URSP 708:

COMMUNITY PLANNING STUDIO

VACANT AND/OR UNDERUTILIZED RELIGIOUS PROPERTIES IN MARYLAND:

ENVISIONING HEALTHY PLANNING TRANSITIONS

Final Report

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School of Architecture,
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› ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was developed by the members of URSP 708: Community Planning Studio in collaboration with the community interlocutors during the fall semester of calendar year 2025.

STUDENTS

- Homayoon Aghili
- David Arazi
- Maya Assaker
- Noah Carey
- Pablo Espejo
- Sarah Kamei Hoffman
- Dejuan Johnson
- John Lawrence
- Insha Sheikh

GUEST STUDENTS

- Oscar Chavez Castillo
- Zachary Nelson

INSTRUCTORS

- Dr. Clara Irazábal
- Professor Jordan Exantus

INTERLOCUTORS

- Carolina Baptist Missionary Church
- St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
- Church of Living God
- Enterprise Partners

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Community Planning Studio report showcases the final phase of work for the University of Maryland (UMD) Urban Studies and Planning (URSP) Community Planning Studio course, which focused on the multifaceted issue of vacant and underutilized religious properties in Maryland. The core purpose of this report is to present work completed for three church interlocutors in Prince George's County: Carolina Missionary Baptist Church, Church of the Living God, and St. Christopher's Episcopal Church.

Each church partner seeks to leverage church-owned land and building assets and has requested support from the class to develop relevant analyses and resources, evaluate their current development proposal, and provide recommendations and alternative proposals. Completing these tasks required the class to build on preliminary research conducted during the first half of the semester; incorporate feedback from the midterm event and ongoing community engagement; synthesize research to inform evaluations, recommendations, and alternatives; and create effective design and policy proposals and visuals.

Overall, each church partner sought to develop their property in a way that aligned with both their mission and the community and county needs. This included proposals for supportive and affordable housing, supportive services, senior services, and climate resilience. The strongest asset of these developments is the churches' mission-driven approach.

However, further evaluation and analysis of the churches' original proposals revealed that separation of uses, accessibility concerns, overdependence on subsidies, limited revenue streams, and a singular, narrow focus potentially constrained the long-term viability and community benefits of these developments. Therefore, recommendations for all churches focused on creating integrated, mixed-use environments; enhancing accessibility through site design changes and improved pedestrian infrastructure; co-locating housing with on-site services and amenities; and designing developments to serve a diverse target population.

Carolina Missionary Baptist Church, located in southern Prince George's County in Fort Washington, Maryland, is seeking to build 30 units of permanent supportive housing for single mothers with HIV/AIDS. The site is constrained by Marlboro clay and steel slopes, a restrictive zoning designation, high subsidy-dependence, and a lack of transit and pedestrian infrastructure. To address these concerns, the Studio recommended a mix of supportive and traditional affordable housing, with on-site workforce development.

Church of the Living God seeks to develop land close to its leading development site. This site is in Adelphi, Maryland, approximately 1 mile west of the University of Maryland campus. They plan to develop a planned retirement community with for-sale homes and apartments, some of which will be affordable. The campus will also have a community center. Key challenges include restrictive zoning, largely low-density housing surrounding the site, a stream that cuts through the property, and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure. The Studio recommended that the church adopt a wellness- and nature-integrated focus for the campus, consider

an intergenerational approach, and advocate for improved pedestrian infrastructure on and around the site as part of the development.

Finally, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, strategically located near the New Carrollton transit hub in Maryland, wants to develop approximately 80 units of affordable housing, a new worship space, and a resilience hub. The narrow shape of the parcel, the volume of traffic along Annapolis Road, steep slopes toward the rear of the property, and the church's limited financial reserves constrain the development. The group recommended combining the affordable housing, worship space, and resilience hub components into a single building and adding retail uses to generate revenue. By consolidating uses within a single building, this option activates the Annapolis Road streetscape, creates a cohesive identity, and provides a rear yard for open space and green infrastructure.

The Studio hosted a final event to showcase these findings and recommendations and collect feedback from community members. From this event, the class continued to gain insight into the importance of bottom-up community engagement, integrated land uses, sustainable development, accessibility, and financial considerations.

The work conducted during the second half of the semester demonstrated the important and expanding role of religious institutions as mission-driven developers and the diversity of opportunities to develop their properties to serve and support communities. At the same time, the class learned the importance of realistic financial planning, strong partnerships, and flexibility in ensuring that these transitions are successful, sustainable, and deliver the most significant community benefits.

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PART 1
UNPACKING THE ISSUE

A Tsunami of Closings?

› INTRODUCTION

This report presents the work of the Urban Studies and Planning (URSP) 708 Community Planning Studio course at the University of Maryland, College Park, which functions as the capstone experience of the Community Planning Master's Program. The studio is a hands-on, experiential learning environment in which students work with real communities and places to address planning challenges.

The focus of the Fall 2025 course is "Vacant/and or Underutilized Religious Properties in Maryland: Envisioning Healthy Planning Transitions", a complex and multifaceted issue. Declining congregations leave behind a significant property inventory that represents either a potential blight or a powerful opportunity for innovative urban planning and adaptive reuse.

The mission of the studio course is to analyze the current conditions of three case-study religious properties and to develop mission-driven proposals for their healthy planning transitions in partnership with these congregations and their leaders. The three case study churches are located in Prince George's County, with specific requests for students to work on:

1) Carolina Missionary Baptist Church, Fort Washington, MD

Request: identify resources to support Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), including grants and foundations. This is especially critical given the current climate of reduced HUD funding for PSH initiatives.

2) Church of the Living God, Chillum, MD

Request: Develop a community engagement plan that includes key stakeholders and planners in the area, such as council members, state delegates, neighborhood associations, HOAs, community associations, schools, PTAs, churches, and other relevant groups.

3) St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, New Carrollton, MD

Request: explore funding options, programmatic requirements, and other resources available to support its goal of becoming a Resilience Hub.

The studio has two parts. Part 1 focused on research and analysis, running from the start of the semester in September through October. Students completed five major analytical tasks: the problem statement, the contextual background, the literature review, and the preliminary case study analysis. This work culminated in a midterm community engagement event and a midterm report. Part 2 builds on the work of Part 1, moving from analysis to proposal development.

› PROBLEM STATEMENT

Houses of worship are not merely religious spaces; they often serve as deeply rooted community anchors that provide programs, services, and gathering spaces, especially for those in need. **As congregations shrink and buildings become increasingly difficult to maintain, communities face difficult questions about what happens next**, particularly because reuse and redevelopment can be complicated by land-use controls, building conditions, historic significance, and neighborhood expectations.



Figure 1. Congregants gather outside of St. Ann's Catholic Church following its final service.

Source: The Baltimore Banner (2024).

On Sunday, November 24th, 2024, the 151-year-old, predominantly Black Catholic parish of St. Ann's in Baltimore held its final Mass, marking its closure under a restructuring plan by the Baltimore Archdiocese (Figure 1) (Vaughn-Hall, 2024). For parishioners who had long considered St. Ann's their "spiritual home," the moment was deeply emotional and painful (Vaughn-Hall, 2024). St. Ann's story reflects a broader reality: hundreds of thousands of churches across the United States, Canada, and western Europe are closing or at risk of closure due to steep declines in religious affiliation, membership, and attendance.

SCALE AND SCOPE

In the U.S., an estimated 100,000 churches—over one quarter of the nation's 370,000 operating congregations—are expected to close in the next several years (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2023; Reinhard, 2024). Over 500 "church and religious facilities" were listed for sale on LoopNet (Figure 2), and nearly 1 in 4 congregations reported operating at an economic loss in 2023 ("Fast Facts on American Religion", 2023).



Figure 2. LoopNet map showing "Church and Religious Facilities" listed for sale in the United States.

Source: LoopNet.com (2025).

Similar trends appear elsewhere. In Canada, thousands of faith-owned buildings are projected to close in the coming decade (CBC News, 2019). Western Europe also faces widespread closures, including substantial church shutdowns in the United Kingdom and parish closures in Germany (Sherwood, 2024; Pentin, 2018), and the broader market for church sales has increased over the past decade (Herald Staff, 2023).

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Declining religious affiliation is a core driver. The share of Americans identifying with "no religion" increased from 9% to 21% between 2000–2003 and 2021–2023 (Figure 3) (Jones, 2024).

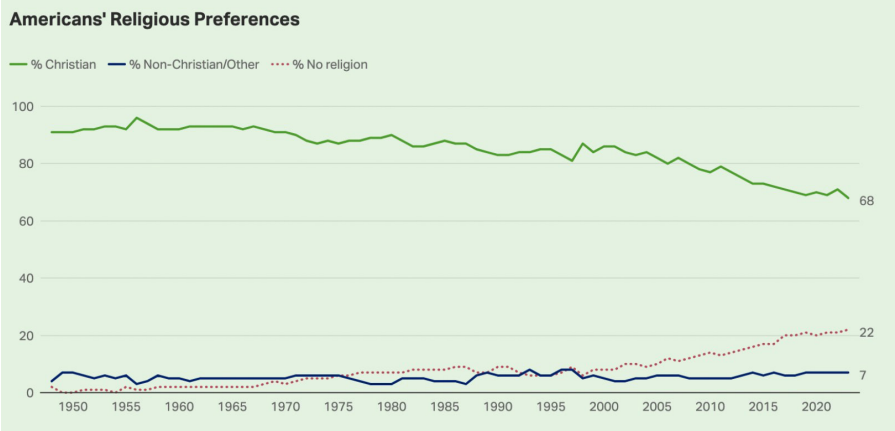


Figure 3. Americans' Religious Preferences Over Time by Christian, Non-Christian, and No Religion.

Source: Gallup (2024).

Financial pressures make this decline operationally consequential. Rising building supply and repair costs, the complexity of maintaining older structures, and other cost pressures intensify the "Great Mismatch" between small, aging congregations and large, deteriorating buildings (Reinhard, 2024; Williams, 2024). Congregational expense structure is illustrated in Figure 4 (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2024).

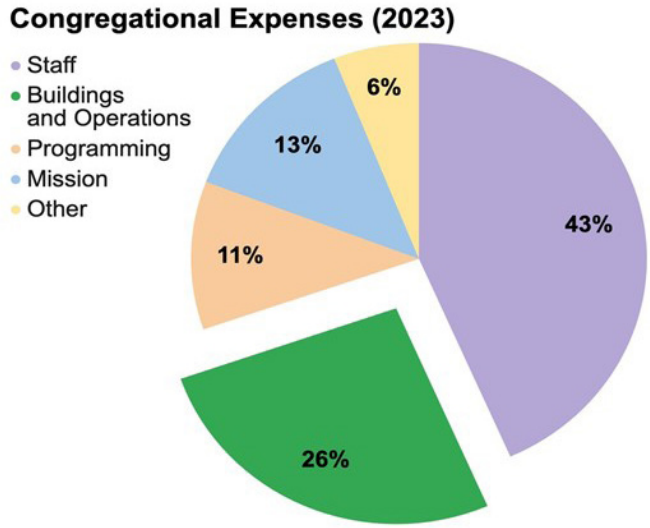


Figure 4. Breakdown of Congregational Expenses.

Source: Hartford Institute for Religion Research (2024).

Virtual worship and COVID-era shifts played a role, but the report treats them largely as accelerants rather than root causes. Pew research shows substantial participation through online or televised services (Figure 5) (Faverio et al., 2023), and related evidence suggests in-person preference remains strong among those who attend both ways (Tyson et al., 2025). These drivers and effects are synthesized in Table 1.

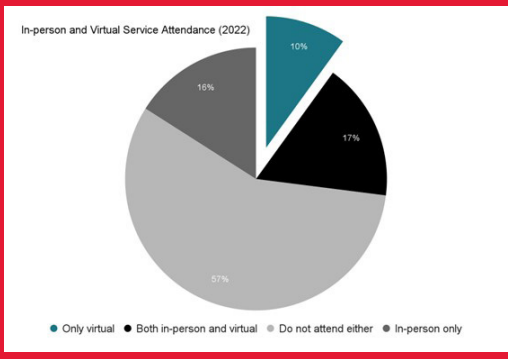


Figure 5. Breakdown of In-Person and Virtual Attendance at Religious Services.

Source: Pew Research Center (2023).

Drivers and Effects of Religious Property Vacancy	
Driver of Vacancy	**Effect**
Declining religious affiliation and participation	Reduced the base of congregants, supporters, and social capital
Declining membership and attendance	Shrinking congregations and weaker community presence
Generational and demographic shifts	Younger adults are less religious, accelerating long-term declines in engagement and support
Financial dependence on membership contributions	Loss of primary source of income, undermining sustainability
Shift toward larger congregations	Smaller congregations have fewer members and shrinking budgets
Rising facility and maintenance costs	Deferred maintenance
Aging, oversized, deteriorating buildings	Exceed current capacity and financial means
Declining real income and budget pressures	Forces cutbacks on maintenance and programming
Influence of virtual worship and COVID-19	Reductions in in-person attendance

Table 1. Drivers of Religious Property Vacancies and Effects.

QUESTIONS AND GOALS

The studio addresses this challenge through five main tasks and nine guiding questions, thereby establishing the foundation for assessing conditions and constraints across the three case studies and for proceeding with proposal development.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

CONDITIONS IN THE WORLD

Religious affiliation and participation patterns vary significantly across the world, but global trends provide important context for understanding the widespread decline of religious institutions in Western countries. Christianity remains the largest religion globally, with approximately one-third of the world's population identifying as Christian in 2010 (Maoz & Henderson, 2013). Although the number of Christians increased to approximately 2.3 billion by 2020, their share of the global population declined to about 28 percent, indicating that Christian growth has not kept pace with overall population growth (Hackett et al., 2025). A key factor contributing to this decline in proportional growth is that many individuals leaving religious affiliation globally were formerly Christian, particularly in more developed countries with lower fertility rates (Maoz & Henderson, 2013).

Islam is one of only two religions growing faster than the global population. Between 2010 and 2020, the global Muslim population increased from approximately 1.5 billion to nearly 2 billion, accounting for roughly one quarter of the world's population (Maoz & Henderson, 2013; Hackett et al., 2025). This growth is largely driven by higher fertility rates and population growth in Muslim-majority regions, particularly in Asia and Africa. Judaism, while representing a small share of the global population, has remained relatively stable, with modest growth concentrated primarily among Orthodox Jewish communities. Hinduism has remained relatively stable, accounting for approximately 15 percent of the global population, whereas Buddhism has declined in recent decades (Maoz & Henderson, 2013; Hackett et al., 2025).

The global population of individuals identifying as nonreligious, including atheists, agnostics, and those without a reported religious affiliation, has grown at a rate exceeding global population growth. This category peaked around 1990, declined briefly following the collapse of atheistic states such as the Soviet Union, and has since increased again, particularly in developed countries (Maoz & Henderson, 2013; Maoz & Henderson, 2010). These global shifts highlight that religious decline is not uniform across regions but is concentrated in specific political, economic, and demographic contexts.

Regional analysis further illustrates these differences. Christianity has declined substantially in Europe while continuing to grow in Africa, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere (Hackett et al., 2025). Islam is heavily concentrated in Asia, which contains the largest number of Muslims globally, and has grown in Europe over the past decade, likely influenced by migration related to regional conflicts such as the Syrian Civil War (Pew Research Center, 2025). Nonreligious populations have historically been largest in Asia, particularly due to state atheism policies in China, whereas in Europe, nonreligious affiliation peaked around 1990 and subsequently declined following the fall of European communist regimes (Maoz & Henderson, 2013).

These global patterns underscore that while religion remains strong in many regions, secularization is most pronounced in developed Western countries. As a result, religious institutions in North America and Europe face distinct pressures that are not reflective of global religious vitality as a whole.

CONDITIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Religious affiliation in the United States has undergone significant restructuring over the past several decades. Regular attendance at religious services has declined substantially, and the proportion of adults attending services weekly has fallen to approximately 30 percent (Jones, 2024). At the same time, religious participation has become increasingly polarized, with growth concentrated among large congregations while smaller congregations continue to lose members (Faith Communities Today, 2020).

Nondenominational congregations represent one of the most significant changes in the U.S. religious landscape. These churches have grown rapidly, particularly among younger and more mobile populations, in part by distancing themselves from traditional denominational identities and political associations (Silliman, 2022). Nondenominational churches are often supported by independent publishing networks and parachurch organizations, allowing them to operate without centralized denominational governance. However, their decentralized structure also makes them difficult to quantify, and researchers caution against overgeneralization due to the lack of national leadership or unified doctrine (Burge, 2022).

Despite these measurement challenges, evidence suggests that nondenominational and megachurch models have expanded while traditional congregations have declined. The average U.S. church has approximately 65 members, most of whom are over the age of 65, while nearly three-quarters of megachurches reported growth as of 2020 (Neuman, 2023). This concentration of growth among large churches further exacerbates financial challenges for smaller congregations that lack economies of scale (Figure 6).

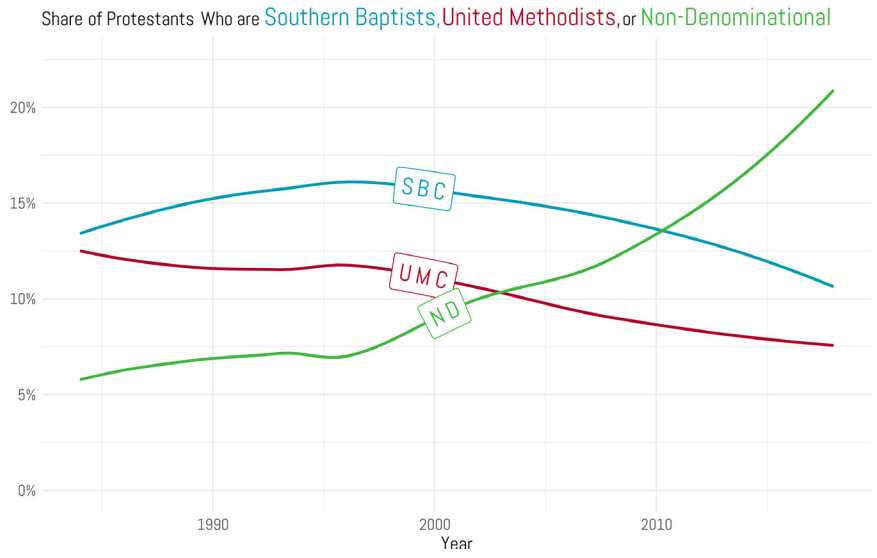


Figure 6. Rise in Nondenominational Churches.

Source: General Social Survey (2018)

At the same time, the proportion of Americans identifying as religiously unaffiliated has increased sharply. The share of adults reporting "no religion" rose from approximately 9 percent in the early 2000s to 21 percent by 2023 (Jones, 2024). Explanations for this trend include generational comfort with nonreligious identification, persistence of nonreligion among those raised outside faith traditions, and broader skepticism toward national institutions, often correlated with higher education and income levels (Smith & Cooperman, 2016; Scheitle & Corcoran, 2024; Fuzy, 2025).

Financial pressures intensify these demographic shifts. Religious buildings are costly to operate, with average annual operating and capital reserve costs estimated at approximately $9.25 per square foot (Cool, 2023). For a mid-sized 10,000-square-foot church, this equates to more than $90,000 annually—an increasingly unsustainable burden for shrinking congregations. As a result, many churches have reduced staffing, deferred maintenance, or eliminated programs, further accelerating decline (Fuzy, 2025)

CONDITIONS IN MARYLAND

Maryland reflects national religious trends while maintaining a distinct historical and demographic context shaped by religious pluralism. Many of the state's religious institutions—particularly older Christian congregations—function as long-standing community anchors that provide social services, educational programming, and civic gathering space. However, these institutions face declining attendance, aging infrastructure, and mounting financial pressures that threaten long-term sustainability (Cool, 2023; Fuzy, 2025).

Maryland's religious diversity is historically rooted in the Maryland Toleration Act of 1649, which established one of the earliest legal protections for religious freedom in colonial America. This legacy continues to shape contemporary planning challenges, as repurposing religious properties requires balancing redevelopment goals with respect for religious heritage and community identity.

At the policy level, Maryland and its counties provide pathways for the adaptive reuse of religious buildings, though regulatory requirements vary by jurisdiction. Zoning ordinances in counties such as Prince George's and Montgomery allow conversions under specific conditions related to parking, accessibility, and historic preservation. While historic designation can protect cultural heritage, it can also increase redevelopment costs and complicate feasibility (Reidy, 2024).

Market indicators suggest that religious property transitions are already underway in the state. Listings of churches and religious facilities for sale across Maryland illustrate the scale of this trend (Figure 7). Operating costs for mid-sized religious properties frequently exceed $80,000–$100,000 annually, making continued operation increasingly difficult for congregations experiencing declining membership (Cool, 2023). In response, some congregations have merged, sold property, or pursued partnerships, while others have begun exploring adaptive reuse and community-serving redevelopment strategies.

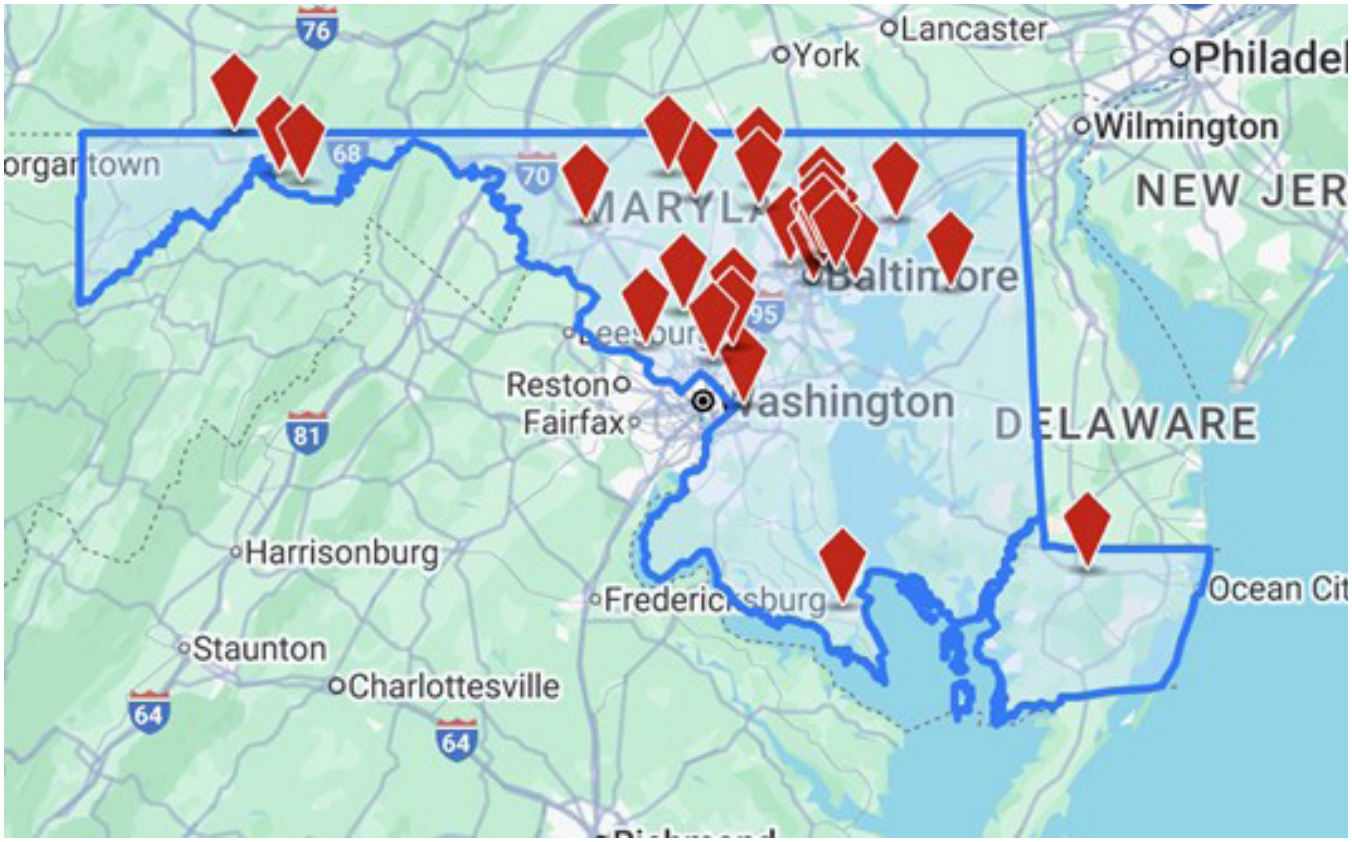


Figure 7. Churches and Religious Facilities For Sale in Maryland.

Source: Loopnet.com (2025)

Maryland also exhibits dual trends similar to those observed nationally: the growth of nondenominational and megachurch-style congregations alongside the rise in the religiously unaffiliated population. At the same time, Jewish and Muslim communities in parts of the state have experienced growth and face distinct spatial and programmatic needs, underscoring that religious decline and expansion are uneven across faith traditions and geographies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PLANNING AND ZONING FACTORS

Literature consistently identifies land use regulation as one of the most significant barriers to the reuse and redevelopment of religious properties. Religious institutions are typically permitted in residential or institutional zoning districts rather than assigned a distinct land-use category, leaving many churches constrained by zoning codes that limit alternative uses as congregational needs change (Reidy, 2024). In many cases, religious buildings function as prior nonconforming uses, which can severely restrict redevelopment options unless rezoning, variances, or special exceptions are obtained, processes that are often time-consuming, expensive, and politically contested.

Exclusionary zoning further compounds these challenges. Many religious properties are in low-density residential zones that prohibit multifamily housing or mixed-use development, even when sites are well served by transit or infrastructure. As a result, faith-owned land is frequently underutilized relative to its potential contribution to housing supply or community services (Reidy, 2024). These zoning constraints often reflect broader patterns in U.S. land use regulation that prioritize neighborhood stability and detached single-family housing over flexibility.

In response, several states and local governments have adopted policies intended to reduce zoning barriers for faith-based redevelopment. The literature highlights examples such as Maryland's Housing Expansion and Affordability Act (HB 538), Washington's HB 1377, California's SB 4, and Montgomery County's ZTA 24-01, all of which allow increased residential density or streamlined approvals for projects on religious or educational land under specified conditions (Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024; Hanna, 2023; Ndou, 2024). While these reforms expand development potential, their effectiveness depends on site-specific eligibility criteria, affordability requirements, and local implementation.

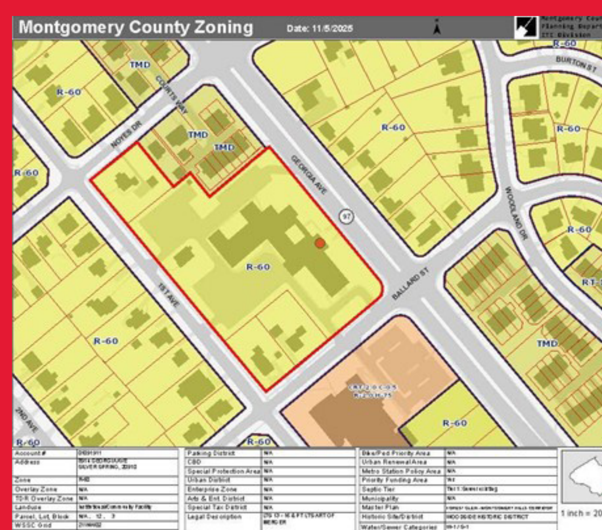


Figure 8. Zoning Category (R-60) for the Silver Spring United Methodist Church.

Source: MC Atlas (2025).

NEIGHBORHOOD OPPOSITION

Neighborhood opposition is a recurring theme in the literature on religious property redevelopment. Conflicts are most common when religious sites are located within or adjacent to residential neighborhoods, particularly in suburban contexts where concerns about traffic, parking, density, and neighborhood character are heightened (Miller, 2020). Even when zoning allows redevelopment, opposition can delay or derail projects through public hearings, appeals, and procedural challenges.

The literature emphasizes that land-use processes often provide multiple opportunities for residents to contest proposed changes, thereby increasing uncertainty and development costs (Reidy, 2024). Opposition is not limited to housing proposals; even community-serving uses may face resistance when perceived as incompatible with neighborhood expectations. An example highlighted in the report is opposition to zoning text amendments in Montgomery County, illustrating how political dynamics can shape outcomes even when policies are designed to facilitate redevelopment (Bixby, 2025).

Researchers consistently argue that early, transparent, and sustained community engagement is essential for mitigating opposition. Projects that involve neighbors early, clearly articulate benefits, and address concerns related to scale and design are more likely to advance successfully (Freed, 2024).



Figure 9. Attendees hold signs opposing a zoning text amendment during a Montgomery County Council session.

Source: Bethesda Magazine (2025).

PARKING, BUILDING CODES, AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REGULATIONS

Beyond zoning and opposition, regulatory requirements related to parking, building codes, and environmental review present substantial barriers to the reuse of religious buildings. Minimum parking requirements can significantly constrain redevelopment, particularly on sites with limited land area. Efforts to reduce or waive parking standards frequently encounter neighborhood resistance, even when projects are located near transit (Reinhard & Mian, 2023).

Building code compliance poses an especially significant challenge for older religious structures. Change-of-occupancy requirements and rehabilitation thresholds—such as the 25/50 rule—can trigger costly upgrades that make adaptive reuse financially infeasible, particularly for affordable housing projects (Building Codes for Rehabilitation, 2017). These requirements often undermine the economic advantages of reusing existing structures.

Environmental review processes further increase project complexity. While intended to protect environmental and public health, lengthy review timelines and litigation risk can delay projects and discourage smaller congregations from pursuing redevelopment (Reinhard & Mian, 2023). Some jurisdictions have introduced reforms to limit procedural delays or to exempt qualifying affordable housing projects, but these measures are applied unevenly.

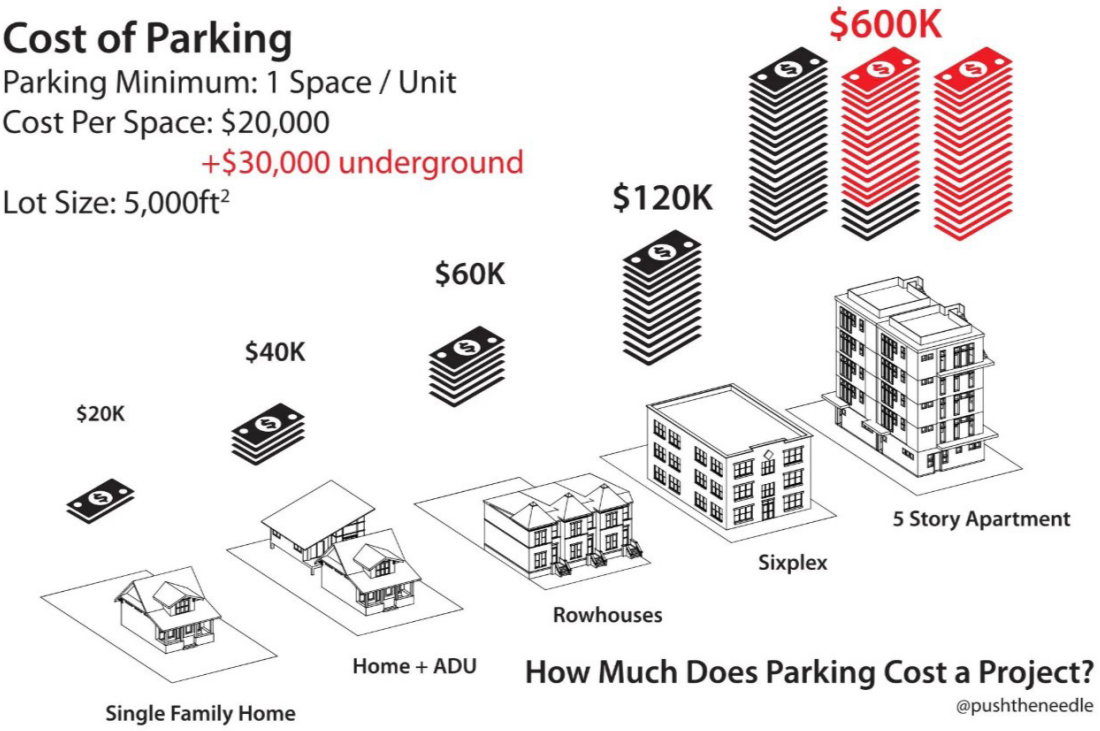


Figure 10. Changing Parking Cost based on Density and Parking Type.

Source: pushtheneedle (2023).

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS

Affordable housing has emerged as a prominent redevelopment pathway for faith-owned land, often framed through the "Yes, In God's Backyard" (YIGBY) movement. The literature emphasizes that housing development aligns closely with the social justice missions of many congregations and allows religious institutions to leverage land assets for community benefit (Paxton, 2025a; Reinhard, 2024b).

Faith-based housing projects benefit from land ownership, favorable locations, and community trust, but they also face significant challenges. Financing complexity, regulatory barriers, and affordability requirements can limit feasibility, particularly for projects serving very low-income households. Successful projects typically rely on partnerships with nonprofit developers, public agencies, and mission-aligned investors (Enterprise, 2025).

The literature also highlights tradeoffs between mission alignment and financial sustainability. While affordable housing can generate long-term revenue through ground leases or joint ventures, congregations must carefully evaluate risk, governance structures, and long-term control of their property.

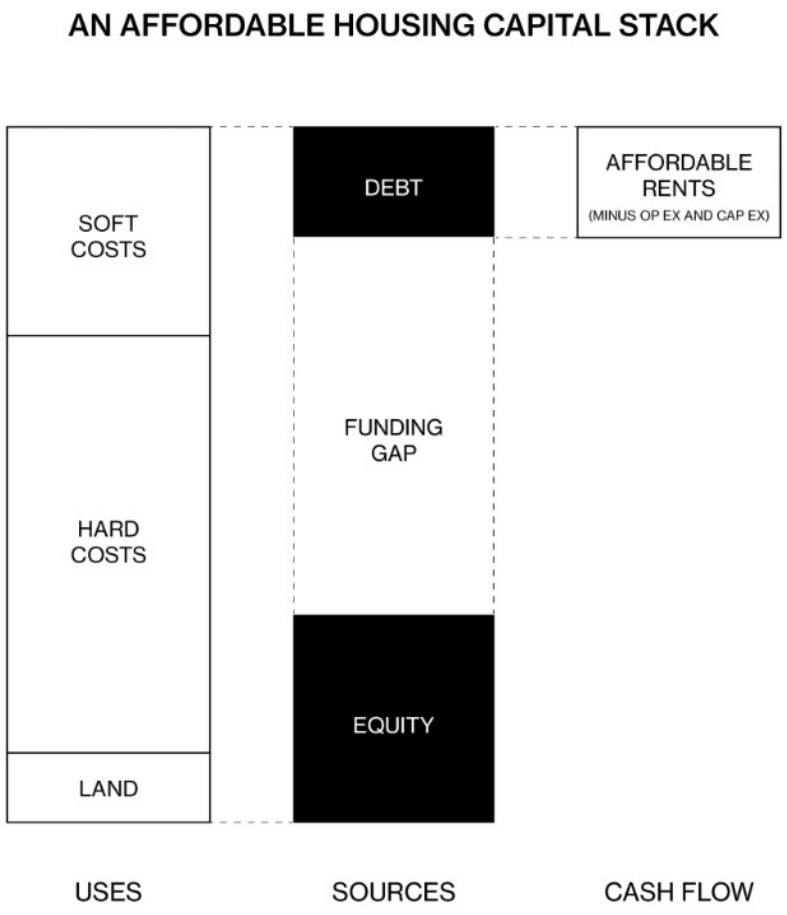


Figure 11. Costs, Sources, and Cash Flow for an Affordable Housing Project.

Source: Shelter Force (2025)

COMMUNITY-USE AND MIXED-USE PROJECTS

In addition to housing, religious organizations have pursued community-use and mixed-use redevelopment strategies that incorporate social services, cultural programming, nonprofit offices, or limited commercial activity. These models build on the historic role of churches as community hubs and may provide flexible revenue streams through leasing arrangements.

However, the literature notes that mixed-use projects introduce additional complexity. Integrating multiple uses requires careful design coordination and may affect eligibility for zoning incentives or tax exemptions. In particular, introducing commercial uses can raise concerns about maintaining tax-exempt status, requiring careful legal and financial planning.



Figure 12. Interior of the Ministry Loft Apartments at the Former Site of St. Michael's Church Complex in Baltimore, MD. Source: SAA|EVI (2023).

