

Introduction

Overview

This Plan is the culmination of a five-year process that has featured over 30 meetings of the Clarksburg Master Plan Citizens Advisory Committee, 13 Planning Board worksessions, 17 County Council Planning Housing and Economic Development Committee meetings, seven County Council worksessions, community workshops on a variety of planning topics, property owners workshops, technical workgroup meetings on staging and implementation, and close coordination with governmental agencies affected by the Plan's recommendations.

The time and commitment represented by the Plan reflects the importance of Clarksburg to the future of Montgomery County. Clarksburg is the "final frontier" in terms of the I-270 Corridor: master plans for the balance of the Corridor are in place and in various stages of implementation (see Figure 1). The sheer size of the Study Area (10,000 acres) and the very limited amount of development that has occurred here underscores the need for very careful planning. Environmental concerns are many; a major challenge in this Plan effort is how to address the human need for compact communities in an area where environmental features limit the amount of developable land.

This Plan establishes the long-range vision of Clarksburg as a town (rather than a city) along the I-270 Corridor. Implementation of this vision will take many years and will require substantial financial commitments by both the public and private sector. Although this Plan addresses the issue of staging development over time, the most critical function of this Plan is to establish a strong public commitment to the vision of Clarksburg as a transit- and pedestrian-oriented community surrounded by open space.

Past Planning Efforts

This Plan amends the 1968 *Clarksburg and Vicinity Master Plan*. The 1968 Master Plan provided policy guidance for the growth of Clarksburg from its present rural character into a small town rather than a Corridor City as originally envisioned in the 1964 General Plan. It also addressed the absence of public services, such as schools, parks, and roads.

Although significant development potential (13,800 dwelling units and 14 million square feet of employment) was reflected in the 1968 Master Plan, the land use and zoning recommendations in the 1968 Master Plan were not fully realized for the following reasons:

- Public policy discouraged the extension of public water and sewer service to Clarksburg in order to encourage development south of Clarksburg, in Germantown and Gaithersburg.
- The area's fractured rock and sub-surface geology severely limited the uses of septic systems.
- Zoning changes needed to implement the 1968 Plan were not adopted.

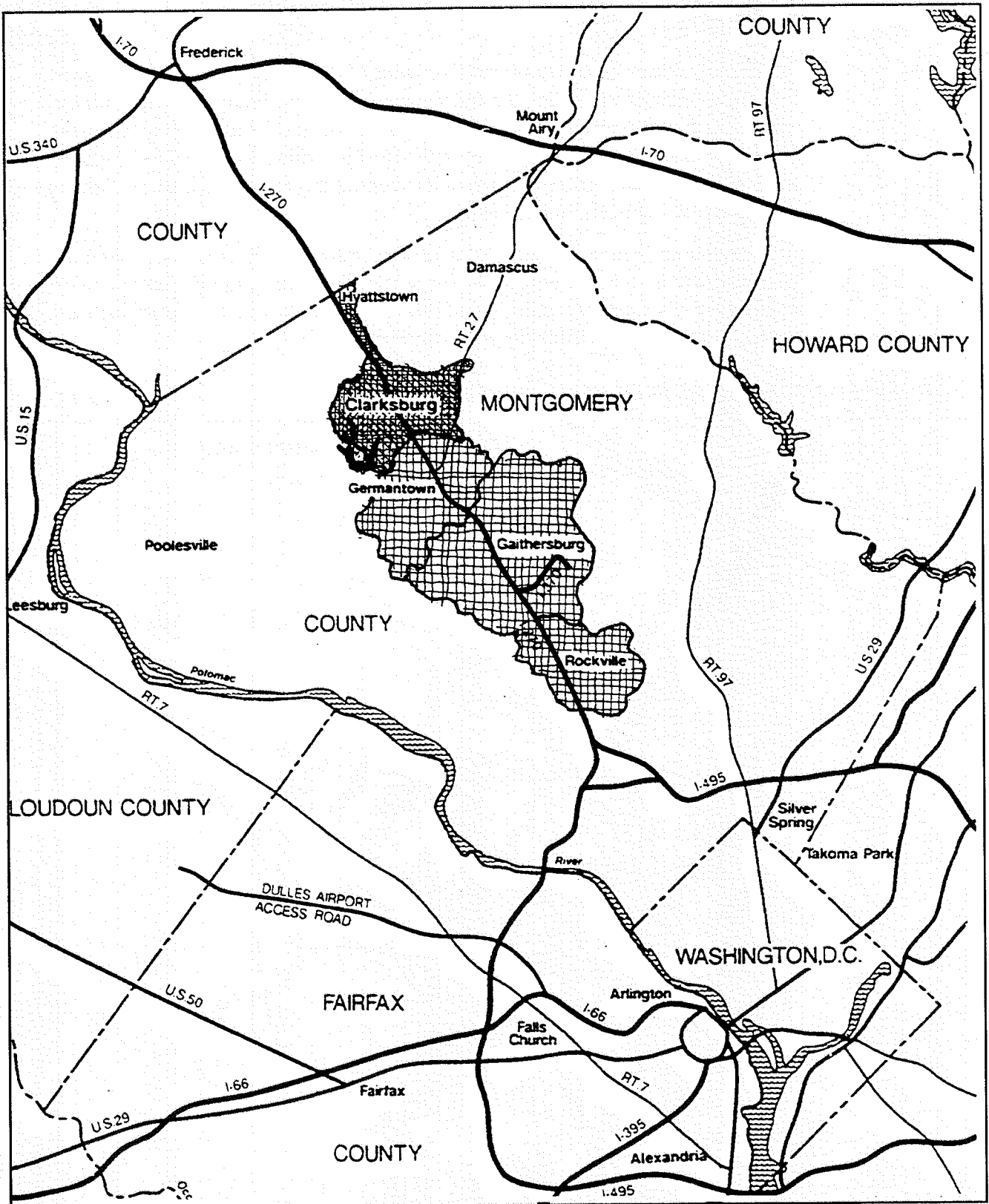
This Plan continues many features of the 1968 Plan, the most important being a town scale of development. However, many new policy concerns have emerged since 1968 and require that new Plan concepts be addressed. These include:

