



TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN

Prince Frederick

*Summary of Public Input
through December 1, 2020*

Introduction

The Calvert County Planning & Zoning Department (DPZ) is in the process of updating the Prince Frederick Town Center Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance as required by the 2019 Calvert County Comprehensive Plan. The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners first adopted the Prince Frederick Master Plan in 1989. The goals of the current update process are to ensure the visions for the Town Center are still relevant, address changes to town center demographics, economic development trends, job creation, and retail needs, address issues such as housing cost and affordability, traffic congestion, and ensure compliance with federal and state planning requirements.

DPZ is committed to a robust public engagement process throughout Town Center plan update. During October and November 2020, the Calvert County Department of Planning & Zoning collected public input for the Prince Frederick Town Center Master Plan and Zoning Update through three avenues: a story map with a click-and-comment interactive map, an online survey, and a virtual public workshop. Input was specifically sought on the land use and transportation elements of the plan. This document summarizes the input received in all three forms.

Summary of Public Input

Overall, public input collected for this project supported improvements that would enhance quality of life, aesthetics and architectural form, and bicycle and pedestrian travel while avoiding high density development, additional big box retail and mitigating the environmental impacts of rural development. As might be expected, the survey revealed significant differences between how younger and older citizens perceive the challenges facing Prince Frederick and ways to address them.

Younger residents tended to favor more urban Town Center development, while older residents preferred improvements to services and activities available in Prince Frederick without significantly densifying the built environment. Older adults, considering how they might adapt if their ability to drive declines, expressed a desire to continue driving rather than relocating, walking more, or taking transit, but acknowledged they would likely limit their driving at night, during rush hour, and in bad weather. Younger residents felt strongly that, with better infrastructure, Prince Frederick families would feel comfortable allowing their children to walk to Calvert Middle School and Calvert High School, while older residents were skeptical. Residents of all ages supported preserving Prince Frederick's existing forests and green infrastructure.

Finally, participants in a public meeting budget exercise prioritized community spaces and safety, pedestrian, and transit improvements over roadway network expansions.

In summary, participants particularly sought a public gathering place and improved retail and restaurant options that would transform the Town Center into a pleasant place to spend time, better facilities and services for older adults, better sense of place along MD 2-4, and a more complete sidewalk and pathway network. Participants expressed a strong desire to preserve Prince Frederick's heritage and environmental features.