RELIGIOUS LAND USE AND INSTITUTIONALIZED PERSONS ACT (RLUIPA)

One important federal law that religious congregations should be aware of is the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). Enacted in 2000, RLUIPA prohibits governments from imposing or implementing a land use regulation that imposes a substantial burden on the religious exercise of a person, assembly, or institution (Reidy, 2024). This law limits municipalities' abilities to regulate how faith communities use their land, thereby strengthening faith communities' legal position to control and modify their properties in alignment with their religious mission. In the New York City Region, RLUIPA

strengthened religious groups' ability to use or alter land and buildings when they encountered opposition from municipalities (Miller, 2020). In a novel argument, Reidy (2024) proposes that religious institutions might invoke both RLUIPA and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to defend the development of affordable housing on their property, framing such projects as an extension of their religious practices. While not applicable or optimal in every situation, RLUIPA remains a valuable legal tool that faith communities can consider when navigating land use challenges and asserting their right to use property in ways consistent with their mission. careful legal and financial planning.

TAKEAWAYS FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES

Given the range of regulatory challenges and potential community opposition that faith communities may encounter during reuse and redevelopment projects, congregations must allocate sufficient time to conduct thorough research and establish effective partnerships to address these issues effectively. This includes understanding their property's characteristics and limitations, applicable regulations, and the attitudes of the surrounding community. By investing time in the early stages of research and planning, congregations can avoid costly delays and rejections later in the development process.

Being well-informed about a property and its feasibility before bringing it to market ensures that congregations can negotiate with developers from an informed position (Johnson, 2022). Location is key for a property, and the possibilities for redevelopment and success depend heavily on the market's location (Reinhard and Mian, 2023). Additionally, assessing the real estate market as a whole – whether it is "hot" or "cold" – also helps congregations anticipate the level of developer interest and the types of offers or partnerships they might receive (Reidy, 2024). Understanding the project's physical and market context helps congregations balance their visions for reuse or development with the realities of feasibility.

Building partnerships with other organizations, such as community development corporations, and with legislators can also be crucial to a project's success (Reidy, 2024). These partners can help faith communities navigate legal and regulatory challenges, offer creative solutions, or even advocate for regulatory changes. For example, Silver Spring United Methodist Church collaborated with a Montgomery County Council member to draft and enact a zoning text amendment that facilitated faith institutions' pursuit of affordable housing projects. Collaborations like this can serve as models for future congregations pursuing reuse or redevelopment, and may even lead to legislation that streamlines the process for others.

Finally, overcoming community opposition–and ideally building community support– can be achieved through strong congregational social networks, consistent community engagement sessions, and the presence of committed project "champions" (Fisher et al., 2025; Johnson, 2022). This is particularly important for affordable housing initiatives, which often face strong local resistance. Getting to know local communities, involving them in the process, and listening to their concerns can help gain buy-in and support, even if they

were not initially supportive of the project. Being well-informed, building partnerships, and connecting with the local community will all support faith communities seeking to reuse or redevelop their properties.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SPATIAL SHIFTS

Long-term demographic and spatial shifts shape the vulnerability of religious institutions. Post-World War II suburbanization contributed to the decentralization of religious life, while subsequent urban disinvestment weakened many city congregations (Hudnut-Beumler, 2009). More recent patterns of reinvestment and gentrification have created new pressures, particularly for historic Black churches located in rapidly changing neighborhoods (Eichel & Infield, 2017).

The literature documents that churches in high-poverty or rapidly gentrifying areas are especially vulnerable to closure, displacement, or sale. At the same time, increased mobility and automobile dependence have enabled "church shopping," allowing congregants to attend services far from where they live, further weakening neighborhood-based congregations (Dougherty & Mulder, 2020).

Technological changes also shape participation. Livestreaming and online worship expanded rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing hybrid participation models and altering traditional patterns of in-person engagement (Pew Research Center, 2023). While these changes do not fully explain church closures, they contribute to evolving expectations about religious participation.

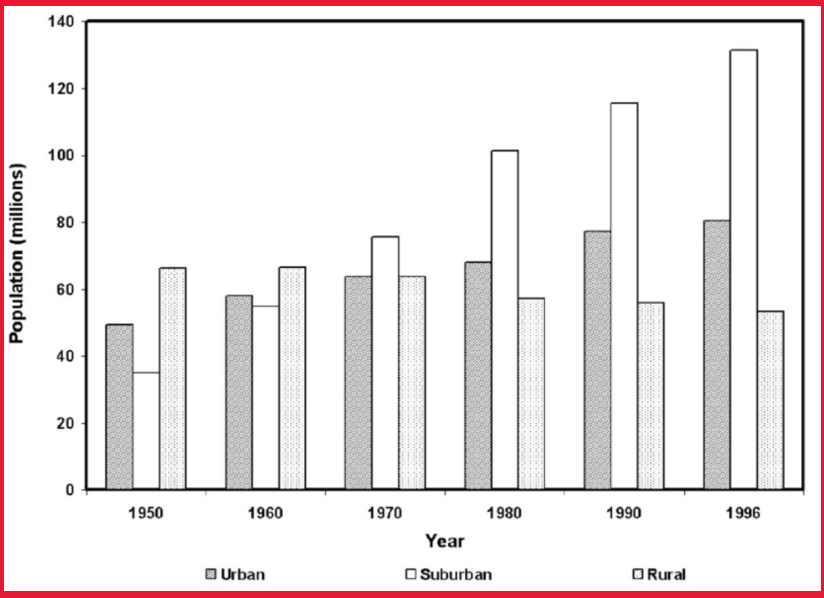


Figure 13. U.S. Population in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Areas (1950-1996).

Source: S. Taylor Jarnigan (2004)

SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF CONVERSION

The literature emphasizes that religious property transitions involve not only regulatory and financial considerations but also spiritual and emotional processes. In Catholic contexts, formal deconsecration procedures governed by canon law shape how sacred spaces are transitioned, while Anglican and other Protestant traditions exhibit varying degrees of ritual formalization (Canon Law, 1999; de Wildt, 2020; 43rd General Synod, 2023).

For congregants, religious buildings often embody collective memories and personal life events, making transitions emotionally complex. Recognizing and honoring this dimension is critical for ensuring community acceptance and respectful outcomes.

TAKEAWAYS FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES

Given the complex interplay of demographic shifts, economic changes, and regulatory barriers, congregations seeking to repurpose or redevelop their properties must approach the process strategically. Key best practices include:

1. **Early Due Diligence**: Conduct a thorough property assessment, including zoning designation, building condition, and market feasibility studies, before making redevelopment decisions.
2. **Engage the Community**: Build trust with neighbors through early outreach, listening sessions, and transparent communication to address concerns and generate buy-in, thereby reducing opposition during public hearings.
3. **Forge Strategic Partnerships**: Collaborate with nonprofit developers, community development corporations, and local officials to navigate regulatory processes and secure funding. Partnerships with mission-aligned organizations can help share risk and expand capacity.
4. **Leverage Policy Tools**: Take advantage of density bonuses, streamlined permitting processes, and other supportive state or municipal policies that facilitate affordable housing or mixed-use development on faith-owned land.
5. **Plan for Financial Sustainability**: Explore revenue-generating uses, such as leasing space or incorporating commercial components, while being mindful of potential implications for tax-exempt status.
6. **Honor Congregational Legacy**: Incorporate rituals, commemorations, or interpretive signage to preserve the congregation's history and cultural significance, helping members and the broader community navigate the emotional transition.

ARCHITECTURE, PRESERVATION, AND DESIGN

Adaptive reuse of religious buildings requires architectural strategies that introduce new functions while preserving historic character and spatial legibility. Comparative studies identify a set of recurring design tactics aligned with community-oriented reuse goals (Mine, 2013). These include establishing more visible and accessible public entrances (often reorienting inward-facing churches toward the street), inserting reversible mezzanines or galleries within large nave volumes, and concentrating new mechanical systems in discrete, legible zones rather than distributing invasive infrastructure throughout sacred spaces. Such approaches allow defining architectural features—vaulted ceilings, stained-glass windows, axial sightlines, and daylight patterns—to remain perceptible even as uses change.

Successful adaptive reuse projects also tend to prioritize multifunctional programming rather than single-use conversions. Combining uses such as community centers, housing, childcare, or cultural facilities ensures daily activation and reduces reliance on a single revenue stream (Mine, 2013). By contrast, monofunctional or highly privatized conversions—such as luxury condominiums or exclusive event venues—often preserve exterior appearance while limiting public benefit and long-term viability (Atkins, 2025; Franco, 2024a; Yan et al., 2024).



Figure 14. View of the proposed public space at the level of the former reading room and of the big "holes" in the reinforced concrete floor that allow one to perceive, from the ground floor, the original holy space (Genoa University Library).

Cross-cultural research highlights a recurring tradeoff between authenticity and viability. In Harbin, China, heritage-tourism conversions of Russian-influenced churches preserved exterior form while extensively altering interiors for commercial use, raising questions about authenticity and community acceptance (Yan et al., 2024). Similar tensions appear in European and North American contexts, where preservation of visual form alone does not guarantee continuity of meaning or public function.

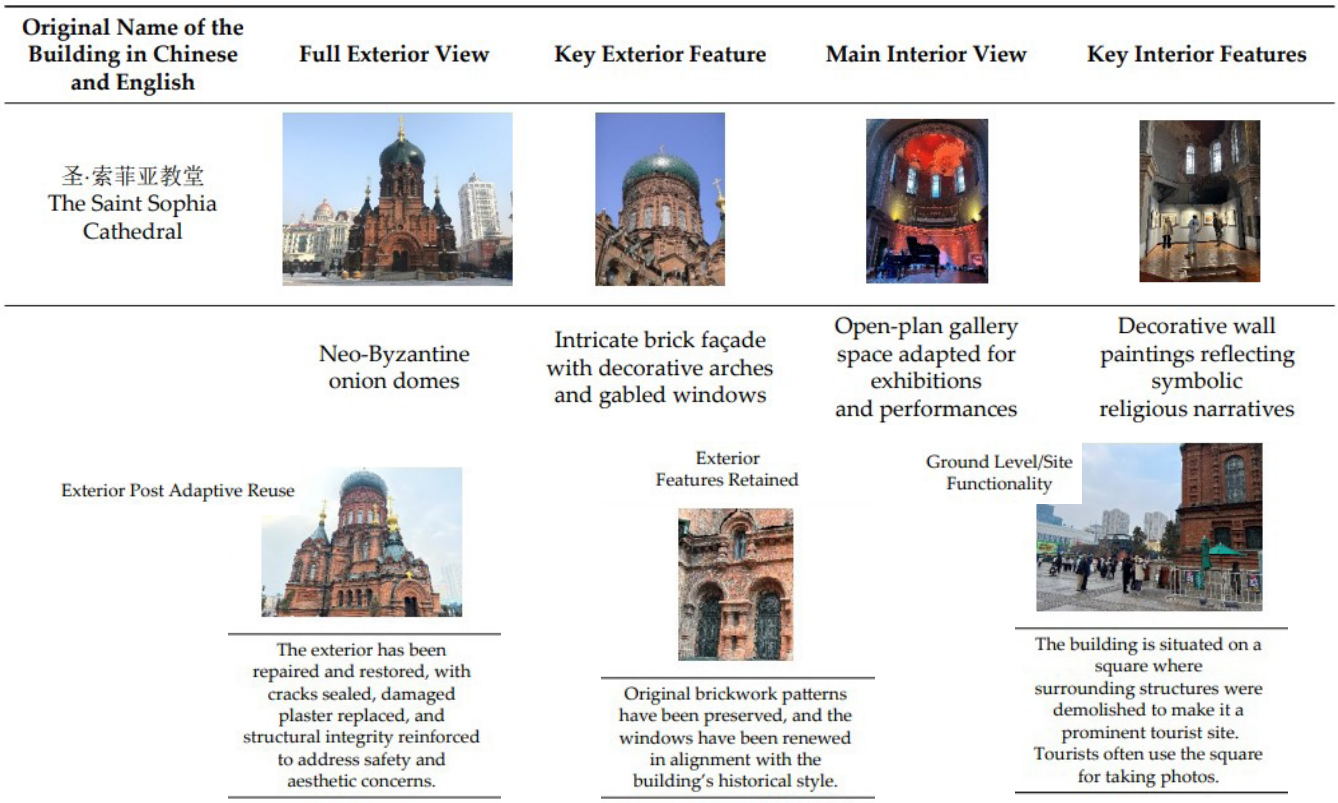


Figure 15. The Saint Sophia's Church in Harbin, Heilongjiang, China, before and after the Sacred to Secular adaptive reuse process.

Other studies demonstrate that adaptive reuse can successfully honor sacred heritage while delivering tangible community benefits. Lo Faro and Miceli (2019) show that programming former religious buildings for health, shelter, or social services—when paired with light-touch, reversible architectural interventions—can preserve sightlines and communal spatial qualities while extending the site's original public-serving mission.

Urban design context further shapes outcomes. Many historic churches occupy central, transit-accessible locations, making them well-suited for reuse as civic anchors. Design strategies such as opening courtyards, introducing plazas, or adding weekday entrances can reweave former churches into the urban fabric and signal accessibility. Projects like the conversion of a 17th-century Jesuit church in Genoa into a public university library illustrate how free-standing mezzanines and reversible insertions can accommodate new programs while preserving nave volume, acoustics, and spatial hierarchy (Franco, 2024a).

TREATMENT STANDARDS

Reuse of historic religious structures must comply with preservation treatment standards that safeguard cultural value. In the U.S., the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation require that character-defining materials, forms, and spaces be retained, applying to both exterior and interior elements—particularly significant for religious buildings where interior volume and ornamentation convey meaning (Mine, 2013).

Adaptive reuse projects, therefore, follow a significance-led design process, typically beginning with archival research, detailed building surveys, and stakeholder consultation to identify elements requiring protection (Franco, 2024a). This front-loaded diagnostic phase establishes where flexibility is possible and where intervention must remain minimal. New additions are designed to be reversible and compatible—distinguishable on close inspection yet harmonious in scale and impact, consistent with international preservation charters.

Conflicts frequently arise between preservation goals and modern building requirements. Structural reinforcement, accessibility upgrades, and fire safety improvements may threaten historic fabric, requiring negotiated, case-by-case solutions (Franco, 2024a; Yan et al., 2024). Kelly and Koo (2024) document tensions between retaining original materials and meeting contemporary performance standards, particularly where compliance increases cost or complexity.

While historic tax credits and designation can unlock grants and public support, their administrative and technical requirements can outweigh financial benefits in some cases, leading developers or congregations to forgo designation in favor of greater design flexibility. Nonetheless, many projects succeed by prioritizing preservation of form, volume, key artwork, and façade while allowing more substantial modification in secondary spaces. Sad Berenji and Moazen (2024) emphasize that clearly distinguishing new construction from historic fabric can enhance authenticity rather than diminish it.



Figure 16. Redesigned Saint Francis Church in Santpedor (Catalonia), Spain.

DESIGN TRADEOFFS

Adaptive reuse inevitably involves tradeoffs between heritage preservation and contemporary functionality. A recurring tension exists along the authenticity–viability spectrum: excessive preservation may render a building unusable, while overly aggressive alteration risks erasing its defining character (Mine, 2013).

Design strategies that navigate this tension include partial mezzanines, lightweight independent structural systems, and distributed mechanical infrastructure that minimizes intrusion into masonry or plaster. Performance-based code compliance, rehabilitation codes, and alternative safety measures often allow historic elements—such as original stairwells or uneven stone floors—to remain in use while achieving acceptable safety standards.

Energy efficiency presents another challenge. Massive masonry churches are difficult to retrofit without altering appearance or moisture behavior. Khalid et al. (2023) frame this as a balance between artifact protection, user comfort, decarbonization, and operating cost. Solutions vary by context, ranging from improved low-level heating in intermittently used churches to discreet renewable energy installations in larger urban facilities (Reinhard, 2024a).

Underlying these technical decisions is a broader tension between change and continuity. Projects that involve community members in identifying which elements "feel" essential—light, memorials, axial views—are better positioned to preserve both tangible and intangible heritage (Sedova, 2022). The literature consistently finds that projects delivering clear social value achieve greater acceptance and long-term success (Franco, 2024b; Sedova, 2022).

REAL ESTATE, ECONOMICS, AND FINANCE

The closure of religious institutions creates stranded assets that can be reactivated through development, but congregations often lack real estate expertise. The YIGBY movement reframes faith properties as partners in housing and service provision, emphasizing mission-aligned development rather than outright sale (Paxton, 2025a; Reinhard, 2024b).

PARTNERSHIP AND FINANCIAL MODELS

Ground leases, joint ventures, and conditional sales enable congregations to retain ownership while accessing development expertise (Enterprise, 2025). Layered financing—combining grants, tax credits, loans, and philanthropy—is often necessary for feasibility, particularly for affordable housing projects (Myerson, 2024; Sedova, 2022).

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Reuse projects can stabilize neighborhoods, increase property values, generate congregational revenue, and preserve community identity (Liu & Liu, 2022; Paxton, 2025; Reinhard, 2024a). Community-serving programs and early engagement reduce opposition and strengthen long-term outcomes.

SYNTHESIS AND RESEARCH GAPS

The literature collectively demonstrates that the adaptive reuse and redevelopment of religious properties is shaped by the intersection of land-use regulation, demographic change, architectural constraints, financial feasibility, and socio-cultural considerations. Planning and zoning frameworks consistently emerge as the primary gatekeepers of redevelopment potential, while design and preservation strategies mediate the introduction of new uses without erasing historic and spiritual significance. Financial models and partnership structures determine feasibility, particularly for affordable housing and community-serving projects, and community engagement strongly influences project outcomes.

Despite this breadth, existing research remains fragmented across disciplines and is largely descriptive. As summarized in Table 2, the literature identifies persistent regulatory barriers, promising policy reforms, and replicable design and financing strategies, but provides limited empirical evaluation of outcomes. Major gaps remain in measuring policy effectiveness, quantifying the capacity of faith-owned land, assessing long-term equity impacts, and evaluating financial performance and risk. These gaps point to the need for integrated, data-driven frameworks that link planning reform, design interventions, and economic structures to measurable community benefits.

Table 2 synthesizes these themes by mapping core findings and limitations across planning, socio-cultural, architectural, regulatory, and financial dimensions, providing a structured foundation for future research and policy development.

Literature Review Summary			
Thematic Area	**Representative Authors & Sources**	**Core Findings**	**Identified Gaps / Limitations**
Planning & Zoning Regulations	Reidy (2024); Murphy et al. (2024); Freed (2024); Housing Expansion and Affordability Act (2024)	Exclusionary zoning and procedural hurdles constrain redevelopment; state reforms (HB 538, SB 4) provide new density and procedural flexibility.	Lack of longitudinal data evaluating policy impacts; no national database of faith-based projects.
Community Opposition & Engagement	Miller (2020); Freed (2024)	Neighborhood pushback often halts projects; early engagement and political partnerships improve outcomes.	Limited empirical measurement of the effectiveness of engagement strategies.
Demographic & Socio-Cultural Shifts	Hudnut-Beumler (2009); Born et al. (2021); Jones (2024); Eichel & Infield (2017)	Urban disinvestment and suburban migration led to underused urban churches; immigrant and Black congregations face displacement pressures.	Few longitudinal or comparative studies track congregation adaptation and equity outcomes.
Architecture & Preservation	Franco (2024); Mine (2013); Lo Faro & Miceli (2019); Sad Berenji & Moazen (2024)	Successful adaptive reuse balances reversibility, minimal intervention, and public-serving programs that preserve the "spirit of place."	Lack of standardized guidelines for sacred-to-secular transformations; insufficient integration with preservation funding policy.
Building Codes & Environmental Regulation	Kelly & Koo (2024); Young (2025); Senator Wiener Bill (2025)	Traditional codes raise costs; rehabilitation codes and CEQA modernization improve feasibility.	Sparse evaluation of code reform adoption rates and cost savings.
Real Estate, Finance & Partnership Models	Myerson (2024); Paxton (2025); Enterprise (2025); Reinhard (2024b)	Faith–developer partnerships (ground leases, JVs) enable mission-aligned projects; financing depends on layered funding sources.	Limited disclosure of financial performance and risk management outcomes.
Economic & Community Impact	Liu & Liu (2022); Sedova (2022); Reinhard (2021)	Reuse projects can raise property values, preserve heritage, and strengthen the social fabric.	Need for quantifiable indicators of social and cultural benefit; limited comparative data.

Table 2. Literature Review Summary.

PLANNING AND DESIGN TYPOLOGIES AND PRECEDENTS

PLANNING AND DESIGN TYPOLOGIES

The transition of vacant or underutilized religious properties can take multiple physical and programmatic forms depending on structural condition, location, community needs, and congregational goals. The literature and precedent analysis identify a spectrum of planning and design approaches ranging from minimal physical intervention to complete redevelopment. This section organizes those approaches into four primary typologies: adaptive reuse, recycle, redevelopment, and development. These typologies are not mutually exclusive; rather, they represent a continuum of intervention that balances preservation, community continuity, and financial feasibility.



Figure 17. Chart of Typology and Terminology Breakdown.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Adaptive reuse involves repurposing an existing religious building while retaining much of its original architectural form, spatial configuration, and symbolic meaning. This approach is most commonly applied to structures with architectural or historic significance and is often motivated by a desire to preserve community identity and collective memory. Adaptive reuse can allow religious buildings to continue serving public or semi-public functions while accommodating new programs.



Figure 18. Ministry of Brewing in Baltimore, MD

However, adaptive reuse presents substantial challenges. Older religious structures often require extensive rehabilitation to meet contemporary building codes, accessibility standards, and life-safety requirements. These upgrades can significantly increase project costs and may undermine financial feasibility, particularly for affordable housing or nonprofit uses. As a result, adaptive reuse projects frequently rely on historic preservation incentives, tax credits, or philanthropic support to close funding gaps.

The following precedents demonstrate how diverse planning and design typologies can transform religious properties into vibrant, community-serving spaces. Each example illustrates how planners, architects, and congregations strike a balance between heritage, identity, and adaptation. They are organized by typology, including adaptive reuse, recycling, redevelopment, and development, to reveal how different approaches address physical condition, mission alignment, and urban impact.

Precedent: Ministry of Brewing (Baltimore, MD)

The Ministry of Brewing project exemplifies adaptive reuse by transforming a former church into a brewery while retaining the building's historic character and prominent architectural features. The project preserved the stained-glass windows, vaulted ceilings, and the overall form of the sanctuary, thereby allowing the building to remain a recognizable neighborhood landmark. Flexible zoning and historic preservation tax credits were critical to the project's feasibility, demonstrating how regulatory context can enable preservation-oriented reuse.



Figure 19. Ministry of Brewing in Baltimore, MD

RECYCLE

Recycle represents a partial preservation approach in which select architectural elements or materials from a religious building are incorporated into new construction. This typology prioritizes sustainability and symbolic continuity rather than full structural preservation. Commonly reused elements include stone façades, stained glass, timber framing, or decorative features that reference the original building.



Figure 20. After Image of Arlington Presbyterian Church

Source: KGD Architecture

While recycling materials can reduce waste and maintain a tangible connection to a site's religious history, it also entails tradeoffs. The original spatial experience of the religious building is often lost, and the success of this approach depends on the careful integration of design. Recycling strategies are most effective when buildings are structurally unsound or spatially incompatible with new uses yet retain cultural or symbolic significance.

Precedent: Gilliam Place (Arlington, VA)

Gilliam Place demonstrates a recycle-based redevelopment of a former church site into a 173-unit affordable housing development. Although the original church structure was not fully retained, key elements, including the stone façade, stained glass, and interior furnishings, were incorporated into the new development. The project includes affordable housing, nonprofit office space, and ground-floor retail, and is located near transit, reinforcing its role as a community-serving redevelopment.



Figure 21. Before Image of Arlington Presbyterian Church

Source: Arlington Presbyterian Church

REDEVELOPMENT

Redevelopment involves substantial demolition or reconstruction to accommodate entirely new uses and building forms. This approach is typically pursued when existing religious structures are physically deteriorated, spatially unsuitable, or financially infeasible to rehabilitate. Redevelopment allows for greater flexibility in density, program mix, and site design, but often requires navigating zoning approvals, neighborhood opposition, and symbolic loss.



Figure 22. After Image of Riverside Baptist Church.
Source: Mid-Century Mundane and GBR Architects.

Redevelopment raises important questions about how religious and community identity can be acknowledged after the removal of the original structure. Projects that successfully navigate these tensions often incorporate commemorative design elements, continued worship space, or programming that maintains a connection to the site's original purpose.

Precedent: Riverside Baptist Church (Washington, DC)

The Riverside Baptist Church redevelopment illustrates a mixed-use redevelopment model that integrates a new worship space with residential and commercial uses. The project comprises approximately 170 residential units, ground-floor retail, and a new church facility, with rental income supporting the long-term sustainability of the congregation. Symbolic elements from the original church were retained in the new design, demonstrating how redevelopment can balance financial viability with institutional continuity.



Figure 23. Before Image of Riverside Baptist Church

DEVELOPMENT

Development represents the most intensive intervention, typically involving the complete replacement of an existing religious structure with a new building or complex that may include worship space, housing, community facilities, or other uses. This typology is often pursued when congregations seek to maximize land value or respond to substantial community needs while maintaining an on-site presence.



Figure 24. Proposed Site of the Silver Spring United Methodist Church.

Source: United Methodist News.

CROSS-TYPOLOGY TAKEAWAYS

Across all four typologies, the precedents illustrate several consistent themes. Successful projects align planning and design decisions with the congregational mission, the regulatory context, and the financial capacity. Early engagement with planners, neighbors, and development partners increases feasibility and reduces conflict. Finally, preserving some form of symbolic or programmatic continuity, whether through retained architecture, commemorative elements, or continued worship space, plays a critical role in community acceptance and long-term success.

Precedent: Silver Spring United Methodist Church (Silver Spring, MD)

The Silver Spring United Methodist Church project exemplifies a development approach that integrates religious, residential, and community-serving functions within a newly constructed complex. The project reflects a strategic response to rising land values, zoning opportunities, and evolving congregational needs, positioning the church as an active partner in community development rather than a passive landholder.



Figure 25. Current Site of the Silver Spring United Methodist Church.

Source: culturespotmc

› CONCLUSION

As the United States, like the Western world, becomes increasingly secular, the issue of closing houses of worship is one that urban planners need to tackle. It is a complicated issue, wrapped up in all the typical problems one would expect with urban planning, like zoning, policies, funding, and political issues, alongside problems specific to these places that have such strong emotional and communal values. However, some of those issues have been alleviated, and new ones have emerged with the churches with which the class is collaborating. Two of the churches, Carolina and Church of the Living God, are proposing development projects that do not require changes to or the sale of the existing church. St. Christopher's is considering a more typical project: developing part of its property and constructing a new church.

As the class progresses, they will need to keep these challenges in mind as they work with their individual churches. There are several steps the class will need to take as they progress through the semester. The first is working on an engagement plan for the churches. All churches will need to engage their local communities as they move forward with their projects, and the class will assist them in drafting engagement event plans. In addition, the Church of the Living God has yet to inform its congregants of its plans; therefore, that group will also need to determine how to disseminate this information. The groups will also have to address the individual issues each church faces. The Carolina Missionary Baptist Church group has been tasked with identifying funding sources to support the project.

Additionally, the group has recommended that Carolina Church be designated as a Priority Funding Area, which could create opportunities for additional state and county funding. The Church of the Living God primarily tasked the group with further developing its engagement plan. In addition, the group has been asked to use its urban planning expertise to evaluate CLG's current plan and provide feedback and alternatives. Like Carolina Church, St. Christopher's has requested assistance in finding alternative revenue sources. The group will also provide input and identify potential avenues for advancing their project.

PART 2
THE CASE STUDIES

Carolina Missionary Baptist Church

Church of the Living God

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church

› OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDIES

The three churches selected as case studies are located in Prince George's County. Therefore, they have overlapping general properties. These churches are:

- Church of The Living God
- Carolina Missionary Baptist Church
- St. Cristopher Episcopal Church

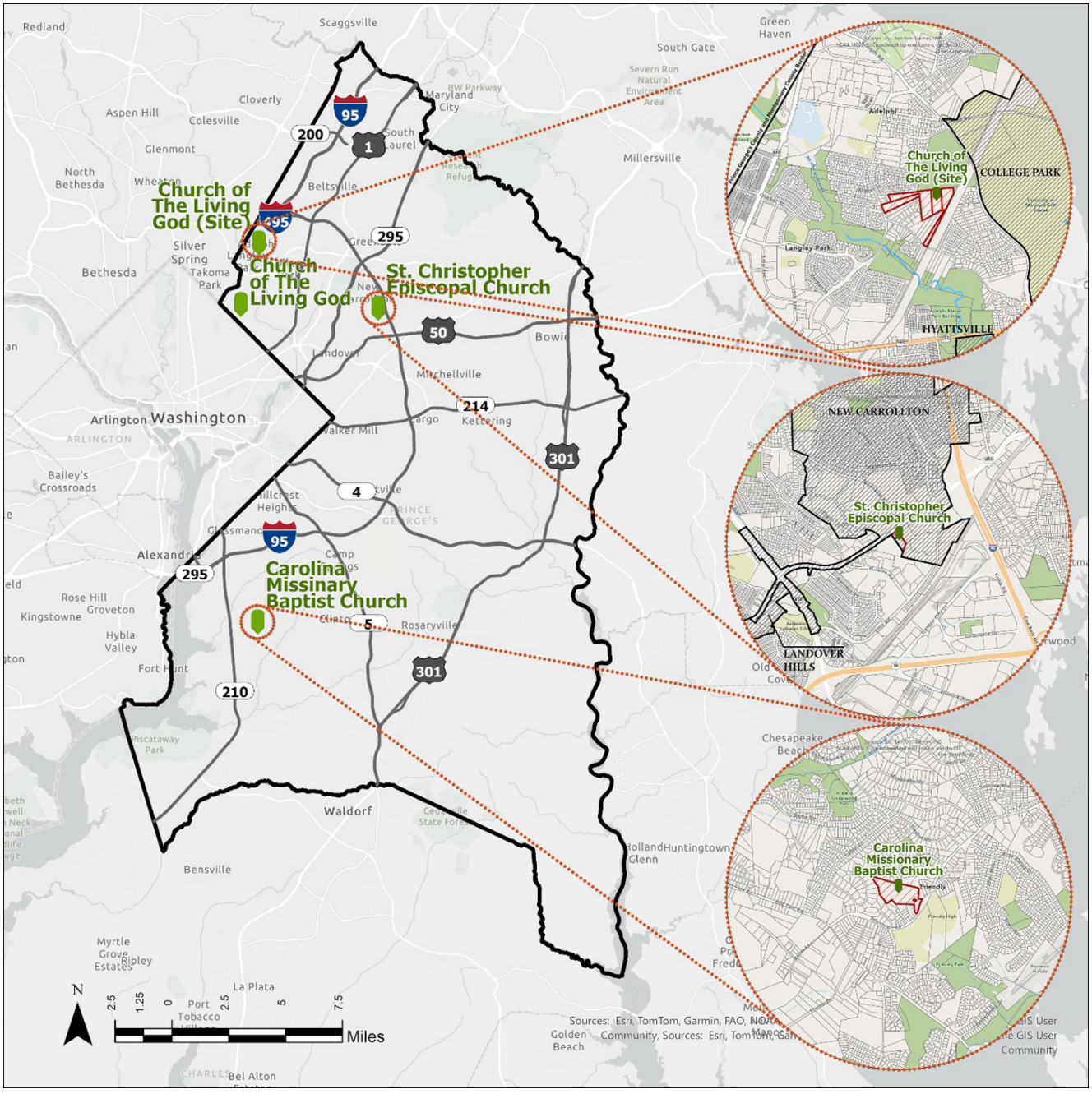


Figure 26. The location of the case studies in Prince George's County.

COUNTYWIDE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

PLAN PRINCE GEORGE'S 2035: GROWTH POLICY CONTEXT

All three case study sites are evaluated within the framework of Plan Prince George's 2035, the county's general plan, which establishes long-term land use and growth priorities. The plan designates much of the county's developed area as "Established Communities," where the policy emphasis is on reinvestment, infill development, and adaptive reuse rather than greenfield expansion. Each of the three case study sites is located within or adjacent to areas classified as Established Communities, positioning them squarely within zones where redevelopment is both anticipated and encouraged.

This designation is significant for faith-based redevelopment because it aligns adaptive reuse and infill housing projects with the county's stated growth objectives. Rather than representing exceptional or ad hoc development, reuse of religious properties in these areas is consistent with the plan's emphasis on maximizing existing infrastructure, stabilizing neighborhoods, and accommodating growth without sprawl.

PRIORITY FUNDING AREAS (PFAS)

Priority Funding Areas further refine where public investment and development incentives are most likely to be available. PFAs are state-designated areas intended to concentrate growth where infrastructure already exists, thereby reducing public costs and encouraging efficient land use. Two of the three case study sites are located within designated PFAs, which improves their eligibility for state and county funding programs and signals policy support for redevelopment.

The third site, Carolina Missionary Baptist Church, is located just outside a designated PFA. While this status limits automatic eligibility for certain programs, the literature and planning practice indicate that PFA boundaries can be amended through map adjustments, particularly where a site is contiguous with existing PFAs and aligns with growth and transit objectives. As such, PFA status represents a constraint, but not an absolute barrier, to redevelopment feasibility.

Together, the PFA locations of the three sites highlight how minor differences in designation can significantly affect access to incentives and public support, even within the same county and planning framework.

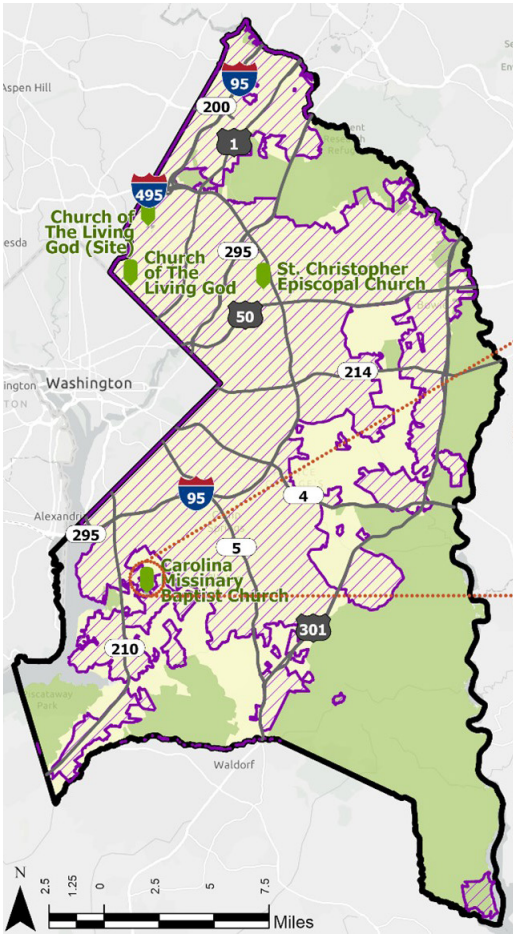


Figure 27. Prince George's County Growth Priority Funding Areas (PFA) Map.

INCENTIVE LANDSCAPE AND ELIGIBILITY

Redevelopment feasibility across the three case study sites is strongly influenced by access to federal, state, and county incentive programs. Faith-owned properties are not automatically eligible for these programs; rather, eligibility depends on a combination of location, zoning, proposed use, and compliance with program-specific requirements. As a result, understanding the incentive landscape is essential for evaluating redevelopment pathways.

At the federal level, incentives such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC), and Historic Tax Credits are commonly leveraged in faith-based redevelopment projects. These programs support affordable housing production, community-serving commercial space, and rehabilitation of historic structures, respectively. However, their applicability varies by site based on historic designation status, income targeting, and project structure.

State and local programs further shape feasibility. Maryland programs, including those administered through the Department of Housing and Community Development, prioritize projects located within Priority Funding Areas and those aligned with state housing and revitalization goals. At the county level, incentives may include property tax abatements, gap financing, or participation in place-based programs tied to transit corridors or redevelopment zones.

Current Incentive Eligibility Matrix		Carolina Missionary Baptist Church	Church of the Living God	St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
Federal Incentives	Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)	●	●	●
	Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) & Section 108	●	●	●
	Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone)	×	×	●
Maryland State Incentives	Maryland House Bill 538	●	●	●
	Priority Funding Area (PFA)	×	●	●
	Opportunity Zones	×	×	●
	Enterprise Zones (Prince George's County)	×	×	●
	National Capital Strategic Economic Development Areas (NCSEDA)	●	●	●
	Sustainable Communities	×	●	●
	Heritage Areas (Anacostia Trails Heritage Area)	●	●	●
Prince George's County	Revitalization Tax Credit Area – Residential	●	●	×
	Healthy Food Priority Area	×	×	●
	Housing Investment Trust Fund (HITF)	●	●	●

Table 3. Current Incentive Eligibility Matrix.