- The critical importance of protecting environmental and historic resources.
- The need to preserve farmland.
- The importance of land use patterns which are transit-oriented.
- The need to consider fiscal implications of different land use patterns.

Creating a vision for Clarksburg that embraces these policy objectives has resulted in significant changes to the 1968 Plan. The most significant changes involve the clustering of development east of I-270. The 1968 Plan anticipated extensive residential development, with public water and sewer service throughout the Study Area.

Clarksburg and the I-270 Corridor

Figure 1



Plan Determinants

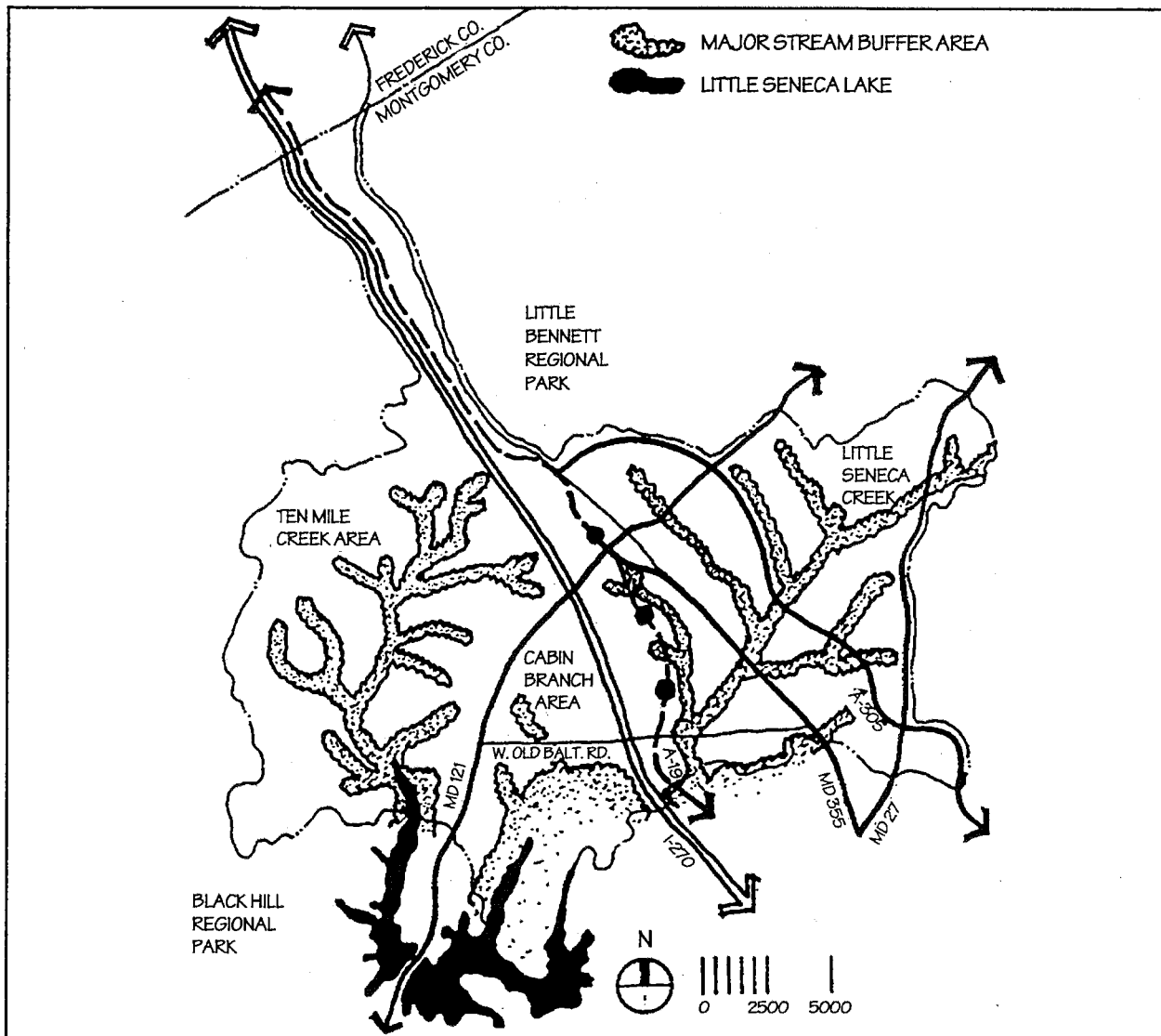
1. Natural Features

The key natural features of the Clarksburg Study Area are shown in Figure 2. Water-related features are the most prominent. The Study Area lies almost entirely within one watershed (Little Seneca Creek) and includes many streams, flowing in a north-south direction. The streams, which flow to Little Seneca Lake, generally have good water quality; continuing the good health of these streams is a key concern of the Plan.

The soil and slope characteristics of the Study Area bear special mention. The majority of soils are unsuitable for septic fields; thus, public sewer and/or water service is a pre-requisite for any development except very large-lot residences. Slope characteristics also pose concerns.

