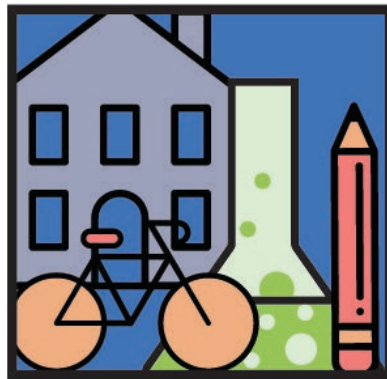


THE GREAT SENECA PLAN: CONNECTING LIFE AND SCIENCE



The Great Seneca Plan

CONNECTING LIFE AND SCIENCE

Description

Scope of Work for the Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science.

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SUMMARY

The Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science (Great Seneca Plan) is an update to the 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan* and follows the 2021 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Minor Master Plan Amendment* Phase 1. The Great Seneca Plan is a comprehensive Master Plan Amendment that will evaluate recommendations for land use, zoning, urban design, transportation, environment, and community facilities, as well as incorporate countywide initiatives and policies. This memorandum presents the Scope of Work for the Great Seneca Plan, including the proposed Plan boundaries and purpose, the context and background of the Plan area, overall planning framework, elements to explore, public engagement strategy, and the Plan schedule.

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

Draft

Scope of Work

Date

5/26/2022

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Item 7

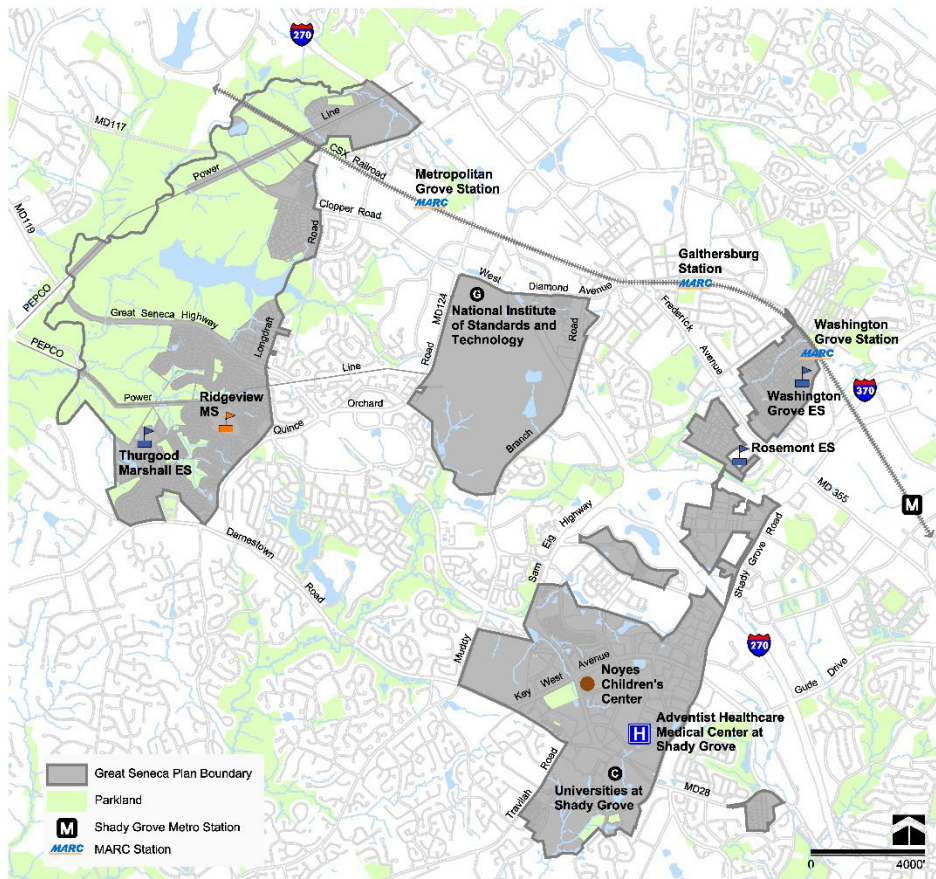


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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The purpose of this document is to define the Scope of Work and boundaries for the Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science (Great Seneca Plan), an amendment to the 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan (2010 Plan)*. The *2010 Plan* was recently amended by the 2021 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Minor Master Plan Amendment (2021 Amendment)*.

The 2021 Amendment followed a narrow scope focused on adjusting the staging requirements established by the 2010 Plan to relieve development pressure and provide time for the area to be comprehensively evaluated. The Great Seneca Plan picks up where the 2021 Amendment left off; the Great Seneca Plan will evaluate trends and conditions and develop recommendations to align the vision, recommendations, and overall staging requirements for the area with the county's adopted plans, policies, and priorities.

PLAN AREA

The Great Seneca Plan maintains the 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan (2010 Plan)* boundary. As shown in Figure 1, the boundary includes the Life Sciences Center, the western Quince Orchard neighborhoods and enclave areas such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) as well as Rosemont and Walnut Hill, which are nearly surrounded by municipalities. The City of Gaithersburg occupies 10 square miles in the center of the Plan area. The City of Rockville borders the Plan area on the east and the Town of Washington Grove is located to the northeast.