Rather than duplicating program descriptions, Table 3 summarizes incentive eligibility across the three sites, illustrating how location and designation affect access to funding. This matrix highlights that even within a single county, faith-based properties encounter uneven incentive landscapes, reinforcing the importance of site-specific analysis.

TRANSPORTATION CONTEXT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Transportation investment is a second major factor shaping redevelopment potential. Two of the three case study sites are located within the Purple Line corridor, placing them in proximity to a major east–west light rail investment intended to improve regional connectivity, support transit-oriented development, and catalyze reinvestment. Proximity to the Purple Line enhances access to jobs, services, and educational institutions, while also strengthening eligibility for transit-oriented development incentives.

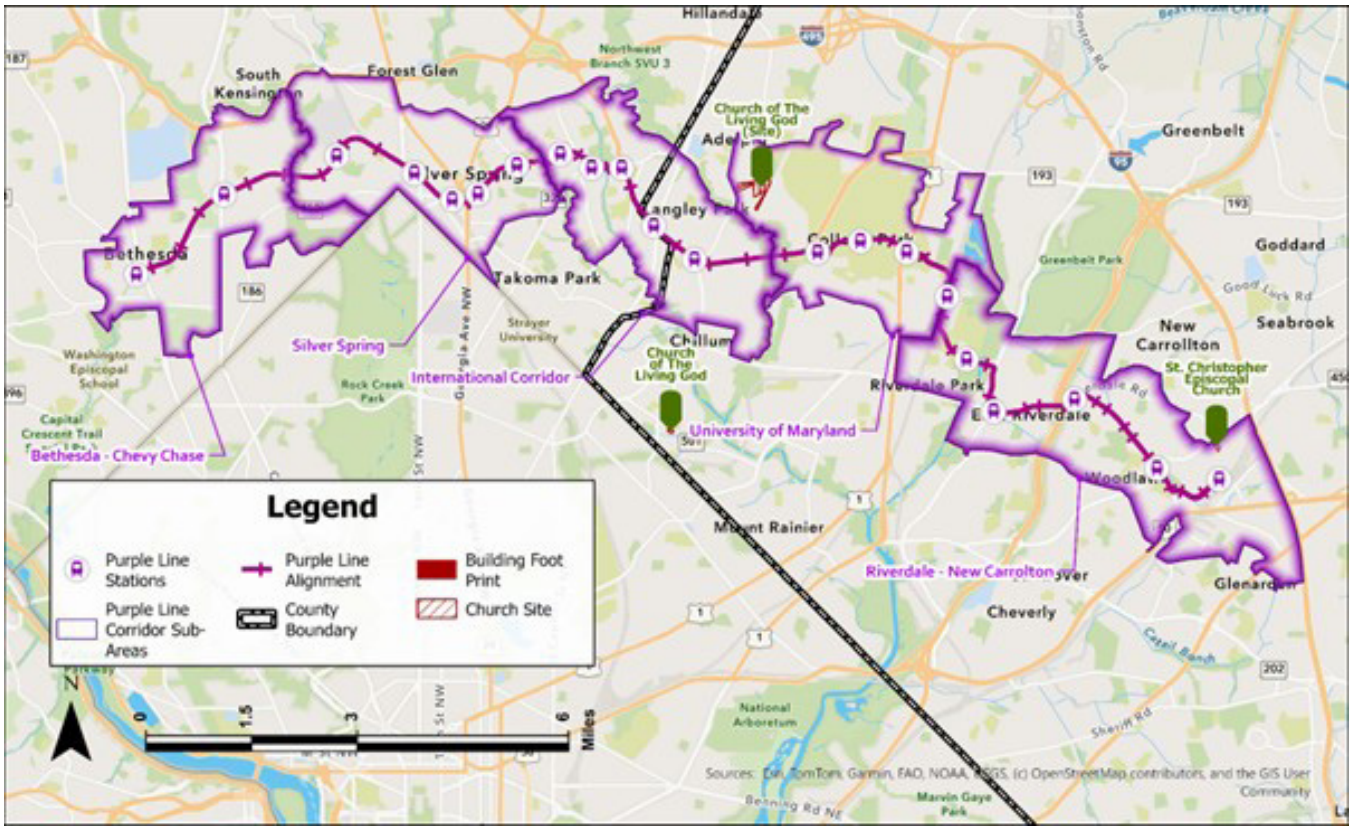


Figure 28. Location of two of the three sites in MTA Purple Line's

The third site, while not directly served by the Purple Line, is located within an area targeted for service improvements through Prince George's County's bus network redesign initiatives, including TheBus and Better Bus planning efforts. These investments aim to improve frequency, reliability, and connectivity, partially offsetting the absence of rail access. As a result, while transit access differs across the cases, none of the sites are isolated from countywide mobility improvements.

The transportation context also interacts with zoning and community concerns. Sites near high-capacity transit may face heightened neighborhood scrutiny related to density and parking, even as policy frameworks encourage compact development in these locations. Conversely, sites without rail access may encounter fewer density-related objections but face greater challenges demonstrating market feasibility (New Routes 2025 | Prince George's County, 2025; WMATA | Metro Launches Better Bus Network Redesign on June 29, Transforming Bus Service across the DMV, 2025).

CROSS-CASE COMPARISON FRAMEWORK

To synthesize these shared conditions, Table 4 provides a side-by-side comparison of the three case study sites. The table consolidates key attributes, including zoning designation, parcel size, Priority Funding Area status, transit access, regulatory constraints, and proposed redevelopment concepts. Presenting this information in a single matrix allows differences in feasibility to be assessed without repeating narrative descriptions.

The comparison underscores that redevelopment outcomes are shaped less by congregational intent than by external structural factors. Sites with favorable zoning, PFA designation, and rail proximity enjoy clearer development pathways, while others require additional regulatory strategies, such as zoning text amendments or funding-area adjustments, to achieve comparable outcomes. This framework establishes the analytical foundation for the detailed case discussions that follow.

Cross-Case Comparison	Carolina Missionary Baptist Church	Church of the Living God	St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
Location	Fort Washington, MD	Chillum, MD (worship site) Adelphi, MD (development site)	New Carrollton, MD
Neighborhood Typology	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban/Urban Edge/Mixed
Property Relationship	Development is on the main worship site	Development is located off the main worship site	Development is on the main worship site
Parcel Size (Acreage)	14.2 acres	~27.18 acres	2.66 acres
Zoning	Residential Estate (RE)	Rural Residential (RR)	Regional Transit Oriented High Intensity Edge (RTO-HE)
Assessment Price	$2,578,967	$1,386,700	$3,759,900
Congregational Size	~340 members	~1,000 members	~75 members
Weekly Attendance	~200	~350	~40
Congregation Demographics	Predominantly African American; mix of ages	Predominantly Black (African, Caribbean, African American); mix of ages	Largely West African and Caribbean; aged 45-65
Neighborhood Demographics	Predominantly African American; the 5th richest Black community in the US	Almost three-quarters are Hispanic/Latino, almost half are foreign-born; high rates of youth poverty	Majority Black; large and growing Hispanic/Latino population; lower median household income
Proposed Development	Assisting single mothers with comorbidities	Senior housing	High-density, mixed-use development
Site Constraints	Protected wetlands, Marlboro clay	Pepco utility lines, wooded areas, stream buffer/floodplain, and a lack of pedestrian infrastructure	Small size, steep drops in elevation
Transit Proximity	Limited public transit	Nearby bus lines, future Purple Line station planned within a mile	Anchored by New Carrollton transit center (Metro, MARC, buses, Amtrak, future Purple Line
Purple Line Proximity	N/A	Two stops roughly a mile away: Riggs Road and Adelphi Road-UMGC	Completely in the Purple Line's New Carrollton corridor, as well as in a TOD-designated zone by the state
Takeaways	Strong mission alignment supported by a large parcel, but development is constrained by restrictive Residential Estate (RE) zoning and environmental features.	A sizeable land asset near future transit offers long-term potential, but Rural Residential (RR) zoning and environmental features limit short-term flexibility.	Site constraints limit design options, but zoning and proximity to the New Carrollton transit center enable high-density redevelopment.

Table 4. Cross-Case Comparison.

CAROLINA MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROPERTY PROFILE

Carolina Missionary Baptist Church is a black Protestant church located in Friendly, Maryland. It was founded in its current location in 1994 and opened its doors in 2006 after several years of construction. The main building consists of the sanctuary and attached offices. The parcel is relatively large, exceeding 14 acres. It is zoned residential, as are many neighboring properties. According to the Prince George's County zoning code, the purpose of residential estate is "To provide for and encourage variation in the size, shape, and width of single-family detached residential subdivision lots, to better utilize the natural terrain". Simply put, residential estate zones are for single-family detached homes with extensive natural areas. Nearby parcels are zoned as either residential estate or rural residential, which are similar to residential estate but generally allow for smaller parcels and less space between dwellings.

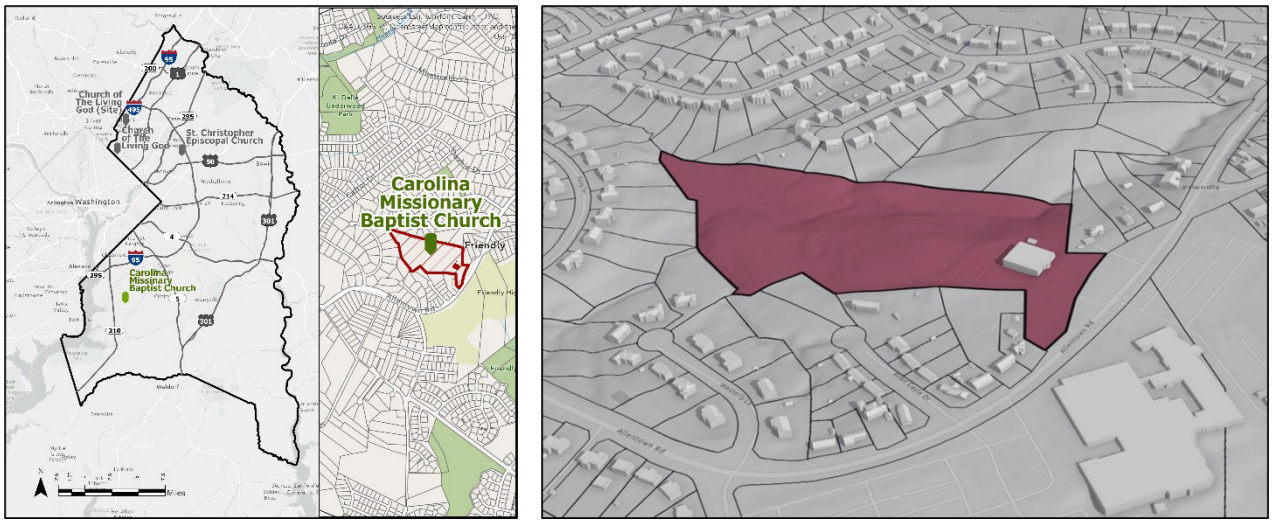


Figure 29. Location of Worship and Development Sites for Carolina Missionary Baptist Church.

Some of the land is listed as protected wetlands, particularly along the northern portion of the property, which has a stream. Additionally, there are significant deposits of Marlboro clay. Marlboro clay is known to cause slope failures and to hinder development efforts. The property itself is labeled as institutional - church land use, in contrast to the institutional land use across the street with Friendly High School, and in sharp contrast with the surrounding residential - single-family land uses.

Property Profile	
Address	9901 Allentown Road, Friendly, MD
Building Size	12,000 Square Feet
Parcel Size	14.2 Acres
Year Built	2006
Zoning	RE (Residential Estate)
Sale Price	$375,000 (1994)
Assessment Price	$2,578,967 (2025)

Table 5. Tax Parcel Information for Carolina Church.
Source: PG County Tax Records (2025)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Carolina Church was founded in 1940, but did not have its own building until 1952, using homes and other churches in the interim. It was founded by 13 South Carolinians who moved to Washington, D.C. The congregation has largely followed the church as it has evolved through the decades, culminating in its current location in Fort Washington. The church undertakes several missions, including providing housing assistance and engaging in foreign missionary work. It is also currently assisting federal workers during the government shutdown. In addition to charitable services, the church rents the sanctuary hall for events.

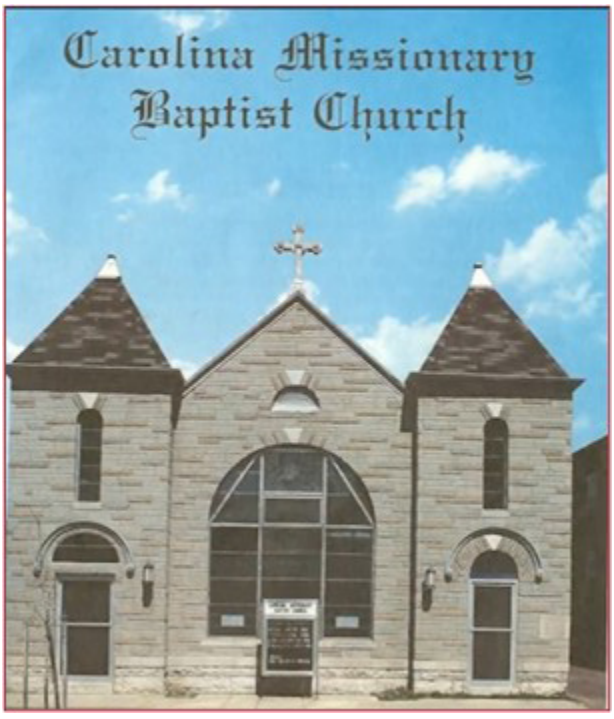


Figure 30. Original Carolina Church Site.

Source: Carolina Church (unknown date).

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Fort Washington, like the rest of Prince George's County, is predominantly African American, the 5th-richest Black community in the United States. It is a highly suburban area, with most land zoned for single-family homes and a highly car-centric infrastructure. There is a Prince George's County TheBus line nearby the church, but it operates intermittently and does not run on Sundays. For most of its history, the area has been predominantly rural, with only the growth of D.C.'s suburbs in the 1950s and 60s resulting in increased density.

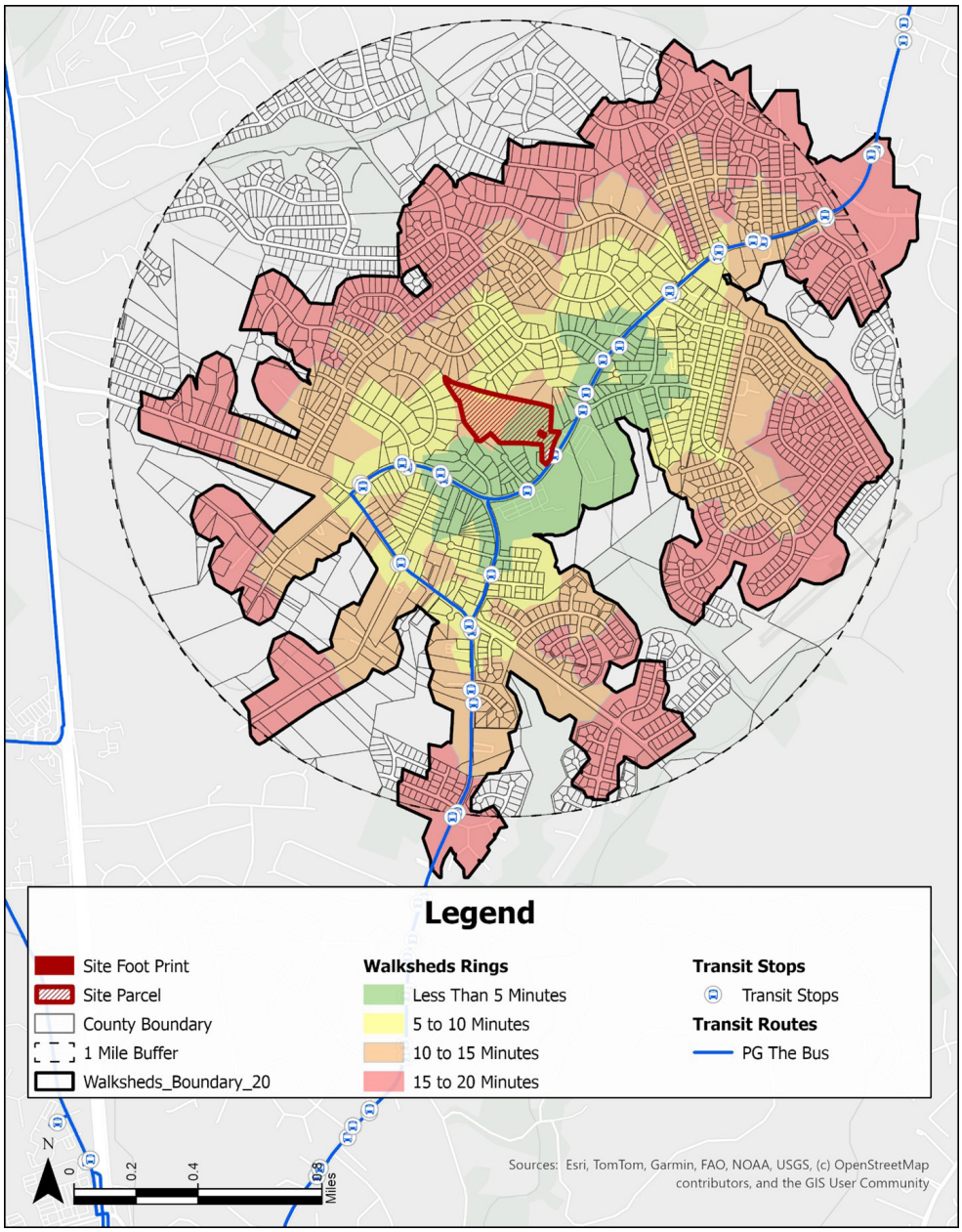


Figure 31. Transit Stops and Routes within the 20-minute walkshed of the study area.

PEOPLE

Our case study group conducted a site visit as part of our initial analysis. Its goal was to gain an impression of the congregation and to obtain more information from church leadership regarding their goals for the team's collaboration. The church has about 340 members, with about 200 attending weekly, both online and in person. The congregation's age demographics are relatively healthy compared to other churches, with a balanced age distribution and a strong younger demographic.



Figure 32. Congregants Worshipping at Carolina Church.

Source: Carolina Church (2025)

From the church, the case study team identified Head Pastor Moore and their COO, Bessie Hayes. Anthony Moore has led the church since 1987 and selected 9901 Allentown Road as the site for its current church. He holds a Master of Theology and sits on the boards of several faith-based organizations in addition to his duties as head pastor. The project that Carolina Church seeks the team's assistance with is driven by its passion for supporting single mothers with comorbidities. Bessie Hayes is an associate pastor, but her primary role is acting as the Chief Operating Officer for Carolina Church, ensuring the church continues to run smoothly. She is also a key member of the Harambee Community Development Corporation, which was established to advance its project. Lastly, there is Edward Burroughs, III, the representative for District 8 of Prince George's County, who also serves as chairman of the County Council. He has been amenable to the project, but his primary focus has been on education to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline and increase graduation rates.



Figure 33. Pastor Anthony Moore.



Figure 34. COO Bessie Hayes.



Figure 35. District 8 Councilman Edward Burroughs III.

An interlocutor analysis has been complex due to the site's rural, decentralized nature and its surrounding area. Therefore, the team's process has mainly focused on church and political leadership.

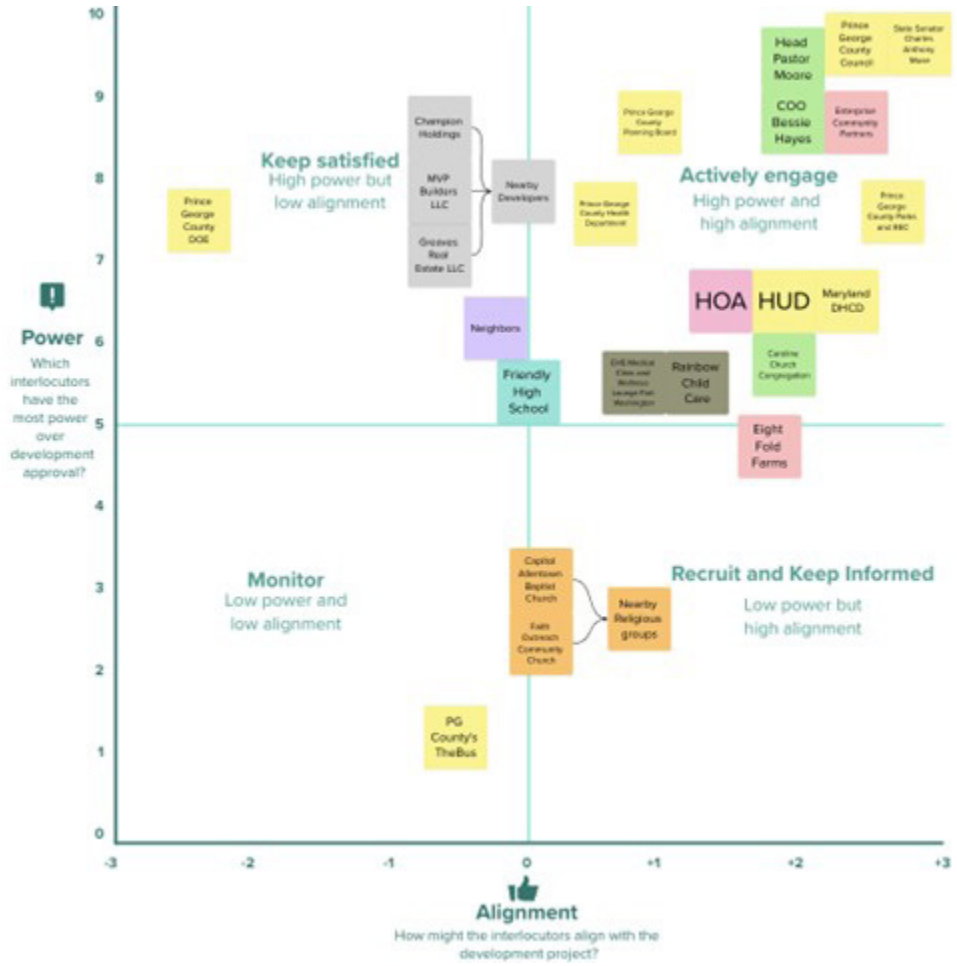


Figure 36. Carolina Church Interlocutor Analysis.

PLACE

This location presents both opportunities and challenges for the church: it's surrounded by stable residential uses, but the current zoning limits the types of new development that can occur on-site.

The property features a mid-20th-century main sanctuary, a fellowship hall, and a large surface parking lot with open green spaces along the site's rear and side areas. The structure itself is in fair condition, but portions of the land remain underutilized for most of the week. Due to its size, accessibility, and location along a local collector road, the site is suitable for small-scale redevelopment or a community-serving addition that complements the existing sanctuary.

The area has a quiet, suburban character typical of this part of Prince George's County, characterized by mostly single-family homes, wide roads, and large spaces between buildings. While the peaceful environment provides the church with privacy and comfort, it also makes the site less accessible to other community resources. Public transit is limited, and most people rely on their cars to get around.

Overall, the place of Carolina Church tells a story of peace, space, and potential. It's a site rooted in community and history but open to new possibilities. With thoughtful planning and the right partnerships, it can become more than a worship center; it can grow into a community hub that connects faith, housing, and hope.



Figure 37. Back of Current Development for Carolina Church.



Figure 38. Asset Map of Carolina Church.

PLANS AND POLICIES

At the federal level, the primary policy instrument is the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program, which extends a 20% rehabilitation tax credit to income-producing certified historic properties. This program incentivizes the preservation of significant architectural features while encouraging economic revitalization through adaptive reuse. Compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation is mandatory to qualify for these credits, making early coordination with preservation experts critical.

Additionally, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sets accessibility standards. While religious facilities often enjoy certain exemptions, these are conditional: projects that are open to the public or receive federal funds must comply with the 2010 ADA Standards, which affect the design and cost of accessibility retrofits.

At the state level, policies complement federal incentives and impose specific standards. The Maryland Historic Revitalization Tax Credit Program, administered by the Maryland Historical Trust, can be layered with federal credits to reduce rehabilitation expenses. Concurrently, the Maryland Building Performance Standards (MBPS) enforce contemporary building and fire safety codes, integrating the International Building Code (IBC) and Maryland's accessibility regulations. These state standards impact necessary structural upgrades, fire egress, and disability accommodations, presenting both technical and financial considerations. Environmental stewardship is mandated by Maryland's stormwater management regulations, with particular attention to impervious surfaces and runoff quality, requiring redevelopment projects to implement mitigation strategies consistent with the Maryland Stormwater Design Manual.

Prince George's County's local regulatory environment adds layers of review and opportunities. Subtitle 27 of the county zoning ordinance specifies permissible land uses, setbacks, development intensities, and parking requirements. Specific provisions for churches include allowances for reduced parking minimums and established pathways for waivers or notable exceptions. The extent to which the site's current zoning supports proposed adaptive uses, such as community centers or affordable housing, remains to be confirmed. Overlay zones, including historic district designations and environmental conservation areas, introduce additional layers of compliance. Early engagement with county planning and permitting officials is recommended to clarify administrative procedures, necessary approvals, and potential exceptions, thereby reducing uncertainty and streamlining the process.

Graphical integration of this analysis would include layered zoning and historic maps, site photographs, and infographics detailing timelines and sequential permitting steps. For example, a visual overlay could illustrate the relationship between zoning districts, historic overlays, and environmental constraints. At the same time, timeline diagrams could delineate critical milestones for tax credit applications and permit reviews.

Taken together, the federal, state, and local regulatory frameworks present both constraints, such as stringent preservation standards, accessibility requirements, and environmental regulations, and powerful financial incentives and procedural flexibilities. Capitalizing on these opportunities requires proactive, informed navigation and early coordination among technical, regulatory, and community stakeholders to ensure the project's successful adaptive reuse.

DELIVERABLES AND OBJECTIVES

Carolina Missionary Baptist Church visited the studio with a project well underway. The church is proposing The House, a 30-unit permanent supportive housing development serving single mothers with comorbidities such as HIV who are experiencing chronic homelessness. At this time, the church has completed significant groundwork and considers the project both mission-aligned and feasible.

Rather than seeking confirmation on whether the project should proceed, the church asked the studio class to help address two key areas necessary for moving the project forward: long-term operational funding and community engagement. Church leadership expressed interest in understanding how similar projects sustain financial viability over time and in strengthening relationships with nearby residents, stakeholders, and decision-makers as development progresses.

Specifically, the church asked the studio to:

- ●Review the current proposal to identify opportunities to strengthen funding competitiveness
- ●Explore potential revenue streams and partnerships that could support long-term operations
- ●Develop a community engagement strategy to build trust and local support
- ●Offer planning-based recommendations that could improve the project's approval process and public perception

CURRENT PROJECT PROPOSAL

Carolina Missionary Baptist Church's current project proposal is to build a 30-unit apartment building specifically for single mothers with HIV/AIDS (Figure 39). The development, named "The House", would have permanent support staff and services to assist both the mothers and their children. The building itself would be located behind the existing church and would require additional parking and an extension of their existing access road (Figure 40).



Figure 39. Rendering of "The House".

Source: Carolina Church (2025).



Figure 40. Site Design for "The House".

Source: Carolina Church (2025).

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK COMPLETED

In response, the group evaluated the church's existing proposal to strengthen it in accordance with their suggested guidelines. The analysis focused on identifying practical ways to better position the project to attract funding, navigate regulatory processes, and engage the surrounding community more effectively.

Work included:

- Reviewing zoning, land use, and plan compatibility to clarify regulatory pathways
- Analyzing site conditions, circulation, access, and environmental constraints that could affect cost and constructability
- Assessing transit access and nearby amenities to better understand resident needs and daily mobility
- Examining funding structures and comparable supportive housing projects to better understand long-term operational sustainability
- Developing targeted recommendations, along with enhanced and alternative concepts, to illustrate how programmatic or design adjustments could improve financial resilience
- Outlining community engagement approaches tailored to the site's context and surrounding neighborhoods.
- This work aims to support the church in advancing a project to which it is committed, while identifying strategies to help ensure that the development is both financially sustainable and well integrated into the surrounding community.

NEED

The need for this project is high, not just in Prince George's County but across Maryland. According to the National Center for Smart Growth's 2025 Housing Report, approximately 46% of renters in Maryland are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than one-third of their take-home pay on housing. In addition, there is a significant gap in the number of poorer individuals and lower-priced homes, over 130,000. This leaves a substantial gap that smaller organizations like Carolina Church may be able to address.

MISSION COMPATIBILITY

There is no explicit mission statement on Carolina Church's website, nor did the group receive one from interviews. The group gained some insight from their current mission work. They conduct several missions, both domestically and abroad, but their domestic missions focus on assisting individuals in need of housing assistance. As such, this project aligns with this mission.

ZONING COMPATIBILITY

The current zoning presents an obstacle for this project. The parcel is currently zoned R-E (residential estate). This zoning is implemented "To provide for and encourage variation in the size, shape, and width of single-family detached residential subdivision lots, to better utilize the natural terrain; To facilitate the planning of single-family residential developments with large lots and dwellings of various sizes and styles; To encourage the preservation of trees and open spaces to create an estate-like atmosphere; and To prevent soil erosion and stream valley flooding." (Prince George's County, 2022). While a typical apartment complex would require an exemption or a zoning change, Carolina Church has instead defined the project as a group residential facility. This use is permitted on a residential estate and would not require an exemption.

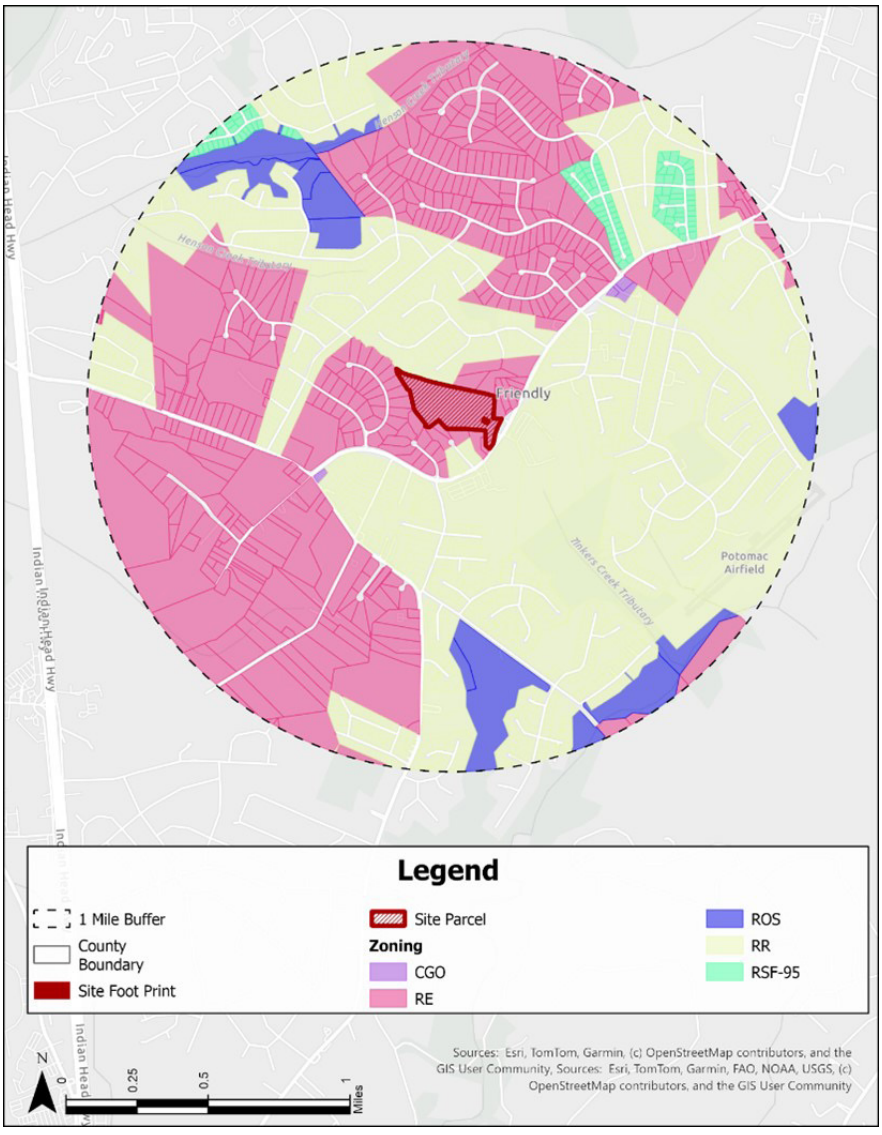


Figure 41. Zoning Surrounding Carolina Church.

PLAN COMPATIBILITY

The current plan for this region of Prince George's County is the 2006 Approved Henson Creek-South Potomac Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment. This plan focuses on increasing density in the National Harbor area, which Carolina Church does not fall within. Other provisions within the plan likewise do not affect the current development proposal. The proposal is supported by other statewide plans, such as Housing Opportunity for All, the FY 2026–2030 Consolidated Plan, and Maryland's Housing First model.

TRANSIT ACCESS

This proposal does little to address the inadequate transportation access in Friendly. It is a very car-centric suburban environment. While there are some sidewalks along Allentown Road, they do not extend into the neighboring streets or toward any meaningful services. There is a Prince George's County TheBus line that runs along Allentown Road, but it is infrequent and does not run on Sundays. Because the proposal includes plans to build a parking lot and makes no plans to add other transit services, this plan performs poorly with respect to transit access.

AMENITIES ACCESS

Amenities are a complex metric for evaluating this proposal. Given the current car-centric infrastructure, the nearest commercial area is approximately 5 minutes away. However, it is the only grocery store within walking distance, and there are few other amenities aside from fast food. As for other amenities, such as parks, the location does much better. There are several nearby green spaces and other churches that could be of assistance, depending on the religious affiliation of potential residents.

SITE DESIGN ANALYSIS

The group found several issues with the current site design. We present the group's recommendations for addressing them in the next section. Overall, the site has limited access, with only one road providing entry and exit. The site plan does not account for or utilize the existing slopes. And the courtyard planned on the front of the building is underutilized and barren.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The market analysis for their project has both advantages and drawbacks. The location is relatively good. It's a large property in a safe, stable neighborhood. This provides room for future expansion and likely enables the provision of better services for its residents. That said, the property has steep slopes, Marlboro clay, and a protected wetland, which may constrain future development. Market trends are highly favorable. There is a continuing need for affordable or supportive housing in Maryland and in Prince George's County. There are relatively few properties that provide the specific services Carolina Church seeks. This does limit their

competition, but also raises the question of whether they are being too specific in their client base. Lastly, their long-term viability. While it is likely to continue securing grants and loans specifically targeted to support supportive housing, the group is unsure whether it will be able to meet its long-term needs. This is compounded by the fact that they provide expensive services to their residents while charging them below-market rent.

Factor	Evidence
Location **Favorability** ✓ ✓ ✓	The project sits on a 18-acre church property right across from Friendly High School. It's a stable, familiar neighborhood, and the site gives us plenty of room to design a supportive and comfortable community.
Factor	Evidence
Market Trends **Favorability** ✓ ✓ ✓	Prince George's County has rising housing need and increasing homelessness. Strong demand for supportive housing for vulnerable families, aligned with County and State priorities.
Factor	Evidence
Comparable Properties **Favorability** ✓ ✓	Few supportive housing projects exist for women with children and HIV/AIDS in the county. Low competition shows both strong demand and a clear service gap.
Factor	Evidence
ROI and Cash Flow Potential **Favorability** ✓ ✓	The demand for this type of housing is strong and expected to increase. Grants and loans based on this housing will likely increase as well. The church does not have strong plans for long-term sustainability.

Table 6. Carolina Church Market Analysis.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

Overall, based on the information provided by Carolina Church, the group found its financial feasibility severely lacking. Although they are relatively close to reaching their construction goal, with a current gap of approximately half a million dollars, the group remains uncertain about its long-term viability. If every resident pays little to no rent, the church will have to pay for maintenance either from its own coffers or by seeking additional grants and loans. Given that they have yet to meet their funding goals, they will likely pursue additional revenue streams to construct and maintain the property.

COMPARABLE PROPERTIES

Seneca Heights Apartments is an apartment complex in Montgomery County that provides permanent supportive housing to 40 formerly homeless adults and 17 families with children. It was renovated from a former hotel. It offers several on-site services, primarily aimed at preventing residents from relapsing into homelessness.

MIDTERM EVENT FEEDBACK

During the midterm engagement event, we designed an interactive activity to collect a snapshot of the attendees' (congregants and non-congregants) comments. Based on the synthesis of information we collected during this activity and our analysis, we concluded the following suggestions.

