



PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Montgomery County has experienced a rapid rate of urban growth in the past ten years. Although this growth has been contained within the framework of the County's growth management system, suburban traffic conditions have markedly deteriorated. There has been a dawning recognition that the land use and physical design characteristics of suburban workplaces have directly contributed to the decline in suburban mobility by inducing most employees to drive alone to work. Specifically, it is increasingly argued that the low density, single use and non-integrated character of suburban office-commercial centers and corridors, combined with their tendency to provide abundant free parking, have compelled many workers to become dependent on their automobiles for travel to work. These factors, combined with a lack of affordable housing in the vicinity of jobs, a reduction in new road construction and meager levels of suburban transit services, have led to unprecedented levels of congestion.

This Plan attempts to address each of these factors. Housing affordability is increasingly becoming an oxymoron in North Bethesda and is of major concern throughout the metropolitan area. High housing costs contribute to other problems such as labor shortages and transportation congestion. Workers in entry-level and service jobs, households headed by single individuals, and senior citizens often cannot afford to live near their places of employment. Longer commutes contribute to traffic congestion and increased individual stress. Workers without automobiles often have difficulty traveling to their jobs because public transportation is not practicable, convenient, or affordable.

In 1990, the North Bethesda median price for a resale detached house was \$220,000. The few new single-family detached houses had a median price of \$555,545, beyond the reach of most households. In 1992, there were only 763 affordable units in North Bethesda, including moderately priced dwelling units, Housing Opportunity Commission projects, and older Section 8 units.

Although high-rise apartments are expensive to build, relative to garden apartments, demand for this type of unit has been strong in North Bethesda. Multi-family housing is the most likely type of housing to yield affordable units and this Plan recommends a significant increase in this component of the housing market.

Residential units are recommended at all three Metro stations. Mixed uses with a significant residential component are proposed at Twinbrook and White Flint, introducing a housing element into exclusively commercial areas. The Plan also recommends rezoning property from commercial to residential and recommends residential planned developments in several areas. Theoretically, at full buildout of all properties, North Bethesda's capacity for dwelling units and jobs would be approximately 25,000 and 103,000 respectively.



The Plan also makes significant recommendations to encourage transit use, including major expansions to the public transportation system. Recommendations are made regarding increased Metro rail frequency, a new MARC railroad station, demand management programs, high occupancy vehicle lanes and reservation for a future transitway.

A recommendation is made to resolve the long-standing issue of the Rockville Facility reservation in North Bethesda. The recommendation has a three-fold purpose: to provide additional east-west traffic capacity, to provide an alternative to a dangerous at-grade crossing at Randolph Road and the MARC railroad, and to provide a greenway to connect the regional parks flanking the Planning Area.

This Plan proposes the following primary recommendations.

A. LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN

This Plan recommends:

- that future development be focused at Metrorail (Metro) stops, new transit stations, and areas best served by transportation infrastructure, with more emphasis on housing;
- new residential and mixed-use development at Twinbrook;
- the introduction of a residential component into exclusively commercial parcels at Twinbrook and White Flint;
- the preservation of an area for light industrial purposes extending from Twinbrook to White Flint;
- an expansion of transit related residential and mixed use zoning at White Flint;
- a publicly-owned conference center with integral, privately-owned hotel be located on the WMATA parking lot;
- confirmation of residential zoning at Grosvenor;
- a residential planned neighborhood on the portion of the Georgetown Preparatory School property within the Grosvenor Sector Plan boundary;
- mixed-use development at Montrose Crossing;
- an expansion of retail opportunities at Loehmann's Plaza and Rock Spring Park;
- a mixed-use planned development on the 54-acre vacant parcel in Rock Spring Park;
- transfer of development rights on to various residential parcels;
- preservation of the unique park-like setting of Garrett Park by the application of an 'overlay' zone;

- a reduction in block sizes in the vicinity of Metro areas;
- improvements to the pedestrian friendliness of streets, particularly near transit nodes;
- the provision of a landmark quality and sense of place for nodal areas and districts; and
- reinforcement of the concept of Rockville Pike as the “Main Street” of North Bethesda-Garrett Park.

B. TRANSPORTATION PLAN

This Plan recommends:

- increasing the frequency of Metrorail and MARC service, and increasing bus services throughout the area;
- the creation of transportation management districts to increase transit ridership and car pooling, with emphasis on parking price and availability;
- the construction of Montrose Parkway from Montrose Road to Veirs Mill Road, with grade separated intersections at Rockville Pike and the MARC railroad, and no through access at Veirs Mill Road;
- retaining the former Rockville Facility right-of-way from I-270 to Veirs Mill Road for a possible future transitway;
- that Executive Boulevard be extended across Rockville Pike to meet Huff Court and that Nebel Street be extended to Chapman Avenue, providing a local circulation alternative parallel to Rockville Pike;
- a new MARC station to serve Twinbrook and Montrose Crossing;
- the addition of two lanes in the medians of the I-270 spurs;
- a direct access ramp from I-270 (east spur) to Rock Spring Park;
- a direct access HOV ramp from the I-270 west spur to Rock Spring Park;
- a high capacity transit connection between Grosvenor Metrorail station and Montgomery Mall, via Rock Spring Park;
- intersection capacity improvements at selected locations; and
- changes to the regulatory standards for the area.

C. COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

This Plan recommends:

- that the existing Wall Park be extended to include the parcel to the north;



- five urban amenity open spaces to be located at Twinbrook Metro, Montrose Crossing, White Flint Metro, Grosvenor Metro, and Rock Spring Park;
- that a continuous portion of the Montrose Parkway right-of-way be reserved as a greenway, with hiker/ biker facilities;
- that new ball parks be located on the state-owned land west of Tildenwood Drive;
- that a community recreation center be located on the Davis Parcel at Rock Spring Park;
- the proposed expansion of the Strathmore Hall Arts Center as envisioned by the Strathmore Hall Foundation;
- that day care centers be provided at Metro stations and at Rock Spring Park; and
- that affordable elderly housing be provided through the special exception process.

D. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

This Plan recommends:

- the protection of woodlands through land use recommendations and development guidelines;
- a system of greenways including the Montrose Parkway hiker/biker trail;
- a “green corridors” policy for North Bethesda roadways;
- that development be focused at transit stations in order to improve air quality;
- noise mitigation measures related to the proposed I-270 spur widening and the proposed Grosvenor transitway;
- that existing stormwater management problems be addressed, particularly at the time of new development; and
- that existing billboards in North Bethesda be removed expeditiously.