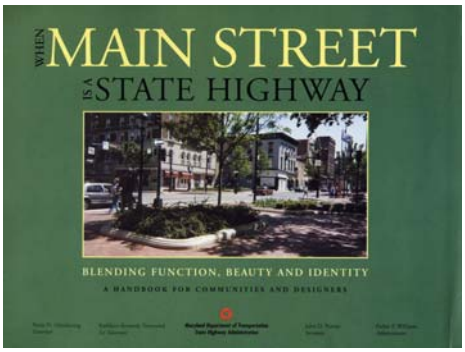
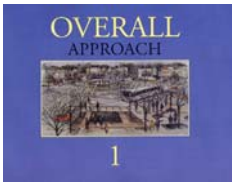
WHEN MAIN STREET IS A STATE HIGHWAY



Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (2001). *When Main Street is a State Highway, Blending Function, Beauty and Identity, a Handbook for Communities and Designers.* Baltimore, Maryland.

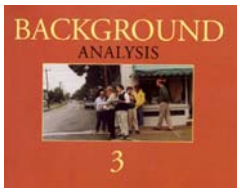
ABSTRACT

The 1998 edition of this handbook was a series of recommendations to solve specific conflicts between downtown economic development needs and the demands of traffic safety and mobility, citing successful examples of cooperation. This 2001 edition outlines the process of project development that calls for participation by all parties to achieve a result satisfactory to all, citing success stories from the Maryland DOT's State Highway Administration (SHA) Thinking Beyond the Pavement initiative and its Neighborhood Conservation Program. This handbook, divided into six chapters, is illustrated with many photos, drawings, and process diagrams from the successful projects.

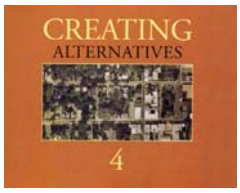


Chapter 1: Overall Approach introduces the concept of Smart Growth and the community. It emphasizes the fundamental understanding that identity is discovered in the structured character of a community and how important it is to listen to the voices of the community. Three successful projects are highlighted, one of which is in Mt. Rainier, a transit-oriented community where intensive community involvement led to a striking change in the appearance of the roadway, its surroundings, and how it functioned. The key to success was moving away from a standards-driven process to a flexible, community-friendly approach that seeks to balance the performance and safety features of the highway with the shape of the built environment. There is an excellent design process diagram that outlines the approach to public involvement and decision-making.

Chapter 2: Project Start outlines the first steps of a CSS process, including the identification of community needs, physical deficiencies, and how to define a shared vision and goals for the project. It suggests various techniques for involving the community such as conducting field walks with elected officials, residents, and business interests to define deficiencies and needs. It describes how to organize a Project Task Force to guide design development. It outlines what communities need to know about how the SHA works, the language highway designers use, and the legal constraints the SHA operates under for design and funding.

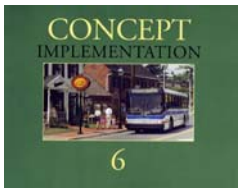


Chapter 3: Background Analysis focuses on the importance of gathering intelligence through background studies and site analysis. Educating the community to understand the technical capabilities of its partners through understanding the complexity of the SHA including how different professionals and offices work together to plan, design, build, and maintain Maryland's highways.



Chapter 4: Creating Alternatives by developing schematic concepts starts with relating the function of the road to both its natural and its "built" setting, or landscape. This chapter outlines a tool kit of opportunities to manage the speed and volume of traffic, improve street conditions, improve pedestrian accessibility, and reduce auto dependence. Photos illustrate the specific applications in Maryland, such as landscaping in Hancock, a pedestrian refuge island across York Road in Towson, and identification signs in Seat Pleasant.

Chapter 5: Concept Plans discusses how to choose among the alternatives, the path from preliminary to final concept plan, and how to measure the effectiveness of the concept with the project needs. The needs of transportation must be balanced with the interests and objectives of the community in order to reach closure. Sharing the results of the task force and technical staff with the public at open houses, at public hearings and through surveys are ways to get public support for a project.



Chapter 6: Concept Implementation discusses turning the concept into reality, the last step in the process. Once the concept plan has been developed and community approval secured, the SHA prepares the project budget and engineering design, and then begins construction. Communicating with the community during construction will help the project move along smoothly. Key elements are the maintenance of traffic plan, including a schedule of when work will be performed and what streets will be open and closed.

SUMMARY

This is an excellent handbook to guide an agency through the project development process in close cooperation with the affected community.

KEY WORDS

Applicable Project Delivery Stages: Administration, Planning, Design, Construction

Applicable Transportation Professionals: Highway Engineers, Structural Engineers, Planners, Urban Designers, Landscape Architects, Historians

Applicable Transportation Modes: Vehicular, Bicycle, Pedestrian, Transit

Transportation Topics: Access Management, Balance, Bicycle, Clear zone, Coordinate, Communicate, Community, Concept development, Crosswalks, Curbs, Decision-making, Education, Flexibility, Furniture and Fixtures, Goals and Objectives, Land Use, Landscaping, Lighting, Medians, Open House, Partnerships, Pathways, Pedestrians, Plantings, Process, Project Development, Public Meeting, Roles and Responsibilities, Road Surface, Shoulders, Sidewalk Corridors, Speed Control, Street Corners, Street Corridors, Task Force, Technical

Staff, Tool Kit, Traffic Volume, Trails, Transportation Enhancement, Travel Lanes, Visibility

WEB LINKS http://www.sha.state.md.us/events/oce/thinkingbeyondpavement/thinking_1.asp (Maryland State Highway Administration CSD Homepage)