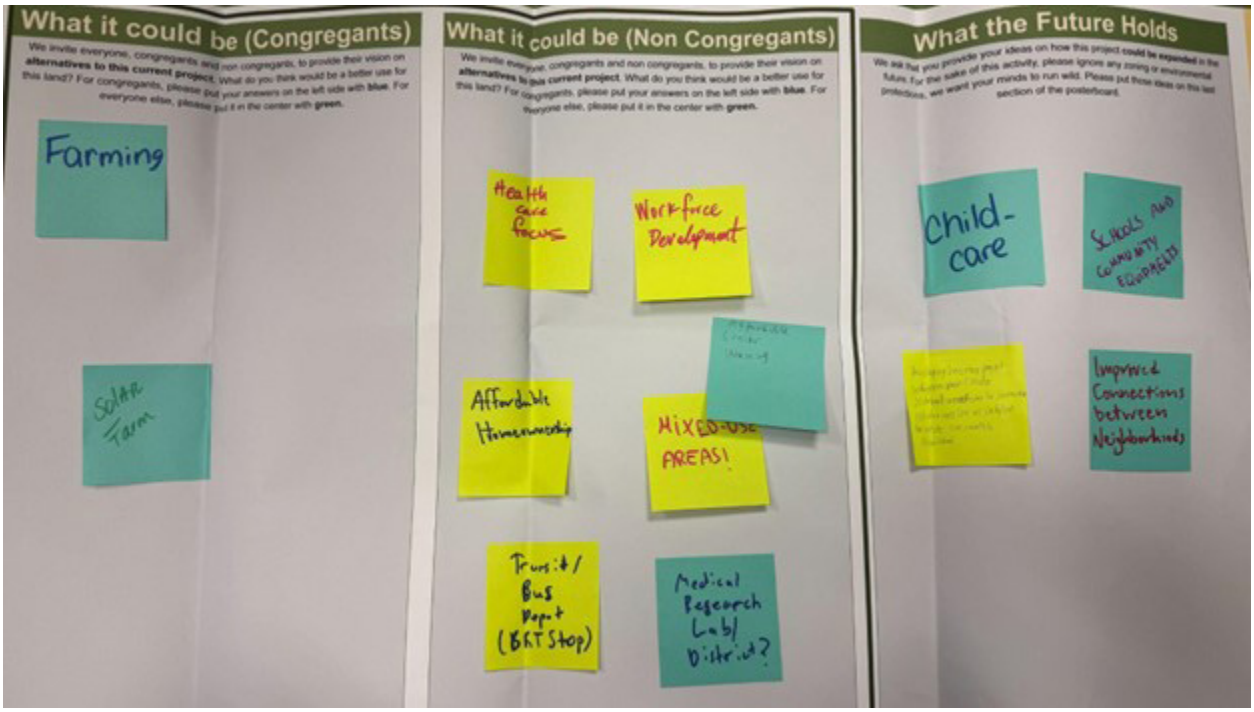


Figure 42. Midterm Presentation Community Feedback.

Implementation of the church's vision could be simple, but its lack of funding shows the difficulties in carrying it out. Fortunately, our research, analysis, and the attendees' comments shed light on possible responses to these challenges, such as including a solar farm to secure additional grants or to pursue tax credits. Another avenue the church is currently exploring is to include farmland to secure an urban gardening grant.

Moreover, the team's suggestion for the church to achieve both financial stability and increased attendance is to expand the facility's childcare, educational, and workforce development offerings. According to current plans, the building has rooms designated for these purposes, but they are currently allocated solely for tenant use. If the church expands its use and opens to the public, this could serve as an additional revenue source. It could also help make Carolina Church more of a community center for Friendly.

Lastly, in keeping with the church's original vision, the team proposes that specific units in the building be designated for affordable housing or market-rate rentals. Either would help them in securing funding. If used for affordable housing, it would free up funds and make it easier for them to meet their PFA goal. If they opened them at market rate, it would help generate the revenue needed to maintain the facility.

ENHANCED PROPOSAL

The enhanced proposal includes several changes that the group recommends. These changes would improve the overall proposal and facilitate approval by both nearby residents and county planners.

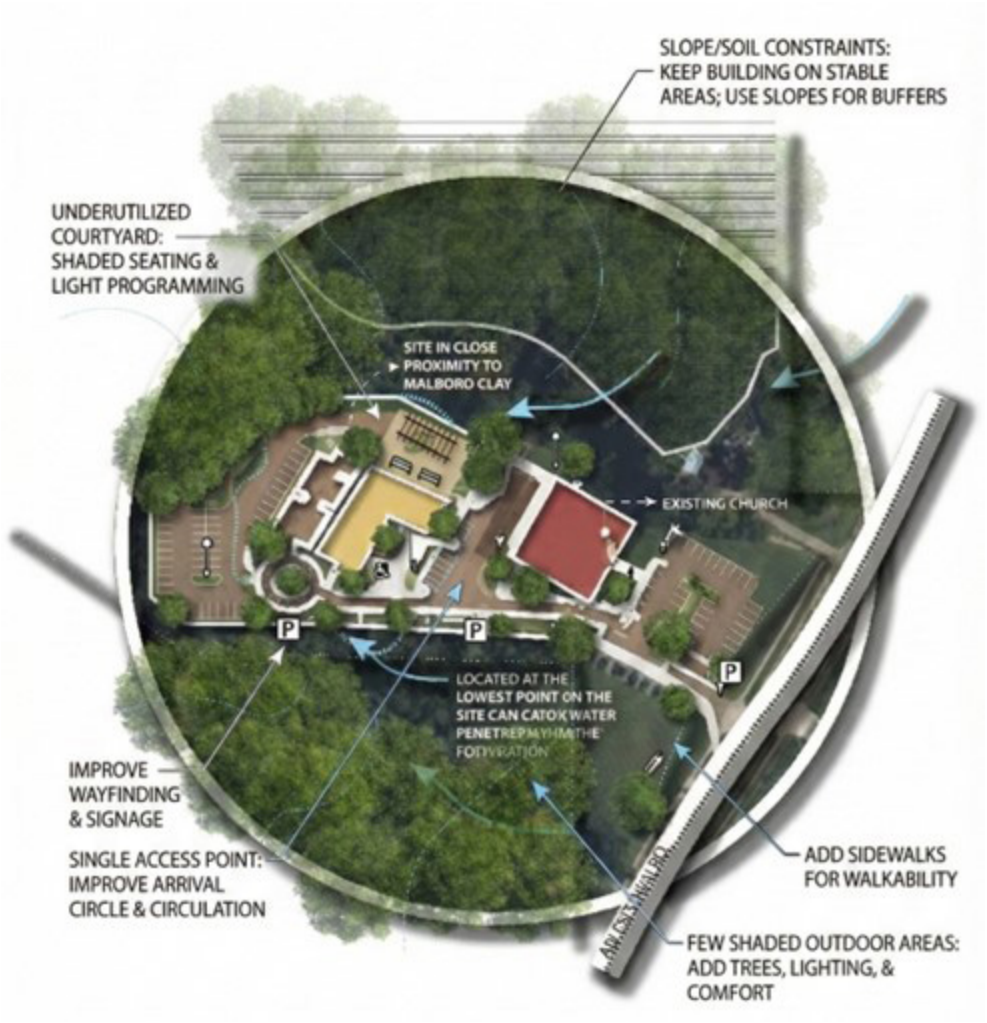


Figure 43. Enhanced Proposal.

The first issue the group recognized is the underutilized courtyard in front of the building. Given such an open space, it would be a significant waste if it went largely unused, which the group would expect if it were left in its open state. The changes include adding trees and other shaded areas, perhaps through canopies. It would also involve adding seating to encourage use of the area and to enable the courtyard to be used for programs.

The next major issue the group found was the single access point at the front of the property. As development extends further to the rear, it will create difficulties for emergency services in accessing the site and for general traffic to pass. The recommended changes would improve circulation on the property by expanding the rotary circle and adding more sidewalks and other walkable areas.

The next issue is the lack of connectivity to the current sidewalks in Allentown. While it is lacking, Carolina Church has an opportunity to encourage further expansion by making it easier for residents to walk safely from The House to the road.

Next is the issue the group saw with signage. While the church does have signage of the current property and it does advertise the fact that it rents out its sanctuary, there do not appear to be plans to advertise The House. Adding signage to the front would make it easier to promote the new services and make it more explicit to the surrounding community about the church's mission. They could also install signage to assist drivers with pathfinding within the latest development.

Lastly, the group identified environmental issues. The group was already aware of the problem posed by Marlboro that impedes further expansion, and it has already dashed any plans for underground parking. Further investigation revealed potential issues attributable to the slopes and the soil. North of the planned development, there is a patch of Marlboro clay and additional slope; the group recommends that they keep this in mind and prepare to leave it as a permanent edge. The south side of the current and future development is an existing slope that could lead to drainage issues, especially if additional parking is added and gravel is replaced with pavement in some existing parking areas. The group recommends installing additional drainage on this side to prevent future flooding.

While these changes would continue to increase the project's overall costs, the group believes they are relatively inexpensive compared with current construction costs. Unfortunately, as with the current proposal, feedback during the final event was primarily focused on the alternative proposal, so that nothing could be reported from the event regarding the enhancements.

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL

The alternative proposal builds on the church's original version of The House by introducing a more financially resilient, community-integrated development model. Rather than relying exclusively on permanent supportive housing, the alternative employs a mixed-use approach that integrates it with affordable housing units, workforce development, and retail space. This approach maintains the project's mission to serve highly vulnerable populations while also creating opportunities for diversified revenue, expanded funding eligibility, and stronger integration with the surrounding community. The alternative proposal directly addresses concerns raised during the analysis and feedback regarding long-term operational sustainability and community perception.



Figure 44. Alternative Proposal Rendering.

JUSTIFICATION

While the current proposal is strongly mission-driven, it relies heavily on subsidies and grants to cover both construction and long-term operating costs. This creates a financial risk, particularly given the intensive services required by the target population and the limited ability to generate ongoing revenue. The alternative proposal is justified as a means of addressing these challenges without abandoning the church's core goals.

By introducing affordable housing units and workforce-oriented programming, the alternative expands the project's revenue base, improves long-term financial stability, and increases competitiveness for a broader range of public and philanthropic funding sources. In addition, the inclusion of community-facing uses helps reposition the development as a shared asset rather than a single-purpose facility, improving its appeal to nearby residents, planners, and elected officials.

DESCRIPTION

Under the alternative proposal, the total unit count is 24, with 18 remaining as permanent supportive housing and 6 converted to affordable units. The permanent supportive housing units would continue in their current service mission, while the affordable housing units would be reserved for low-income households that are currently cost-burdened. This mixed-unit approach preserves the project's original mission while allowing for a more balanced financial and operational structure.



Figure 45. Second and Third Floor Alternative Proposal.

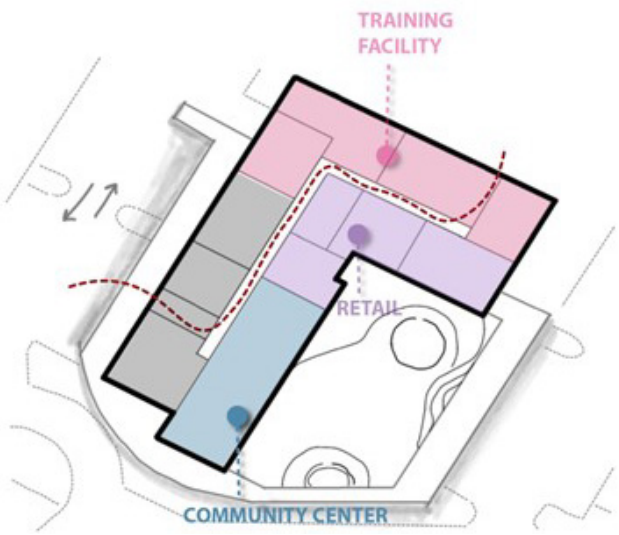


Figure 46. Alternative Proposal's First Floor.

The alternative proposal includes workforce development and retail space located on the building's ground floor. These spaces would be used for job training, education, health and wellness programming, and partnerships with nonprofit or community organizations. An urban agriculture component is also incorporated to support food access, workforce opportunities, and educational programming. The retail space would provide additional job training and further integrate the project into the surrounding community by serving as a local hub. Together, these features support resident self-sufficiency, reduce social isolation, and strengthen the project's role as a community hub rather than a standalone residential facility.

SITE DESIGN

The overall building form and site layout remain consistent with the conceptual plans presented in the final presentation. The alternative proposal enhances the use of shared spaces, particularly the central courtyard, by supporting programming, shaded seating, and flexible outdoor use. Ground-floor design modifications accommodate workforce and community-oriented uses without requiring significant changes to the building footprint. These design adjustments improve functionality while remaining sensitive to site constraints such as slope and soil conditions.

The site's accessibility under the alternative proposal remains generally consistent with the current plan. Vehicular access, parking, and internal circulation are retained, with opportunities for improved pedestrian connections within the site. While the surrounding area remains largely car-oriented, the inclusion of on-site services, employment opportunities, and programming reduces residents' need for frequent off-site travel, particularly for daily needs.

The alternative proposal remains largely consistent with existing zoning and land-use policies, as group residential facilities and related institutional uses are permitted under the current zoning designation. However, the introduction of additional mixed-use or workforce-oriented components may require further review, exemptions, or approvals depending on final program details. From a planning perspective, the alternative aligns with county and state goals related to affordable housing, housing stability, and community-serving development. While zoning considerations may require additional coordination, the broader policy context supports the alternative proposal's intent and outcomes.



Figure 47. Wide Alternative Proposal Rendering.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

ALTERNATIVE REVENUE STREAMS

One of the central challenges identified in the current proposal is long-term operational sustainability. While the project has made substantial progress toward closing its construction financing gap, its reliance on deeply subsidized permanent supportive housing units creates ongoing financial vulnerability, particularly in covering operations, maintenance, and supportive services. The alternative proposal strengthens the project's financial position by introducing diversified, complementary revenue streams that remain aligned with the church's mission, thereby reducing dependence on a single funding source.

In addition to rental and programmatic income, the alternative proposal introduces clearly identifiable public funding and cost-offsetting mechanisms that are not fully accessible under the current proposal. These include Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to support community-serving and workforce development components, as well as Maryland Energy Administration programs that provide grants and low-interest financing for energy-efficiency, electrification, and renewable-energy improvements in nonprofit and multifamily buildings. The project may also be eligible for the Jane E. Lawton Conservation Loan Program, which offers below-market financing for energy upgrades. Together, these funding sources reduce long-term operating costs and strengthen the project's overall financial sustainability without increasing reliance on resident rents.

MIXED-INCOME HOUSING REVENUE

Under the alternative proposal, a portion of the 30 units would be designated as affordable housing rather than exclusively permanent supportive housing. Introducing affordable units generates a predictable rental income stream while still serving low-income households and maintaining alignment with county and state housing priorities. Based on conservative assumptions, affordable units renting for approximately $1,100-$1,400 per month could generate an estimated $237,600 annually, thereby helping to offset operating costs and stabilize long-term cash flow. At the same time, supportive housing units would continue to leverage vouchers and service-based funding, preserving the project's core mission of serving chronically homeless mothers with co-morbid health conditions.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAMMATIC SPACE

The alternative proposal also introduces workforce development and programmatic uses, including training, education, and employment-oriented spaces on the ground floor. These spaces may be leased to nonprofit partners, service providers, or community organizations, generating modest but consistent non-residential income. Estimated revenues from program space rentals and service partnerships range from approximately $30,000 to $60,000, depending on tenant mix and program intensity. In addition to generating revenue, these uses directly support resident self-sufficiency and strengthen the project's position as a community asset rather than a standalone housing development.

URBAN AGRICULTURE AND ANCILLARY INCOME

The proposed urban agriculture component serves multiple purposes, including addressing food insecurity, creating employment opportunities, and generating modest supplemental income. While not intended to be a primary revenue source, produce sales, programming, and educational activities could generate an estimated $5,000 to $15,000 annually. More importantly, the agricultural component strengthens grant competitiveness by demonstrating integrated health, food access, and workforce outcomes.

EXPANDED GRANT AND LOAN ELIGIBILITY

Adopting the alternative proposal significantly expands the range of grants and loan programs for which the project may be competitive. As a nonprofit development, the project would be well-positioned to pursue federal, state, county, and philanthropic funding sources that support affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, and community-serving uses. These include housing and homelessness assistance programs, state and county housing trust funds, Community Development Block Grants, and mission-aligned philanthropic funding. The mixed-income and program-integrated model also improves competitiveness for low-interest loans and predevelopment financing from community development financial institutions and similar partners.

In addition, pursuing Priority Funding Area designation would unlock access to state-linked housing, infrastructure, and revitalization funding programs, further strengthening the project's financial feasibility and long-term sustainability.

OVERALL FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Taken together, these alternative revenue streams shift the project from a highly subsidy-dependent model to one that is more financially diversified and more resilient over time. Conservative estimates suggest combined annual revenues of approximately $540,000 to $610,000, compared with projected operating costs of roughly $420,000 to $480,000 per year. This approach substantially improves long-term solvency while preserving the project's mission-driven focus and strengthening its appeal to funders, lenders, and public agencies.

OTHER COMPARABLE PROPERTIES

We reviewed several comparable developments to better understand how mixed-income and community-serving housing models have been implemented in other contexts. While none of these projects exactly replicate the scale or program of the proposed alternative, they provide applicable precedents for integrating housing with supportive services, education, and public-facing amenities.

ANCHOR PLACE

Anchor Place, located in Long Beach, California, is a permanent supportive housing development serving families experiencing homelessness. The project combines residential units with on-site supportive services, childcare facilities, and educational programming. Rather than functioning as an isolated residential facility, Anchor Place is designed to support family stability and long-term success through integrated services. This precedent demonstrates how housing developments can incorporate education- and service-oriented spaces while maintaining a residential character.



Figure 48. Anchor Place.

Source: The Architects Collective (2017).

SOJOURNER PLACE AT PARK

Sojourner Place at Park, in Baltimore, Maryland, is a supportive housing development serving women and families transitioning out of homelessness. The project integrates housing with case management services, community rooms, and health-related programming. It illustrates how nonprofit-led developments can pair affordable housing with supportive services while remaining financially viable. This example is relevant to proposals that seek to combine housing with workforce development and wellness-focused amenities.



Figure 49. Sojourner Place at Park.

Source: Episcopal Housing Corporation (2024)

3368 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MA

3368 Washington Street, located in Boston, Massachusetts, is a mixed-use development that combines affordable housing with community-serving ground-floor uses. The inclusion of flexible program and commercial space allows the development to generate supplemental revenue while also enhancing neighborhood integration. This project demonstrates how limited non-residential space can strengthen both financial sustainability and community connectivity when thoughtfully incorporated into a residential development.

Taken together, these comparable properties indicate that housing developments that integrate residential uses with services, education, and community-oriented spaces are both feasible and increasingly common. They support the viability of alternative models that move beyond single-purpose housing toward more resilient, multi-functional developments.

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Factor	Current Proposal	Alternative Proposal
Target Population	High need, single focus	Multiple vulnerable groups
Zoning	Permitted by right	Requires exemption or zoning change
Community Impact	Narrow	Broader
Financial Sustainability	High ongoing costs	Self-sufficient model
Start-up Costs	Subsidy-dependent	82% cost recovery
Upfront Costs	$12-15M	$18-22M

Table 7. Carolina Church Proposals Comparison.

We examined both proposals across multiple factors, with particular attention to the development's financial viability and its appeal to local planners and politicians. These factors were the target population, zoning, financial sustainability, start-up costs, community impact, and upfront costs. (Table 7).

Overall, the group found that the alternative proposal performs better on all factors except up-front costs and zoning. The current proposal is overly narrow in its focus on whom it seeks to serve. Opening it up as a mixed-use development would serve other individuals experiencing poverty who do not meet the current criteria, as well as nearby residents. The current zoning permits group residential facilities, which is what Carolina Church intends to designate for its development. For the alternative to be approved, it would require an exemption or a zoning change. The impact on the nearby community would be substantially greater, as the current proposal

does not integrate with the area. The group found that a mixed-use model would significantly improve overall financial sustainability by providing additional revenue streams to cover maintenance and operating costs. This results in start-up costs, with the current development unable to fully account for its ongoing funding needs, whereas a mixed-use development would. The property would be more expensive to construct as a mixed-use development than under their current plan.

One recommendation for Carolina Church is to consider this alternative proposal. Based on feedback from the final event, several of the points and assumptions the group had when planning the alternative had changed or were not addressed in conversations with Carolina Church. As such, it does not work as a perfect model for what they could do moving forward. It covers one of the main issues they had presented to us, their lack of funding, while also making the project more enticing to the surrounding community, local planners, and politicians.

FINAL EVENT FEEDBACK AND NEXT STEPS

FEEDBACK FROM FINAL EVENT

At the final event, participants reviewed the alternative proposal and shared feedback on what worked well and what could be improved. Overall, feedback on the alternative proposal was positive. Participants described the project as ambitious and well-planned, and several noted that the education-focused programming was a good idea.

Feedback from the Final Event on the Alternative Proposal	
What Works Well	**What Needs Improvement**
Ambitious proposal	The church needs to communicate more clearly
Strong from a planning standpoint	The feasibility section should better explain the community services
Education-focused programming is a good idea	Long-term operating and service costs need more clarity

Table 8. Feedback from Final Event - Carolina Church.

At the same time, participants felt that the church needs to communicate more clearly as the project progresses. There were comments that the feasibility section should better explain the community services and provide more clarity regarding long-term operating and service costs. This feedback helped guide revisions to the proposal, particularly the expanded discussion of feasibility, services, and long-term sustainability.

The group received little feedback on the original proposal during the final studio presentation, as participants mainly focused on the alternative proposal. The primary feedback concerned several points the church had not communicated to the group, which were later clarified by Vonette Harris. Many recommendations are addressed in the next section, as the group identified several minor revisions that could strengthen the proposal's appeal to both planners and investors.

The primary recommendation for the current proposal is to assess the plan's financial feasibility. As it stands, the group cannot see how it can remain financially solvent while pursuing this project. The church will need to seek additional investors and consider a land lease agreement. While they already have a partnership with Enterprise assisting them in these efforts, the group recommended that they also consider Partners for Sacred Places for additional support.

NEXT STEPS

If the church elects to move forward with the alternative proposal, we recommend the following actions to advance the project in a structured and feasible manner.

In the short term, the church should refine the alternative program and unit mix to reflect the proposed combination of permanent supportive housing, affordable housing, and workforce development space. This refinement should be accompanied by updated preliminary cost estimates and operating assumptions to demonstrate how the alternative improves long-term financial sustainability clearly. At the same time, the church should formally engage potential nonprofit, workforce, and health service partners to confirm interest, space needs, and potential lease or service agreements.

A critical early step will be pursuing the Priority Funding Area (PFA) designation. Securing PFA status would significantly expand eligibility for state housing, infrastructure, and revitalization funding programs. This process should include coordination with County planning staff, preparation of required maps and justification materials, and initiation of the Planning Board and County approval process.

In the medium term, the church should align the refined alternative proposal with targeted funding applications. This includes pursuing housing and homelessness-related grants and loans, as well as philanthropic and mission-aligned funding that supports mixed-income housing, workforce development, and health-centered services. The alternative proposal's diversified revenue model should be clearly emphasized in funding narratives to demonstrate reduced dependence on long-term subsidies.

Once key funding commitments and approvals are in place, the project can move into final design, permitting, and financing closeout. The church may use a phased implementation approach to manage risk and upfront costs, beginning with core housing components and expanding programmatic uses as partnerships and funding mature.

CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Regardless of which proposal ultimately advances, several broader actions will support the church's long-term development goals. First, continued and proactive community engagement will be essential to maintaining trust and building local support as the project approaches implementation. This includes transparent communication about project goals, timelines, and community benefits.

Second, the church should continue strengthening its internal capacity for development by maintaining relationships with technical advisors, development partners, and public agencies. This will help ensure that future funding opportunities, regulatory requirements, and implementation challenges can be addressed efficiently.

Regardless of which direction the church decides to take, it should make application to the priority funding area a significant part of its short-term goals. It would substantially benefit them by filling funding gaps. As stated earlier, it should be relatively easy for them to apply and receive approval, even with their current proposal.

Finally, the church may consider viewing this project as a foundation for future expansion. The site's size and institutional ownership create opportunities for phased growth, allowing the church to respond to evolving housing and community needs while building on the financial and organizational capacity established through this initial development.

› CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROPERTY PROFILE

Church of the Living God's proposed development site is located separately from its worship site (Figure 50). The site includes five adjoining parcels in unincorporated Prince George's County within the Adelphi neighborhood, totaling 27.18 acres. Although the combined assessed value exceeds $1 million, comparable properties in the area have recently sold for up to $9 million, demonstrating significant redevelopment potential. Tax parcel information is summarized in Table 9.



Figure 50. Location of Worship and Development Sites for Church of the Living God.

Property Profile						
Address	**Building Size**	**Parcel Size**	**Year Built**	**Zoning**	**Sale Price**	**Assessment Price**
8555 22nd Place	N/A	5.08 acres	N/A	RR (Rural Residential)	$69,737	$44,200
8530 22nd Place	N/A	8.76 acres	N/A	RR (Rural Residential)	$126,991	$287,400
8545 22nd Place	N/A	5.43 acres	N/A	RR (Rural Residential)	$74,621	$47,300
2410 Cool Spring Road	1888 sf	3 acres	1937	RR (Rural Residential)	$343,000	$467,500
8511 Riggs Road	1,380 sf (no longer exists)	4.91 acres	1920 (no longer exists)	RR (Rural Residential)	$700,000	$540,300
Total	**1888 sf**	**27.18 acres**			**$1,314,349**	**$1,386,700**

Table 9. Tax Parcel Information for Church of the Living God.

The Church of the Living God Full Gospel Ministries, Inc. has owned most of the property since 2000. The parcel at 2410 Cool Spring Road was granted in 2024. This long-term ownership signals stability and provides leverage in stakeholder engagement.

Current land use classifications (Figure 51) identify parcels along 22nd Place as "Vacant" and parcels on Cool Spring Road and Riggs Road as "Residential – Single Family." However, only the 1937 house on Cool Spring Road remains; the former residence on Riggs Road no longer exists (Urban Green Environmental, 2025). Surrounding land uses are primarily single-family residential, with parks and open space to the north, institutional, agricultural, and natural resource uses near 22nd Place, and a Pepco utility corridor to the east. The agricultural-natural resource parcel currently contains a used-appliance store that previously operated as a gasoline station (1966–1989) (Urban Green Environmental, 2025, p. 25).

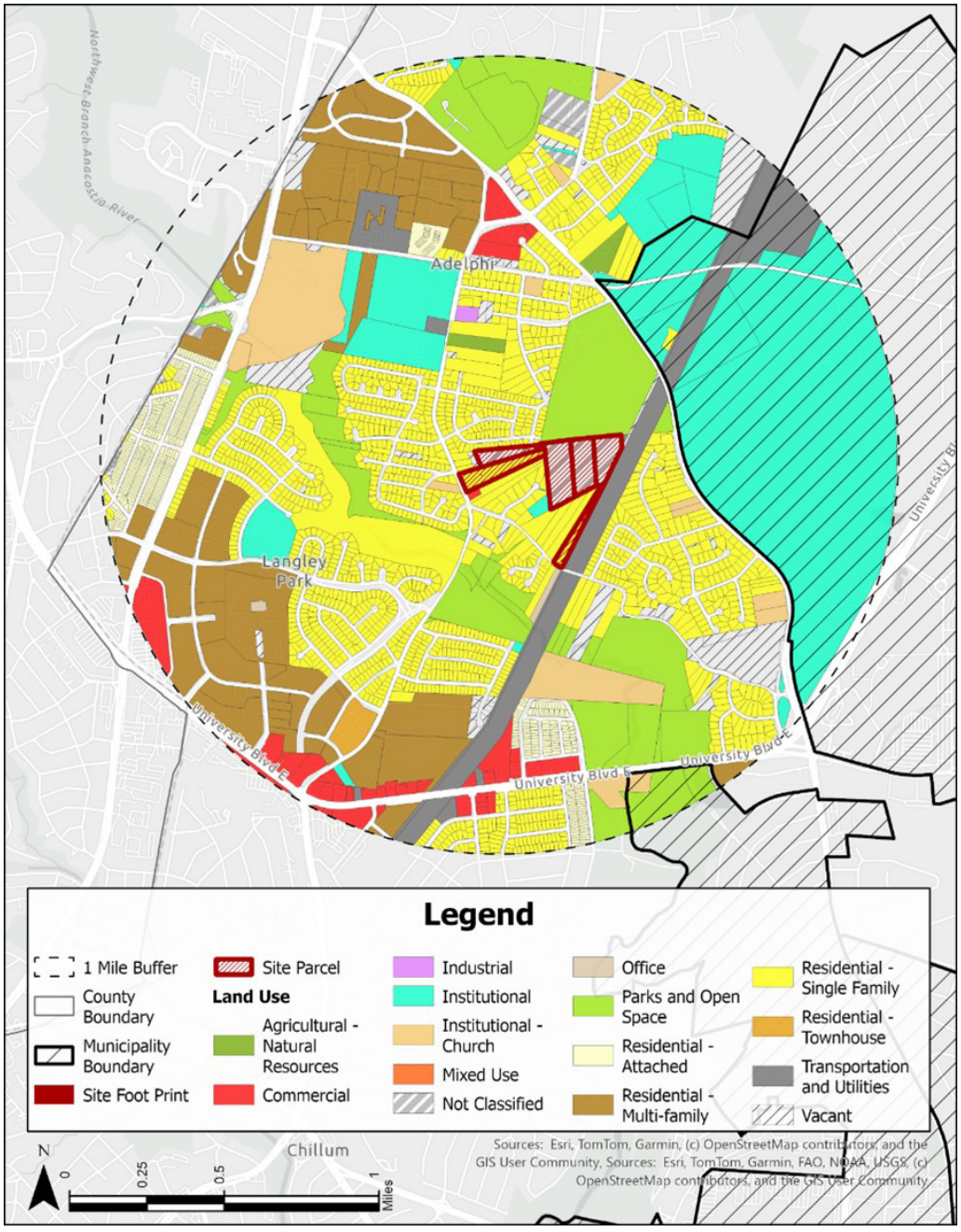


Figure 51. Current Land Use for Development Sites.

Environmental and historical review by Urban Green Environmental (2025) indicates the site supported agricultural uses, including a tree farm or orchard, dating back to at least 1927 (Figure 52). From the late 1920s to 1960, most of the site was agricultural, transitioning to wooded land in later decades. A tributary of the Northwest Branch Anacostia River runs through the property (Figure 53). The area has "consisted primarily of residential, agricultural, and/or wooded land since at least 1920" (Urban Green Environmental, 2025, p. 17).



Figure 52. . 1927 Aerial View of Site.

Source: Urban Green Environmental (2025).

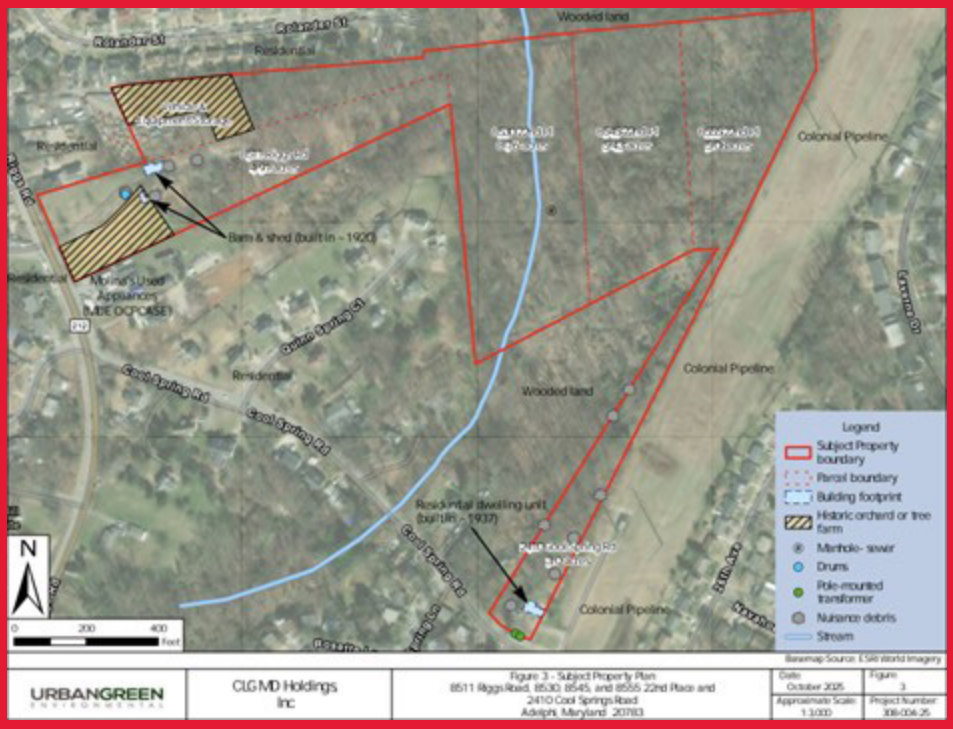


Figure 53. Map of the Site showing Stream.

Source: Urban Green Environmental (2025).

The site's ecological integrity has been preserved due to low-intensity historic land use and stable church ownership. While adjacency to residential neighborhoods supports redevelopment potential, the surrounding low-density character and wooded condition may constrain higher-density proposals.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Reverend Stephen K. Gyermeh founded the Church of the Living God in 1984 in Chillum, Maryland (Figure 54). What began as a congregation of fifteen members grew within a decade to 1,500 members, $3 million in assets, and additional congregations nationwide (RNS Blog Editor, 1997). Today, the church includes 10 U.S. congregations and additional churches in Africa (General Overseer, n.d.).The congregation is predominantly Black and internationally diverse, representing 30 or more countries (RNS Blog Editor, 1997). The church reflects a broader "reverse missions" movement in which African churches established ministries in North America (Dart, 1998). These churches emphasize vibrant worship, strong prayer traditions, and active church planting (RNS Blog Editor, 1997).

As immigrant congregations mature, they face challenges maintaining intergenerational engagement and cross-cultural cohesion (Perry, n.d.; RNS Blog Editor, 1997). These tensions highlight the importance of inclusive outreach and long-term institutional sustainability.



Figure 55. Teenagers at a "Gospel Jam". Source: The Washington Post (1997).

Born in Ghana in 1938, Rev. Gyermeh returned to the United States in 1982 after receiving a calling to "rescue the perishing, care for the dying" (General Overseer, n.d.).



Figure 54. Reverend Stephen K. Gyermeh. Source: Church of the Living God Website (2025).

Beyond spiritual services, the church operates youth programs, a food pantry (with Capital Area Food Bank), health fairs, and holiday meal services. "Gospel Jams" illustrate its integration of faith and cultural expression (Figure 55). Historically Black churches in Prince George's County also play significant civic roles; for example, Senator Benjamin L. Cardin visited the congregation in 2006 (Wiggins & Harris, 2006).

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

DEMOGRAPHICS

Adelphi has a 70.2% Hispanic and Latino population (Figure 56), significantly higher than County and State averages. Nearly half of residents are foreign-born, primarily from Latin America (Figure 57). Age distribution mirrors County and State patterns (Figure 58).

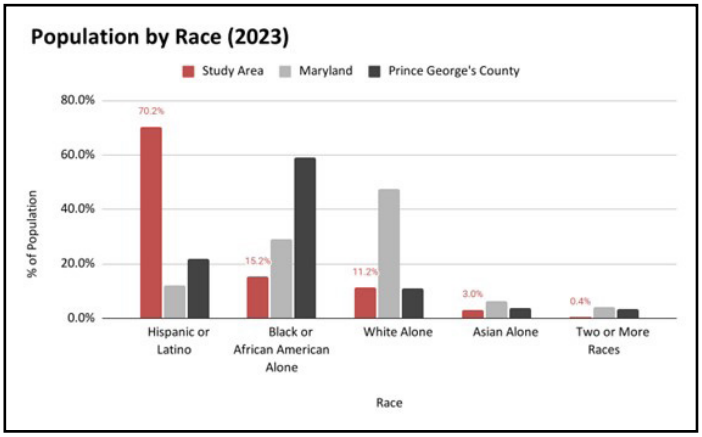


Figure 56. Race in the Study Area (Census Tract 8059.04).

Source: Social Explorer and ACS 5-Year Estimates (2019-2023).

