

LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN

Vision

Rockville is a city that encompasses comfortable neighborhoods where residents can walk, bike, and roll to amenities; mixed-use urban areas where residents, businesses and institutions thrive together; commercial and residential corridors where daily needs and wants are met; and areas for offices, laboratories, and industry where employment can be found.

An aerial photograph of Rockville Town Center, taken in 2015, shows a growing urban density to the east of North Washington Street, transitioning in the span of a single block to the historic houses of the West End along Adams Street.



Land use in Rockville is the result of the city's growth over more than 230 years, beginning in the 1780s. It is a pattern of development that includes an historic town with a government core at its center, commercial activity along Maryland State Route 355 (Rockville Pike/Hungerford Road/Frederick Road), suburban style residential neighborhoods and office parks from the last half of the 20th century, industrial uses along the CSX railroad corridor and Gude Drive area, and growing areas of higher density, mixed-use developments that are a hybrid of urban and suburban land use types.

Land use planning, implemented through its municipal zoning authority, is a primary responsibility of the City of Rockville government. The City is committed to thoroughly considering the potential impacts and benefits of any proposed land use change, through community-based planning, the development review process, and consistent neighborhood outreach.

Summary of Community Input

Visions for future land use in Rockville encompass a wide variety of desired neighborhood environments and lifestyles, stretching from the leafy suburban residential subdivisions found throughout Rockville, to the walkable, bikable, and transit-accessible commercial and residential areas of Town Center and south Rockville Pike to the newer communities of Fallsgrove and King Farm with their mix of housing types. Outreach for the Comprehensive Plan identified shared values, but also very different ideas about what types of development are desirable based on their location and the expectations and hopes of each individual. Fortunately, the city provides a diversity of built environments that can meet the needs of many different lifestyle choices, and residents can select the area of the city that best meets their ideals.

Goals for Rockville's Land Use Plan include:

1. Craft a land use plan that reflects existing uses and provides guidance and flexibility for future growth and redevelopment.
2. Allow for greater flexibility and affordability in residential land use types, while maintaining a high quality of life in new and existing neighborhoods.
3. Integrate land use and transportation planning to maximize the value of Rockville's transportation assets.
4. Promote a walkable and bikable city with connected neighborhoods and amenities.
5. Encourage and support office clusters in areas with good regional access.
6. Provide areas for service industrial and other high-intensity uses.
7. Support a robust commercial base.
8. Plan for parks and rich civic and cultural life.
9. Provide zoning tools for major development projects, and master plans as needed, for development of large areas.

Rockville 2040 participants expressed interest in diversifying the types of residential land uses allowed in certain locations. There was general support for urban-style development near Metro stations and a growing desire for walkable and bikable destinations and amenities within established neighborhoods. Participants also cited difficulties in traversing Interstate I-270, the WMATA and CSX railroad corridor, and busy Rockville Pike, whether by car, foot, or bike.

Concern was expressed regarding the future of suburban office campuses, specifically at a time when demand for office space is weak. Rockville Town Center is viewed as improved since the last master plan, but with serious concern about the struggles of commercial businesses. There is stated interest in maintaining service industrial land uses, such as manufacturing and shipping, both as a convenience and as a place for business and employment.

Many participants expressed a desire for a more active city with more things to do, including dining, entertainment, arts, culture, and recreation. In general, the Rockville community sought a land use plan that is coordinated with transportation infrastructure and amenities and related policies on the natural environment and community facilities.

GOAL 1

Craft a land use plan that reflects existing uses and provides guidance and flexibility for future growth and redevelopment.

The land use plan of this Comprehensive Plan consists of the policies that are presented in this Element and the Land Use Policy Map (see Figure 3) is the graphic expression of those policies. A key purpose of the land use plan is to anticipate and guide land use change based on demographic projections and the desired land use of property owners and the community.

The city has grown in population and area over its 230 years of history, and every indication is that its land use pattern will continue to evolve. The City of Rockville adopted comprehensive plans with a land use plan in 1960, 1970, 1993, and 2002. The City of Rockville is empowered by the State of Maryland to regulate land use through the adoption of the land use plan and is required to keep an updated land

use plan that corresponds to the City's Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map.