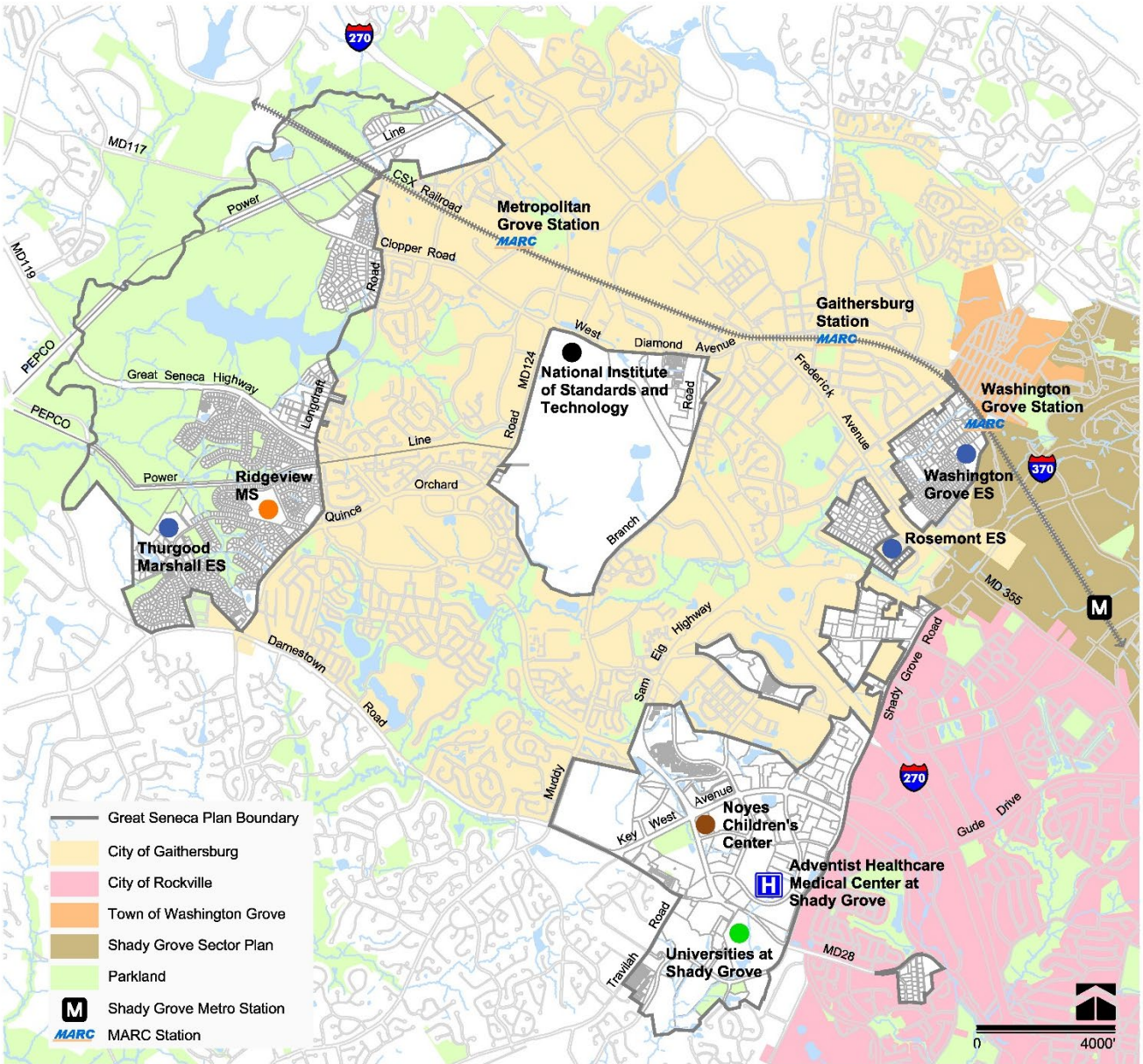


Figure 1: Great Seneca Plan - Proposed Plan Area

The Great Seneca Plan, although it includes dispersed land area, will focus on the eastern side of the Plan area, which includes the Life Sciences Center (LSC) districts defined in the 2010 Plan, Rosemont, Oakmont and Walnut Hill, Washingtonian Residential, Washingtonian Light Industrial Park, and Hi Wood.

This focus area has experienced the most change over the past decade and has new planned transformational investments on the horizon, including the LSC Loop Trail. The Life Sciences Center districts have been the center of new development applications as well as construction in the area. The area is also adjacent to important commercial centers in the City of Gaithersburg, such as the RIO Lakefront and Downtown Crown, built since the 2010 Plan, which may require new connections. The

focus area also contains roadways with planned major infrastructure such as grade separated interchanges, the Corridor Connectors, and the Great Seneca Transit Network.

HISTORY

Public investment in transportation infrastructure during the last two centuries, coupled with targeted investment in the science industry over the last several decades has significantly influenced the physical and cultural development of the Great Seneca Plan area.

Gaithersburg and Rockville, two of the oldest settlements adjacent to this Plan area, owe their early population expansion to the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad. In 1827, the B&O Railroad began building the first railway for commercial transportation of people and goods. The Rockville and Gaithersburg stations were added to the rail line in 1873 and 1884, respectively. The rail spurred population growth and attracted summer tourists, which prompted hotel and residential developments alongside the rail tracks.

Concurrently, small historic African American communities, such as Quince Orchard, existed in the area since the end of the Civil War. These communities were usually anchored in the area through the establishment of a church, which served multiple roles as a community center, benevolent society, school, and other functions. The Pleasant View Methodist Episcopal Church, which was built in 1888, razed in 1914, and subsequently replaced with a new church along Darnestown Road, served as the community anchor for the Quince Orchard community, with the Quince Orchard Schoolhouse located adjacent to the church.