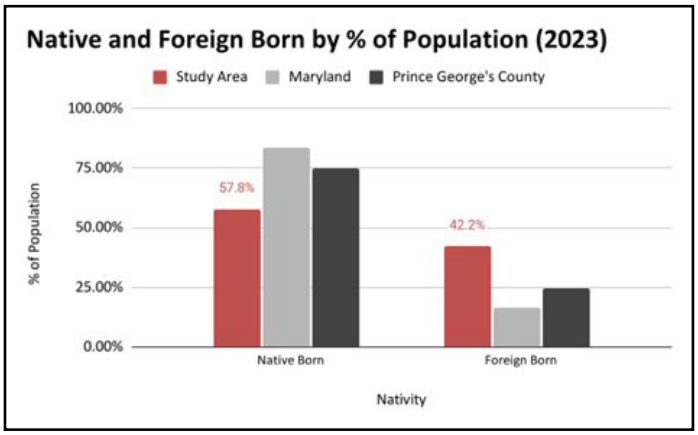


Figure 57. Nativity Status in the Study Area (Census Tract 8059.04).

Source: Social Explorer and ACS 5-Year Estimates (2019-2023)

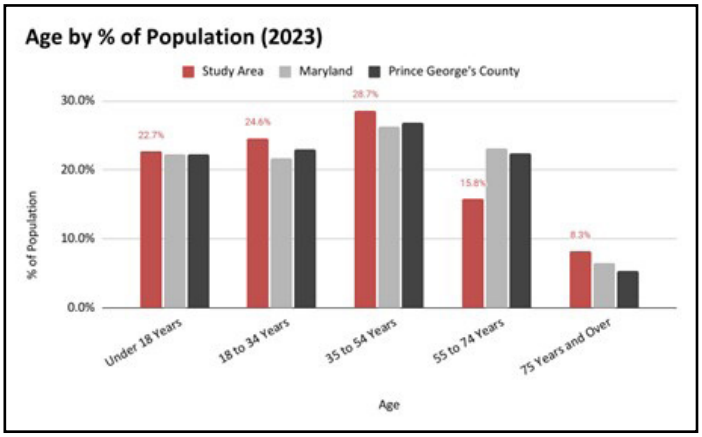


Figure 58. Age in the Study Area (Census Tract 8059.04).

Source: Social Explorer and ACS 5-Year Estimates (2019-2023).

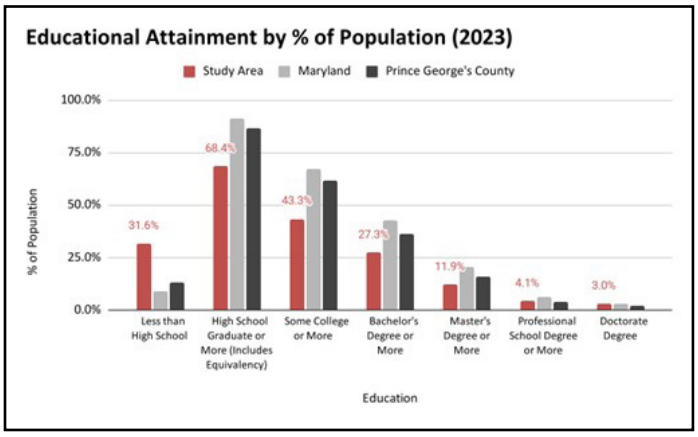


Figure 59. Educational Attainment of the Study Area.

Source: Social Explorer and ACS 5-Year Estimates (2019-2023).

Median household income in Adelphi ($119,583) exceeds County and State levels, despite lower educational attainment (Figure 59). This suggests working- and middle-class households with strong earning capacity. Poverty is concentrated among younger residents, while seniors experience lower poverty rates (Figure 60). Average household size (4.1) exceeds County (2.7) and State (2.6) averages, reflecting multigenerational living (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). These characteristics suggest demand for affordable housing and potential receptiveness to intergenerational models.

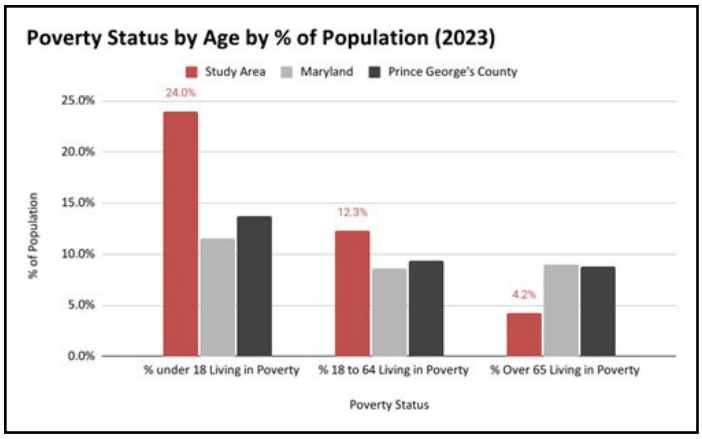


Figure 60. Poverty Status of the Study Area.

Source: Social Explorer and ACS 5-Year Estimates (2019-2023).

PLACE

The area surrounding the church features a generally suburban landscape, with a mix of residential, institutional, and natural features that influence how people navigate and perceive place. Applying Kevin Lynch's framework of urban form, the area can be interpreted through its nodes, paths, edges, landmarks, and districts, each shaping the physical and social accessibility of the church's land and potential future development as evident in the asset map (Figure 61).



Figure 61. Asset Map of Church of the Living God Development Sites.

Prominent nodes emerge at transit stops and community gathering spaces. The Purple Line stations planned at Adelphi Road (UMGC–UMD and Riggs Road–University Boulevard), each within about a mile of the other, will serve as regional connectors, integrating the church's property into a larger network of activity and resources. Local nodes include the National Archives at College Park, Megamart Adelphi, and nearby schools and parks, all of which function as daily anchors for residents. The church's existing community events, such as health fairs, food pantry distributions, and holiday programs, already serve as social nodes that bring together diverse groups. The Pepco utility corridor further marks a rigid infrastructural boundary (Figure 62).



Figure 62. Pepco Utility Line Adjacent to Site.



Figure 63. Rainier Manor, A Nearby Senior Living Community.

Source: Caring.com (2023)

Institutional and community assets include CASA, AARP Maryland, Purple Line Corridor Coalition, Prince George's County Public Schools, and nearby senior housing communities (Figure 63). Green spaces such as Adelphi Manor Park and Northwest Branch Trail enhance environmental capital.

Collectively, Adelphi presents environmental constraints but strong human, institutional, and cultural capital that support community-based development.

DELIVERABLE

Church of the Living God asked the group to assist in their goal of developing a planned retirement community by **creating a community engagement strategy** that **identifies key stakeholders and planners** in the area. We introduced elements of this strategy in the midterm report; the group's SWOT and SOAR analyses, which were completed for the midterm report and are finalized and included in this report's Appendix. The final deliverable builds on that work through three components:

1) Identify and analyze stakeholders;

2) Develop a messaging strategy for stakeholder groups; and

3) Offer engagement activities suitable for stakeholder groups.

CURRENT PROJECT PROPOSAL

Church of the Living God plans to develop a planned retirement community on five parcels of land, approximately three miles from its worship site. The planned retirement community would consist of:

1) Apartments (aged 65+), with 100 affordable units and 80 market-rate units.

2) For-sale homes (Aged 55+), with 46 single-family ranchers or 104 quadplex units.

3) Community center.

The community center could host a variety of programs and services, including on-site medical services, a fitness center, and activity rooms.



Figure 64. Conceptual Site Design with Quadplexes for For-sale Component.

Source: Design Hand Architects (2025).



Figure 65. Conceptual Design for Affordable Senior Apartments.

Source: Design Hand Architects (2025).



Figure 66. Conceptual Design for Club House/Community Center.

Source: Design Hand Architects (2025).

NEED

The proposal responds to documented senior housing demand in Prince George's County. In 2020, 27% of County residents (242,493 households) were 55+, projected to increase to 30% (311,756 households) by 2040 (National Center for Smart Growth, 2025). Among County seniors:

- 39% of 65+ renters are extremely or very low-income
- 60% of 65+ renters are cost-burdened
- 14% of 65+ homeowners are cost-burdened
- Only 3,354 subsidized senior housing units exist Countywide.

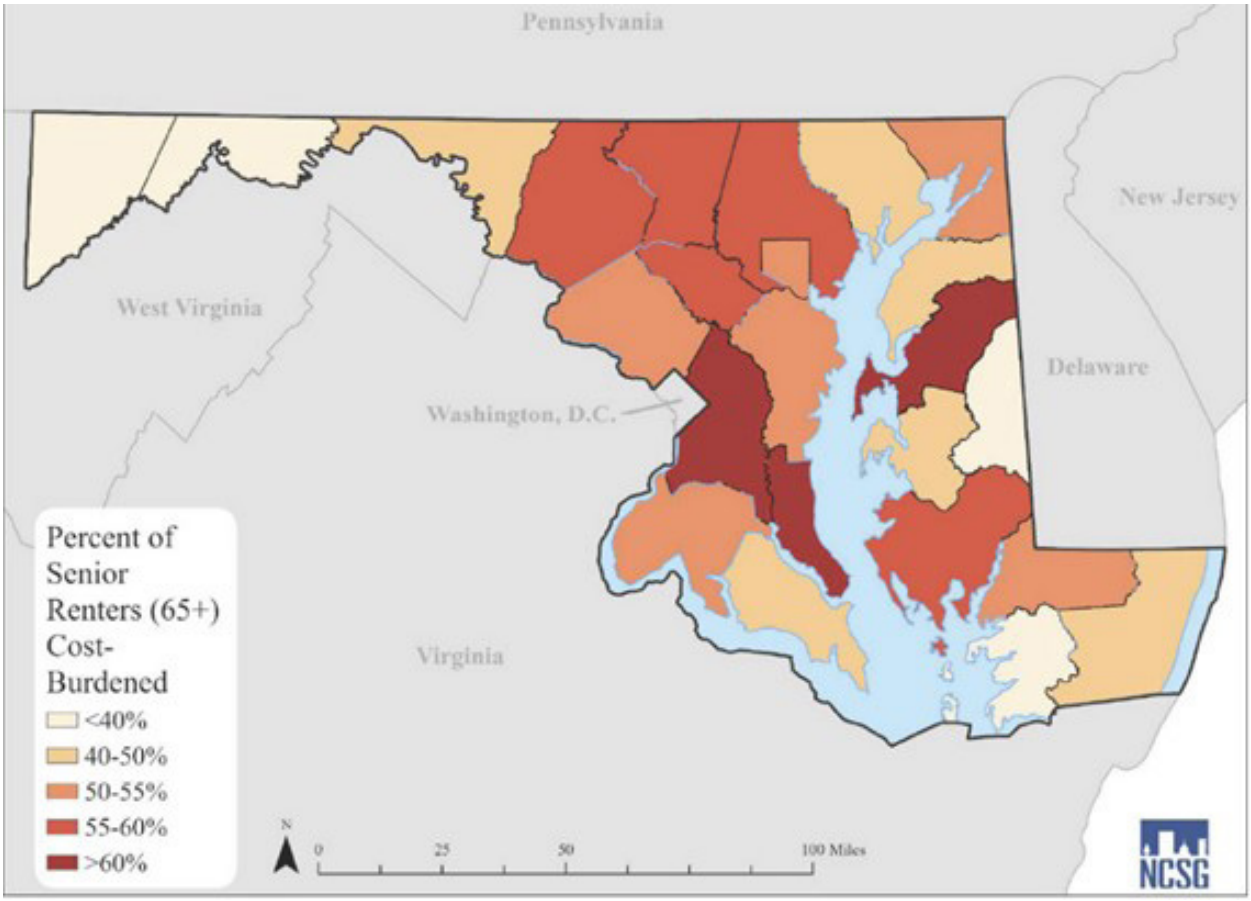


Figure 67. Maryland Senior Renter Cost-burden.

Source: National Center for Smart Growth (2025).

In Adelphi, population nearly doubled between 2009 and 2023, yet no housing units have been built since 2010. The average household size (4.1) significantly exceeds County (2.7) and State (2.6) averages, suggesting multigenerational housing pressures (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). The proposed retirement community addresses both Countywide senior housing shortages and local housing demand.

MISSION ALIGNMENT

The church's mission "Rescue the Perishing, Care for the Dying" currently manifests through food distribution, health fairs, and holiday meals. Affordable senior housing directly extends this mission by providing stable housing combined with health and wellness services that promote aging with dignity.

ZONING COMPATIBILITY

The site is zoned Rural Residential (RR), intended to facilitate single-family development on moderately large lots. RR permits limited residential uses by right (Table 10) but allows a Planned Retirement Community (PRC) through special exception (Prince George's County, 2022).

By-right	Special Exception
Single-family detached	Conversion of a single-family detached to add a maximum of two additional dwelling units
Assisted living facility (≤ 8 residents)	Apartment housing for elderly/physically disabled families
Convent or monastery	Assisted living facility (> 8 residents)
Group residential facility	Boarding or rooming house
	Planned retirement community

Table 10. Allowed and Special Exception Principal Residential Uses in RR.

Source: Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance (2022).

A planned retirement community has several requirements for special exception approval. The current proposal by the church meets several of these requirements, although the design may require adjustment to receive easy approval (Table 11).

Requirement for PRC Approval	Requirement Met?
Meets the needs of the retirement-aged community.	**Yes.** Units will be restricted to age groups 55+ and 65+.
Will not adversely affect the character of the surrounding residential community.	**Maybe.** A four-story building may be seen as adversely affecting the character of the surrounding residential community.
Contains at least (10) contiguous acres.	**Yes.** 27.18 acres.
The average number of dwelling units per acre shall not exceed eight.	**No.** 10.44 with the quadplex option and 8.31 with the single-family option.
Contains a community center or meeting area.	**Yes.** The church plans to construct a community center.
A community center serving residents beyond the retirement community will be harmoniously integrated into the retirement community and the surrounding neighborhood.	**Maybe.** The community center is located in the middle of the property, which may or may not be seen as harmoniously integrated.

Table 11. Requirements for Planned Retirement Community Approval.

Source: Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance (2022).

Based on the table, the current proposal is mainly compatible with zoning requirements. However, we recommend adopting vegetative buffers and other design measures to soften the transition between the development and existing housing. Furthermore, the number of units must be reduced to be below the eight average dwelling units per acre limit. Finally, consideration should be given to how the community center could be "harmoniously integrated" into the surrounding neighborhoods.

PLAN COMPATIBILITY

The current proposal aligns with several of the visions and goals in the County's comprehensive plan, Plan 2035 (Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, 2014).

1. **Goal:** variety of high-quality housing adds needed low-, middle-, and middle-to-high density development to Adelphi.
2. **Goal:** promote healthy lifestyles by providing on-site services and programs for aging seniors.
3. **Goal:** encourage development near transit infrastructure; the development is located approximately 1 mile from three upcoming Purple Line stations.
4. **Goal:** context-sensitive in-fill and low- to medium-density development in "Established communities" ● development offers apartment and single-family (or quadplex) housing options.

College Park, and Greenbelt Approved Master Plan (Figure 68). The plan recommends that the church's parcels be developed with single-family detached residential units, consistent with the RR zoning, to minimize traffic impacts on adjacent roads. Although the current development is not compatible with this recommendation, it aligns with another recommendation in the plan to develop housing for older adults. The plan recommends that elderly housing be sited near public transportation and commercial services, which this development would be (Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, 1989).

Given the age of this active plan, the group also examined the nearby Adelphi Road-UMGC-UMD Purple Line Station Area Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment. Although the development site falls outside the study area of this plan, the group used the plan's recommendations for "Edge" areas to infer how the plan would apply (Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, 2022). Based on this, the current proposal aligns with several of the plan's goals and recommendations:

1. **Goal:** create new housing opportunities ● This proposal adds new housing, particularly multi-family housing, to the neighborhood. It also provides affordable housing opportunities for seniors.

2. **Goal:** create walkable, supportive environments for seniors and students ● A senior campus and on-site amenities support a walkable, supportive environment.

3. **Goal:** improve connectivity. The proposal could include improvements to sidewalks, trails, and connections between neighborhoods.

In conclusion, this proposal mostly aligns with the comprehensive, master, and sector plans in place.

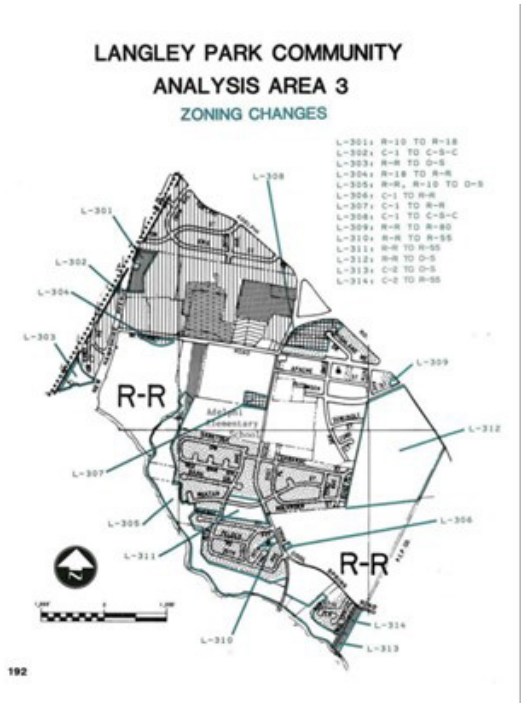


Figure 68. Proposed Zoning Changes to the Area Surrounding the Development Site.

Source: Prince George's County Planning Department (1989).

TRANSIT ACCESS

The site falls within three major roads: University Boulevard to the south, New Hampshire Avenue to the west, and Adelphi Road to the north (Figure 69). These roads connect the site to landmarks including the University of Maryland, Langley Park, Hyattsville Crossing, Beltway Plaza Mall, and Washington, D.C.

The site also has access to multiple current and planned public transit routes within a 20-minute walkshed (Figure 69, Table 12).

WMATA Metrobus Routes	Shuttle UM Routes
P32 - Greenbelt - Fort Totten	108 - Adelphi
P31 - New Carrollton - Langley Park	111 - Silver Spring
P16 - Riggs Rd - White Oak	118 - Gold
	133 - Grocery
Purple Line Light Rail Stops	**PG The Bus Routes**
Riggs Road	P37 - College Park - Adelphi
Adelphi Road UMGC	

Table 12. Transit Routes and Stops within a 20-minute Walkshed from the Development Site.

Nodes of transit access are located (1) southwest of the property around the intersection of Riggs Road and University Boulevard and around Langley Park; (2) southeast of the property around the intersection of Adelphi Road and University Boulevard; and (3) north of the property around the intersection of Riggs Road and Adelphi Road. However, all of these nodes fall within the 15- to 20-minute walkshed. Therefore, although there are eight bus/shuttle routes in the vicinity of the property, access to these routes may be difficult for senior residents. Cool Spring Road and Riggs Road are busy roads with poor pedestrian infrastructure: Riggs Road lacks crosswalks, while Cool Spring Road has no sidewalks. Currently, the only planned entrance to the property will be along Riggs Road, with no connections to Cool Spring Road and Adelphi Road. This challenge is evident in that portions of Adelphi Road directly north of the property fall outside the 20-minute walkshed.

One bus line, WMATA's P16, runs directly along Riggs Road and falls within a 5-minute walkshed. This bus route is significant as it provides direct access to the Adventist White Oak Medical Center in White Oak. This bus route will also offer easy access to the future Riggs Road Purple Line stop.

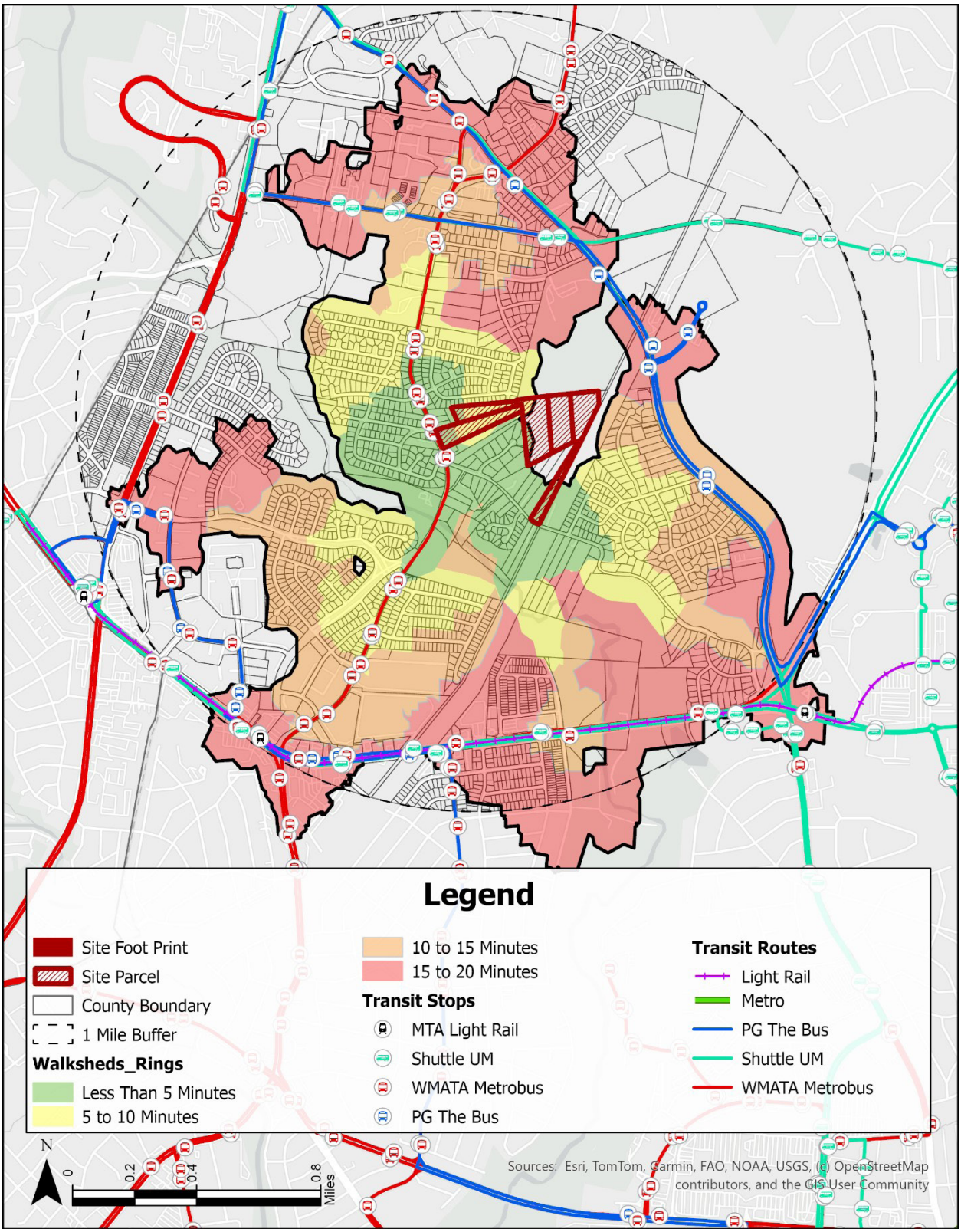


Figure 69. Transit Access Map.

The challenges of Riggs Road and Cool Spring Road were apparent during the group's site visit in the first half of the semester (Figure 70).



Figure 70. Riggs Road (left) and Cool Spring Road (right).

The lack of sidewalks along Cool Spring Road is significant, given that it provides the primary connection between the site and several transit stops, including the Adelphi Road UMGC Purple Line Stop. Its county-maintained status will facilitate improvements to Cool Spring Road. The lack of crosswalks along Riggs Road is critical, as the bus route along this road will be used heavily by senior residents due to its connection to the Purple Line and the hospital. Improvements to Riggs Road will be more difficult, as it is State-maintained. There are existing plans in place to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the Adelphi Road UMGC Purple Line stop along Cool Spring Road, such as creating external and internal sidewalks, closing streets, implementing traffic calming measures, and adding improved wayfinding and lighting upgrades (Figure 71). Therefore, pedestrian improvements undertaken as part of this development project could align with and complement these existing recommendations.



Figure 71. Recommendations to Improve Connectivity Near Cool Spring Road.

Source: Prince George's County Public Works and Transportation Department (2021).

AMENITIES ACCESS

Amenities are generally clustered in similar locations to the transit nodes to the south and north of the property (Figure 72). These clusters are the locations of three central shopping plazas near the site: (1) Metzerott Plaza to the north, (2) Adelphi Plaza directly to the south, and (3) the Langley Park shopping plazas to the southwest. These plazas host several food retail stores, a bank, and salons and barbers. Although the map does not show any health and medical amenities (it uses layers from PG Atlas), further review of Google Maps revealed several health and medical services within these shopping plazas. These include Mary's Center, Maryland Eye Care Center, Umoren Dental Services, Centro Dental Las Americas, Ashley Dental Center, and Visual Eyes Hyattsville. There are also CVS and Walgreens on Thadaree, just outside the 20-minute walkshed. While there are abundant amenities for residents, they may face challenges accessing them due to the pedestrian infrastructure issues described above.

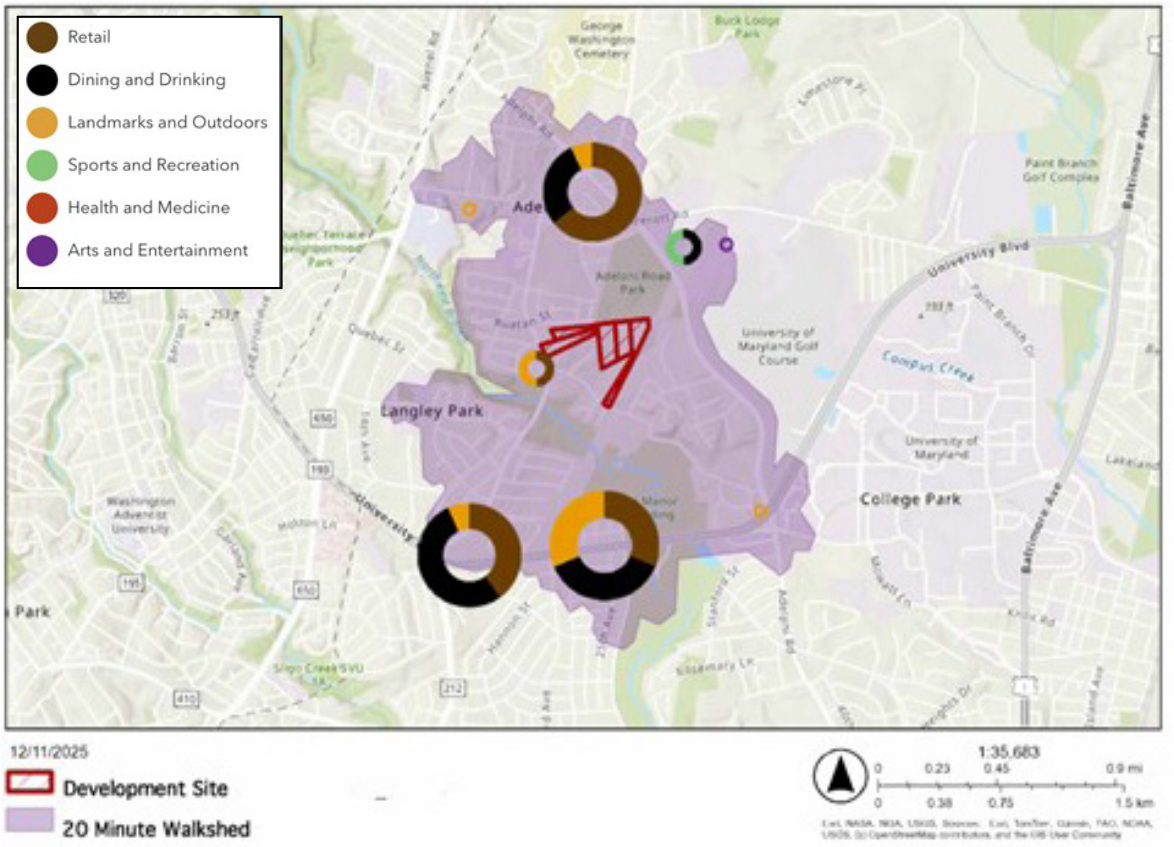


Figure 72. Amenity Clusters within a 20-minute Walkshed.

Source: GIS Open Data Portal, Prince George's County.

Another key amenity of this site is its proximity to several parks and recreation spaces. Nearby parks include Lane Manor Park to the south and Adelphi Road Park to the north (Figure 73)

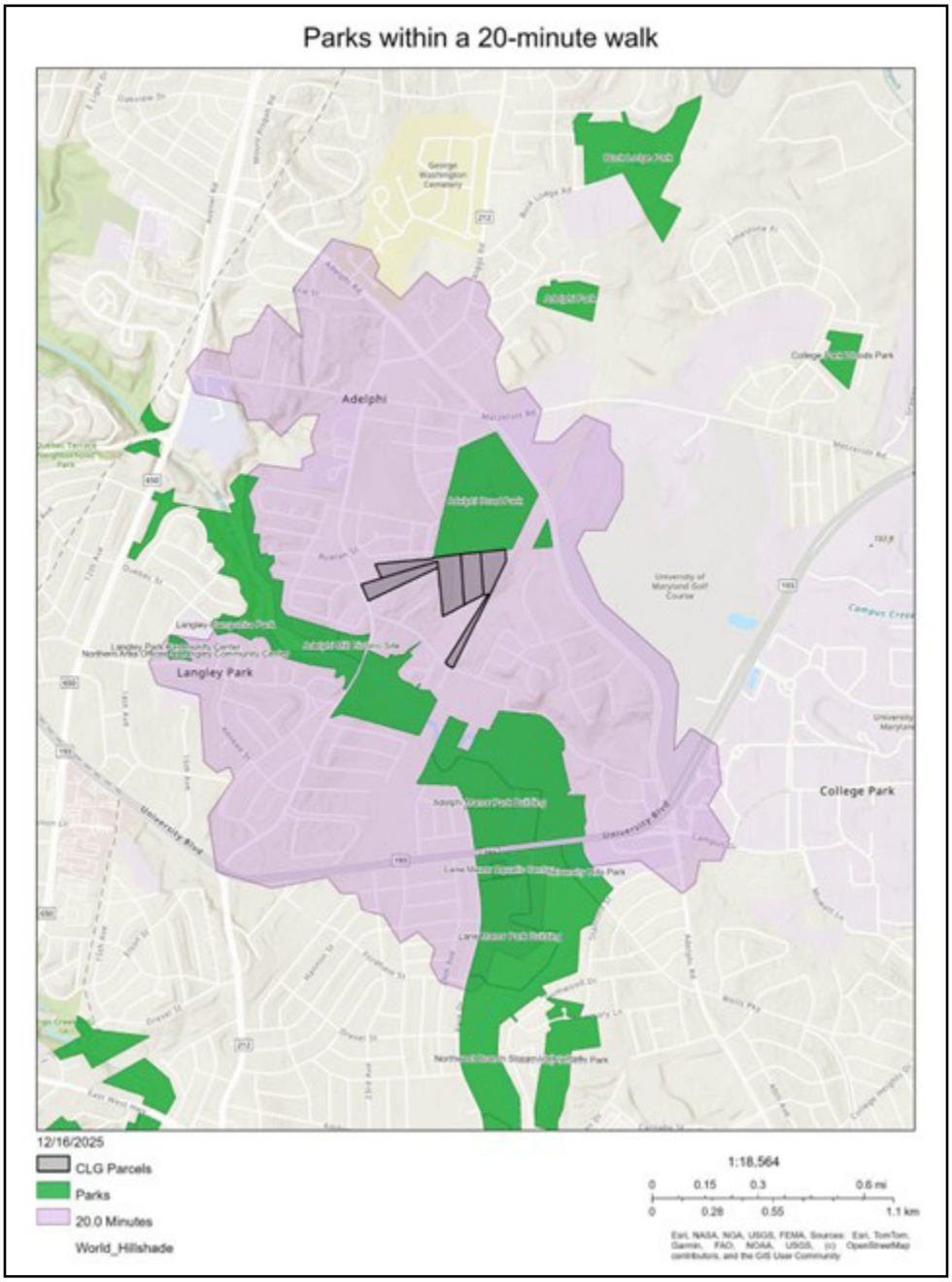


Figure 73. Parks overlaid with a 20-minute walkshed.

Source: GIS Open Data Portal, Prince George's County.

SITE DESIGN ANALYSIS

The group analyzed the proposed site design for the planned retirement community to identify opportunities and challenges, develop recommendations, and guide the development of an enhanced proposal (Figure 74 and Table 13).



Figure 74. Site Design Analysis of the Current Development Proposal.

Source: Design Hand Architects.

Weaknesses	Strengths
• 4-story multi-family adjacent to single-family • Riggs Rd. has substantial traffic and lacks pedestrian infrastructure • Insular community center, not "harmoniously integrated" • Limited pedestrian options • Floodplain/stream constraints • Disjointed open spaces • No buffer between utility line and homes; utility line/trail site of recent crime and safety concerns • Lack of connection to: Cool Spring Road, Adelphi Road Park, Adelphi Rd., and 22nd Pl.	• Green buffers are maintained on many sides • Central clubhouse placement for residents • Separation of housing types • Campus circulation, with a central spine

Table 13. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Current Site Design.

In addition, the area also has some safety concerns. According to the Prince George's County Police Department Crime Incidents dataset, from February 2017 to July 2023, the 20740 zip code (which the site falls within) experienced more crime incidents than surrounding zip codes (Figure 75). Additionally, a 2014 homicide on the Northwest Branch Trail may still influence perceptions of trail and neighborhood safety among current and prospective residents (Bell, Roussey, and Tschida, 2014). The group recommends that lighting improvements be made to sidewalks and walking paths, and that the church consider installing blue emergency phone poles on-site. These improvements can provide residents with a sense of safety and may deter future incidents.

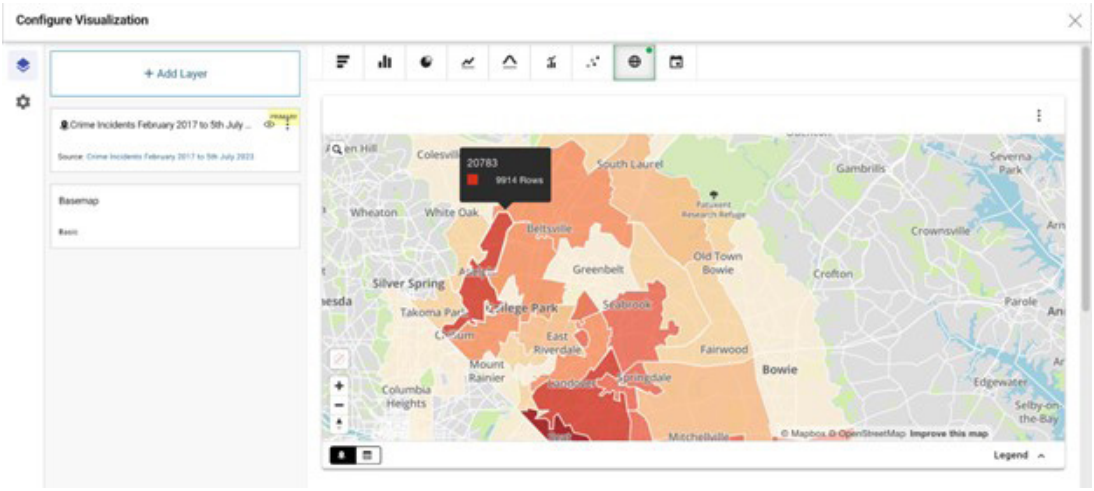


Figure 75. Map visualization of the number of crime incidents by zip code between 2017 and 2023.

Source: Prince George's County Open Data Portal.

The separation of housing types creates a "campus"-like feel that may appeal to residents seeking a quiet, orderly environment. However, placing four-story apartment buildings adjacent to existing single-family homes raises compatibility concerns, as neighbors may perceive the project as "adversely impacting" neighborhood character. This could be mitigated by relocating the apartments, adding vegetative buffers, reducing building height, or increasing setbacks.

While the central spine road allows simple vehicular access, the design prioritizes cars over pedestrians and offers no clear walking options beyond the roadway. Limited connections to Adelphi Road Park, 22nd Place, and the Northwest Branch Trail further isolate the site. The group recommends adding walking paths, advocating for improved pedestrian infrastructure along Riggs and Cool Spring Road, and creating stronger connections to surrounding landmarks to enhance safety, mobility, and integration.

The open spaces are also disjointed, limiting their value as shared amenities. Linking them with trails and seating areas would create a more usable, interconnected network for recreation and social interaction.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The group conducted a market analysis across four factors: location, market trends, comparable properties, and return on investment (ROI) and cash flow potential (Table 14). Each factor was rated on a 1-3 scale, with 1 indicating low favorability and 3 indicating high favorability.