The Zoning Ordinance is continuously revised through text amendments and through comprehensive rewrites, the latest rewrite occurring in 2009. Changes to the Land Use Policy Map can recommend corresponding changes to the Zoning Map, which is typically adopted as a Sectional Map Amendment. Public notification and public hearings are required during the Comprehensive Plan's review and adoption process, and before any changes are made to the Zoning Ordinance or Zoning Map.

In addition to the citywide Land Use Policy Map, contained in Figure 3 of this Element, this Plan also provides land use policy direction in the Planning Areas section of this Plan.

Policy 1 **Adopt a Land Use Policy Map that clearly shows where continuity, change, and growth will be allowed to meet community goals.**

For the majority of land in Rockville, this Plan recommends retaining the existing land uses through a land use plan that closely matches current land use and is consistent with previously adopted plans. However, the land use plan is also forward-looking (with a planning horizon out to 2040) and land use change is anticipated or envisioned in certain locations. This Plan reflects comments expressed by Rockville 2040 participants and is consistent with good planning principles that seek to respond to changing market conditions and larger societal issues, including allowing for additional housing production and affordability, addressing environmental and health concerns, and maintaining a high quality of life.

This Plan was adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic and with its long-term impacts still unknown. This Plan therefore recognizes that market trends and societal issues may evolve and may require new thinking in the nearer future than would normally be the case with a land use plan. Nonetheless, this Element addresses policies in accordance with current understandings and desires of the community and planning best practices.

Definitions for Land Use Policy Map Designations

RESIDENTIAL

-  **RD - Residential Detached** is mapped for properties with a single house per lot, but may include institutional or home office uses. This category may also include one accessory dwelling unit, under rules defined in the Zoning Ordinance.
-  **RA - Residential Attached** includes a variety of house types that share party walls. Types of construction include duplex, triplex, fourplex, townhouses/row houses, and, depending on the location in the city, small apartment buildings with up to six units in a single structure. Detached houses are also allowed.
-  **RF - Residential Flexible** includes a mix of townhouses/row houses, and apartment buildings, as well as detached houses. It is applied to sites where the mix of allowed residential types is flexible and to be finalized during development review. Small-scale commercial uses are an included option if integrated into the residential development.
-  **RM - Residential Multiple Unit** is mapped for apartment or condominium buildings, which are defined as construction types with shared corridors and entrances. The density of units and size of the building is regulated by the zoning ordinance. RM areas exclude detached and attached types of construction.

COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE

-  **C - Commercial** is mapped exclusively for commercial uses, which include all types of businesses that provide direct sales or customer service, including retail shops, grocery stores, restaurants, personal or professional services, and lodging. In some locations, the Plan indicates where commercial is strongly preferred along a street frontage.
-  **CRM - Commercial and Residential Mix** expresses the City's interest in retaining and introducing commercial uses in specific locations mixed with multiple unit residential and/or residential attached types. The mix can be horizontal, with stand alone commercial next to apartment buildings on a site; or the mix can be vertical, with commercial on the ground floor and apartments above. In some locations, the Plan indicates where commercial is strongly preferred along a street frontage.
-  **O - Office** is mapped where office or other employment-generating uses, such as hotels, research & development, or laboratories, are preferred as the primary use. Commercial or other customer-serving uses are allowed as complements to the primary employment-generating use.

 **RO - Residential and/or Office** allows either or both uses, but not commercial.

 **OCRM - Office, Commercial and Residential Mix** is the most flexible category, allowing a wide choice in mixing office, commercial, and residential uses. Uses such as research & development, breweries, distilleries, and small manufacturing may be appropriate if they do not adversely impact surrounding properties. In some locations, the Plan indicates where commercial is strongly preferred along a street frontage.

 **SRM - Service Industrial and Residential Mix** is mapped in areas where service industrial is the primary use, but a mix of residential, commercial, office, and other uses is also allowed.

 **SI - Service Industrial** is inclusive of a wide variety of light industrial uses, warehouses, automobile repair, construction supply, and other distribution, repair, or wholesale businesses. It also allows for food service, kennels, or indoor recreation. Railroad and other utility properties are included.