Plan Determinants: Natural Features

Figure 2



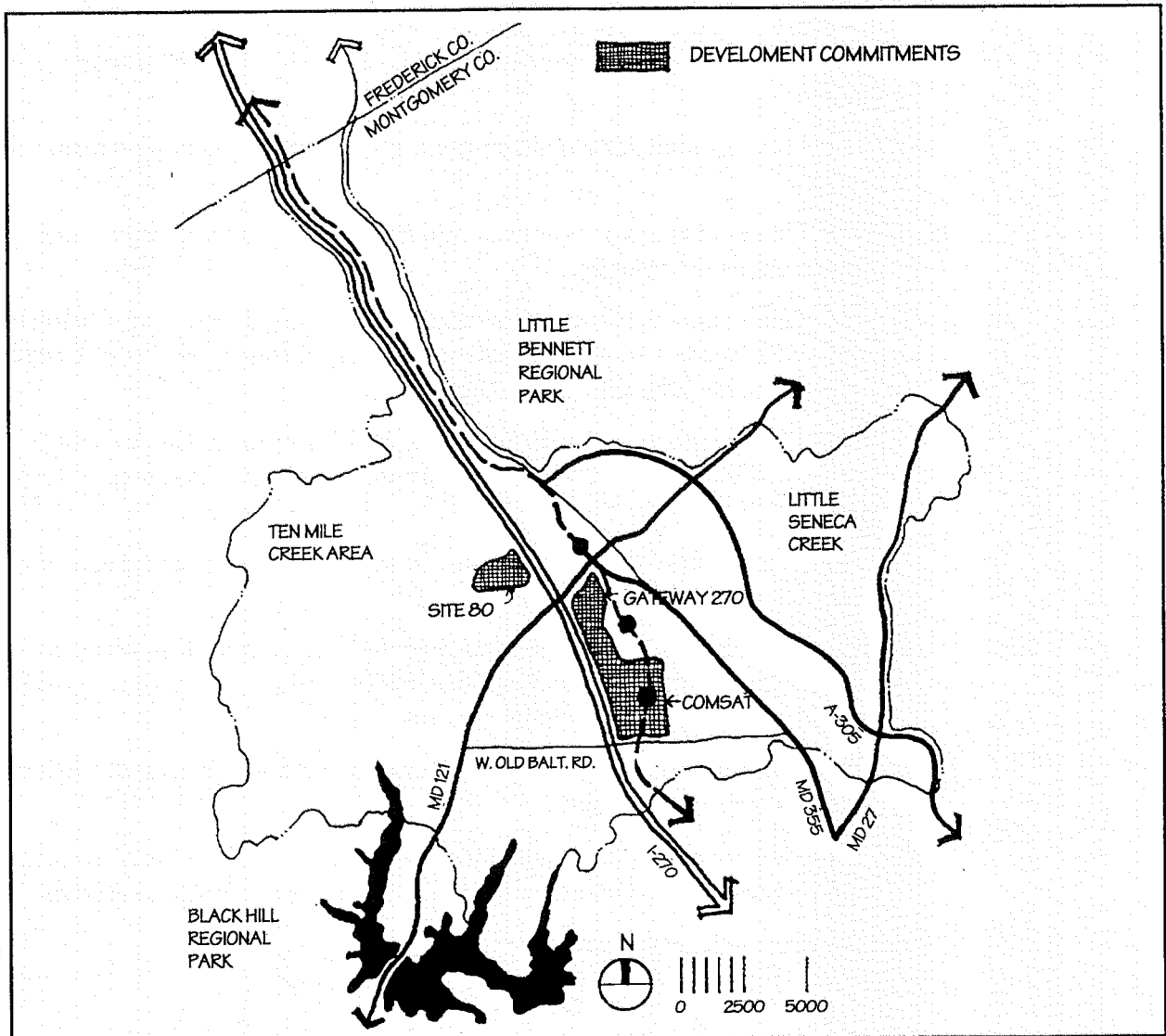
2. Development Commitments

As previously mentioned, the Clarksburg area is largely undeveloped. There are, however, significant commitments to development — both by the private and public sector — that this Plan accommodates. These commitments, illustrated in Figure 3, include:

- Gateway 270 and Comsat employment centers.
- Site 30, a 300-acre site owned by Montgomery County, a portion of which is planned for a detention center.
- Midcounty Highway, a proposed highway that will link Clarksburg to Germantown and Gaithersburg, is part of the Plan but it is designated an arterial rather than a major highway through Clarksburg.
- The future widening of I-270.

Plan Determinants: Development Commitments

Figure 3



Proposed Concept Plan for Clarksburg

The proposed concept plan for Clarksburg features a Town Center (which includes the Clarksburg Historic District); a regional transitway; two new neighborhoods, one east of I-270 and one west of I-270; the continuation of the residential character along MD 355, a greenway network, and employment along the I-270 Corridor.

This Plan continues the town scale of development proposed in the 1968 Clarksburg Master Plan but favors a greater emphasis on farmland and open space preservation and introduces the concept of transit-oriented neighborhoods.