The Quince Orchard Schoolhouse was relocated next to the church in the early 1900s, after Montgomery County officials built a new school for White children in Quince Orchard and relocated the old schoolhouse for the African American children. The schoolhouse was primarily dependent on walking, with some students having to walk 2.5 miles to attend school. The lack of accessible transportation to the Quince Orchard Schoolhouse was not unique, as transportation accessibility for Black school children was limited due to the systemic racism that existed in Montgomery County and throughout the United States, which prevented equitable access to education, transportation, and other social amenities. Black children often walked long distances or paid more than White children for the use of buses purchased by local organizations and communities.

After World War II, there was a surge in infrastructure development, particularly in transportation projects. In 1944, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) announced a new Master Plan for a variety of freeways, highways, parkways, and streets, including the Washington National Pike, later known as I-270. The Washington National Pike, designed to connect Frederick to Washington D.C., was built through the agricultural areas in Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Germantown, spurring further suburban development alongside the highway.

In conjunction with the building of the Washington National Pike, the federal government began acquiring properties to relocate government facilities in the event of an attack during the Cold War. In

1956, it began acquiring farmland in Gaithersburg for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) campus. By 1986, NIST was able to acquire all 579.5 acres of land from 14 property owners and entities.

The roots of the Life Sciences Center can be traced to the 1971 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* which proposed a medical center and paved the way for the Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. In the 1980s, as part of its economic development program, Montgomery County strategically invested in the area to improve its competitive position to attract the life sciences industries. The Shady Grove Life Sciences Center was created on nearly 232 acres of publicly owned land near Shady Grove Road and Route 28. The county hoped to attract new jobs and educational opportunities to the Shady Grove area, however it was not well received by all residents, some of whom wanted to preserve their ancestral farmland.

The surrounding areas changed to accommodate the new pace of development spurred from the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center. Large institutions and companies such as the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, NIST, Adventist Healthcare Shady Grove Medical Center, and the Otsuka Pharmaceutical Company established themselves in the Life Sciences Center. The formerly sleepy agricultural area went through a major transformation with investments in roads and development.

PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

The General Plan

The 1964 General Plan, *On Wedges and Corridors*, envisioned corridor cities, including Rockville and Gaithersburg, for high-density, clustered development supported by an efficient transportation system including high-quality transit. This was affirmed in the 1993 *General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County*, which recognized the I-270 Corridor as an economic engine for the County, where knowledge and information-based businesses have grown, while noting that the Corridor was still evolving.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 (Thrive), an update to the General Plan, is currently under review by the County Council. The ideas and the recommendations in the update are organized to achieve three overarching goals: economic competitiveness, racial and social equity, and environmental sustainability. While the web of corridors and centers has grown since the 1960s, in its draft form, Thrive continues to champion growth along corridors in defined centers. It recognizes the crucial role of transit, vibrant mixed-use development, and attainable housing in supporting our economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability.

2010 Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan

The 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan* built upon the evolving vision of the Life Sciences Center (LSC). The Plan established a vision of transforming the LSC into a walkable, vibrant science

center with a mixture of uses served by transit as well as an array of services and amenities for residents, workers and visitors. In addition to establishing the Implementation Advisory Committee and the Biennial Monitoring Report, the 2010 Plan acknowledged that achieving this ambitious vision required periodic review of the Plan's progress and implementation of recommendations.

The 2010 Plan created a vision for the LSC as a biotechnology, healthcare, and higher education hub that "includes an expanded, first-class medical center, research facilities, academic institutions, and an array of services and amenities for residents, workers, and visitors" (p. 15). Divided into five districts, the LSC is home to a major hospital, academic institutions, and private biotechnology companies, including Adventist Healthcare Shady Grove Medical Center (Adventist), Johns Hopkins University-Montgomery County Campus, the Universities at Shady Grove, and the National Cancer Institute's consolidated headquarters.

Additionally, the 2010 Plan included several communities outside of the LSC, as mentioned in the Plan boundaries section of this memorandum. The 2010 Plan did not anticipate major changes to these areas and maintained the zoning in these areas.