Factor	Evidence
Location **Favorability** ✓ ✓	• Strong economic and growth indicators (42.1% pop.growth, slightly higher MHI) • Favorable infrastructure and transit access (Purple Line, eight bus routes, shopping centers, parks and recreation) • Health and safety risks (cluster of crimes, DPIE floodplain)
Factor	Evidence
Market Trends **Favorability** ✓ ✓	• Strong occupancy indicted by low vacancy rates (5.93% acc. to 2020 Census) • Favorable supply dynamics (sales-to-list price ratio of 98.1% in Oct. 2025; Langley Park/Vicinity has a small development pipeline) • Recent declines in price and rent compared to previous year
Factor	Evidence
Comparable Properties **Favorability** ✓ ✓	• Rainier Manor Senior Apartments provide comparisons for rental income projections, square footage, and valuation • Reasonable time on market. Median time on market for single-family homes is 43 days.
Factor	Evidence
ROI and Cash Flow Potential **Favorability** ✓ ✓	• Significant positive cash flow • Strong calculated return on investment • Diversified income streams

Table 14. Market Analysis.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

The project's completion is also financially feasible. Currently, the church estimates that the project will cost approximately $35.7 million to complete, with a larger share of the costs allocated to construction (Figure 76). Development costs total $12 million, comprising soft expenses, acquisition costs, reserves, and fees.

PREDICTED PROJECT COSTS

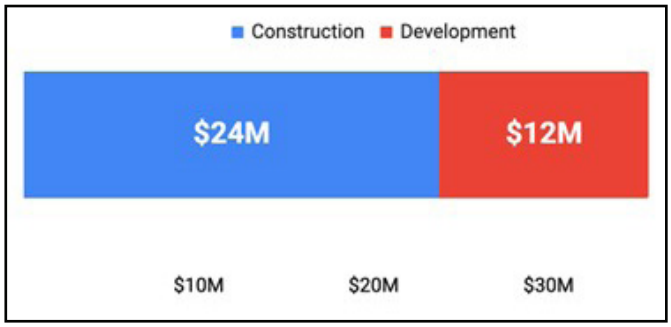


Figure 76. Predicted Project Costs.

Source: Church of the Living God.

PREDICTED FUNDING SOURCES

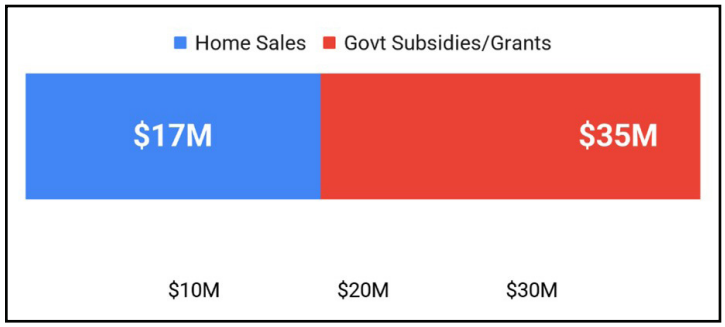


Figure 77. Predicted Funding Sources with Single-family Option.

Source: Church of the Living God.

The church plans to finance the project almost entirely through federal, state, and local government subsidies and grants (Figure 77). This includes a permanent loan from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, gap financing from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and gap financing from Prince George's County Housing and Community Development (Table 15). The remaining project costs will be covered by home sales, which will also generate additional profit (Table 16). Under the quadplex option, the project would generate substantial additional profit through home sales.

Subsidy/Grant Program	Amount
HUD Permanent Loan	$16,400,000
MD DHCD Rental Housing Works	$2,500,000
PG CO. Housing Trust Fund	$2,000,000
MD DHCD Multifamily Energy Efficiency and Housing Affordability	$400,000
Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program	$750,000
Tax Credit Equity	$12,750,000
Deferred Developer Fee	$500,000
Total	**$35,300,000**

Table 15. Subsidy/Grant Programs.

Home Type	Units	Sale Price	Total (5% vacancy)	Profit (after filing funding gap)
Single-family	46	$400,000	$17,480,000	$17,054,000
Quadplex	104	$370,000	$36,556,000	$36,130,000

Table 16. Potential Profit from Home Sales.

COMPARABLE PROPERTIES

We further evaluated two comparable properties to better understand how planned retirement communities appear in practice in Prince George's County. These were (1) Victory Oaks in Silver Spring (Figure 78) and (2) Rollingcrest Commons in Chillum (Figure 79).

VICTORY OAKS

Victory Oaks illustrates how a church can leverage a long-term ground lease and HUD Section 202 funding to deliver affordable senior housing integrated into a church campus while maintaining a distinct operational identity. Its provision of wheelchair-accessible van transportation and robust on-site amenities underscores the importance of pairing housing with supportive services, a particularly relevant strategy given pedestrian and transit limitations at the church's proposed site.



Figure 78. Victory Oaks in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Source: Quantum Real Estate

ROLLINGCREST COMMONS

Rollingcrest Commons further demonstrates how senior housing developments can expand over time and adapt financing structures to accommodate future growth. Its combination of deeply affordable units, state financing through Maryland DHCD, and subsequent integration of additional Section 202 units highlights the potential for phased development and evolving capital stacks. The project also reinforces the importance of integrating housing with social, wellness, and recreational amenities to support aging in place.



Figure 79. Rollingcrest Commons in Chillum, Maryland.

Source: A Place for Mom.

Together, these precedents show that faith-based land ownership, when combined with ground leases, public subsidies, and mission-aligned development partners, can produce financially viable senior housing while preserving institutional identity. They also illustrate strategies for addressing mobility gaps, layering subsidies, and modifying financing agreements over time, all of which are directly applicable to the Church of the Living God's proposed retirement community.

MIDTERM EVENT

At the course midterm event, the team facilitated two participatory activities to gather feedback on community engagement strategies and potential amenities for a senior living development on the site. A member of the church leadership attended this event, offered the team insights, and engaged with other attendees.

The first activity features two posters, one for engaging with Church of the Living God congregants and the second for engaging with Adelphi community members (Figure 80).

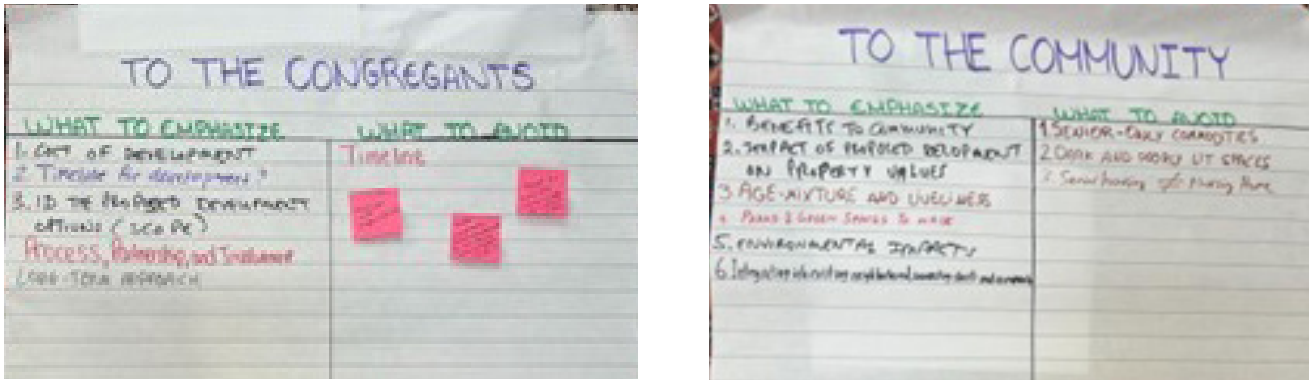


Figure 80. Posters for Messaging Activity.

The second activity invited attendees to respond to a rendering of the proposed senior housing development and images of typical senior living amenities and activities (Figure 81). Participants placed stickers on preferred amenities and added sticky notes suggesting additional activities or desired locations for the amenities shown in the rendering.



Figure 81. Amenities and Land Use Brainstorming Activity.

SYNTHESIS MEMO

Following this event, the following challenges, their implications, and the recommended responses based on our research and the participants' input were synthesized into the following table. This information played a key role in our recommended enhanced and alternative proposals, as well as the church-specific deliverables.

Challenges and Opportunities of the Development Project		
Challenge/Opportunity	**Implication**	**Response**
Challenges		
Restrictive RR zoning	Limits potential land use and development options; rezoning would require additional time, money, and energy	Work within existing regulations to identify the highest and best use; pursue incentives or programs that would allow for higher-density development
Lack of new/dense development in the surrounding community	Middle- to high-density proposals may be viewed as inconsistent with neighborhood character	Explore design and layout strategies that balance higher density with compatibility with the existing community form
Environmental constraints	Reduces developable land; development may require land alteration	Integrate environmental features into the design and mitigate hazards
Limited road access	Higher-density development will require improved access and parking provisions	Coordinate with Planning, Public Works, and Transportation to evaluate and plan necessary road and access improvements
Lack of pedestrian infrastructure	Current pedestrian infrastructure is unsafe for seniors; seniors require safe, accessible sidewalks and crosswalks	Coordinate with Planning, Public Works, and Transportation to implement necessary pedestrian improvements
Lack of immediate amenities	Current amenity hubs are not within walking distance; senior housing depends on proximity to daily and health-related amenities	Explore partnerships to bring amenities on-site or transportation options to connect residents to nearby amenity hubs
Potential language barriers	Only one leadership member speaks Spanish; a large Spanish-speaking population may limit engagement effectiveness	Develop bilingual materials, partner with Latino community organizations, and integrate bilingual features into project design and programming
Past Trail Safety Incident	A 2014 homicide on the Northwest Branch Trail may still influence perceptions of trail and neighborhood safety among current and prospective residents	Coordinate with Parks and County police to evaluate current safety conditions and develop potential improvements (patrols, visibility, maintenance) to ease current and prospective residents
Opportunities		
Few structures on the site	Minimal demolition costs; opportunity to design from a near-blank slate	Capitalize on site flexibility to design a walkable, sustainable, and context-sensitive development
Proximity to amenity hubs	Access to Adelphi and Langley Park amenity hubs and major transit corridors of Riggs Road, University Boulevard, and Adelphi Road	Leverage proximity in marketing and design to emphasize connectivity and accessibility
Access to nature and trails	Existing green spaces and recreational amenities enhance site appeal	Integrate trails and green space connections into site design to promote wellness and sustainability
Strong congregational spirit and mission	Provides a strong base of advocates for the project and alignment of mission-driven goals	Frame the development as an extension of the congregation's mission and engage members in the process
Existing community outreach and community identity	Existing experience and reputation for community service and engagement	Build on past outreach experiences to strengthen trust and involvement during development
Government support for senior housing and partnerships with faith institutions	Availability of incentives and funding programs; potential political champions	Engage local officials; identify 3-4 key champions to support the project through planning and approvals
Potential for co-benefits through the community center	Opportunity to offer multi-use spaces, services, and programs for congregants and residents	Conduct community engagement sessions to co-design community center spaces and programs; build local buy-in and maximize shared benefits

Table 17. Summary of Challenges and Opportunities.

ENHANCED (CURRENT) PROPOSAL

OVERVIEW

The enhanced proposal for the Church of the Living God reimagines the church's planned senior housing development as Adelphi Wellness Commons, a wellness-focused, nature-integrated senior campus serving both older adults and the broader Adelphi community. This proposal builds directly on the church's original retirement community concept, but refines it through improved site design, expanded public-facing amenities, and stronger pedestrian and environmental connections. The enhanced proposal maintains the church's mission of "rescuing the perishing, caring for the dying" while creating a more accessible, cohesive, and community-oriented development that supports healthy aging and long-term financial stability.

JUSTIFICATION

The enhanced proposal addresses several documented needs and constraints identified during the site analysis and in community feedback. Prince George's County faces a significant shortage of affordable and appropriate housing for seniors, with more than 60 percent of senior renters in the County considered cost-burdened (National Center for Smart Growth, 2025). At the same time, the church site is constrained by busy surrounding roads, limited pedestrian infrastructure, and sensitive environmental features, including a stream and wooded areas.

By emphasizing wellness, nature, and accessibility, Adelphi Wellness Commons addresses these challenges while remaining compatible with the church's goals. The proposal improves walkability and safety, integrates open space into everyday use, and expands community-serving amenities that can generate revenue and foster stronger neighborhood connections. Compared with the originally planned retirement community, this enhanced version offers a clearer identity, more substantial mission alignment, and broader community benefits without introducing new land uses beyond those already contemplated.

DESCRIPTION

Adelphi Wellness Commons is designed as a senior-focused residential campus with a public-facing community center and is supported by a network of walking paths, gardens, and recreational spaces. Residential buildings are arranged to reduce visual and physical impacts on surrounding neighborhoods while maximizing access to green space and shared amenities.

The proposal intentionally departs from a more insular layout by opening the community center to the public and by physically and visually linking it to outdoor spaces (Figure 82). Forest buffers and natural features are preserved to soften development edges, while improved internal circulation creates a safer and more intuitive environment for residents and visitors alike.

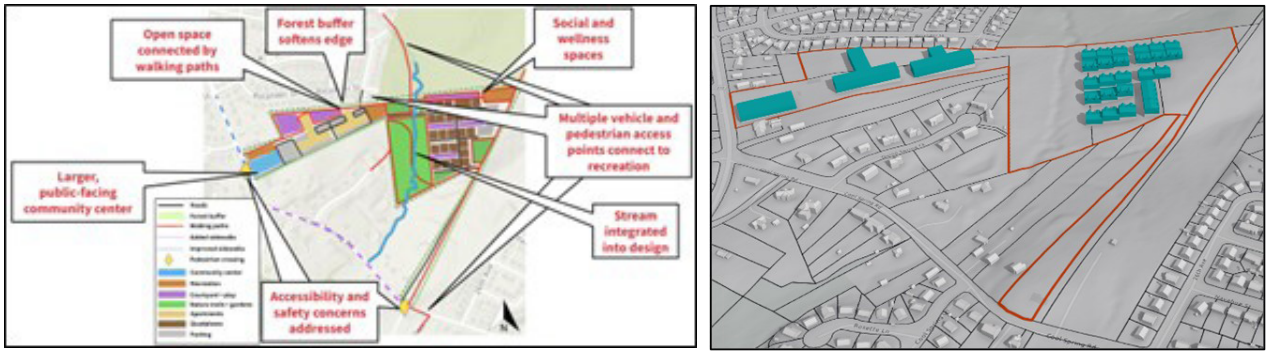


Figure 82. Improvements made through Adelphi Wellness Commons.

NUMBER OF UNITS

The enhanced proposal includes a combination of senior rental and for-sale housing consistent with the church's original plan:

- Apartments (aged 65+): 180 total units
- 100 affordable units
- 80 market-rate units
- Quadplexes (aged 55+, for-sale): 104 units

No changes to unit counts are introduced in the enhanced proposal; instead, improvements focus on layout, accessibility, and shared amenities.

KEY FEATURES

Adelphi Wellness Commons prioritizes holistic senior wellness rather than housing alone (Figure 82). Core amenities include:

- A community center open to the public with flexible multipurpose rooms
- Fitness and wellness rooms
- On-site medical and health services
- Activity and meeting spaces
- Shared gardens and outdoor recreation areas
- A shuttle for senior residents

These amenities are designed to support both residents and neighbors, creating opportunities for programming partnerships, rentals, and community events that reinforce the church's mission and improve financial resilience.

SITE DESIGN

The site design emphasizes connectivity, safety, and environmental integration. Key improvements include:

- A network of walking paths connecting residences, the community center, and open spaces
- Added and improved sidewalks to address existing pedestrian safety concerns
- Multiple vehicle access points to reduce congestion and improve emergency access
- Preservation of wooded areas and stream corridors as functional and visual assets

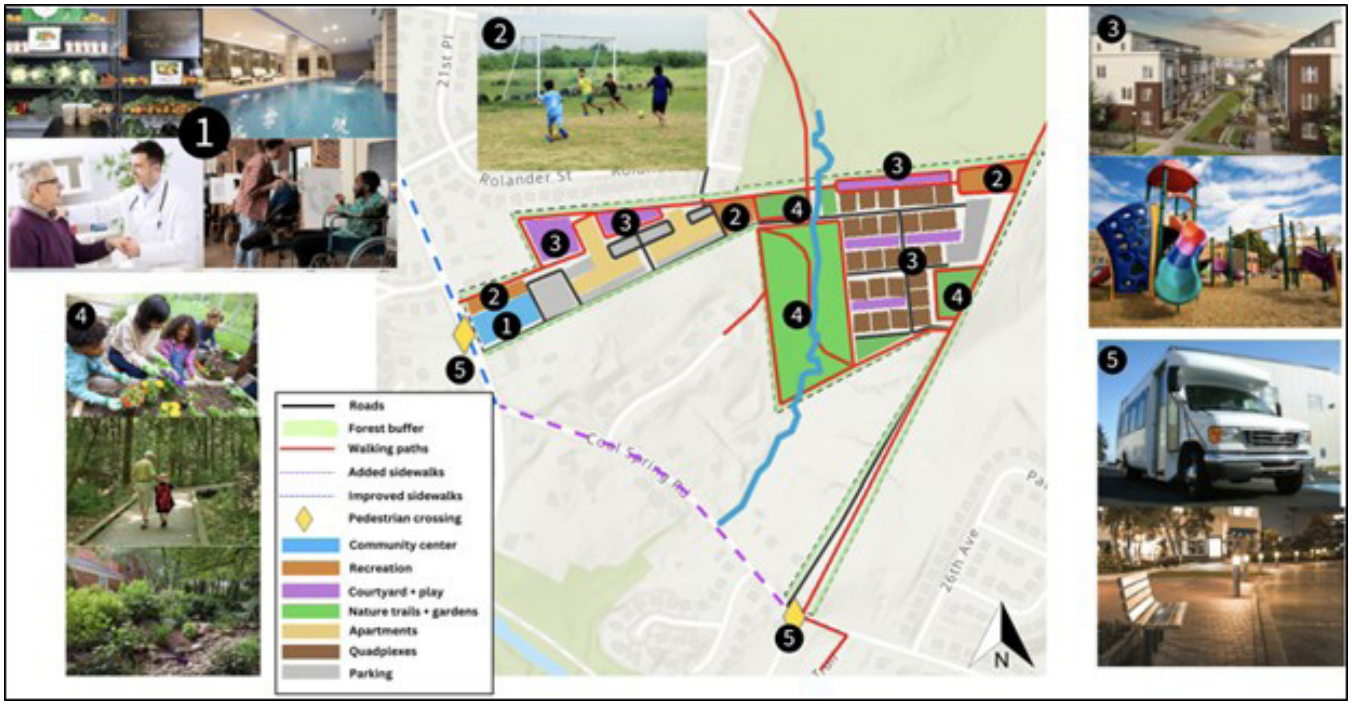


Figure 83. Site design and features of Adelphi Wellness Commons, showing residential buildings, community center, walking paths, and preserved natural areas.

DESIGN

Architecturally, the enhanced proposal maintains a residential scale appropriate to the surrounding rural residential context. Building placement reduces the impact of multi-story structures near existing homes, while courtyards and gardens create spaces that encourage social interaction. Design choices emphasize natural light, ample green spaces, and walking paths, thereby reinforcing the campus's wellness-focused identity.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is a central feature of the enhanced proposal. Improvements include:

- Safer pedestrian crossings and internal walkways
- A shuttle for senior residents
- Barrier-free access to the community center and shared amenities
- Clear internal circulation that supports aging residents with varying mobility needs

These changes directly respond to documented challenges related to busy roads, limited sidewalks, and difficult walking conditions surrounding the site. The shuttle, in particular, addresses the difficulties that seniors may face when navigating the surrounding roadways. It provides them with a safer, more reliable option for traveling outside the community to nearby areas.

COMPATIBILITY (ZONING, PLAN, USE)

The enhanced proposal remains mostly consistent with the zoning allowances already considered for the site, which permit assisted living and related residential uses. The proposal does not introduce new or incompatible uses; instead, it refines the development's scale, layout, and public interface. There may be issues because the proposed homes are quadplexes, which are single-family homes, but not detached single-family homes. Regardless, this is not a dramatic change, and the plan aligns with county priorities around senior housing, health, and community-serving facilities without requiring a fundamental change in land use.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

Financially, Adelphi Wellness Commons follows the same basic revenue approach as the original retirement community, but with changes that make it more stable over time. Income would come from rents from senior apartments, sales of the for-sale quadplex units, and limited revenue from community center uses. Together, these sources contribute to upfront development costs and ongoing operations. By making specific amenities publicly accessible, the enhanced proposal reduces the risk of vacancies and distributes revenue beyond residential units.

COMPARABLE PROPERTIES

Several existing retirement and wellness-oriented developments help illustrate how the Adelphi Wellness Commons fits within a broader set of similar communities. While none of these examples directly replicate the Church of the Living God site, they show established approaches to senior living that prioritize wellness, access to nature, and connection to the surrounding community.

OREN HAMPSTEAD

The Oren Hampstead in London, England, is a retirement living development that emphasizes adaptability, sustainability, and a strong sense of community (Figure 84). Mature trees surround the site and border a public park, allowing residents to remain closely connected to nature while living in a residential setting. Rather than isolating older adults, the design integrates housing into the existing landscape. This approach is relevant to the church site, where wooded areas and open space can be preserved and incorporated into daily use, rather than treated as leftover or buffer land.

IRVINE HEALTH AND WELLNESS CAMPUS

The Irvine Health and Wellness Campus in Irvine, California, is a planned campus that integrates a comprehensive range of mental health and wellness services for people of all ages, including older adults (Figure 85). Although larger in scale than the church's proposal, it demonstrates how housing and wellness services can be co-located to improve access and support overall quality of life. This model illustrates how a public-facing community center at Adelphi Wellness Commons could serve not only residents but also the broader Adelphi community through health- and wellness-oriented programming.

METLIFECARE GULF RISE RETIREMENT HOMES

Metlifecare Gulf Rise Retirement Homes in Auckland, New Zealand, is designed around a holistic approach to aging that includes access to gardens, a nearby nature reserve, and additional services such as weekly wellbeing visits (Figure 86). Outdoor space plays a central role in daily life, supporting physical activity, social interaction, and mental health without creating an institutional environment. This example closely aligns with the enhanced proposal's focus on wellness, outdoor amenities, and supporting aging in place rather than high-acuity care.



Figure 84. The Oren Hampstead in London, England.

Source: Stanton Williams.



Figure 85. The Irvine Health and Wellness Campus in Irvine, California.

Source: Be Well OC.



Figure 86. The Metlifecare Gulf Rise Retirement Homes in Auckland, New Zealand.

Source: ArchDaily (2020)

Taken together, these comparable properties show that senior housing can move beyond a purely residential model. They reinforce the enhanced proposal's emphasis on nature, wellness, and community access as practical, tested approaches that have been successfully implemented in other settings.

ALTERNATIVE (RECOMMENDED) PROPOSAL

OVERVIEW

The alternative proposal for the Church of the Living God, the Adelphi Intergenerational Commons, envisions a wellness-focused, nature-integrated intergenerational campus serving seniors, families, and youth. Unlike the senior-only enhanced proposal, this model intentionally integrates age and income, pairing modest residential development with community-serving facilities that remain accessible to the neighborhood. The proposal introduces middle-density housing while remaining compatible with surrounding residential areas.

JUSTIFICATION

This alternative addresses broader demographic and social needs in the area, including youth poverty, older adults' isolation, and housing affordability. Prince George's County has experienced a loss of middle-density housing, and many residents, including both seniors and families, face limited options that meet their needs (Enterprise Community Partners, 2019).

By introducing an intergenerational model, the proposal expands the church's ministry impact, supports social cohesion, and improves financial resilience by broadening its resident base. The mix of unit types and income levels reduces vacancy risk and aligns with feedback emphasizing mixed-use, community-serving development.

DESCRIPTION

Adelphi Intergenerational Commons is organized around shared indoor and outdoor spaces that encourage everyday interaction across generations (Figure 87). Residential buildings are lower in scale near existing neighborhoods and clustered to preserve open space. A central community hub anchors the site, providing health and wellness services and flexible program space for all ages.

A key feature of the proposal is a staffed intergenerational connector program that matches youth, parents, and older adults based on needs such as tutoring, companionship, and childcare support, thereby creating intentional social connections rather than merely living near one another without interaction.

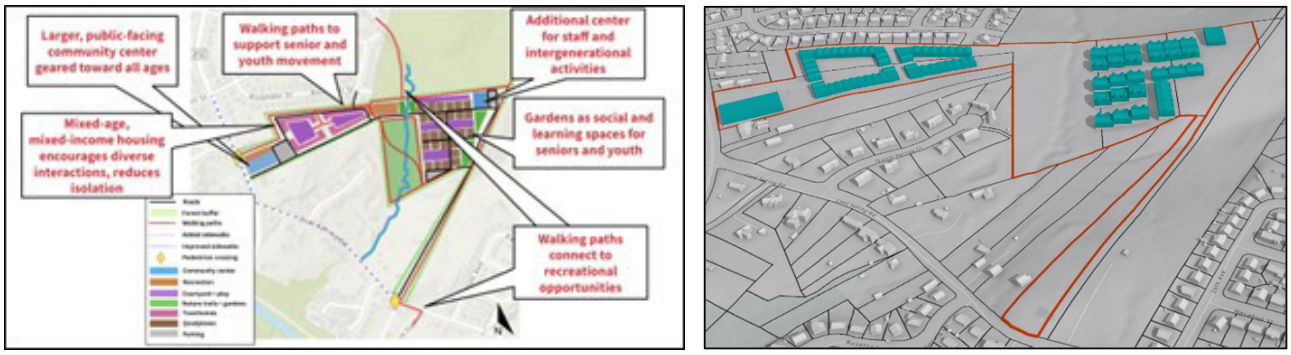


Figure 87. Improvements made through Adelphi Intergenerational Commons.

NUMBER OF UNITS

The alternative proposal includes a mix of townhomes and quadplexes:

- Townhomes: 60 units
  - 30 for-sale
  - 30 affordable rentals
  - 30 senior-restricted (split between for-sale and affordable)
- Quadplexes: 104 units
  - 52 for-sale
  - 52 affordable rentals
  - 52 senior-restricted (split between for-sale and affordable)

This approach guarantees that people of different ages and income levels can live on the site in various types of housing.

KEY FEATURES

Adelphi Intergenerational Commons offers features to all, prioritizing overall wellness, accessibility, and genuine interactions (Figure 88). Shared amenities include:

- Community centers open to the public
- Fresh food market
- On-site medical services
- Fitness rooms
- Library and computer room
- Activity and meeting spaces
- Gardens and outdoor play areas

These amenities are designed to support both residents and neighbors, creating opportunities for programming partnerships, rentals, and community events that reinforce the church's mission and improve financial resilience.

SITE DESIGN

The site design prioritizes safe movement for both seniors and youth, with walking paths connecting residences, open spaces, and nearby trails. Forest buffers soften development edges, and multiple access points improve circulation and safety. Open space is intentionally programmed to encourage shared use rather than age-segregated activity.

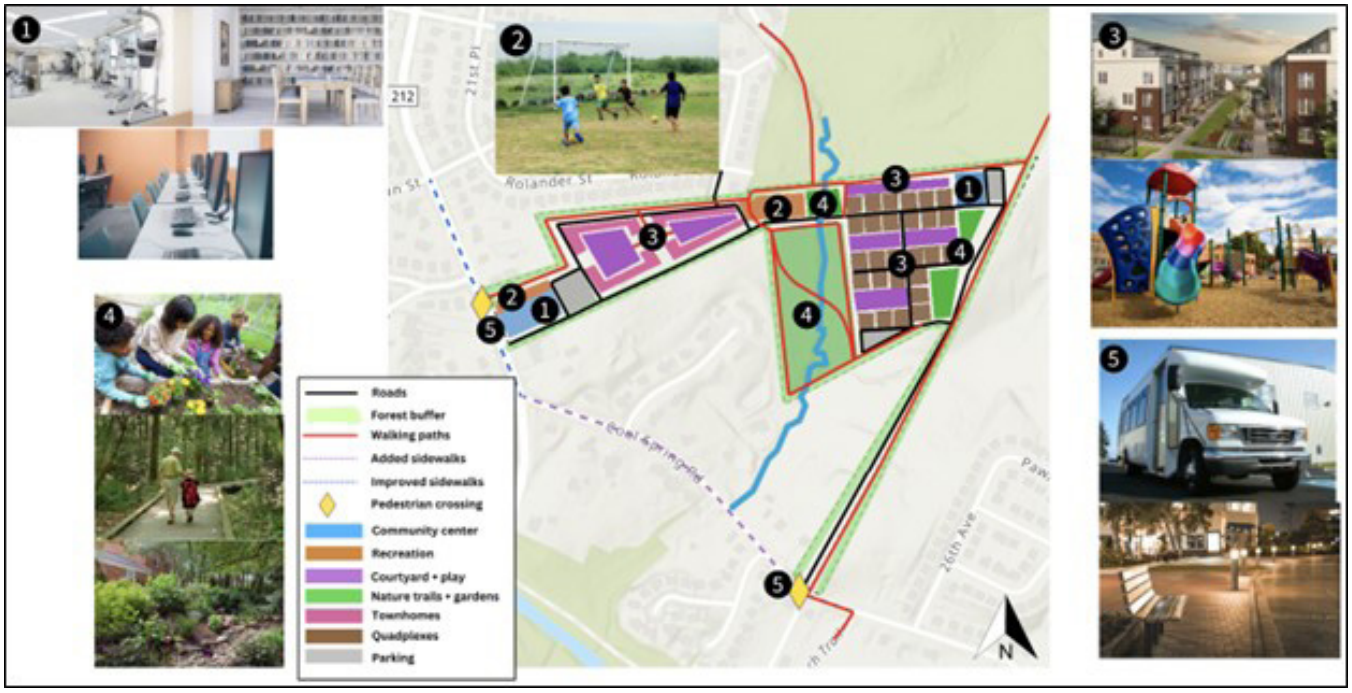


Figure 88. Site design and features of Adelphi Intergenerational Commons, showing townhomes and quadplexes, community center, walking paths, and preserved natural areas.

DESIGN

The architectural design emphasizes compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods by placing lower-density buildings near existing homes and clustering higher-intensity uses toward the interior of the site. Courtyards and gardens function as shared social spaces, reinforcing the intergenerational model without overwhelming the site's rural residential character.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility improvements mirror those in the enhanced proposal but are expanded to support both seniors and families with children. Clear pedestrian routes, improved sidewalks, and safer crossings enable independent movement across the site and to nearby amenities.

COMPATIBILITY (ZONING, PLAN, USE)

The proposal uses Maryland House Bill 538 to permit the development of mid-density housing in an area otherwise zoned for single-family detached residences. This bill provides density bonuses and other benefits to projects built on land owned by a nonprofit, provided that the project meets specific requirements (Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024, 2024; Housing Expansion and Affordability Act (HB 538) Frequently Asked Questions, 2025). While this represents a shift from the church's original plan, the overall scale and residential character remain compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. The inclusion of community-serving uses aligns with County goals related to housing, wellness, and social equity.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

Compared to the senior-only model, the intergenerational proposal generates lower total first-year revenue but offers greater long-term stability through a diversified resident base and reduced vacancy risk (Table 18). The mix of rental and for-sale units, combined with public-facing amenities, supports a more resilient financial structure over time.

	Revenue From Rent (per year)	Revenue From Home Sales	Total Revenue (first year)
Planned Retirement Community	$2 M	$36.6 M	**$38.6 M**
Adelphi Intergenerational Commons	$2.6 M	$18.7 M	**$21.4 M**

Table 18. Revenue Comparison – Original vs. Alternative Proposal.

COMPARABLE PROPERTIES

Several existing intergenerational and cohousing developments help demonstrate how the alternative proposal for the Church of the Living God could function in practice. These projects show how shared spaces, mixed-age residents, and intentional design can support both housing stability and social connection.

BRIDGE MEADOWS

Bridge Meadows in Portland, Oregon, is an intentionally intergenerational community designed to encourage daily interaction among residents (Figure 89). The development includes shared gardens, a typical house, and communal outdoor areas that create regular opportunities for people of different ages to spend time together. These shared spaces support resident interaction while preserving privacy within individual homes. Bridge Meadows also offers long-term affordable housing options, demonstrating how intergenerational models can remain financially accessible while fostering a strong sense of community.



Figure 89. Bridge Meadows, Portland, OR, is an intentionally intergenerational community.

Source: Bridge Meadows.

PETALUMA AVENUE HOMES

Petaluma Avenue Homes in Sebastopol, California, is an affordable cohousing-style development that serves a mix of former foster youth, adoptive families, and older adults (Figure 90). The project provides stable, affordable housing while intentionally integrating social support systems that enable residents to support one another. By housing multiple generations together and designing spaces that encourage connection, Petaluma Avenue Homes shows how intergenerational living can reduce isolation and create a more supportive residential environment.



Figure 90. Petaluma Avenue Homes, Sebastopol, CA.

Source: SAHA.

Together, these examples show that intergenerational housing can successfully combine affordability, shared space, and social support. They help ground the alternative proposal in real-world precedents that align with the Church of the Living God's goals of community care and long-term stability.

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION

We assessed both the current (planned retirement community) and alternative (intergenerational community) options across five factors: target populations, zoning compatibility, financial sustainability, revenue potential, and community impact (Table 19).

Factor	Planned Retirement Community	Adelphi Intergenerational Commons
Target Population	High need, single focus (seniors)	Multiple groups (intergenerational)
Zoning	More challenging; need approval for notable exception	Easier; no approval required w/ MD HB 538
Financial Sustainability	Higher vacancy potential	Mixed residents, lower vacancy potential
Revenue	Over $35 M	Roughly $20 M
Community Impact	Narrow	Broader

Table 19. Comparative Evaluation of Current and Alternative Proposals.

Based on this comparative evaluation, the team recommends the intergenerational option, as it yields the highest combined mission alignment, community impact, and adaptability. It maximizes the site's value by serving multiple populations, strengthens the church's role as a community anchor, and positions the church as a leader in innovative, mission-driven development. However, given that this option may reduce revenue potential, the church should determine which option best aligns with its long-term goals.

FINAL EVENT FEEDBACK AND NEXT STEPS

FEEDBACK FROM FINAL EVENT

Feedback from the final studio event highlighted strong support for the emphasized accessibility, public-facing amenities, and integration with surrounding neighborhoods. Participants expressed interest in improved pedestrian infrastructure, connected open spaces, and developments that extend benefits beyond residents alone. The enhanced proposal directly reflects this feedback by prioritizing walkability, safety, and shared community amenities while preserving the church's core mission.

Although the enhanced proposal was generally well-received, participants raised several concerns. They noted that while the community center would welcome more people from other neighborhoods, it is now farther from the quadplexes, which isolate

Final event feedback indicated strong interest in intergenerational housing, mixed-income development, and expanded community-serving uses. Participants highlighted the value of developments that address multiple social needs simultaneously and create visible community benefits. The alternative proposal reflects this feedback by broadening the church's impact while maintaining alignment with its mission and values.

As in the enhanced proposal, notes addressed the new location of the community center. There were also concerns about the pronounced revenue decline between the improved and alternative versions. While there are financial advantages to the alternative, it remains worth considering. Overall, though, the intergenerational approach was received positively.

NEXT STEPS

Regardless of which option the church chooses, the team recommends five next steps for development.

First, the church should begin early coordination with County planning and zoning agencies to clarify implementation pathways, including whether to apply for a special exception or use Maryland House Bill 538. In parallel, the church should initiate conversations with mission-aligned nonprofit developers experienced in intergenerational or affordable housing to explore partnership and ground-lease structures. One option includes Victory Housing, Inc., which developed Victory Oaks and Rollingcrest Commons discussed earlier.

Second, the church should proactively pursue partnerships with health, wellness, and social service providers to coordinate on-site services and programming. Formalizing these partnerships early will enhance the project's attractiveness and its potential public benefits.

Third, community engagement is critical. Using the stakeholder analysis and engagement framework developed by the team, the church should begin developing communication with nearby residents, faith organizations, and public officials. Public engagement sessions and workshops should also be part of the community engagement plan. The church should incorporate feedback from these parties into the project's design and programming.

Fourth, the church should refine its financial strategy by identifying and researching additional funding sources and beginning to prepare applications. Establishing an internal development team or advisory committee may help the church manage the complexity of financing a project of this type.

Finally, the church should continue to emphasize the opportunity this project provides to align its mission with community needs. Whether through senior housing, intergenerational living, or shared community services, the project offers a chance to advance the church's mission of care, stewardship, and service, thereby benefiting the Adelphi community.

ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROPERTY PROFILE

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church is a Protestant church located in New Carrollton, Maryland. The church was founded in 1956 and established in its current building in 1957. The main structure includes the sanctuary, classrooms, and offices on a 2.55-acre parcel. The site is zoned Residential Transit-Oriented High Intensity Edge (RTO-HE) within the New Carrollton Transit-Oriented Development Area. This zoning designation is intended to support high-intensity, mixed-use development in dense, walkable environments that accommodate much of the county's future residential and employment growth.

The site benefits from proximity to the New Carrollton transit center, which provides access to WMATA Metrorail and Metrobus, MARC commuter rail, and Amtrak services. The upcoming Purple Line will further expand transit connectivity. Under Plan Prince George's 2035, New Carrollton is designated as one of three county "Downtowns," and the church parcel is identified as a future mixed-use redevelopment site.

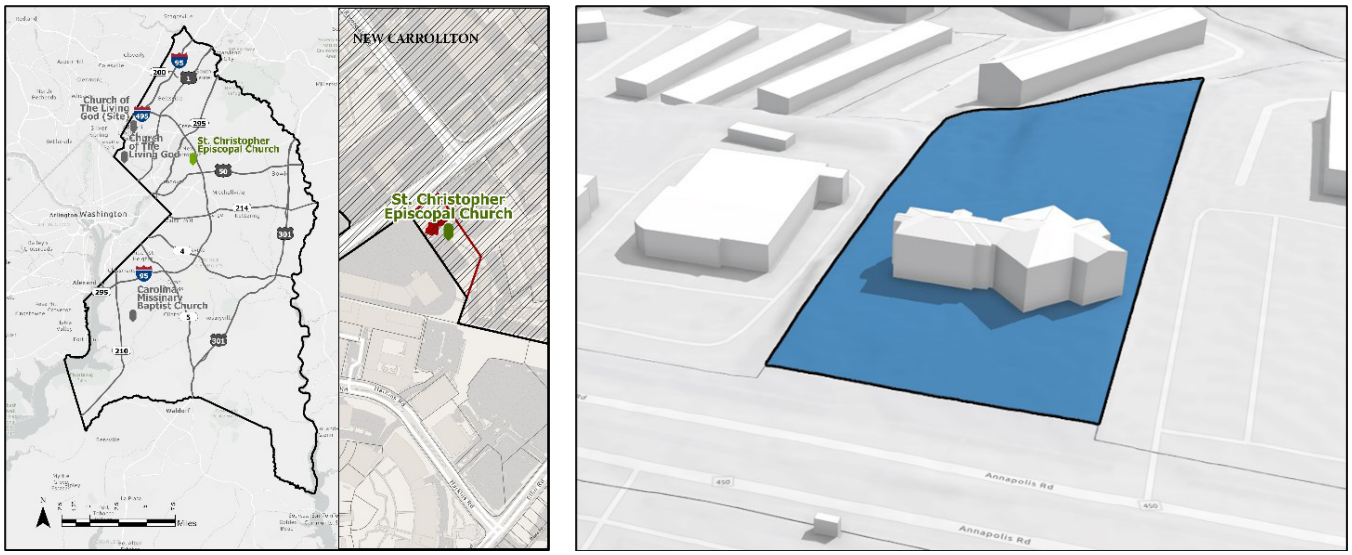


Figure 91. Location of Site for St. Christopher Episcopal Church.

Figure 91 shows the site location, while Table 20 summarizes parcel characteristics and property assessments. The surrounding zoning context (Figure 92) illustrates the transition from Edge zoning along Annapolis Road to higher-density Core zoning closer to the Metro station, where lower-density uses are restricted.

Property Profile	
Address	8001 Annapolis Rd, New Carrollton, MD 20784
Building Size	12,227 square feet
Parcel Size	2.55 Acres
Year Built	1957 (1961 on SDAT Records)
Zoning	RTO-H (Residential Transit Oriented, High Intensity)
Sale Price	Not Available on SDAT Records
Assessment Price	Land: $ 2,221,500 (2025) Improvements: $1,538,400 (2025) Total: $3,759,900 (2025)

Table 20. Tax Parcel Information for St. Christopher's Church.

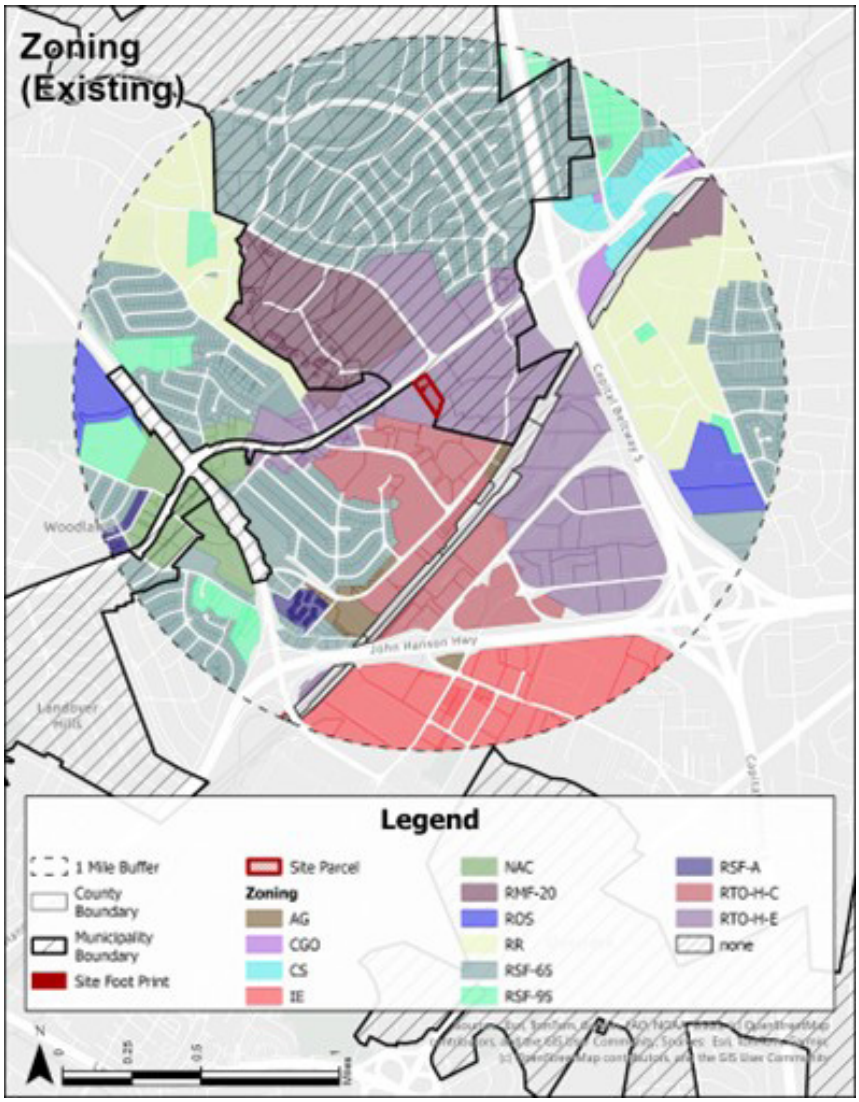


Figure 92. Zoning Surrounding St. Christopher's.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church was founded in 1956, with services formally established in its current building in 1957. Historically, the congregation reflected the demographic diversity of the surrounding community. Earlier membership included both white and Black congregants, while today the church is predominantly composed of West African members, including Nigerians, Sierra Leoneans, Liberians, and Ghanaians. The congregation also includes members of Caribbean, European, and African-American backgrounds. The building is shared with Iglesia Cristo Viene Ya, a Spanish-speaking sister congregation, reflecting ongoing demographic change in the area.

Site visits conducted during the semester indicate that the church has approximately 75 members, with weekly attendance typically ranging between 35 and 40 individuals, most of whom are between 45 and 65 years old. Attendance declined following the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among older members who have not returned to regular in-person participation.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

New Carrollton originated in 1957 as a planned community known as the City of Carrollton, covering approximately 300 acres. The city was named after Charles Carroll, a Maryland signer of the Declaration of Independence, and was later renamed New Carrollton in 1986 to distinguish it from other Maryland communities with similar names.

The city initially grew during the suburban expansion and white flight from Washington, D.C., followed by later waves of Black migration into Prince George's County. In the 1990s, the establishment of federal government offices near the Metro station further stimulated development. More recently, Prince George's County identified New Carrollton as a priority location for high-density redevelopment, particularly around the Metro and MARC stations.

Despite this policy direction, the Annapolis Road corridor remains largely low-density, characterized by strip commercial development such as fast-food restaurants and discount retail.

Demographically, New Carrollton is a majority-Black community with a significant and growing Hispanic and Latino population, representing roughly 36% of residents. According to the 2023 American Community Survey, the city has a median household income of $80,292 and the median individual income of $42,207, both lower than county and state averages, indicating ongoing affordability challenges. Figure 93 illustrates the racial composition of New Carrollton compared with Prince George's County and Maryland.

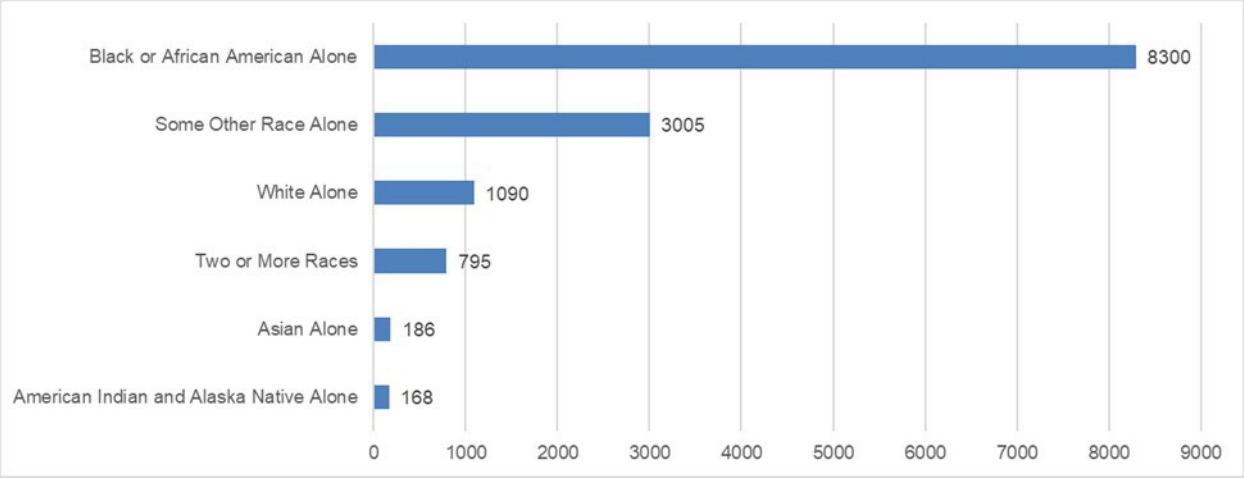


Figure 93. New Carrollton, Prince George's County, and Maryland by Race (2023).

PEOPLE

The project team conducted outreach with several individuals connected to the church and local government. Within the church, key contacts included Jo Mimms, the acting Senior Warden responsible for overseeing the vestry and church operations, and Marcia Nwosu, Chair of the Development Committee for the church's nonprofit organization, Center of Grace. Both individuals have been actively involved in exploring redevelopment opportunities for the site.

Local government stakeholders were also identified because of the site's location within a priority redevelopment area. These include Prince George's County Councilmember Eric C. Olson, who represents District 3 and currently serves as County Council Chair, as well as New Carrollton Mayor Phelicia Nembhard. The Prince George's County Planning Department also plays a key role, given the county's goal of encouraging higher-density development near transit stations. Figure 94 shows several of these individuals involved in discussions related to potential redevelopment.



Figure 94. Senior Warden Jo Mimms, Councilman Eric Olson, and Mayor Phelicia Nembhard.

PLACE

Although the site is relatively small, the RTO-H zoning designation allows for high-density redevelopment, making the property capable of supporting a significant new development. However, the broader Annapolis Road corridor presents challenges because most surrounding parcels remain low-density despite the mixed-use zoning framework.

The church property currently includes the sanctuary building, a community garden, and a large surface parking lot. The site is adjacent to the parking lot of the Defense Shopping Center, separated by a fence. The building itself is in poor physical condition, with notable water damage and roof leaks (Figure 95).



Figure 95. Water Damage in St. Christopher's Church Kitchen.

Annapolis Road is a heavily trafficked multi-lane corridor that creates barriers to pedestrian and bicycle activity. Despite zoning that encourages mixed-use redevelopment, existing land uses along the corridor are dominated by strip retail and auto-oriented businesses such as auto repair shops, discount stores, and fast-food establishments.

FUNDAMENTAL SITE ANALYSIS

To evaluate potential redevelopment options, it is necessary to establish a baseline understanding of the site's regulatory and physical context. This analysis examines zoning regulations, transit access, amenities access, and applicable planning frameworks to identify the conditions shaping future development opportunities.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The site is located within the Regional Transit-Oriented High-Intensity (RTO-H) Zone, specifically within the Edge Area, which supports high-density development while transitioning intensity away from the transit core. This zoning framework allows substantial residential and mixed-use development but incorporates form-based design controls that influence building form, frontage, and site layout.

The RTO-H Edge designation permits residential densities of up to 175 dwelling units per acre, building heights up to 182 feet, and flexible floor-area ratios, although these theoretical limits are moderated by design requirements such as build-to lines, frontage transparency standards, and parking regulations.

Parking requirements are reduced to 50% of the county standard, though maximum limits apply, and surface parking is discouraged along street frontages. Structured parking is exempt from these caps, encouraging parking solutions integrated within buildings. Table 21 summarizes the primary zoning standards affecting the site. Overall, the zoning provides significant development capacity but channels that capacity through design-oriented requirements that influence project cost, building form, and site layout.

Zoning Factor	Regulatory Standard (RTO-H Edge)	Constraint Implication
Permitted Intensity	Residential density up to 175 du/ac	Allows high unit counts, but realization depends on parking, setbacks, and building form
Building Height	Maximum 182 ft (with step-back requirements above threshold heights)	Tall buildings permitted, but step-backs increase design and construction complexity
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	No maximum FAR for any specific use, but the total FAR must be within [0.5 - 3.0]	Density is constrained more by form, occupancy rate, and parking than by FAR caps
Build-To Line	15–35 ft from street frontage	Requires a consistent street wall, limiting flexible site layouts
Building Width in Build-To Zone	Minimum 70% of the lot width	Encourages continuous frontage, discourages fragmented massing
Front Yard Depth	0 ft minimum	Supports urban form but limits buffering from street activity
Side / Rear Yards	Minimal requirements (typically 0–5 ft)	Maximizes buildable area but increases coordination with adjacent uses
Façade Transparency	50% minimum at street-level facades	Requires active ground floors; increases facade cost
Parking Minimums	50% of the standard county minimums	Reduces parking burden but does not eliminate it
Parking Maximums	150% of reduced minimums (structured parking exempt)	Caps surface parking, incentivizes structured solutions
Surface Parking Location	Must be to rear or side, not dominant on frontage	Constrains site circulation and layout
Pedestrian Standards	Required sidewalks, cross-access, and marked crossings	Increases site design obligations but supports walkability goals

Table 21. RTO-H Edge Zoning Summary Table.

TRANSIT ACCESS

Transit accessibility is a defining characteristic of the site and a key factor supporting transit-oriented development. The property is located within a multimodal transit network that includes bus service, Metrorail, MARC commuter rail, Amtrak service, and the future Purple Line light rail.

Local accessibility is reinforced by a high density of bus stops within walking distance, as illustrated by the walkshed analysis in Figure 96. Multiple WMATA Metrobus and PG The Bus routes operate along Annapolis Road and nearby corridors, providing overlapping service coverage.

At the regional level, the New Carrollton transit hub connects the site to Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and the broader Northeast Corridor. The upcoming Purple Line will add east-west connectivity across Prince George's and Montgomery counties, further strengthening transit access. Table 22 summarizes the number and types of transit services located within the 20-minute walkshed.

Color	**Transit Type (Agency)**	**Route Name**	**# Stops**
	Regional (Amtrak)	Northeast Regional	1
	Metro (WMATA)	Orange	1
	Commuter (MARC)	Penn	1
	Light Rail (MTA)	Purple	2
	Bus (Shuttle UM)	126	19
	Bus (PG The Bus)	P22, P23, P2X	16
	Bus (WMATA)	P20, P21, P24, P30, P31, P35, P40, P42	79
Total			**119**

Table 22. Transit Routes and Stops within a 20-minute Walkshed from the Development Site.

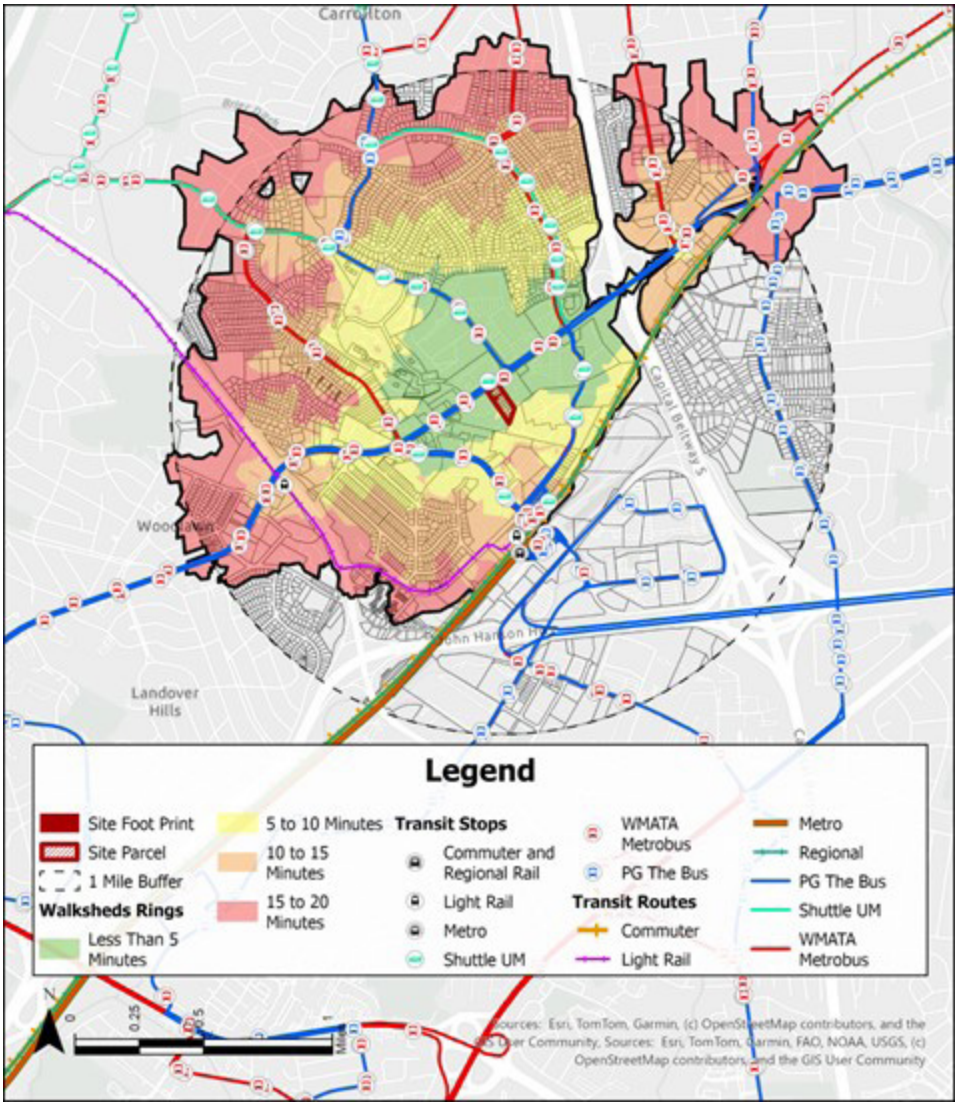


Figure 96. Transit Routes and Stops within a 20-minute Walkshed from the Development Site.

AMENITIES ACCESS

Amenities around the site are unevenly distributed and constrained by pedestrian safety conditions along Annapolis Road. The amenities analysis evaluates four categories: recreational assets, healthy food vendors, health services, and community or educational facilities. Recreational opportunities are limited near the site, with no parks located within a five-minute walk and only a small number within the broader 10- to 20-minute walkshed. Food access is more readily available due to nearby strip commercial centers, though many establishments are fast-food oriented. Two grocery stores are located within the extended walkshed, providing baseline food access.

Health services are concentrated primarily within the Metro Points Hotel complex, while community and educational assets, including churches and government facilities, are clustered near the New Carrollton transit center. Table 23 and Figure 97 summarize the number of amenities identified within the 20-minute walkshed. Despite their proximity, pedestrian safety along Annapolis Road reduces practical accessibility, limiting the comfort and convenience of walking between the site and surrounding amenities.

Color	Essential Use	Count
	Community and Educational Assets	31
	Health Services	20
	Healthy Food Vendors	7
	Recreational Assets	12
Total		**70**

Table 23. Amenities within a 20-minute Walkshed from the Development Site.

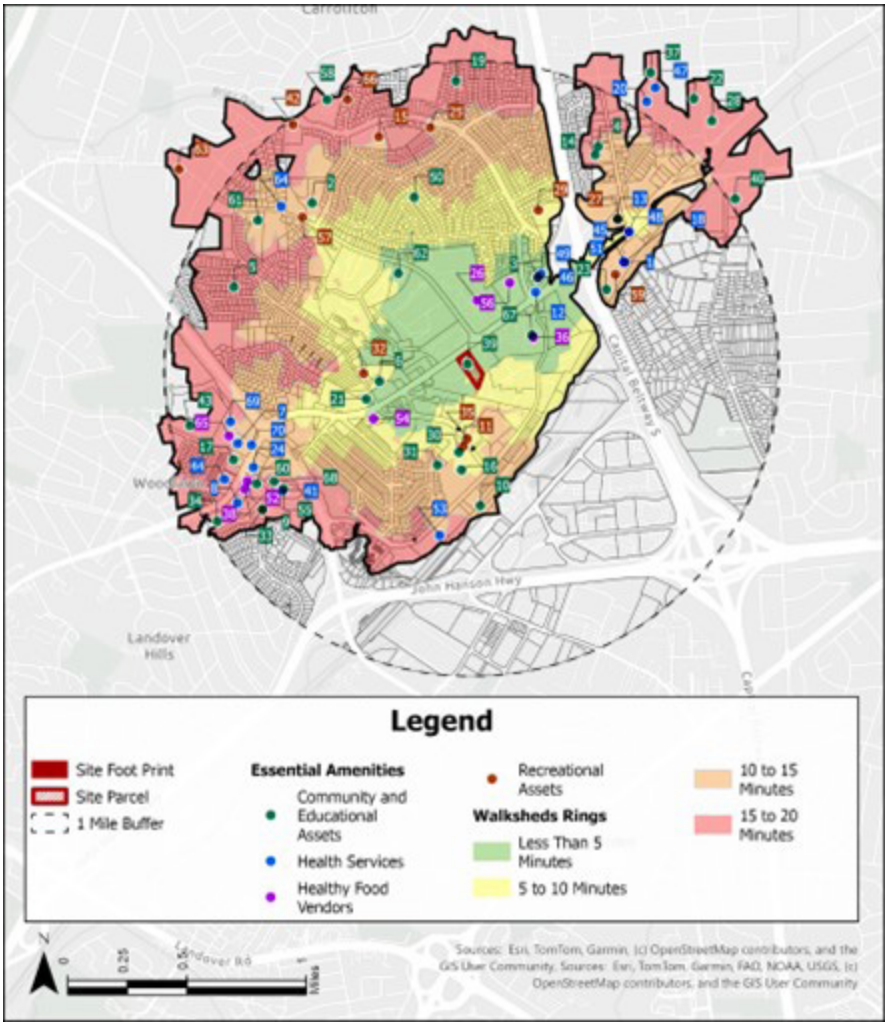


Figure 97. Amenities within a 20-minute Walkshed from the Development Site.

CURRENT ACTIVE PLANS AND OVERLAYS

The site benefits from several development incentives available at the federal, state, and county levels. At the federal level, redevelopment may qualify for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. At the state and local levels, the site's location in New Carrollton provides access to additional programs, including Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone), Priority Funding Area designation, Sustainable Community status, Opportunity Zone designation, National Capital Strategic Economic Development Fund eligibility, and Enterprise Zone incentives. These programs may expand financing opportunities and support larger redevelopment efforts.

The primary planning framework guiding redevelopment is the New Carrollton Transit District Development Plan and Transit District Overlay Zoning Map Amendment (2010), which replaced the earlier 1989 plan. The plan directs long-term transit-oriented redevelopment around the Metro station and along key corridors such as Annapolis Road.

Within this framework, the project site lies in the Annapolis Road Corridor, identified as a commercial and redevelopment spine connecting surrounding neighborhoods to the Metro core. The corridor is intended to support medium-density mixed-use development, with retail concentrated at intersections and residential uses integrated nearby.

Key planning priorities include improved pedestrian crossings, streetscape enhancements, integration with the transit network, and environmentally sensitive design strategies such as green infrastructure and stormwater management (Figure 98).

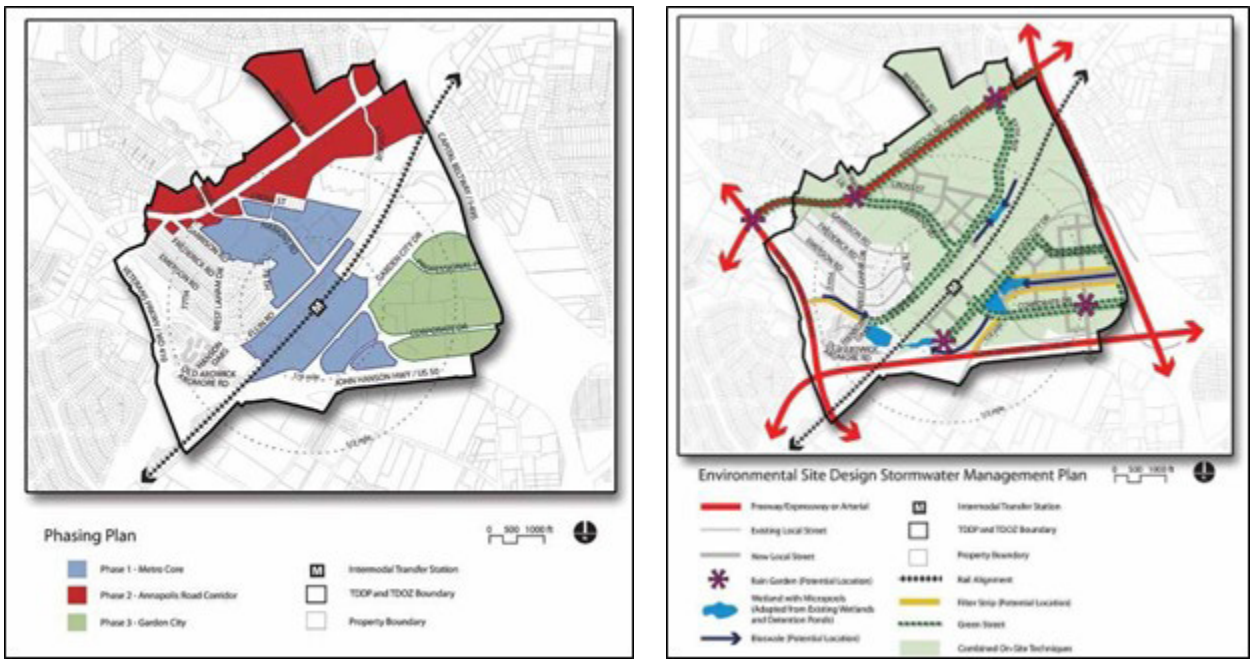


Figure 98. New Carrollton Approved Transit District Development Plan's Phasing and Corridors (left) and Environmental Site Design Stormwater Management (right).

Overall, the plan positions the Annapolis Road corridor as a future redevelopment area, encouraging incremental transformation into a transit-supportive, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use environment. The plan does not prescribe a specific development outcome but instead establishes the regulatory and design framework within which individual projects are evaluated.

DELIVERABLE

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church requested assistance from the project team in three areas:

- Analyzing the current development proposal and recommending a potential alternative.
- Identifying financial incentives and programs that could support a viable development strategy.
- Identifying potential partners to help initiate redevelopment of the property.

The latter two deliverables are provided in the Appendix.

CURRENT PROJECT PROPOSAL

OVERVIEW

Following the analysis of existing conditions and planning frameworks, this section evaluates the Current Project Proposal prepared by Michael Graves Architecture. The analysis assesses how the proposal performs relative to previously identified market conditions, zoning constraints, transit access, surrounding amenities, and adopted plans before introducing alternative development scenarios.

The evaluation considers four dimensions:

- Site and Urban Design
- Financial Feasibility
- Mission Alignment
- Zoning and Plan Compatibility

Figure 99 illustrates the relationship between the existing site and the proposed development.

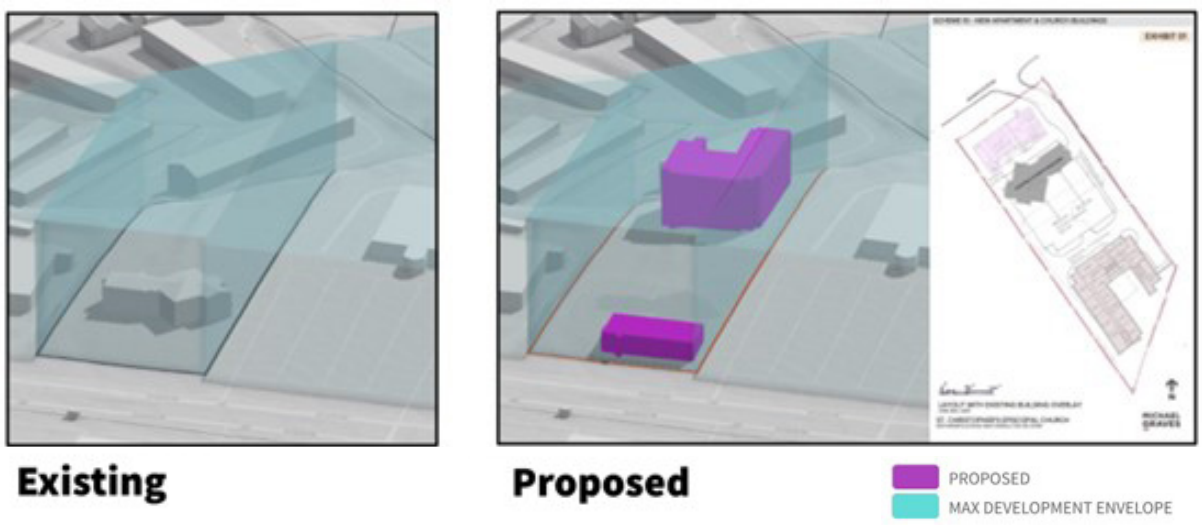


Figure 99. Existing vs. Proposed Development.

DELIVERABLE

The proposal organizes the site as a two-building campus consisting of civic and residential components. A three-story church building fronts Annapolis Road, creating a civic presence along the corridor, while a six-story affordable housing building is placed toward the rear of the parcel to reduce visual impacts on the church. Shared surface parking and outdoor amenities are located between and behind the two buildings.

The proposed program includes:

- Worship space for two congregations
- Daycare facilities
- Food pantry
- Classrooms and community meeting space
- Approximately 80 units of affordable housing
- Outdoor green and gathering areas

This layout separates sacred, residential, and support functions while allowing shared infrastructure. From an urban design perspective, the proposal offers several strengths. The church building establishes a visible institutional presence along Annapolis Road, while the rear placement of the residential building preserves the church's prominence and reduces overshadowing.

However, several design limitations are also identified. The narrow, triangular parcel requires efficient circulation and frontage design, yet pedestrian connections from Annapolis Road into the site remain limited. Outdoor amenities are largely internalized behind the residential building, reducing their visibility and contribution to the public realm. In addition, the shared surface parking configuration improves operational efficiency but constrains opportunities for stronger pedestrian-oriented site design and streetscape activation. Figure 100 presents the detailed site plan and program configuration.



Figure 100. Detailed Site Plan with Proposed Program.

MISSION ALIGNMENT

Mission alignment represents the strongest dimension of the proposal. The project directly advances St. Christopher's goals of expanding affordable housing, strengthening community services, and creating a resilience hub for the surrounding neighborhood.

Program components such as the food pantry, daycare facilities, and community spaces build on existing church initiatives and reinforce the church's role as a community anchor. The emphasis on resilience and community support also responds to identified climate risks and emergency preparedness needs in the area.

As a result, the proposal positions the church as a "beacon of faith, service, and resilience." However, the analysis notes that mission-driven design choices may constrain flexibility in responding to market conditions and financial feasibility, suggesting the need for careful balancing in future iterations.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Market demand for development in New Carrollton is shaped by strong locational advantages, constrained housing supply, affordability pressures, and financial feasibility limits. Table 24 synthesizes these factors by evaluating location, market trends, comparable properties, and return on investment (ROI) potential.

Location emerges as the strongest market factor. The site benefits from regional transit access, including proximity to New Carrollton Metro, Amtrak service, multiple bus routes, and the future Purple Line. Its position within a designated Transit District and Regional Transit-Oriented zoning framework further reinforces long-term residential demand.

Market trends are rated medium to high, reflecting low vacancy rates, competitive housing conditions, and limited new development supply in nearby submarkets. Although price growth has moderated and affordability pressures remain significant, these indicators reflect continued demand rather than market instability.

Comparable developments demonstrate moderate favorability, indicating that mixed-use and faith-based redevelopment projects in Prince George's County have achieved sustained occupancy and operational viability. However, outcomes vary depending on construction type, parking strategy, and financing structure.

ROI and cash flow potential are also rated medium, reflecting a market in which demand is stable, but rents alone cannot support high-cost development forms. Financial feasibility, therefore, depends on cost-efficient building typologies and layered financing strategies.

Overall, the market conditions indicate stable demand but strong cost constraints, establishing the parameters within which development alternatives must be evaluated.

Factor	Evidence
Location **Favorability** ✓ ✓	• Strong regional and local transit access, including frontage on Annapolis Road (MD-450), multiple bus routes, proximity to New Carrollton Metro and Amtrak, and future Purple Line connectivity • Located within a designated Transit District and Regional Transit-Oriented zoning framework that prioritizes compact, mixed-use development • Proximity to major civic, medical, and institutional anchors (municipal services, healthcare, employment centers) strengthens long-term residential demand
Factor	Evidence
Market Trends **Favorability** ✓ ✓	• Persistently low residential vacancy rates indicate steady underlying housing demand • High sales-to-list price ratios signal competitive housing conditions despite moderated price growth • Limited new residential pipeline in nearby submarkets suggests constrained supply rather than demand saturation • Stable rent levels and modest price softening reflect affordability pressure rather than market weakness
Factor	Evidence
Comparable Properties **Favorability** ✓ ✓ ✓	• Comparable mixed-use and faith-based redevelopment projects in the county demonstrate sustained occupancy and long-term operational viability • Comparable multifamily developments near transit confirm demand for residential uses in similar locational contexts • Variations in scale and program across comparables indicate that feasibility is sensitive to construction type, parking strategy, and financing structure rather than demand alone
Factor	Evidence
ROI and Cash Flow Potential **Favorability** ✓ ✓ ✓	• Market studies and feasibility analysis indicate predictable residential demand but limited ability to absorb high construction or parking costs • Financial performance is highly dependent on cost-efficient building typologies and access to public or mission-aligned financing tools • Stable demand supports long-term cash flow, but market rents alone are insufficient to support high-intensity or high-cost development forms

Table 24. Site's Market Analysis.

ZONING AND PLAN COMPATIBILITY

The proposal is generally consistent with the RTO-H Edge zoning designation and the New Carrollton Transit District Development Plan. Both multifamily housing and houses of worship are permitted uses within the zone, and the proposed residential density of approximately 80 units falls within the allowable range of 20 to 175 dwelling units per acre.

The placement of the church along Annapolis Road aligns with planning policies encouraging development that activates the corridor and supports a transit-oriented urban environment. The proposal also supports the broader goal of encouraging mixed-use development near the New Carrollton transit hub.

Despite this compatibility, the evaluation notes that the proposal does not fully leverage the regulatory flexibility provided by the RTO-H Edge zone. Opportunities remain to improve building efficiency and strengthen frontage activation along Annapolis Road. Table 25 summarizes zoning compatibility for the major program components, including multifamily housing and house-of-worship uses.