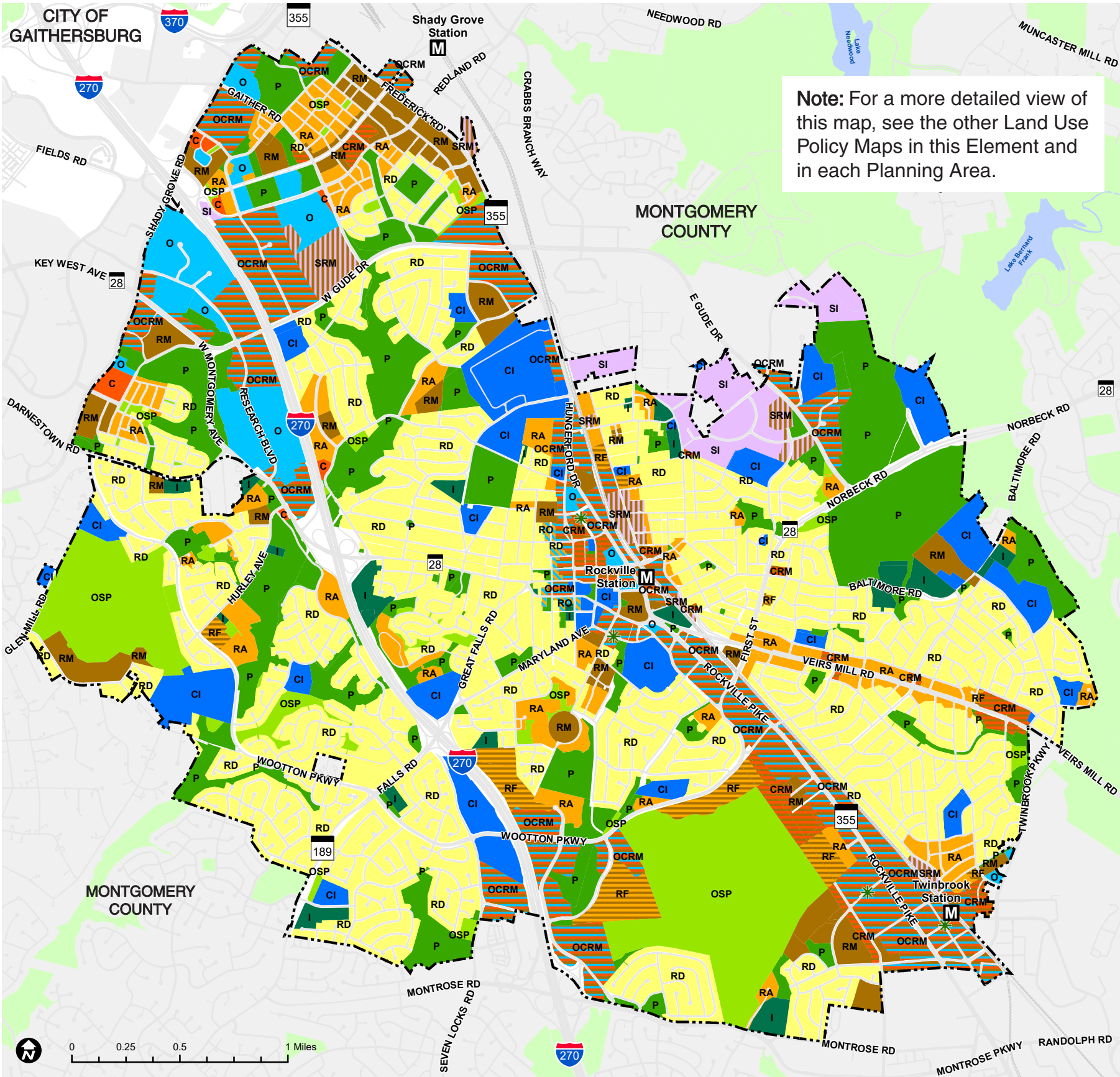
PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONAL

-  **P - Public Parks** includes all public parks and open space.¹
 A green asterisk is placed on the map in the general area where a **Potential Future Public Park** is needed, but the specific location has yet to be determined.
-  **CI - Civic and Public Institutional** are uses where government and other civic functions are located on publicly owned property. These uses include public schools and colleges, courthouses, Rockville City Hall, County offices, libraries, and maintenance facilities. Public parks are mapped under the Public Park (P) designation.
-  **OSP - Open Space Private** is private country club land and golf courses, and also large common areas owned by homeowners associations.
-  **I - Private Institutional** is mapped for private religious institutions and organizations, private schools, and cemeteries.²

¹ A land use designation of public park on private property or property not owned by the City of Rockville is for planning purposes. Any such property will not be zoned as "Park" and nothing in this Plan precludes an owner from developing property in accordance with the zoning designation and zoning regulations applicable to the property.