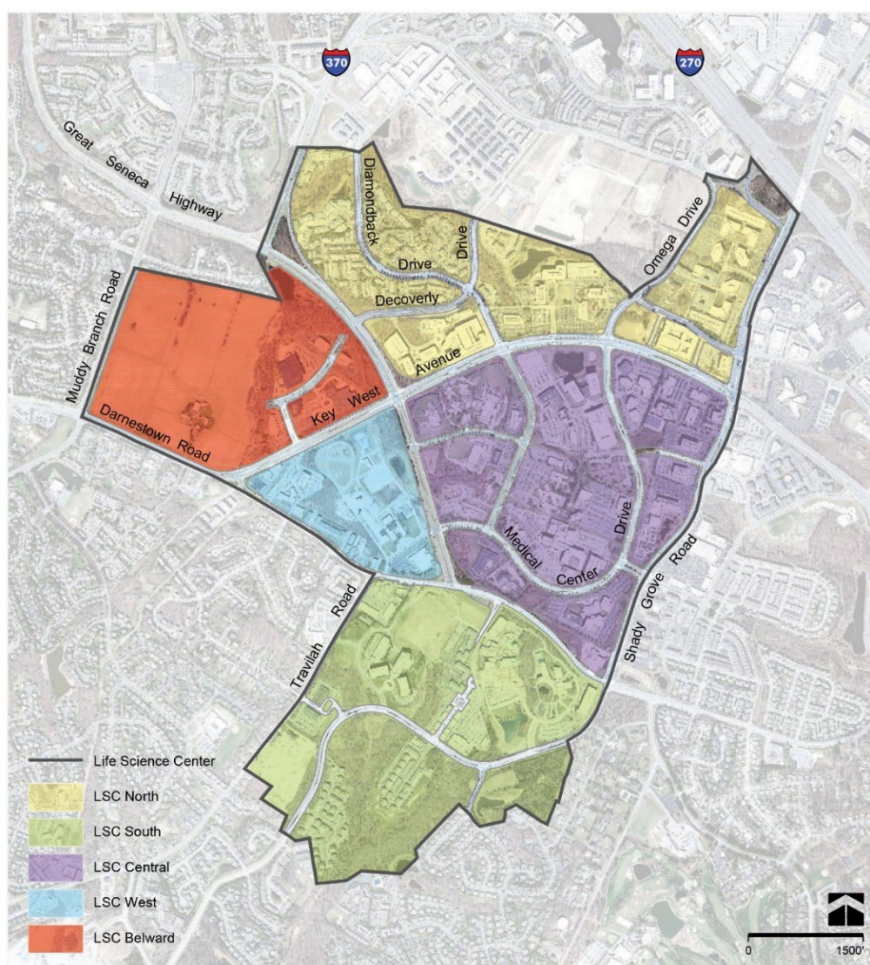


Figure 2: Life Sciences Center Districts

The 2010 Plan recognized the centrality of transit in transforming the LSC into a dynamic live/work community and stated, “Transit is an essential element of this Plan and is the basis for the land-use and zoning recommendations. A strong public and private commitment to the Plan’s transit proposals will help ensure that the LSC is connected internally as well as to the rest of the Corridor.” (P. 15) The 2010 Plan recommended aligning the Corridor City Transitway (CCT) through the LSC, providing four stations to serve as the center of new development and amenities. However, the CCT did not proceed as originally planned.

Staging

The 2010 Plan included staging requirements for development in the LSC. The staging requirements were intended to pair incremental development with infrastructure, public facilities, services, or specific milestones to ensure that development advanced at a pace consistent with the delivery of infrastructure and services necessary to support the development as well as minimize negative impacts.

The 2010 Plan established four stages of development, each with its own requirements. Funding, construction, and operation of the CCT was the centerpiece of the staging requirements. Requirements for Stage 1, which released 400,000 additional square feet of non-residential capacity, have been met and the square footage has been allocated. The requirements for Stage 2, which included the full funding of the CCT, have not been met.

The Great Seneca Science Corridor Minor Master Plan Amendment, Phase 1

The Montgomery County Council requested that Montgomery Planning initiate an amendment to the 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan*, to facilitate the continued growth of the life sciences industry and advance transit options serving the Life Sciences Center.

Montgomery County diligently worked over decades to cultivate the life sciences industry within the Great Seneca Science Corridor Plan area and in recent years, this industry gained momentum, which increased with the COVID-19 pandemic and the pursuit for a vaccine. The tremendous growth of the life sciences industry within Montgomery County has served as a catalyst for economic development and employment, and the county has a vested interest in supporting the continued growth of the life sciences industry.

The ability for growth has been hindered in recent years due to the staging requirements of the 2010 Plan, which allocated development based on provision of key public facilities and infrastructure including the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT).

The 2021 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Minor Master Plan Amendment*, adopted in December 2021, addressed the effective commercial development moratorium in the area and enabled critical life

sciences development to proceed in a timely manner. The 2021 Amendment contains two recommendations, and the first recommendation states:

Create an interim stage, between Stage 1 and Stage 2, that shifts 400,000 square feet of non-residential development from Stage 2 to this interim stage. Release 400,000 square feet of non-residential development capacity immediately through this interim stage.

The 400,000 square feet of non-residential development capacity is limited to the LSC North, LSC Central, and LSC South districts. New development capacity allocations through this interim stage are prohibited in the LSC West and LSC Belward Districts. The additional capacity of 400,000 square feet is only available for non-residential development and is not eligible for conversion to residential development under the staging requirements.

The 2021 Amendment also recommends pursuing a second amendment to the 2010 Plan that would evaluate and recommend critical infrastructure, facilities and amenities and support the county's adopted plans and policies, as well as implement an equitable engagement strategy. The Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science is described in the second recommendation of the 2021 Amendment:

Initiate a comprehensive amendment to the 2010 Plan to address the departures and barriers from the 2010 Plan vision identified through this amendment, as well as changes to or the potential elimination of the staging requirements. The comprehensive amendment provides an opportunity to integrate policy guidance from countywide plans and initiatives including Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050, and Vision Zero, as well as to employ a robust outreach and engagement strategy to create a plan that advances racial equity and social justice.

Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan

The Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) was featured prominently in the 2010 Plan vision, recommendations, and staging requirements. The 2010 Plan called transit “an essential element of this Plan and is the basis for the land use and zoning recommendations.” The CCT did not come to fruition following the 2010 Plan approval, which impacted development in and expectations for the Plan area.

Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan (Corridor Forward) was initiated in spring 2020 to evaluate and prioritize transit projects that best support the travel needs of communities and employment centers along the I-270 corridor, including those within the Plan area. Corridor Forward proceeded in parallel with the 2021 Amendment, and evaluated several transit projects, including the Corridor Cities Transitway, to identify the transit projects that would advance the county's goals related to equitable communities, environmental resilience, and economic health. The Plan was approved by the County Council in April 2022, and recommended a near-term transit network of dedicated bus lanes, long-

term recommendations for an extension of Metrorail's Red Line and enhancements to MARC commuter rail along the Brunswick Line, as well as several supporting recommendations and regional opportunities.

The near-term transit network recommendations included implementing both the MD355 and Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit routes and re-envisioning the CCT, which was a cornerstone of the 2010 Plan, as a network of dedicated bus lanes called the Corridor Connectors. It also included support for current and planned transit services, like the Great Seneca Transit Network, North Bethesda Transitway, and state-run commuter buses on I-270. The long-term transit vision included an extension of Metrorail's Red Line to Germantown Town Center and supported the long-term potential of MARC rail through enhanced service and new stations at Shady Grove and White Flint.

The 2021 Amendment Scope of Work posited that a comprehensive amendment to the 2010 Plan should follow the adoption of Corridor Forward. The Great Seneca Plan will integrate the guidance and recommendations from Corridor Forward into the vision, goals and recommendations, which includes a revised Corridor Cities Transitway, called the Corridor Connectors.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

COUNTYWIDE INITIATIVES

There are several countywide efforts that will inform and guide the planning process and the development of the Great Seneca Plan recommendations, including:

- **Climate Action Plan** Montgomery County's strategic plan to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 80 percent by 2027 and 100 percent by 2035. Planning staff will incorporate guidance from the Climate Action Plan and develop recommendations to assist the county in achieving these goals.
- **Thrive Montgomery 2050** (Thrive) The update to the General Plan is currently under review by the County Council. Planning staff will follow the Thrive process and incorporate approved guidance and policies, as well as identify efforts to advance Thrive's desired outcomes of equity, environmental resilience, and economic competitiveness in the Plan area.
- **Vision Zero** In 2016, the county adopted a resolution mandating the Vision Zero approach to all transportation planning efforts and policies. Vision Zero seeks to eliminate transportation-related deaths and severe injuries. The target goal is to reach zero traffic fatalities and severe injuries by 2030. Staff will apply the Vision Zero approach to transportation analyses and recommendations.
- **Complete Streets Design Guide** Complete Streets are roadways that are designed and operated to provide safe, accessible, and healthy travel for all users of the roadway system,

including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. The approach to Complete Streets will vary in different parts of Montgomery County. Staff will identify and select appropriate designations for the roadways in the Plan area, based on the 2021 *Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guide*.

- **Pedestrian Master Plan** The Pedestrian Master Plan team recently presented an existing conditions report to the Planning Board. The Great Seneca team will coordinate with the Pedestrian Master Plan team regarding roads, crosswalks, safety, and overall pedestrian experience, and apply findings in the Plan area.

AN EQUITY LENS FOR PLANNING

In 2019, the Montgomery County Council passed a Racial Equity and Social Justice Act (27-19) that requires the Planning Board to consider racial equity and social justice impacts when preparing a Master or Sector Plan. Montgomery Planning is developing an Equity Agenda for Planning to systemically dismantle the institutional racism that exists in our work and prevent it in the future.

The Equity Agenda is an ongoing effort and includes applying an equity lens to all plans, policies, and practices. The American Planning Association states, “Planning for Equity means applying an equity lens—for just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper and reach their full potential—to everything planners do. From the way planners work with community members creating a shared vision for their neighborhoods to advocating for policies that connect people to opportunities at the local, state, and federal levels, planning for equity is planning for all.”

ELEMENTS TO EXPLORE

Below is a list of elements that will be explored through the planning process for the Great Seneca Plan. It is anticipated that additional elements will be added as the engagement effort and existing conditions analysis begin. No issue is studied in a vacuum; all plan recommendations will be considered as part of a holistic approach to shaping the future of the Great Seneca area.

Community Identity, Connection and Social Capital

The Plan area is nestled between the City of Gaithersburg, the City of Rockville, and the Town of Washington Grove. The people who live, learn, work, and play in the Great Seneca area are incredibly diverse—with unique needs and interests. However, the area lacks a sense of place—a unifying identity or gathering spaces. Staff will engage community members to understand the cultures and elements unique to the area. Staff will work to incorporate and to highlight the various cultures that comprise the community through urban design, architecture, and open space planning.

The Plan will also examine the relationship between the built environment, physical activity, and social capital, the network of community relationships that contribute to a shared sense of purpose

that can help build a foundation for greater trust and support an effectively functioning and inclusive community.

The built environment is the human-made space where people visit, pass through, recreate, work, and play on a daily basis. Although the built environment is a physical space it can have impacts on many aspects of our lives, including our health and our social connections. Places that encourage opportunities for people to have informal encounters can create social capital, enabling neighbors or workers to recognize each other as part of a community. The plan will examine how to support these encounters by creating places where people want to be out in the public realm: walking, biking, shopping, and recreating.¹

Land Use and Staging

Since the approval and adoption of the *2010 Plan*, the Life Sciences Center has attracted world class biotechnology and life science companies as well as healthcare and higher education institutions. Major residential projects have provided new homes near workplaces, leading the way to a transformation of the Life Science Center into a vibrant area to live and work, as envisioned in the *2010 Plan*. Despite the growth, recent development applications are not delivering the building forms, residential or employment densities envisioned in the *2010 Plan*. The staging requirements established in the *2010 Plan* present additional challenges for development in the Life Sciences Center.