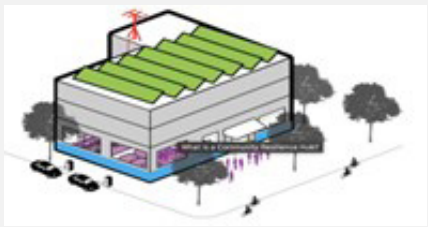
Multifamily-Housing	
	**Permitted in RTO-H-E Zones:** Shall not adversely affect the character of the surrounding residential community **For the Edge zone, must not:** Have min DU of 20 and max of 175 (currently has 80) Min height of 35/Max height of 182 **For Edge Min Parking requirement:** 1 space for every dwelling unit (DU) – studio and 1 bedroom 1.35 spaces for every DU – all other unit types
House of Worship	
	**Fully compatible with RTO-HE; allowed by right** **Parking requirement:** 1 space for every 4 seats
Resilience Hub	
	**N/A**

Table 25. Zoning Compatibility: House of Worship.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

Overall, the proposal presents a mission-driven and policy-consistent development concept that delivers significant community benefits, particularly through the provision of affordable housing and expanded church services. However, several limitations remain. These include constrained pedestrian connectivity, inefficient use of the site, and challenges related to long-term financial feasibility. While these limitations do not invalidate the proposal, they highlight opportunities for refinement or alternative development configurations that could improve project feasibility while maintaining the church's mission. Table 26 summarizes the evaluation across five categories: mission alignment, market feasibility, financial feasibility, site planning, and urban design.

Evaluation Category	Rating	Key Observations
Mission Alignment	★★★★★	Strong alignment with church and community service goals
Market Feasibility	★★★★	Affordable housing demand supported; limited income diversity
Financial Feasibility	★★★	Reliant on subsidies; constrained revenue streams
Site & Planning	★★★	Zoning-compliant but not fully optimized
Urban Design & Access	★★★	Strong civic presence; weak pedestrian integration

Table 26. Summary Evaluation of Current Project Proposal.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

PROJECT COST STRUCTURE

The total estimated development cost for the current proposal is $65,345,500, covering both the residential and church components of the project (Figure 101).

The residential portion represents the majority of the cost due to the scale of the multifamily housing program and structured parking requirements. The church component includes the replacement of worship, community, and administrative spaces specified in the project program.

Cost estimates include construction expenses, soft costs such as design and permitting, financing and legal fees, insurance, and contingency allowances consistent with similar mixed-use affordable housing projects in Prince George's County.

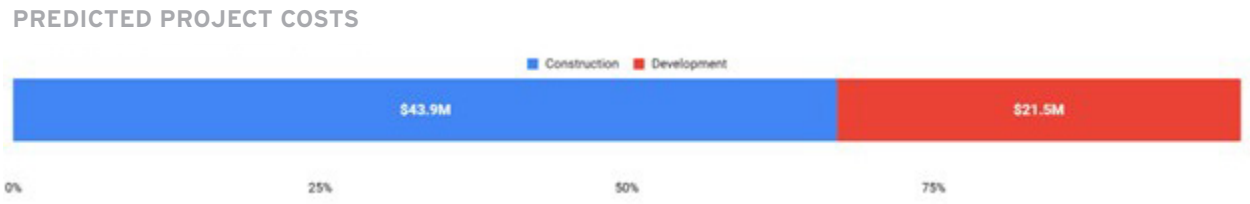


Figure 101. Current Proposal's Predicted Project Costs.

IDENTIFIED FUNDING SOURCES

Figure 102 summarizes the primary funding sources identified for the project. These sources include conventional debt, public-sector soft financing, tax credit equity, and internal project transfers.

The residential portion relies on multiple financing streams. Permanent first mortgage debt is estimated at $13.65 million, based on projected operating income and conservative underwriting assumptions. Additional public-sector support includes approximately $6 million in soft loans from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and Prince George's County.

A major financing component is 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) equity, enhanced by a Qualified Census Tract basis boost, which is estimated to generate $18.42 million.

The church component currently lacks independent external funding sources and relies primarily on $2.43 million in proceeds from an internal land sale transferred from the residential portion of the project.



Figure 102. Current Proposal's Predicted Funding Sources.

FUNDING GAP ASSESSMENT

Despite assembling approximately $40.5 million in financing sources, the project remains significantly underfunded relative to the estimated development cost. Table 27 identifies a funding gap of $24,849,067.

This gap results from two primary conditions. First, the church facilities do not generate revenue and therefore lack dedicated financing sources beyond the internal land transfer. Second, while the residential component benefits from LIHTC equity and conventional debt, it cannot generate sufficient surplus revenue to fully subsidize the church component without undermining project feasibility.

Type	Source	Estimate
Loans (Debt & Soft Loans)	Permanent First Mortgage Debt	$13,650,433
	Maryland DHCD – Rental Housing Works	$3,500,000
	Prince George's County Soft Financing	$2,500,000
Tax Credits/Equities	LIHTC Equity (4% w/ QCT Boost)	$18,418,000
Other	Proceeds from Internal Land Sale	$2,428,000
Funding Gap		$24,849,067
Total		**$65,345,500**

Table 27. Current Proposal's Detailed Funding Assessment.

As a result, the project would require additional grants, philanthropic funding, program adjustments, or development phasing to achieve full financial feasibility.

COMPARABLE PROPERTIES

We evaluated two comparable properties in greater detail to better understand how combined affordable housing and house-of-worship developments appear in practice in Prince George's County. These were (1) Courtney View Apartments in Arbutus, MD. (Figure 103) and (2) Gilliam Place in Arlington, VA (Figure 104).

COURTNEY VIEW APARTMENTS



Figure 103. Courtney View Apartments in Arbutus, Maryland.

Source: Episcopal Housing Corporation.

The Courtney View Apartments in Arbutus, MD, is a 74-unit, new-construction affordable housing project developed in partnership with The Church of Holy Apostles and St. Stephen, serving low-income families, including 19 individuals and families experiencing homelessness, with robust on-site amenities such as a Life Enrichment Center, community garden, and shared social spaces. The project was made feasible through 9% LIHTC and HOME-ARP funding, alongside support from Baltimore County DHCD, a significant grant from The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, and construction and permanent financing from JPMorgan Chase.

The Courtney View Apartments demonstrate how a faith-based institution could use state funding and a mission-aligned nonprofit developer to create affordable housing on a church property. Furthermore, it highlights how a renovated or new house of worship can be connected to a multi-family apartment building as a single structure. The Courtney View Apartments are near the Halethorpe MARC station and are served by numerous MTA bus routes. These are especially relevant to SCE given the pedestrian and transit opportunities at the Church site.

GILLIAM PLACE IN ARLINGTON, VA



Figure 104. Gilliam Place in Arbutus, Maryland.

Source: Gilliam Place.

Gilliam Place in Arlington, VA, is a faith-based, mixed-use redevelopment that delivers 173 units of affordable housing with ground-floor community space, allowing the congregation to remain an active civic anchor. The project was supported by a strong public-private partnership, receiving approximately $57 million in state and local funding from Virginia Housing, Arlington County, Capital One, and Enterprise Community Partners.

Gilliam Place serves as an example for SCE of a successful mixed-use development combining a church and affordable housing. It shares several similarities with SCE, another project in the suburban Washington, DC area. Several WMATA Metrobus routes serve it and are close to the Ballston and Pentagon City Metro stations and the Crystal City VRE station. Gilliam Place illustrates how a church can redevelop its property in an area with a shortage of affordable housing.

MIDTERM EVENT

Although St. Christopher's did not explicitly request assistance with community engagement, the project team conducted a midterm engagement session to gather feedback from community members, planners, and other stakeholders. This engagement helped the team assess development potential at the site and identify possible constraints that may have contributed to the continued presence of low-density development along the Annapolis Road corridor.

The session provided insights into several key issues, including the role of transit-oriented development, potential environmental concerns, and precedents for mixed-use redevelopment on church properties. This feedback informed the team's subsequent research, including identifying funding opportunities, exploring tax incentives, and evaluating alternative redevelopment strategies.



Figure 105. SOAR Activity for St. Christopher's Episcopal Church and Engagement with University of Maryland Students, Prince George's County Planning, and Additional Community Members.

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Participants were asked to evaluate the current proposal by identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback summarized in Table 28 highlights both positive aspects of the concept and concerns regarding site design.

Participants generally supported the project's mission-driven approach to providing affordable housing. Positive feedback noted that locating housing at the rear of the site could create a quieter residential environment, that the project provides sufficient parking, and that various financial incentives exist for developments of this type.

However, participants also identified several design concerns. These included the proposal's limited use of mixed-use zoning, an overreliance on parking for a transit-oriented site, and the placement of housing at the rear of the development rather than along Annapolis Road.

Feedback from the Final Event on the Current Project Proposal	
"What Works Well"	**"What Needs Improvement"**
Housing in the back allows for a quieter home environment	Does not take advantage of mixed-use land use
There is enough parking for both uses	Too much parking for a Transit-Oriented Development
There are many financial incentives for projects like this	Move the housing to the front of the development

Table 28. Feedback from the Final Event on the Current Project Proposal.

Overall, the feedback indicates that the project's core concept, combining church functions with affordable housing, is well supported, but improvements are needed to strengthen connectivity, accessibility, and site integration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the project's accessibility and site design, the group recommends that the development shift toward a more mixed-use model.

- improving pedestrian safety;
- reorienting the apartments to face Annapolis Road;
- enhancing green buffers;
- creating a green-space sponge park;
- creating multiple access options through entrances, paths, and road connections.

These recommendations will address concerns related to heavy traffic and walkability, while marketing the project as an accessible, inclusive, and resilient community center (Table 29).

Concerns and Responses for the Current Project Proposal	
Concern	**Response**
Noise of Annapolis Road	Expand forested/green buffers, place a park/garden in the back
Land Dedicated to parking	Reduce parking footprint, add green buffers
Circulation and traffic challenges	Reorient building design to place all uses in the front of the lot
Pedestrian safety issues	Emphasize pedestrian mobility by advocating for sidewalk upgrades, crosswalks, lighting, shading, and traffic calming measures
The current setback for building along Annapolis Road exceeds the permitted limit.	Remove the current setback to comply with the zoning code.
The current proposal plans for two separate structures and does not take advantage of the Mixed-Use zoning	Integrate the two structures into a single building, or connect the two buildings.
Slope/flooding concerns	Create a Sponge Park/Rain Garden in the back of the site
Paved environment	Prioritize planting of native species and substantial vegetation in park/garden space

Table 29. Concerns and Responses for the Current Project Proposal.

CURRENT PROJECT PROPOSAL

OVERVIEW

The alternative proposal for St. Christopher's Episcopal reimagines the church's planned development as three components of a single mixed-use building: a church with a resilience hub, a mixed-use apartment building, and a retail storefront on the ground floor. This proposal builds directly on the church's original concept but refines it through improved site design, expanded public-facing amenities, and stronger, more extensive green spaces. The alternative proposal maintains the church's mission of providing affordable housing while creating a more accessible, cohesive, and community-oriented development that adds amenities to the neighborhood (Figure 106).

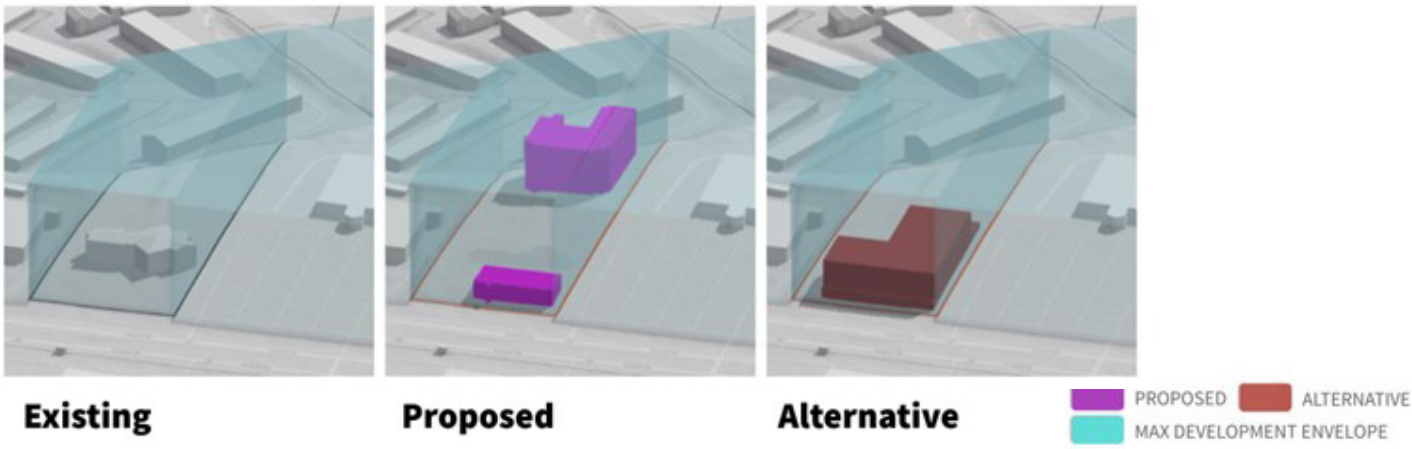


Figure 106. Existing vs. Proposed vs. Alternative Developments.

JUSTIFICATION

The alternative proposal addresses several documented needs and constraints identified during the site analysis and in community feedback. One connected mixed-use structure provides additional space for other uses on the site while also better conforming to the zoning code. At the same time, the church site is constrained by a busy surrounding road, limited pedestrian infrastructure, and extensive surface parking. The site is also constrained by its small size of just 2.55 acres.

Retail adds amenities to the site in an area that lacks high-quality food and third-space options. It enhances the apartment complex's appeal to prospective residents and fosters community. The Sponge Park at the back of the site makes the church's status as a resilience hub more physically visible. It enables the church to play a role in mitigating the impacts of natural disasters, such as flooding from heavy rainfall. While the site itself is protected from rain, and development does not add impervious surfaces, a sponge park can help mitigate runoff from the heavily paved Annapolis Road corridor to the rest of the area (Figure 107).



Figure 107. Existing vs. Proposed vs. Alternative Developments.

DESCRIPTION

The alternative St. Christopher's Church is organized around a single mixed-use structure that houses the church, a retail site, and a resilience hub. The retail proponent of the new development allows for greater use of the parcel's space and serves as a gathering space for the new community.

A key feature of the proposal is a new sponge park green space in the back (see the Sponge Park Callout Box Below). The park will absorb runoff from the church site, thereby helping mitigate existing flooding in Prince George's County. It also serves as a key aspect of the resilience hub. It allows St. Christopher's resilience hub greater protection against flooding during heavy rain and provides a beautiful and educational park space on the church site.

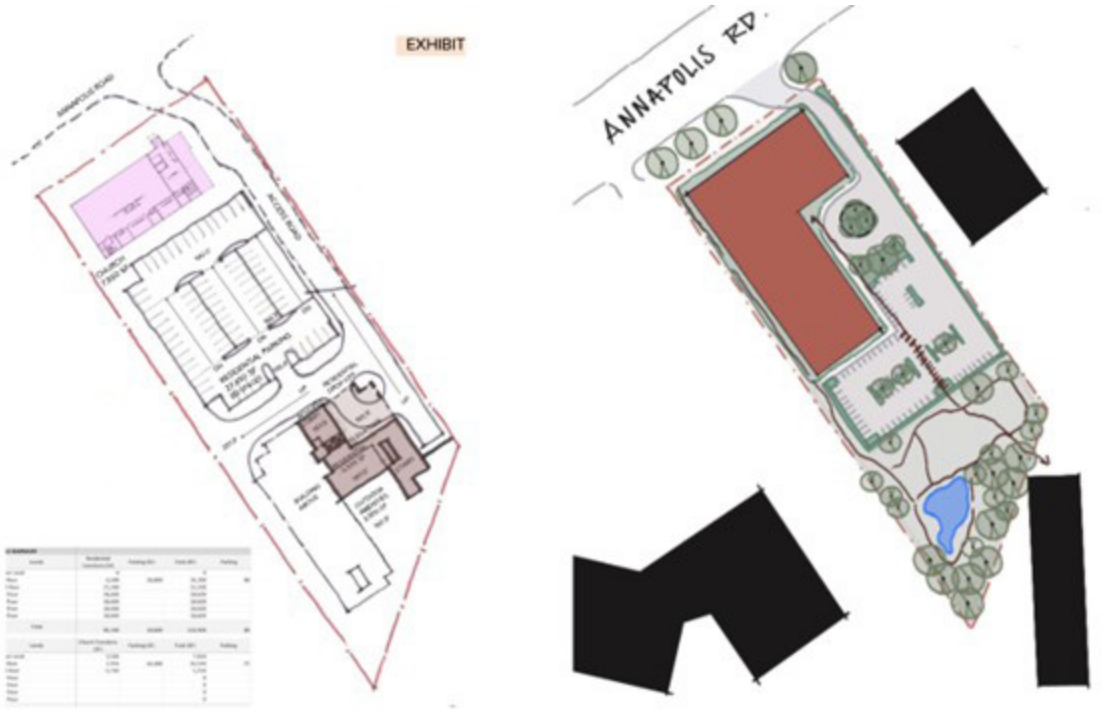


Figure 108. Proposed Development (left) Compared to Alternative Development (right).

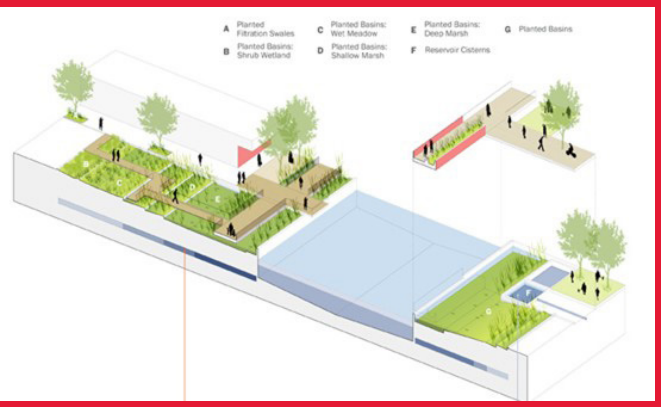


Diagram showing how a sponge park works

What is a Sponge Park?

A sponge park is a landscaped public space designed to capture, absorb, and filter stormwater runoff before it enters nearby waterways. These parks rely on natural systems such as vegetation and permeable surfaces to manage water flow while improving environmental quality. Typical sponge park features include:

- Bioswales and rain gardens, which slow and filter stormwater
- Permeable pavement, allowing water to infiltrate the ground
- Retention basins, which temporarily hold stormwater and reduce runoff

Because they manage stormwater and reduce flooding risk, sponge parks are often integrated into community resilience hubs. During climate-related events, they can help maintain access to key facilities and provide shaded cooling spaces during extreme heat.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The alternative proposal includes the same number of housing units in total but adds retail space to the site and reduces the total amount of parking:

Spaces Details	
Amenities Per Floor	600 sf (1/floor)
1 Bedroom Units	600 sf (8/floor)
2 Bedroom Units	900 sf (6/floor)
3 Bedroom Units	1200 sf (6/floor)
Retail Units	1000 sf (4 on ground floor)
Church and Services	24000 sf (on the ground floor)
Construction Information	
Base Parking Spots	174
Decreased Parking Spots	87
Proposed FAR	1.13
Footprint Coverage	50%
Residential Area	96000 sf
Commercial Area	6000 sf
Community Service Area	24000 sf
Use Efficiency Rate	25%
Number of Floors (Height)	5 (55 ft)

Table 30. Alternative Design Details.

KEY FEATURES

The alternative proposal offers amenities to the region, prioritizing community, resilience, and safety. Amenities include:

- Resilience Hub/Community Resource Center
- Bakery and Cafe
- Daycare
- Community work space
- Workforce training center
- Sponge Park and nature area
- Community garden

These features support intergenerational interaction while meeting everyday needs for residents and neighbors alike.

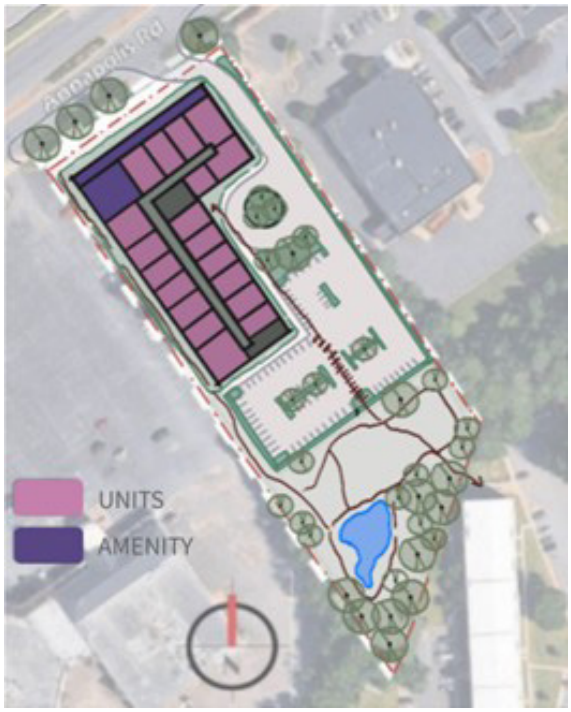


Figure 109. Alternative Unit Floor Conceptual Diagram.

SITE DESIGN

The site design mixed-use site. The park at the back of the site encourages recreation, while the retail in the front of the site encourages pedestrian activity. The alternative site is intentionally designed to leverage the mixed-use zoning designation and create a walkable community space.



Figure 110. Site Design and Features of Alternative Development, showing apartments, a sponge park, parking with solar panels for a resilience hub, and potential retail spaces.

COMPATIBILITY (ZONING, PLAN, USE)

The alternative proposal is strongly compatible with both the RTO-H Edge zoning designation and the New Carrollton Transit District Development Plan, while more fully leveraging the intent of these policies than the current proposal.

The integrated mixed-use building combines multifamily housing, church facilities, and ground-floor commercial space, all of which are permitted uses within the zone. Residential density remains within the allowable range of 20 to 175 dwelling units per acre.

By placing the building directly along Annapolis Road, the proposal supports the corridor vision described in the Transit District Development Plan by reinforcing a continuous street edge, activating the public realm, and promoting a walkable, transit-oriented environment. The consolidated building form also improves site efficiency and better utilizes the zoning framework compared to the separated-building approach.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

The financial feasibility of the Alternative Proposal was evaluated using the same cost estimation methods, underwriting assumptions, and general market parameters applied to the Current Project Proposal. This approach enables a direct and consistent comparison between the two scenarios while isolating the effects of program configuration and site design on overall project cost and funding capacity.

PROJECT COST STRUCTURE

As illustrated in Figure 111, the Alternative Proposal has a total development cost of $62,424,000, which is lower than that of the current proposal despite maintaining the same number of residential units and using the same cost estimation methodology. The reduction in overall cost is primarily attributable to two design decisions:

1. The use of surface parking only, eliminating the need for a structured parking facility; and
2. The consolidation of all uses, residential, church, community services, and retail, into a single principal mixed-use structure, rather than multiple standalone buildings.

Importantly, the lower total cost is not attributable to reduced residential quality or intensity. In fact, the Alternative Proposal includes larger average unit sizes across all residential unit types than the current proposal, while maintaining the same total unit count. Cost efficiencies are therefore achieved through building form, parking strategy, and shared infrastructure rather than program reduction.

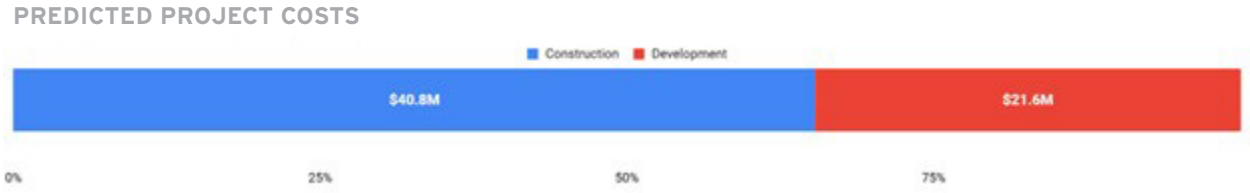


Figure 111. Current Proposal's Predicted Project Costs.

IDENTIFIED FUNDING SOURCES

Figure 112 summarizes the predicted funding sources for the Alternative Proposal, which draw on a broader and more diversified set of financing tools than those for the current proposal. As detailed in Table 31, the funding strategy combines senior debt, layered soft loans, state and federal grants, tax credit equity, and non-traditional sources.

Permanent financing is anchored by an $18.0 million senior loan, supported by projected operating income and conservative underwriting. This is complemented by $14.0 million in soft loans, including funding from Maryland DHCD programs, the National Housing Trust Fund, and local gap financing supported by HOME, CDBG, and PILOT-backed mechanisms.

The Alternative Proposal also incorporates a significant grant component, totaling approximately $7.5 million, drawn from multiple state, federal, and regional sources. These grants directly support the project's community-serving, resilience, and sustainability components, including neighborhood revitalization, energy infrastructure, and site improvements.

Equity financing includes $19.48 million in 4% LIHTC equity and $4.04 million in New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) subsidy, reflecting the project's mixed-use, community-serving program and eligibility for mission-driven financing tools. Additional sources include philanthropic contributions and fundraising, totaling approximately $1.38 million.

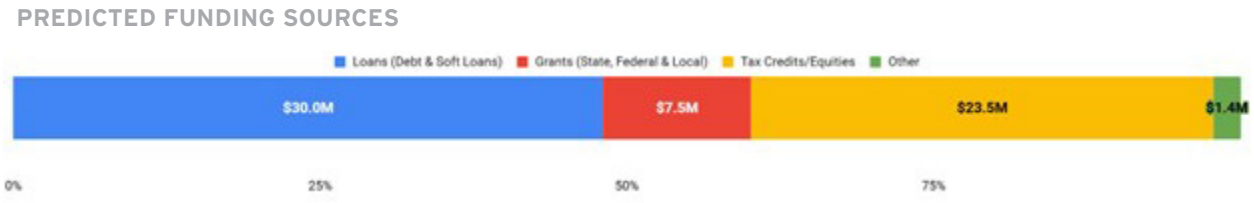


Figure 112. Current Proposal's Predicted Funding Sources.

FUNDING BALANCE AND FEASIBILITY

Collectively, the identified sources shown in Table 31 fully cover the $62.424 million total development cost of the Alternative Proposal. Unlike the current proposal, the Alternative Proposal does not rely on a large unresolved funding gap at this stage of analysis. This outcome reflects the combined effects of lower overall project costs, reduced parking expenditures, and expanded eligibility for diverse funding sources associated with mixed-use, community-serving, and resilience-oriented development.

Type	Source	Estimate
Loans (Debt & Soft Loans)	Senior Loan	$18,000,000
	DHCD RHFP Soft Loan	$7,000,000
	National Housing Trust Fund	$3,000,000
	PG County / City Local Gap (HOME / CDBG / PILOT-backed gap)	$2,000,000
Grants (State/Federal & Local)	DHCD NED Fund	$2,500,000
	DHCD Community Legacy	$350,000
	DHCD Strategic Demolition	$600,000
	FHLB AHP	$1,000,000
	MEA Solar Grant	$500,000
	MEA EVSE	$80,000
	Congressional Earmark	$2,500,000
Tax Credits/Equities	4% LIHTC Equity	$19,476,288
	NMTC Subsidy	$4,040,000
Other	Philanthropy	$1,000,000
	Other Donations and Fundraisings	$377,712
Total		**$62,424,000**

Table 31. Alternative Proposal's Detailed Funding Assessment.

It is important to note that while funding sources are identified and quantified at a planning level, the detailed eligibility requirements, competitiveness, and application strategies for each funding source are addressed in detail in a separate document linked in the Appendix.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

The Alternative Proposal demonstrates improved financial feasibility relative to the current proposal by achieving cost efficiencies through site design and program integration, while simultaneously expanding the range of eligible funding tools. The proposal maintains the same number of residential units, increases unit sizes, and preserves the church's mission-driven program, all within a lower total development cost framework. This establishes a financially coherent foundation for the Alternative Proposal, contingent on the successful execution of the funding strategy described in the following section.

COMPARABLE PROJECTS

Several existing projects demonstrate how the various components of the alternative proposal for St. Christopher's Episcopal could function in practice. These projects show how sponge parks and faith-based retail can improve a location.



Figure 113. Gowanus Canal Sponge Park in Brooklyn, NY, has improved water quality.

Gowanus Canal Sponge Park in Brooklyn, New York, demonstrates how effective a compact rain garden can be in mitigating flooding and cleaning runoff. The Park is a 1,800-square-foot street-end rain garden on the banks of the Gowanus Canal that captures and cleans stormwater runoff from nearby 2nd Street. The project uses plant beds to capture water and native plants to filter it.



Figure 114. Ebenezer's Coffeehouse in Washington, DC.

Source: MTFA Architecture.

The National Community Church in Washington, DC, transformed this once derelict building near Union Station, which had become a hotspot for illegal activity, into a vibrant coffee shop and community gathering space. The building is a place where the church and the community intersect. It is an important gathering space for the Church with office space on the upper floors and gathering spaces in the basement. It has also become a staple of the community. In addition to serving as a valuable community resource, the coffeehouse continues the church's mission. The coffee sold at the shop is fair-trade and ethically sourced, and the business actively supports vulnerable members of the community. It serves as an excellent example of how a faith-based business can be commercially and spiritually successful.

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION

We assessed both the current and alternative options across four factors: building structures, environmental impact, financial sustainability, and community impact (Table 32).

Factor	Current Proposal	Alternative Proposal
Building Structures	Separate-use buildings	Mixed-use building
Environmental Impact	Less vegetation and environmental protection	Increased vegetation and environmental sustainability systems
Financial Sustainability	Little to no revenue-generating program	A variety of revenue-generating programs
Community Impact	Narrow/limited	Broader

Table 32. Comparative Evaluation of Current and Alternative Proposals.

The alternative option performs well across all factors. This option presents opportunities to serve the broader community, expanding the project's reach beyond the congregation. A mix of uses provides a more diverse array of amenities on-site to fulfill the church's mission, benefit the community, and have long-term social impact. Furthermore, a diversity of amenities reduces the risk of the site contributing to the car-centric development of the Annapolis Road corridor. The Alternative option also addresses more aspects of the church's goal. The sponge park concept and solar panel parking lot enhance the site's resilience as it seeks to become a resilience hub for the community. Zoning compatibility may be improved under this option, with the church now matching the future land use designation for a mixed-use development and meeting the required setback for the zone. However, reducing parking may not be feasible for the church's plans to increase attendance at Sunday services.

Based on this comparative evaluation, the team recommends the alternative option, given that it delivers the greatest combined mission alignment, community impact, and adaptability. It maximizes the site's value by serving the entire community, strengthens the church's role as a resilient community anchor, and positions the church as a leader in development along the Annapolis Road corridor. This option increases revenue potential; however, given the importance of expanding the congregation and the limited parking options, it is

up to the church to determine which option aligns with its long-term goals. The team hopes that, whatever the Church's decision, the alternative will help shape the final plan and that aspects of the alternative will become part of the final product.

FINAL EVENTS FEEDBACK AND NEXT STEPS

FEEDBACK FROM FINAL EVENT

Feedback from the Final Event on the Alternative Proposal	
"What Works Well"	**"What Needs Improvement"**
Sponge Park is an interesting idea	It may not be the best location for a park to manage stormwater
A bakery/coffee shop could fit well with the church's mission	Concerns about whether retail would work there
The mixed-uses allow for more space	The Church should be the most visible part of the property

Table 33. Final Event Feedback for the Alternative Proposal.

NEXT STEPS

As St. Christopher's Episcopal Church moves forward, the following steps focus on translating the research, community input, and feasibility analysis in this report into clear, practical actions that can guide decision-making, reduce uncertainty, and help the congregation move confidently toward the next phase of planning and partnership-building.

Church's Request	**Next Step**
Financial Plan	Explore every eligible funding source • Use the detailed information provided in the section "Funding Details and Strategies" as a starting point for funding the project.
Resilience Hub Logistics	Develop a plan to purchase assets • Backup energy, food, water, temporary heating, and cooling Develop a plan for Community Services • Plan for programming to assist the community at the church
Potential Developer	Reach out to: Episcopal Housing Corporation • A developer based in Baltimore who works with community partners to develop affordable and assistive housing

Table 34. Next steps for St. Christopher's Episcopal Church.

1. **Refine the financial plan** by focusing on the most realistic housing, resilience, and philanthropic funding sources needed to support the church and community spaces.
2. **Define the resilience hub's core functions** by identifying essential emergency services and the basic infrastructure required to support them.
3. **Scale community programs** appropriately by prioritizing a small set of high-impact services and relying on partnerships to support long-term operations.
4. **Engage a mission-aligned developer**, such as the Episcopal Housing Corporation, to assess feasibility, phasing, and parking options before making final decisions.

Together, these steps establish a clear and grounded path forward that allows the church to move deliberately from vision to action while balancing its mission, financial realities, and its responsibility as a long-term steward of the site.

This report is intended to support informed conversation rather than prescribe a single outcome. The analysis demonstrates that St. Christopher's is well-positioned to pursue a development project that serves both the congregation and the broader community. Still, success will depend on the careful alignment of goals, partners, and resources. By approaching the next phase incrementally and with clarity, the church can continue to lead with its values while making thoughtful decisions about the future of its property.

› CONCLUSION

Across all three case studies, the churches emerged as long-term stewards of land that are well-positioned to address key needs in Prince George's County. Each church pursues redevelopment through a mission-driven approach that prioritizes community benefits such as affordable housing and supportive services. In all cases, redevelopment is intended to sustain the churches' historic role as community anchors while aligning with broader County health, housing, and planning priorities.

A common challenge across the projects is balancing mission-driven goals with long-term financial feasibility. Evaluation of the existing proposals revealed several constraints, including reliance on subsidies, limited revenue diversification, and high operating costs. In response, each group explored more integrated development models that combine housing with complementary uses. Mixed-use development, diverse housing types, and the inclusion of commercial or community-serving spaces were identified as strategies that could strengthen financial resilience while continuing to support community needs.

Community engagement also emerged as a critical factor in all cases. Transparent communication and consistent engagement with local residents help ensure that redevelopment reflects neighborhood priorities and builds community support. This is particularly important because several proposals introduce higher-density development than currently exists on site, which may initially raise concerns among nearby residents. Meaningful engagement can therefore help build acceptance and support for redevelopment initiatives. Despite these similarities, the churches differ in several important ways.

First, the neighborhood contexts surrounding each development site vary considerably. Carolina Missionary Baptist Church is located in a predominantly Black rural/suburban area with limited transit access. The Church of the Living God site is situated near the University of Maryland and several future Purple Line stops within a growing and changing suburban community. St. Christopher's Episcopal Church is located near the New Carrollton transit hub, an area expected to experience significant investment associated with the Purple Line and surrounding redevelopment plans. These different contexts required each group to consider distinct neighborhood needs, partnerships, and development strategies.

Second, the financial conditions and institutional goals of the churches differ. Carolina Missionary Baptist Church and Church of the Living God were relatively financially stable and pursued redevelopment primarily to expand community services. In contrast, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church faces more significant financial constraints and aging worship facilities, requiring a development proposal that addresses both financial sustainability and the need for a new worship space.

Third, the target populations and programmatic visions vary across the projects. Carolina Missionary Baptist Church focuses on permanent supportive housing for single mothers with HIV/AIDS. Church of the Living God prioritizes housing for seniors. St. Christopher's Episcopal Church envisions a mixed-use development that combines affordable housing with a new church facility and a resilience hub designed to serve the broader community during emergencies.

Fourth, the physical characteristics of the development sites present different opportunities and constraints. Parcel sizes vary, some sites contain existing structures while others are vacant, and each property has distinct environmental conditions such as streams, slopes, and Marlboro clay. These conditions influenced the design strategies proposed by the class. For example, the wooded stream environment at the Church of the Living God site informed the design of a nature-integrated senior campus, while the slope at the St. Christopher property informed the proposal for a sponge park.

Finally, the technical requests and deliverables from each church differed. Some projects emphasized financial modeling and funding strategies, while others required stakeholder mapping or community engagement planning. For example, because the Church of the Living God development site is located several miles from its worship site, identifying relevant stakeholders and government actors became a key task. In contrast, the financial challenges facing St. Christopher's Episcopal Church made identifying funding sources and revenue opportunities a central priority.

Together, these similarities and differences demonstrate that while religious institutions often share common missions, successful redevelopment strategies must respond to each church's specific context, financial capacity, and community relationships.

› APPENDIX

The studio course appendix materials can be found in the following location:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1l6nsDid2_d8WUPEKedJs3FJUJqt9lSy/view?usp=drive_link

Also accessible via the QR Code below:


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