² The Land Use Policy Map shows existing institutional uses that are on parcels larger than three acres; for smaller parcels it shows the recommended land use for the property.

Figure 3: Land Use Policy Map



Key areas of the city planned for land use change are:

- Rockville Town Center
- Rockville Pike corridor
- Twinbrook Metro Station area
- East Rockville neighborhood
- North Stonestreet Avenue
- Shady Grove Road/Piccard Drive corridor
- Veirs Mill Road corridor

Descriptions of the land use designations in the Land Use Policy Map are provided to the left of Figure 3 in this Element and in the Planning Areas section later in this Plan. These descriptions help to guide consistent implementation of the land use plan through the adoption of zoning map amendments and the City's development review process. Some of these designations are consistent with zones that are currently in place in the City's Zoning Map. Other land use designations will be implemented through Zoning Map amendments following the adoption of this Plan.

GOAL 2

Allow for greater flexibility and affordability in residential land use types, while maintaining a high quality of life in new and existing neighborhoods.

Rockville strives to provide comfortable and convenient places that its residents are proud to call home, in both older stable neighborhoods and growing residential areas. In response to changing lifestyles, demographics, and land economics, this Plan recommends changes to the housing types and associated uses allowed in some locations to meet growing demands for safer and more comfortable walking, biking, and rolling; greater transit access; and more varied, affordable neighborhoods.

At present, residential development occupies nearly half of the total developed land in the city, with just over one-third of the total dedicated for single-unit detached homes; townhouses/row houses and multi-unit buildings each occupy 5 percent of the total developed land. The strong trend toward more townhouses/row houses and apartments reflects both a lack of undeveloped land in the city and



Rockville is home to a diverse range of single-unit detached residential dwelling types and sizes, from single-story homes without basements (top) to split-level Ranch-style homes (middle) to larger contemporary houses (bottom).

higher land and construction costs per housing unit. Most of the newer, higher density residential is being developed on land previously occupied by commercial uses, for instance, in Rockville Town Center and along the Rockville Pike and Shady Grove Road corridors.

Policy 2

Maintain large areas of Residential Detached land use, while allowing one additional accessory apartment or accessory dwelling unit per residential lot.

The City of Rockville is largely developed with detached single-unit residential homes. One way to accommodate more affordable housing options, flexible space for an office or shared family living arrangements, and financial assistance for current homeowners, while maintaining the city's predominantly residential character, is with accessory apartments and accessory dwelling units.

This Plan recommends that accessory apartments (i.e., those internal to the main residential structure) be allowed across the city. Detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are also recommended to be allowed, under a zoning text amendment, if the proposed new construction conforms to conditional use criteria that address size, parking, and other development standards.

Actions

2.1 Retain areas dedicated primarily for single-unit detached homes, mapped as Residential Detached (RD) on the Land Use Policy Map.

2.2 Allow one Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), attached or detached from the primary building, subject to size, parking, and development standards for Single Unit Detached lots. Revise the Zoning Ordinance and any applicable design guidelines to set standards for accessory dwelling units, assure neighborhood compatibility, and define applicability of adequate public facilities standards.

2.3 Establish development standards for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in the Zoning Ordinance and design guidelines that address compatibility of architectural design, use of

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

An accessory dwelling unit is a smaller, independent residential dwelling unit located on the same lot as a stand-alone (i.e., detached) single-family home. ADUs go by many different names throughout the U.S., including accessory apartments, secondary suites, and granny flats. ADUs can be converted portions of existing homes (i.e., internal ADUs), additions to new or existing homes (i.e., attached ADUs), or new stand-alone accessory structures or converted portions of existing stand-alone accessory structures (i.e., detached ADUs).