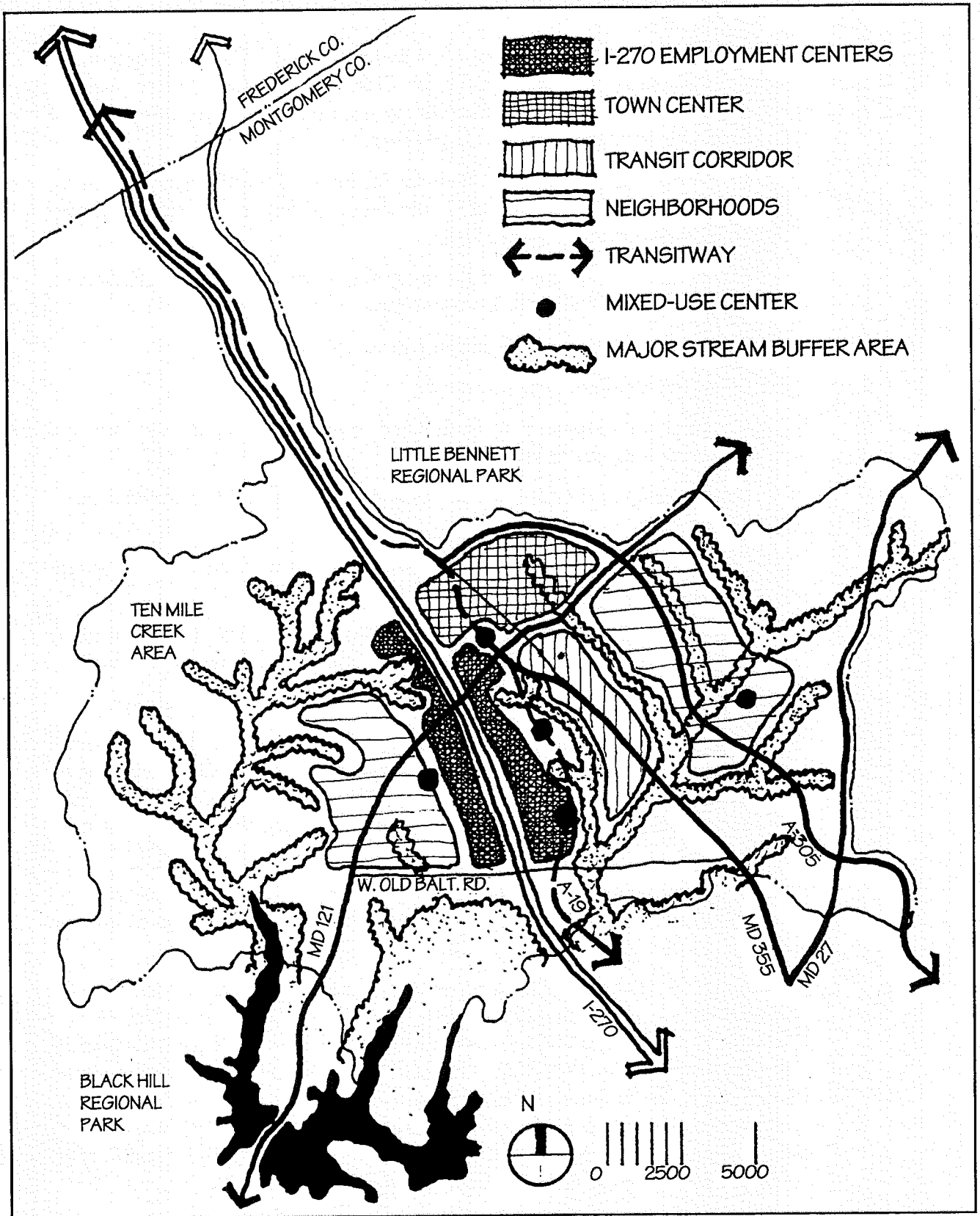
The ten key policies represented by the concept plan shown in Figure 4 are:

1. This Plan envisions Clarksburg as a town, at a larger scale than proposed in the 1968 Clarksburg Master Plan but smaller than a corridor city, such as Germantown.
2. This Plan recommends that Clarksburg's natural features, particularly stream valleys, be protected and recommends that Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Creek be afforded special protection as development proceeds.
3. This Plan recommends a multi-purpose greenway system along stream valleys.
4. This Plan proposes a comprehensive transit system that will reduce dependence on the automobile.
5. This Plan proposes a street network which clearly differentiates between highways needed to accommodate regional through traffic and roads which provide subregional and local access.
6. This Plan proposes a transit-oriented, multi-use Town Center which is compatible with the scale and character of the Clarksburg Historic District.
7. This Plan clusters development into a series of transit- and pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods.
8. This Plan emphasizes the importance of I-270 as a high-technology corridor for Montgomery County and the region and preserves key sites adjacent to I-270 for future employment options.
9. This Plan supports and reinforces County policies which seek to preserve a critical mass of farmland.
10. This Plan recommends development be staged to address fiscal concerns and be responsive to community building and environmental objectives.

Each of these policies is discussed in the next chapter.