Staff will evaluate the current zoning designations in the Great Seneca Plan area. Staff will explore right-sizing zoning—examining if the zoning allocated assumes too much, too little, or just enough height and density. Staff will also assess 2010 staging requirements by reviewing the anticipated and actual impacts of development and evaluating the original objectives and unintended effects. Staff will explore maintaining, amending, or eliminating staging requirements through this planning process.

Housing

The *2010 Plan* imagined a life sciences center hub supported by a range of housing options. A strong demand for multi-family housing has complemented the expansion of the life science industry in the area. The population living in the Plan area has grown by 20 percent since the *2010 Plan* was approved and adopted, more than double the rate of the county overall over the same period. Residential vacancies remain low in the area, while the number of dwelling units built or approved reaches less than half of the capacity allowed by the *2010 Plan*.

Housing costs remain a burden in the area and are a barrier to attracting and retaining employees. The Great Seneca Plan offers opportunities to provide additional housing options in concert with the 2019 Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments regional goal of adding more than 320,000

¹ This text was added in response to Planning Board feedback during the presentation of the proposed scope of work.

housing units by 2030, 75 percent of which will be attainable for low- and middle-income households.

The Montgomery County Council adopted a resolution in 2019 to support this regional target, including the need for Montgomery County specifically to add an additional 10,000 housing units over the forecasted amount of 31,000 by 2030. To help get there, staff will examine existing zoning and land uses in the area and work with housing partners to determine how, where, and what types of new residential development should be pursued.

The Great Seneca Plan will encourage the production of more housing to better match supply with demand, plan for a wide range of housing types and sizes to meet diverse needs, and promote racial and economic diversity in housing in every neighborhood.

Economic Development

Great Seneca is the county's premier life sciences hub and one of the county's main economic engines. Even as the county experienced slow job growth in many employment sectors, the life sciences industry grew by over 30 percent between 2010 and 2018. The Life Sciences Center contains more than twice the number private sector workers in the life sciences industry than those employed in other areas of the county.

The Great Seneca Plan seeks to support the continued growth of the life sciences industry. To continue to foster a competitive 21st century life sciences cluster, staff will need to ensure that the Plan area can accommodate enough state-of-the-art research and development space to meet current and future demand. Firms of all sizes and stages of technology development are necessary for a healthy life sciences ecosystem, so staff will examine ways to meet the needs of all types of life sciences businesses—from startups to publicly traded companies. These needs include laboratory space, but also crucially include supporting businesses, housing and amenities in the nearby area for employees.

The life science industry also provides an opportunity for expanding employment and wages for communities with traditionally less access to jobs and who may have been harder hit by the recent economic changes due to the pandemic. The industry offers many opportunities for people with bachelor's degrees or less education and for people with limited experience in the life sciences industry. And, while White people hold a disproportionate number of life sciences jobs, job growth has been more rapid for Black and Hispanic people. Staff will examine ways to further reduce barriers to this important employment hub.

Transportation, Access and Connectivity

Land use and transportation are interdependent; a successful land-use plan must have a complementary and reinforcing transportation plan. The Plan's approach to transportation will focus on three themes: multimodal access, climate resilience, and social equity, advancing goals set in

previous countywide planning efforts, described in the Countywide Initiatives section of this document:

- **Multimodal Access:** The Plan will build on the multimodal principles advanced by the county over the past decade through the 2013 *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan*, 2016 Vision Zero Resolution, 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan*, 2021 *Complete Streets Design Guide*, 2022 *Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan*, and the ongoing *Pedestrian Master Plan*.
- **Climate Resilience:** The 2020 *Climate Action Plan* sets an ambitious goal with clear actions to reduce the county's carbon emissions. Where feasible, the Plan will integrate these actions into its transportation analysis and considerations.
- **Social Equity:** Equity will be a thread through the transportation analysis and recommendations, incorporating guidance from the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act and the Equity Agenda for Planning.

Staff will examine recommendations from the 2010 Plan through the lens of these more recent planning efforts to realize a more multimodal, sustainable, and equitable future.

The transportation analysis will consider the following:

- **Existing Transportation Network:** The Plan will inventory existing conditions, including both roadway, transit, and nonmotorized infrastructure, as well as review the existing non-auto driver mode share.
- **Transportation Safety:** Consistent with the county's adopted Vision Zero Resolution, the Plan will prioritize safety and will focus on improving access to multi-modal transportation systems that connect people with destinations.
- **Transit Service:** The Plan will integrate planned transit routes and infrastructure, such as the Great Seneca Transit Network and the Corridor Connectors recommended in the 2022 *Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan*, with land-use recommendations.
- **Auto Capacity:** The Plan will reevaluate the planned grade-separated interchanges to determine if they support the county's and the City of Gaithersburg's land-use and transportation vision and goals.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks:** The Plan will revisit the 2010 Plan's recommendations for bicyclists and pedestrians, considering both safety and comfort, through a review of the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress, Pedestrian Level of Comfort, and the Predictive Safety Analysis.
- **Lighting:** The County was recently awarded a Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Transportation-Land Use Connections grant to develop lighting standards. The outcome of that project will inform lighting recommendations throughout the Plan area.
- **Transportation Equity:** The Plan will focus on not just places and infrastructure, but the people who use them, addressing social, health, and environmental equity through identification and prioritization of transportation projects.