Internal, attached, and detached ADUs all have the potential to increase housing affordability (both for homeowners and tenants), create a wider range of housing options within the community, enable seniors to stay near family as they age, and facilitate better use of the existing housing fabric in established neighborhoods. Consequently, many cities and counties have signaled support for ADUs in their plans and adopted zoning regulations that permit ADUs in low-density residential areas.

American Planning Association. (July 2021). Accessory Dwelling Units. www.planning.org/knowledgebase/accessorydwellings/



An accessory dwelling unit sits behind a house in the West End neighborhood.

pervious surface materials, and retention of established tree canopy and landscaped settings. Standards should be developed in consultation with the Rockville community and take into consideration the unique character and development patterns of different neighborhoods in the city.

2.4 Change the Zoning Ordinance to make one accessory apartment, internal to the structure, a permitted use on a Residential Detached lot.

Policy 3

Allow diversification of the residential land use pattern in specific locations to meet varied needs, market dynamics, and high demand for all types of housing.

The Land Use Policy Map applies the Residential Attached (RA) land use designation to areas of the city where there are existing attached residential housing types, such as duplexes and townhomes, as well as new areas where there are currently single-unit detached homes, yet attached housing types are also included. For the most part, these new areas are existing residential blocks on the outside edges of neighborhoods, with pedestrian access to high-capacity transit, including Metrorail and planned bus rapid transit lines. This change in the land use plan will allow for a market-driven transition to residential attached construction types.

The allowed Residential Attached housing types include:

- Single-unit detached homes;
- Duplexes;
- Triplexes;
- Fourplexes;
- Townhouses/row houses; and
- Small apartment buildings with up to six units, though some RA areas only allow up to four-unit apartments.

These housing types can be accommodated on existing residential lots, or through assembly of a number of lots. The scale of this residential construction should be in keeping with its context and potential in relation to the transit infrastructure and other amenities.

Actions

3.1 Allow the introduction of limited areas of attached residential housing types within predominately single-unit detached neighborhoods, mapped as Residential Attached (RA) on the Land Use Policy Map.

3.2 Draft new zoning regulations and development standards to allow a varied mix of residential housing types on the same block, from duplexes to small apartment buildings, in areas mapped for Residential Attached (RA) and Residential Flexible (RF).

3.3 Consider approaches to allowing small single-unit detached homes on lots with narrower minimum frontages and smaller lots, including through lot assembly or subdivision.

Policy 4

Adopt a new high-density residential zone for existing and new multiple-unit residential projects.

The 2009 Zoning Ordinance set the Residential Medium Density (RMD) zone as the city's highest-density residential zone at 25 dwelling units per acre, i.e. RMD-25. Prior to 2009, the City Zoning Ordinance included a residential zone for high-rise buildings. Construction of Congressional Towers in the Montrose neighborhood is an example of development permitted under the high-rise building designation.

At present there is no high density zone that is exclusively residential in the ordinance. The high-rise residential developments built in the city since 2009 were only possible in locations zoned for mixed-use developments, primarily in Rockville Town Center and along Rockville Pike and Shady Grove Road.

Given that most new residential growth in the city will come in the form of multiple unit residential buildings, as apartments or condominiums, and that not all locations are appropriate for mixed-use development, Rockville needs a higher density residential zone. Mapping of the higher density zone would be limited to areas designated as Residential Multiple Unit (RM) or Residential Flexible (RF) on the Land Use Policy Map, and only where higher densities are deemed appropriate.

Attached Residential Housing Types in Rockville



A house with an accessory apartment (upper unit) in Croydon Park, built ca. 1924.



A side-by-side duplex in Falls Grove, built ca. 2004.



A fourplex building with four units, two above and two below, each with a separate entrance in West End, built ca. 1964.



Townhouses, here with three attached units in Hungerford, built ca. 1986.

Policy 5

Develop strategies for higher density living that seek to maintain a high quality of life for all residents and reduces potential conflicts between neighbors.

Where in the past there was enough land in the city to minimize friction between neighbors by separating housing units on generous lots with setbacks on all sides—one of the main attractions of suburban style living—most new dwelling units are now built as attached townhouses/row houses, or multiple-unit buildings. Such units share party walls or are stacked above or below each other. In multiple-unit buildings, residents may also share entrances and hallways. One of the most common complaints with this type of construction is noise from the neighbors. Soundproofing construction standards can avoid future problems by ensuring that apartments are quiet and private.