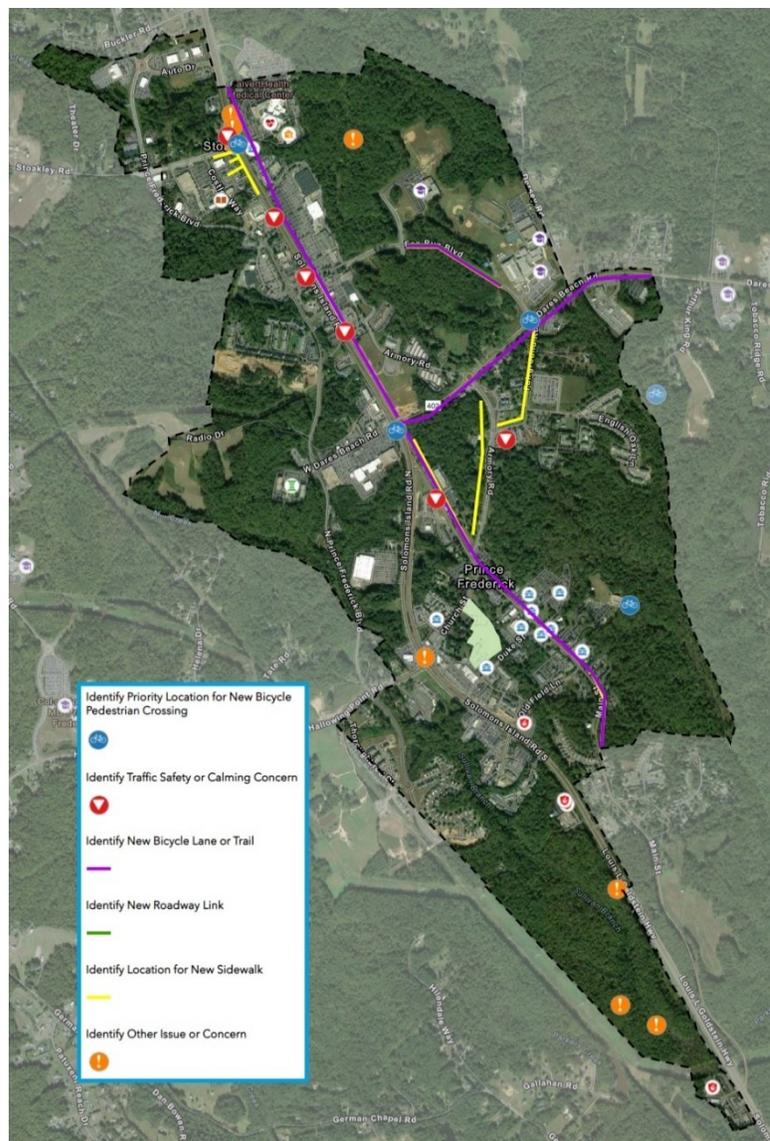
Story Map

On the project website, the County provided a link to an online Story Map that displayed the history and context of the Town Center Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance update, as well as data about transportation issues and challenges facing the Town Center, presented in a series of maps that allowed website visitors to interactively explore the following:

- 2019 Comprehensive Plan Town Center Growth Areas
- History of growth in the Town Center's transportation network
- Congestion and delay along MD 2/4 through the Town Center
- Locations and details of recent traffic crashes in the vicinity of the Town Center
- Sidewalk network and pedestrian destinations

The story map also included a click-and-comment map that allowed users to submit proposed new roadway links, locations of traffic safety or calming concern, places where bike lanes, trails, or sidewalks are needed, priority locations for new bicycle and pedestrian crossings, and other concerns.

- For motor vehicle travel, users identified traffic safety concerns at all intersections along MD 2-4 between Stoakley and Dares Beach Roads and proposed that the Fox Run Boulevard be completed between Calvert Middle School and Calvert High School.
- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements included bike lanes or trails along MD 2-4 through the Town Center and along Dares Beach between MD 2-4 and the Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center, as well as sidewalks along Armory Road, and into the Market Square shopping center.



Online Survey

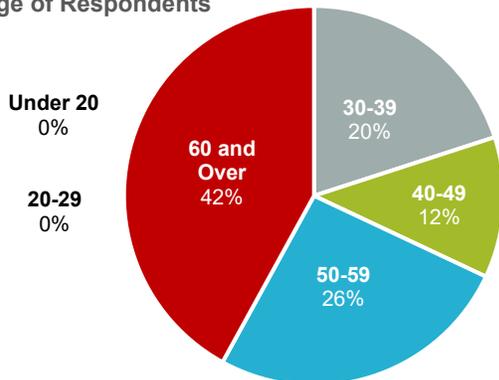
The project team conducted an online survey, which was posted to the project website and shared via various County channels. The survey was open from November 5 to November 30, 2020.

Profile of Respondents

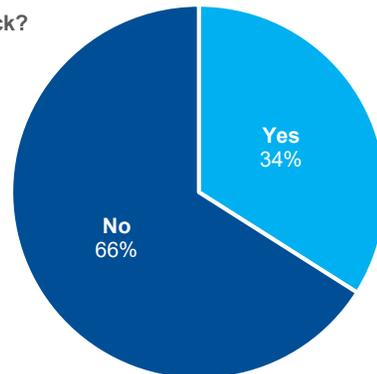
The online survey garnered 63 responses.

- There were no respondents under the age of 30. Those aged 30 to 39 constituted 20 percent of respondents, 40 to 49 constituted 12 percent, 50 to 59 constituted 26 percent, and those 60 and over constituted 42 percent. For analytical purposes, these groups have been combined into those 49 and under (32 percent) and those 50 and over (68 percent).
- About 2/3 of respondents reported not living in the Prince Frederick ZIP Code, and 1/3 reported that they did live there. Among those who lived in Prince Frederick, about 45 percent had lived there 5 to 19 years, a further 25 percent lived there 20 to 30 years, and the remaining 30 percent had lived there more than 30 years. About 2/3 of respondents were employed; nearly all those who were not employed were also not seeking employment.