- **Emerging Issues:** The Plan will consider the role of technology in the future of mobility in the community, including telework, micromobility, last-mile shipping, rideshare, and other emerging trends.

The Plan will also evaluate transportation adequacy for auto and transit accessibility, auto and transit travel times, and vehicle miles traveled per service population, consistent with the County Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee's guidance for measuring transportation adequacy in master plans.

Environmental Resilience

One of the key recommendations of the 2010 Plan was to “create a sustainable community that will attract nationwide interest with design and materials that minimize carbon emissions, maximize energy conservation, and preserve air and water quality.” Since the adoption of the 2010 Plan, research and monitoring have demonstrated that climate change and its impacts are growing worse. This has resulted in new commitments to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2035, supported by actions recommended by Montgomery County's Climate Action Plan and complementary planning actions being recommended in *Thrive Montgomery 2050*.

Environmental resilience has become a cornerstone of our planning work. In addition to the continued focus on improving air and water quality and protecting and promoting biological diversity, the desired outcomes of environmental resilience now include addressing climate change, protecting and improving human health, and promoting environmental justice.

The proposed Great Seneca Plan will respond to the new environmental challenges and desired outcomes by examining current conditions and making recommendations that will contribute to the county's goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, incorporate measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change, and create resilience in the face of anticipated future impacts and disruptions.

The Great Seneca Plan will further examine ways that land use and development can improve human health and well-being and promote biological diversity. The Plan area will be assessed to determine if there are disparities in the distribution of environmental benefits or negative environmental impacts in historically disadvantaged communities and make recommendations to ensure that desired environmental outcomes benefit all communities equitably.

Urban Design

The 2010 Plan prioritized mid- and high-rise mixed-use buildings, and promoted urban-style design with structured parking, pedestrian scale streets, signature buildings, and shorter setbacks. The 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Design Guidelines* recognized that “Today, the buildings and spaces in *Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan* area are complementary in use and function, but unsustainable as self-sufficient entities. They function like typical research parks, with wide roadways and setback buildings forming visually separated spaces and physical barriers that prevent a cohesive

and accessible built environment.” (Design Guidelines, P. 5) Development, however, remains relatively unchanged and has not achieved the urban style form envisioned.

Staff will examine the pattern of development of the Plan area to date and explore alternatives to better align Plan recommendations with current development trends and future growth projections. Staff will explore strategies for attracting a broader mix of uses to individual developments and districts and enhancing building and sustainable site design. Staff will assess existing pedestrian connections and open spaces and explore strategies to create a seamless network of parks, trails, and public spaces.

Staff will work with the community and relevant stakeholders to develop broad design guidance within the Plan that will ensure future developments are located near the transit stop locations identified within Corridor Forward. Staff will also determine if any revisions are needed to the existing 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Urban Design Guidelines*.

Parks and Open Space

The 2010 Plan recognized that “thriving places rely on a high-quality public realm. Parks and open spaces offer community gathering places, foster a sense of place and civic pride, and encourage environmental stewardship; essential components of community life.” The 2010 Plan recommended an extensive park, trail and open space network. While some projects, like the LSC Loop trail, have received funding through the county’s Capital Improvements Program, none of the private open spaces or public parks identified in the 2010 Plan have been built or improved. Recommendations, like the Civic Greens planned for each of the CCT stops in the area, face barriers with the stalling of the CCT.

Staff will also evaluate the current park and open space recommendations in the 2010 Plan to determine which recommendations remain valid and should be carried forward with this Plan, and which recommendations are no longer valid and should be changed or deleted. Staff will also inventory and analyze all the M-NCPPC parks and trails in and nearby to the Plan area, as well as privately owned public spaces (POPS) and other open spaces in the Plan area, including schools and institutions. Staff will also evaluate municipal parks nearby to the Plan area.

Staff will examine the number and quality of these parks and open spaces and compare the facilities to the Energized Public Spaces (EPS) analysis to determine service levels for active, social and contemplate experiences, as well as the 2022 *Parks, Recreation and Open Space* (PROS) Plan recommendations and forecasts for needed facilities in this area of the county.

Staff will work with the community and Plan area stakeholders to develop a vision for future community gathering and play spaces, consistent with existing and proposed land uses, community characteristics and trends in recreation. Staff will also work with them to identify ways to improve bicycling, walking, and transit access to parks, trails, and open spaces.

Community Facilities

Community facilities, in concert with parks and open spaces, contribute to community quality of life and cohesion. The 2010 Plan identified a fire station and a new community center, the North Potomac Recreation Center, which have since been built. The 2010 Plan also provided a site for a future elementary school on the former Public Safety Training Academy site, which has not yet been planned. Staff will examine the existing recommendations for community facilities as well as needs for additional community facilities.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

A central element of the Great Seneca Plan process will be a robust, equitable engagement strategy to gather input of community members, business owners, nonprofit and other organizations, experts, and county government departments and commissions. Most significantly, as staff engages community members, our approach will adapt and consider how best to gather meaningful input and interpret it to shape the plan.

Staff will begin by collecting data about the people who live and work in the area and information about the area itself—its homes and businesses, its growth patterns and environmental needs, and its economic and physical relationships to the surrounding county. Through interactive questionnaires, meetings, and events with community organizations, local business owners, government entities, and other stakeholders, we will determine what the future of the area may look like and how we can best enable a version that is equitable, viable, and will carry forward what people love about their community as-is.