Some new multiple-unit structures in Rockville span a whole block, sometimes more than 300 feet on a side. Breaking up long exterior building facades with different architectural treatments is required by the Zoning Ordinance; however, long interior corridors can pose concerns for fire safety, indoor air quality, and risks of disease transmission. Uninterrupted interior residential corridors can also be uninviting and hinder relationship-building among residents.



Urban loft style apartments replaced former office uses in the Upper Rock development near Shady Grove Road.

Breaking up massive new structures into smaller functional buildings, with their own entrances, gathering spaces, and distinct architecture, is preferred.

Actions

5.1 Establish regulations that require interior soundproofing between units and floors and external soundproofing of walls and windows for new multiple-unit residential and mixed-use structures, especially along busy roadways and rail corridors, specified in design decibels and checked during construction plan review.

5.2 Promote the design and division of massive multi-unit residential structures into smaller functional buildings with shorter internal corridors and their own unique facades, entrances, vertical circulation, HVAC systems, and street addresses.

5.3 Encourage architectural variety for townhouse and row house developments, and individual outdoor space that allows for individual expression and landscape variety.

5.4 Develop parking strategies for residential infill locations that minimize the impacts of additional housing units.

5.5 Recognize that higher density development requires provision of an improved street environment and public or private open spaces within the immediate area.

5.6 Encourage the inclusion of usable private balconies or terraces in multiple unit residential developments.

Policy 6

Anticipate and plan for land use change from commercial to residential uses.

The majority of new residential units added during the Rockville 2040 planning horizon will be constructed on former commercial properties, either former office or laboratory sites or former retail properties. For example, the Upper Rock development project south of Shady Grove Road brought new loft style housing and retail to land that was previously developed in the late 1950s as single-story office buildings. The Shady Grove Road area is ripe for additional conversions from once-sought-after

office buildings to the current market's demand for a mix of apartments, townhouses/row houses, and commercial amenities. In addition, the south Rockville Pike area is seeing a major transition from predominantly commercial shopping centers to higher-density mixed-use projects.

Other still-dominant office and research & development areas, such as Research Boulevard, Piccard Drive, and Tower Oaks Boulevard, continue to attract new office tenants, yet are experiencing their own pressures for conversions or adaptive reuse to residential or other commercial uses. While some of these land use changes are supported by this Plan, it also challenges the City and County governments to deliver amenities and services to new residential areas. Parks, whether publicly or privately maintained, are a specific need to provide open space and recreation facilities in areas that never had residents before or where there are new demands for such spaces and facilities.

Actions

6.1 Coordinate provision of neighborhood amenities as part of the approval process for conversions of commercial uses to residential uses. Allow for publicly and/or privately built and maintained parks, recreation amenities, and open space to serve this need, as appropriate.

Policy 7

Review and revise regulations on shared housing and develop standards for short-term residential rentals.

A number of comments were made during the Rockville 2040 process on informal rental arrangements that stretch the definition of allowed housing arrangements. The Rockville Zoning Ordinance includes a definition of 'family' and also a 'single housekeeping group,' limiting the group to not more than five unrelated persons living in any single dwelling unit. This Plan encourages a community discussion on the appropriate standards and regulations on the use of dwelling units given the reality of shared arrangements, but also concern in neighborhoods regarding overcrowding, adequate parking, and transient renters.

In addition to issues regarding group houses, short-term rentals, made more accessible by Internet-based companies,

can also impact neighborhoods and the supply of longer term rentals. This Plan recommends that the City develop standards and regulations to address potential issues.

Actions

7.1 Develop standards and regulations for short-term rentals to ensure safe and healthy living conditions, adequate off-street parking, preservation of neighborhood character, and an income-generating opportunity for property owners.

GOAL 3

Integrate land use and transportation planning to maximize the value of Rockville's transportation assets.

Land use and transportation planning are closely interrelated. The greater the access provided by the transportation system, the greater potential for an intense land use. For example, the high visibility and regional accessibility of Rockville Pike makes commercial and higher density residential land use a good match to its context as a major arterial corridor. On the other hand, a neighborhood cul-de-sac has limited accessibility and typically leads to low-density residential land uses.