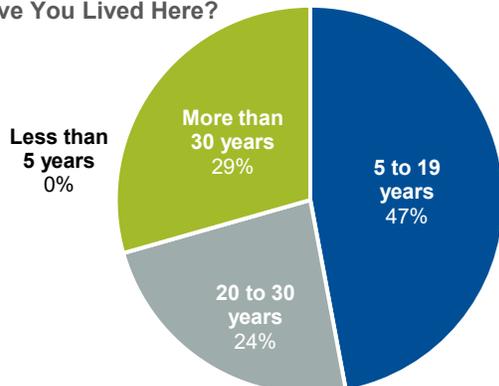
Age of Respondents



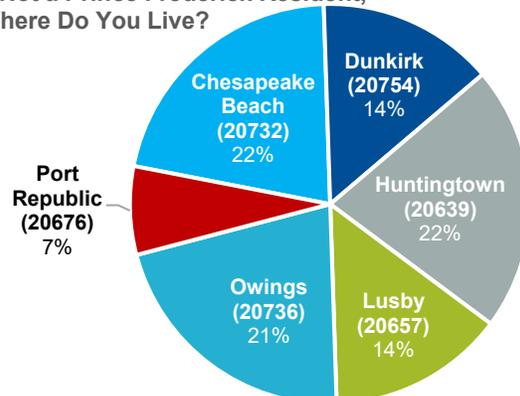
Do you live in Prince Frederick?



If a Prince Frederick Resident, How Long Have You Lived Here?



If Not a Prince Frederick Resident, Where Do You Live?



Transportation Challenges and Priorities

- The Calvert County Transportation Plan listed seven transportation challenges for the County, and this survey asked respondents to rank them specifically for Prince Frederick. Overall, respondents ranked “geography and environmental constraints”, “traffic safety”, and “new transportation technologies” as the most challenging, while considering “climate change and infrastructure resiliency” and “an aging population that is less mobile” as the least challenging. There were diverging rankings between age groups in these rankings:
 - Those 49 and under considered “dispersed travel patterns and lack of density” as a top-3 challenge while ranking “traffic safety” second-to-last.
 - In contrast, those 50 and over ranked “traffic safety” as the most challenging issue facing Prince Frederick and “dispersed travel patterns and lack of density” as the second-to-least challenging issue.
 - Notably, “an aging population that is less mobile” was the lowest-ranking challenge even among the 50-and-over age category.
- The Calvert County Transportation Plan listed five goals at a countywide level, and this survey asked respondents to rank them specifically for Prince Frederick.
 - Overall, the highest-priority goal was to “build and maintain transportation assets that are safe, resilient and well maintained,” while the lowest-priority goal was to “eliminate traffic and pedestrian deaths and serious injuries.”
 - Rankings among respondents 49 and under and those 50 and over were nearly the same, except that “improve mobility within Town Centers” was the highest-priority goal for those 49 and under and the lowest-priority goal for those 50 and over.
- The survey asked respondents whether it had been the right decision to never make MD 2-4 a limited access highway with overpasses, as was proposed in the mid-1990s. This was a polarizing question.
 - Although the mean and median responses were slightly inclined in the “right decision” direction, about 80 percent of responses had strong feelings: about 45 percent of respondents strongly felt it was the right decision and about 35 percent of respondents strongly felt it was the wrong decision.
 - Only 20 percent did not know, had mixed feelings, or felt slightly one way or the other.
- The survey also asked respondents how costs should be shared if a road similar to Prince Frederick Boulevard on the east side of MD 2-4 were found to be necessary.
 - About 40 percent of respondents felt the cost should be borne completely or nearly-completely by developers, and about 2 percent (one respondent) felt the cost should be born completely or nearly-completely by the County.
 - The remaining nearly 60 percent of respondents felt the cost should be shared, with equal numbers of respondents feeling the majority should be borne by developers and feeling the majority should be borne by the County.



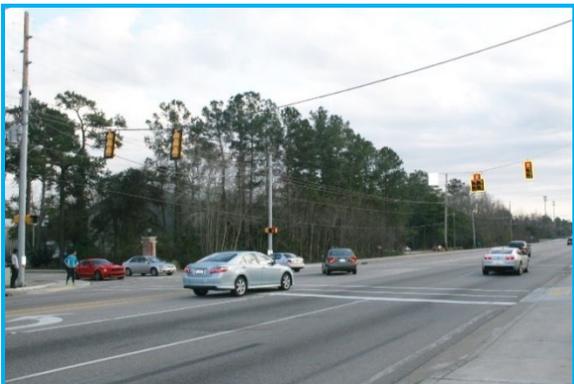
Shared-Use Pathway



Buffered Sidewalk



Rural Road



Signalized Arterial Crossing

Walking and Bicycling

The survey asked the respondents to rate four pedestrian environments (shown in the images at left) on a scale from “very comfortable (I would there walk with a toddler and not require hand-holding)” to “very uncomfortable (I would only walk there in an emergency).”