Proposed Concept Plan for Clarksburg

Figure 4



Conformance with the Maryland Planning Act of 1992 and the General Plan for Montgomery County

The Maryland Planning Act of 1992 and the General Plan for Montgomery County have significant implications for Clarksburg. Together, these planning documents establish state-wide and County-wide planning objectives that must be reflected in local plans, such as Clarksburg.

The seven visions of the Maryland Economic Development, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 (the Planning Act) are embraced and confirmed by the Clarksburg Master Plan.

The seven visions of the State Planning Act, as stated in Article 66B Section 3.06 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, are:

1. Development is to be concentrated in suitable areas.
2. Sensitive areas are to be protected.
3. In rural areas growth is to be directed to existing population centers and resource areas are to be protected.
4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is to be considered a universal ethic.
5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is to be practiced.
6. To assure the achievement of paragraphs 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are to be streamlined.
7. Funding mechanisms are to be addressed to achieve these objectives.

In addition to the seven visions, the Planning Act requires the implementation of a sensitive areas element designed to protect environmentally impacted areas. Sensitive areas are described in the Act as 100-year floodplains, streams and their buffer areas, habitats of threatened and endangered species, and steep slopes.

The Environmental Plan chapter provides for the sensitive areas requirement of the Planning Act, along with regulatory strategies for protecting these areas.

The 1993 *General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County* amends the 1964 General Plan, commonly called "On Wedges and Corridors" and the 1969 *Updated General Plan for Montgomery County* (approved in 1970). The General Plan Refinement provides the framework for the development of more specific area master plans, functional plans, and sector plans. It provides clear guidance regarding the general pattern of development in Montgomery County, while retaining enough flexibility to respond to unforeseeable circumstances as they arise.

The General Plan Refinement divides Montgomery County into four geographic components: the Urban Ring, the Corridor, the Suburban Communities,

and the Wedge. Each area is defined in terms of appropriate land use, scale, intensity, and function. The geographic components provide a vision for the future while acknowledging the modifications to the Wedges and Corridors concept that have evolved during the past three decades. In particular, they confirm two distinct sub-areas of the Wedge — an Agricultural Wedge and a Residential Wedge. They also recognize the transitional areas of generally moderate density and suburban character that have evolved between the Wedge, Corridor, and Urban Ring as Suburban Communities. Emphasis remains on intensification of the Corridor, particularly along the main stem.

The location of the Clarksburg Master Plan in relation to the General Plan Refinement's geographic components is shown in Figure 5. The General Plan Refinement places most of Clarksburg in the I-270 Corridor, an area generally envisioned for intensive development. Environmentally sensitive areas to the east and north are part of the Wedge.

Relationship of the Clarksburg Master Plan to the 1992 Maryland Planning Act and the General Plan Refinement

The General Plan Refinement provides seven goals and associated objectives and strategies that give guidance to development. The goals, objectives, and strategies provide a future vision for Montgomery County and establish a frame of reference for decision-making to make that vision become a reality. The seven goals relate to Land Use, Housing, Economic Activity, Transportation, Environment, Community Identity and Design, and Regionalism.

The visions established in the Maryland Planning Act generally coincide with these goals. For this reason, the following discussion, which is keyed to the seven goals of the General Plan Refinement, also includes a discussion of the Clarksburg Plan's relationship to the Maryland Planning Act.

Achieve a variety of land uses and development densities consistent with the Wedges and Corridors pattern.

The Clarksburg Master Plan identifies Clarksburg as a town in the I-270 Corridor and creates a transition from the more densely developed portions of the Corridor to the south to the more rural and agricultural land uses to the north. A variety of land uses and development densities are provided within the town concept. This also conforms with Vision 1 of the Maryland Planning Act — development is to be concentrated in suitable areas — and Vision 3 — rural growth is to be directed to population centers and resource areas are to be protected.

Encourage and maintain a wide choice of housing types and neighborhoods for people of all incomes, ages, lifestyles, and physical capabilities at appropriate densities and locations.

Clarksburg now is relatively undeveloped, but at “end-state,” the area may have as many as 14,000 housing units. The Plan takes great care to assure a wide choice of housing types, including recommended housing mix guidelines by neighborhood.

Promote a healthy economy, including a broad range of business, service, and employment opportunities at appropriate locations.