Ultimately, we aim to gather the input that explores and characterizes life in Great Seneca to consider the future character of this unusual Plan area more deeply. Throughout our various phases of plan development and outreach, we will create significant, substantive opportunities for community input—including influence on this scope of work and subsequent engagement on its more technical aspects—and staff will continue using information from previous engagement activities to ensure that location selection and session formats are equitable and accessible.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT GOALS

The communications and engagement strategy will support the overarching master plan process and emphasize the importance of building in-depth, effective community relationships and support for our work. Stated goals include:

- **Equitable Public Engagement:** Spark sufficient interest and input from diverse community members who live and/or work in the Plan area to ensure that the resulting plan represents community interests, perspectives, and visions.
- **Pilot New Outreach Activities:** Employ and measure the success of external-facing activities, particularly in reaching more diverse stakeholders meaningfully and developing a baseline for what inclusive community engagement by Montgomery Planning can look like.
- **Effective Community Partnerships:** Build new and deepen existing relationships with and respectfully leverage community partners to become advocates for this plan and its vision.
- **Generate Support for the Plan’s Recommendations:** Gain support through transparent, engaging communications from community members, partners, life sciences industry leaders, and other key stakeholders to successfully approve and implement the recommendations of the Plan.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Our communications strategies prioritize defining not only the master plan but also the unusual, noncontiguous Plan area in play. To that end, we will work to better define the Great Seneca area and its unifying characteristics through creative visualizations, coordination with peer agencies and other primary audiences, and—most importantly—broad community input. We intend to use positive, asset-based, and community-centric messaging frames that promote the wonderful elements of the Great Seneca Plan area as well as to emphasize the purpose and beneficial impact of this Plan.

To execute these strategies effectively, we will use a set of proven community-outreach tactics that help us engage with our audiences in substantive, equitable fashion. These include the rebranding of this work as “Great Seneca: Connecting Life and Science,” offering a variety of ways to collect contact information and allow audiences to stay in touch and clarifying the plan boundaries and related responsibilities frequently and across media. We will also develop materials and promotional resources that our peers, partners, and allies can use to share our messages and advance this work across their own networks.

Because this Plan area is noncontiguous, highly fragmented, and lacking a broadly established unifying character, it will require more explanation than most Plan areas do. To that end, we must prioritize ways of visualizing plan area and other plan overlays, as well as developing messaging that simply explains this unusual map.

ENGAGEMENT PLAN

We envision the engagement effort to be implemented in six phases over the course of the planning process:

Prepare

The first phase will focus on building connections with diverse community groups, institutions, and businesses, and establishing channels for future collaboration. We will build awareness of

Montgomery Planning, the master planning process, and the current planning initiative. Efforts will be targeted at leveling the playing field in terms of information and understanding. We will share information, encourage people to stay in touch and begin collecting information about their lived experiences.

Excite

The second phase will focus on listening sessions. The planning team will follow up with leaders and stakeholders to collaborate on meetings and other events. We will directly reach out to individuals by phone, email, in-person canvassing, and mailed communication, as needed. Staff further anticipates a hybrid engagement method including both in-person and virtual events, such as small listening sessions and online town halls to maintain maximum flexibility and public safety.

Explore

The third phase will include a series of stakeholders' workshops focused on collaborative, interactive discussions regarding a comprehensive, long-term vision for the Plan area. Staff will use information from previous engagement activities to ensure that location selection and session formats are equitable and accessible. This phase will also include life sciences working group meetings.

Consult

The fourth phase will be concurrent with the finalization of the preliminary recommendations. The methods to present these recommendations will necessarily vary by constituency. Staff will use the information gained from previous engagement activities to determine the best methods of disseminating information.

Endorse

The fifth phase will be the presentation of the Public Hearing Draft, the approval of the Planning Board Draft and the Council work sessions. In this phase, stakeholders will see and be able to comprehensively respond “on the record” to the Draft Plan. Staff will need to educate and inform the residents how best to engage with the public hearing processes. We will also continue to clarify for existing participants how their initial thoughts and ideas contributed to this larger, more final document.

Implement

The sixth and final phase will largely conclude the engagement efforts of Montgomery Planning as the plan will move to partner agencies to implement. However, we will continue to maintain relationships and build trust through continued outreach to community members with updates on plan progress.

We hope to reach as many individuals as possible who live, work, learn, and play in the Great Seneca area. The Scope of Work outlines our goals, strategies, tactics for equitable engagement and communications, but we expect to fill in the details of the plan as we meet with stakeholders and learn from them how best to reach their communities.

PLAN SCHEDULE

Staff initiated work on the Great Seneca Plan in February 2022 and the Planning Board Draft of the Master Plan is scheduled for transmission to the County Executive and the County Council by August 2023. Significant milestones are outlined below.

April 2022:	Pre-Scope Outreach
May 2022:	Scope of Work
May – December 2022:	Engagement, Analysis and Plan Development
January – February 2023:	Preliminary Recommendations
April 2023:	Working Draft
May – July 2023:	Planning Board Review: Public Hearing and Work Sessions
August – September 2023:	County Executive and County Council Review of Planning Board Draft
October – December 2023:	County Council Review: Public Hearing and Work Sessions
January – April 2024:	Commission Adoption and Sectional Map Amendment

STAY CONNECTED

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