↑ Most Comfort

- Respondents of all ages considered the shared use pathway to be the most comfortable, followed by the buffered sidewalk. They considered the rural road to be the second-least comfortable pedestrian environment, and the signalized arterial crossing to be the least comfortable.
- Those 49 and under found the shared-use pathway and buffered sidewalk more comfortable than their older counterparts did, while those 50 and above expressed a higher degree of comfort with the rural road and the signalized arterial crossing than younger respondents did.

Finally, the survey asked respondents whether they felt that, if there were safe walking paths to and from Calvert Middle School and Calvert High School (assuming students didn't have to cross MD 2-4), families would be willing to let their children walk to school. There was significant divergence between respondents 49 and under—more than 80 percent of whom felt families would be more willing to let their children walk to school and a majority of whom strongly felt that way—and respondents 50 and over—a majority of whom did not feel families would be more willing to let their children walk and more than a third of whom strongly felt that way.

Least Comfort ↓

Older Adults in Prince Frederick

The survey asked respondents age 50 and over to rank the likelihood that older adults in Prince Frederick would adopt a number of strategies as they become less comfortable driving or unable to drive:

- Move to a location where less driving is required or there are more transportation options (including moving in with a family member)
- Use a private transportation service (taxi, Uber, Lyft, etc.)
- Use the Calvert County bus system
- Avoid driving at night, during rush hour, or in bad weather
- Walk to more locations
- Keep driving as much as I do now

By far, the most widely favored transportation strategy among older adults was to “avoid driving at night, during rush hour, or in bad weather,” followed by “keep driving as much as I do now.” Changing residences or using a transportation service (such as a taxi, Uber, or Lyft) had less favor, and the least favored strategies—by a significant amount—were “use the Calvert County bus system” and “walk to more locations.”

COVID-19 and Impacts on Commuting Patterns

- Approximately 60 percent of respondents reported switching to or increasing a work-from-home schedule (of whom about ¼ have since returned to their pre-COVID schedule). About 30 percent of respondents reported they continued their pre-COVID schedule of working outside their home. The remaining 10 percent reported that they had worked from home before COVID and have continued to do so.
- Overall, respondents estimated that traffic would return to pre-COVID-19 levels in Fall 2021, although respondents 50 and over estimated it would take slightly longer than respondents 49 and under.
- Respondents of all ages indicated that after the pandemic subsides, they would likely work or learn from home more often than before COVID-19, but the inclination for working from home was slight. While a few respondents reported certainty that they would or would not continue a work-from-home schedule, most responses were close to the center, signifying uncertainty about the future.

Open-Ended Responses

Open-ended responses generally focused on at least one of the following three areas: development, traffic congestion and safety, and transportation options.

- **Development:** Respondents were roughly evenly divided on whether they preferred less development or simply better development, which would adequately address environmental, school, infrastructure, and transportation needs. Some respondents mentioned encouraging development in the town center to reduce rural impacts and increase commercial tax base.
- **Traffic Congestion and Safety:** Many respondents mentioned traffic as a primary concern,

but they were equally divided among those concerned with speeding along MD 2/4 and those concerned with traffic congestion along MD 2/4.

- **Transportation Options:** Many respondents recommended increasing accessibility for pedestrian and bicycle travel, while fewer referenced transit service.

Public Meeting

The project team held a virtual public workshop on November 19, 2020 that attracted about 30 participants on Zoom and approximately 1,600 viewers on Facebook Live. The meeting was also broadcast on the County’s public access television channels. In addition to presenting attendees and viewers with information about the project and ongoing land use, development and transportation challenges and opportunities in Prince Frederick, the meeting included two small group sessions in which attendees participated in discussions facilitated by county and consultant staff.