This Master Plan seeks to retain the existing employment centers in Clarksburg and adds employment acreage along selected locations near I-270. This recommendation conforms to the General Plan Refinement's statement that the I-270 Corridor "is a significant employment resource for the County and region." Improving connections between commercial centers and residential areas is promoted in the Plan, as envisioned by the General Plan Refinement (Economic Activity Strategy 4C). The recommendations which permit the intensification of existing centers of economic activity are in accord with Vision 6 of the Maryland Planning Act — economic growth is encouraged.

Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that serves the environmental, economic, social, and land use needs of the County and provides a framework for development.

The Clarksburg Master Plan supports many of the General Plan Transportation principles, including an improved transit system (Transportation Objective 4), bike-way system (Transportation Objective 6), and movement of through traffic away from local streets (Transportation Strategy 5A).

Conserve and protect natural resources to provide a healthy and beautiful environment for present and future generations. Manage the impacts of human activity on our natural resources in a balanced manner to sustain human, plant, and animal life.

This Plan pays particular attention to the protection of stream quality (Environment Objective 5) and proposes all main stream channels be part of a publicly owned greenway network. This Plan also proposes a transit-oriented development pattern, thereby reducing single-occupancy automobile travel and helping to maintain air quality (Environment Objective 7) and reduce energy consumption (Environment Objective 14). The Environmental Plan chapter identifies sensitive areas to be protected in compliance with Vision 2 of the Maryland Planning Act. This chapter is an indication of the County's stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and land (Vision 4). The Plan's efforts for resource conservation comply with reducing resource consumption (Vision 5).

Provide for attractive land uses that encourage opportunities for social interaction and promote community identity.

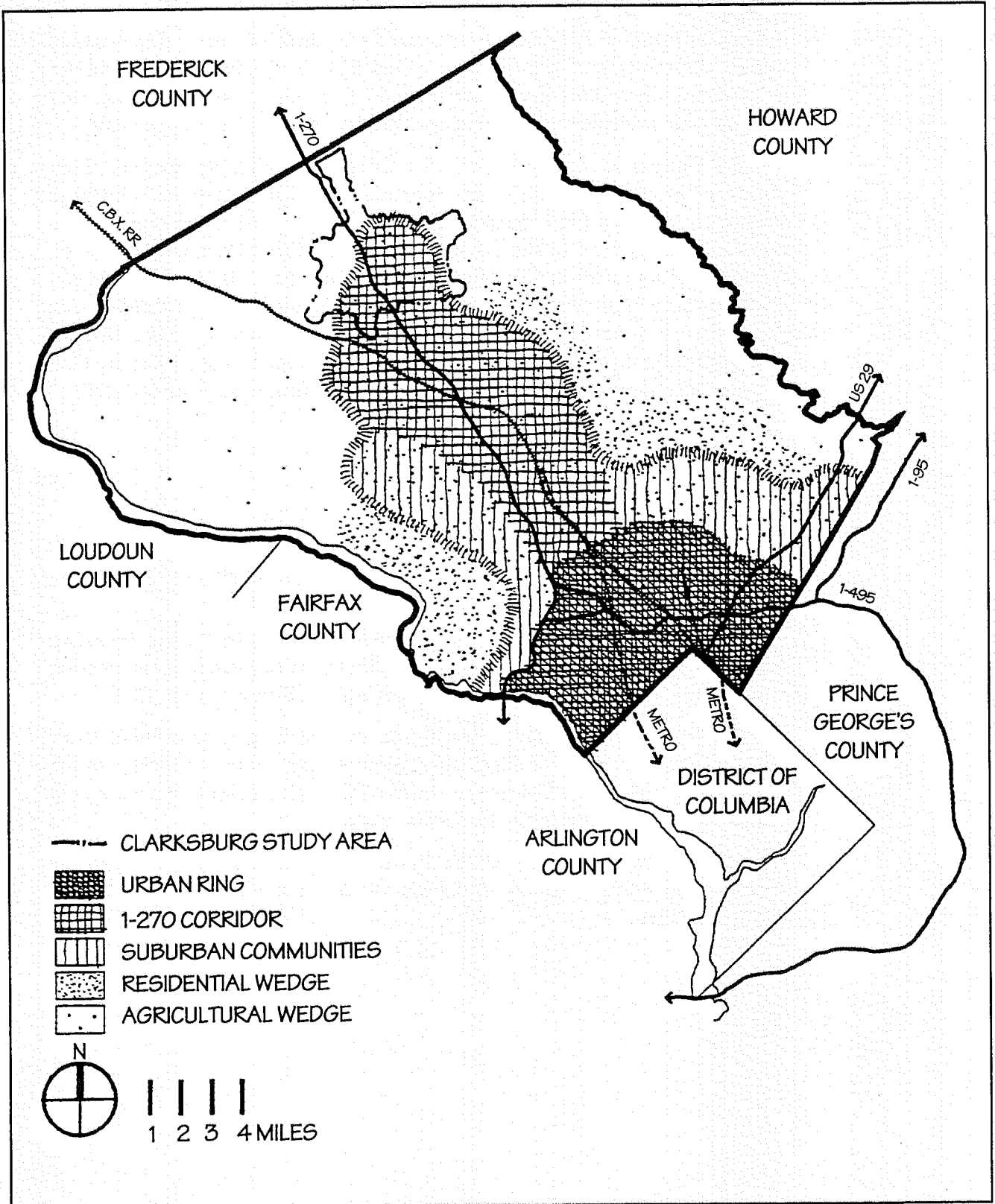
The advancement of social interaction and community identity are major issues in the Clarksburg Master Plan. Many of the General Plan goals, objectives, and strategies aimed at improving community identity are employed in this Plan. The Plan proposes development guidelines to provide connectivity between residential neighborhoods and between residences and commercial areas (Community Identity and Design Strategies 1E, 1H, 1I).