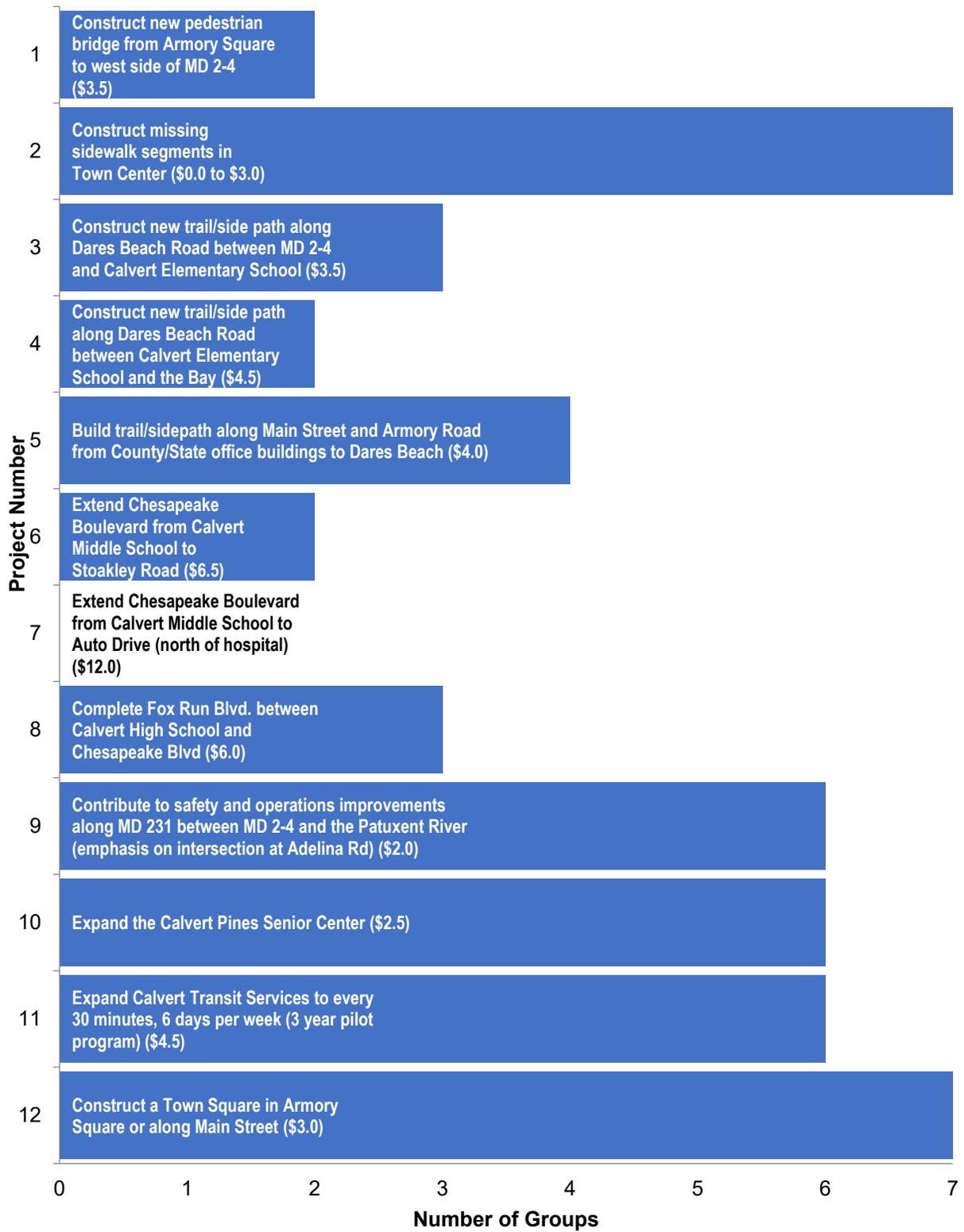
PARK Analysis

The first breakout session was a discussion about what attendees felt should be Preserved, Added, Removed and Kept Out (PARK) of Prince Frederick. The following table summarizes the results:

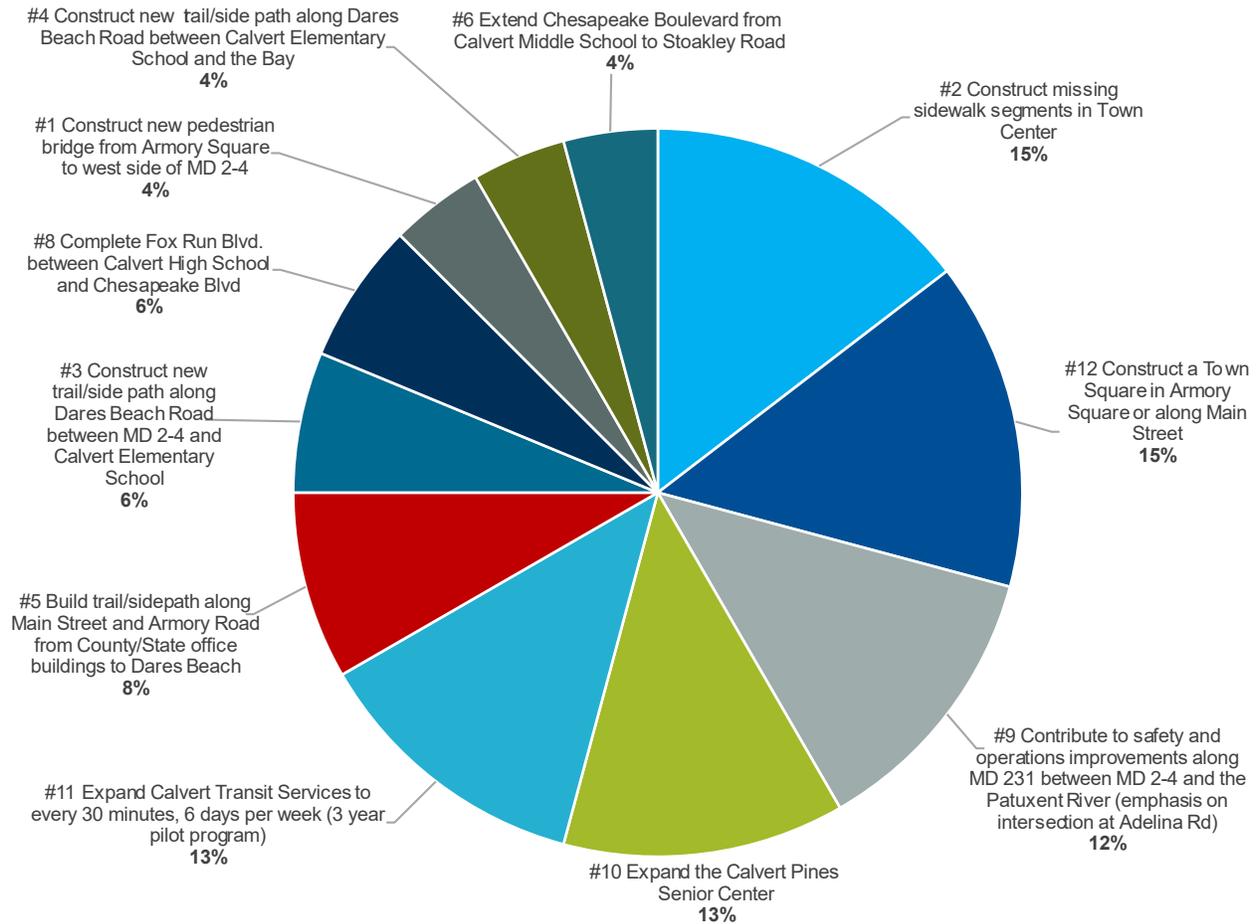
What is positive and should be kept and reinforced?	What do we not have, but need or desire?
<p>Preserve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History, especially in the old town area • Natural assets such as trees, animal habitats, and watersheds • Prince Frederick's small-town feel 	<p>Add</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A town square that could function as a central gathering place with nearby upscale/unique dining and small businesses that create a sense of place • Activities for all ages (such as arcades, escape rooms, and an expanded senior center) • Greater connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists (especially along and across MD 2/4)
<p>Remove</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant and poor-condition buildings • Unattractive signs, landscaping, and other roadside features • Traffic congestion 	<p>Keep Out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More big-box stores with large parking lots • High-density residential • More traffic congestion
What existing negatives should be eliminated?	What outcomes do we want to avoid?

Budget Exercise

The second breakout session was a collaborative exercise where each group was asked to allocate a hypothetical \$25 million budget among \$55 million potential infrastructure projects in Prince Frederick which could be built as a result of the Town Center Master Plan. The figure below shows the 12 projects, their hypothetical cost (in millions) for this exercise, and how many of the seven groups chose each project. Note: None of the groups selected Project #7.



In aggregate, the groups allocated their budget in the following percentages:



Note: Project #7 (Extend Chesapeake Boulevard from Calvert Middle School to Auto Drive) was not selected by any group and. Therefore, did not receive any allocation of funding.

As the figures show, groups tended to prioritize community spaces and safety, pedestrian, and transit improvements over roadway network expansions.