Promote regional cooperation and solutions of mutual concern to Montgomery County, its neighbors, and internal municipalities.

Clarksburg's commitment to achieving Clean Air Act standards and protecting water quality and quantity conform to the General Plan Refinement's strategy to "attain and maintain regional standards for matters of regional significance" (Regionalism Strategy 2D). This Plan has also been coordinated with

Relationship of Clarksburg to Wedges and Corridors

Figure 5



Frederick County planning efforts so the transitway, greenway, and roadway proposals are consistent with Frederick County plans.

Rationale for Chosen Priorities

The General Plan Refinement recognized that there will be conflicts among its goals, objectives, and strategies and noted that “it is only within the master plan context, where decisions about individual parcels of land are made, that any reasonable prioritization of competing goals and objectives can be made.”

Clarksburg is located on the I-270 Corridor, which the General Plan Refinement identifies as a major development area. The Refinement’s intent is contained in the land use objective, “Direct the major portion of Montgomery County’s future growth to the Urban Ring and the I-270 Corridor.” However, environmental resources in Clarksburg also require protection. Both the General Plan Refinement throughout the Environment Goal and the 1992 Planning Act urge protection of sensitive areas. Addressing these two factors has been a challenge throughout the planning process. The balance struck by the Clarksburg Plan is to propose a transit-oriented town scale of development largely east of I-270.

Overview of the Plan Adoption Process

This document is the culmination of a multi-year planning process which is outlined in Figure 6.

The Planning Board held public hearings on the Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan and subsequent worksessions to discuss public hearing testimony and to make final revisions to the Plan (see Figure 6, page 13).

The County Council Public Hearing on the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan provided the general public an opportunity to express their concerns to the Council. After the Public Hearing, a series of Council worksessions were held and appropriate revisions to the Plan were made.

Following the adoption of the Plan, the County Council approved changes to the existing zoning to conform with the zoning recommended in the Adopted Plan.

Clarksburg Master Plan Development Process

Figure 6

Planning staff initiated community participation
and prepared with Executive staff review:

ISSUES REPORT

(August 1989)



Planning staff reviewed Issues Report with Planning Board,
and then prepared:

STAFF DRAFT PLAN

(October 1991)



Planning Board reviewed Staff Draft, and,
with modifications,
approved Plan as suitable for public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING (PRELIMINARY) DRAFT PLAN

(February 1992)



Planning Board reviewed public hearing testimony,
received Executive comments at Board worksessions,
and adjusted Public Hearing Draft to become:

PLANNING BOARD (FINAL) DRAFT PLAN

(June 1993)



Council held public hearings and worksessions,
amended Planning Board Draft,
and forwarded to M-NCPPC to become:

APPROVED AND ADOPTED MASTER PLAN

(June 1994)