The relationship between high-capacity transit and land use is easy to understand. Access to Rockville's Metro stations is valued by the thousands of residents, employees, and visitors who use transit to access the concentration of civic, commercial, and office uses in Rockville Town Center. Changes to land use policies in recent plans have encouraged the construction of higher density residential uses within an easy walk or bike of Metro stations in Town Center and in the Twinbrook and Shady Grove station areas. Strong support for continued intensification of development within walking or biking distance of Metro and new bus rapid transit stations was voiced during the Rockville 2040 process, as well.



The 400 apartment units in the Galvan at Twinbrook are directly across Chapman Avenue from the Twinbrook transit station, offering quick walk or bike access to the Red Line and the region. The project is an example of transit oriented development (TOD), a planning approach that locates denser residential uses near high-capacity transit stations.

The five-story structure, with ground-level commercial and four levels of residential units, occupies the whole block between Chapman Avenue and Rockville Pike. The 90,000 square feet of commercial space includes a full service grocery store and smaller storefronts.

Opened in 2015, the development is the first vertically mixed commercial and residential structure along the Pike in Rockville, realizing a planning goal first set in the 1989 Rockville Pike corridor plan. The allowed land use change from general commercial to mixed-use development required subsequent zoning changes and more than two and a half decades to be realized.

Policy 8

Promote Rockville Town Center as a transit-oriented employment, shopping, residential, and entertainment destination.

The 2001 Town Center Master Plan urban design framework emphasized an ‘L-shaped pedestrian spine’ with ‘retail-entertainment at the ground floor’ from the Rockville Metro Station’s pedestrian bridge over MD-355 to an arcade of shops on East Montgomery Avenue and north along an extended Maryland Avenue.

Today, Rockville Town Center is a successful transit-oriented city center with more residents and office space than at any time in the past. Access to high-capacity transit is a major reason for these investments and choices. Hundreds of private and government office workers and others with business in Rockville arriving in the morning by transit each day provide a customer base in Town Center for storefront coffee shops and bakeries, and restaurants and shops for lunch. Residents returning in the evening stop at restaurants, grocers, and shops before walking, biking or rolling home to residences in Town Center, the West End, and East Rockville. All of these trips are made without adding to traffic congestion or pollution, and Town Center visitors, employees, and residents enjoy its walkable and bikable environment and lifestyle.

In addition to its function as an employment center, Rockville Town Center continues its long history as a commercial area, though one that is still looking to find its market niche. Steady additions of commercial and amenity space on the ground floor of new buildings bring the opportunity for new shops and restaurants, supported by new residential units and offices on upper floors. This Plan promotes

Rockville Metro Plaza is a 400,000-square foot Class A office development located diagonally across MD-355 from Rockville Metro Station.

Montgomery County’s walkable, urban locations focus primarily in its traditional business districts and in new mixed-use developments at Metro stations. Bethesda, Silver Spring and Rockville have developed large office clusters within a quarter-mile of Metro stations, and White Flint and Twinbrook station areas are planned for significant new office developments.

“Office Market Assessment, Montgomery County, Maryland,” Montgomery County Department of Planning, 2014, p.17

an intensification of development that encourages an active street scene and vibrant commercial district. The Planning Area 1 (Town Center) section of this Plan, which also references the Town Center Master Plan, provides more detailed discussion on these and other aspects of Town Center’s potential.

The land use plan reinforces the value of transit access for office uses within a quarter-mile of the Rockville transit station. The regional access provided by Metro and MARC is a key asset for businesses, and immediate access to transit allows a higher-intensity cluster of office buildings, with fewer needed parking spaces.



Actions

- 8.1 Continue to develop Town Center as a major activity center with areas of new office, residential, arts, culture, civic, and commercial development within an easy walk or bike to the Rockville transit station.
- 8.2 Update the Town Center Master Plan by conducting a planning effort leading to the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan amendment of Planning Area 1 that replaces the 2001 *Town Center Master Plan*. (See also *Planning Area 1*)
- 8.3 Conduct focused station area planning for the Rockville transit station, in coordination with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Montgomery County government, and the State of Maryland, that envisions design of a new transit center with improved access and redevelopment.
- 8.4 Require commercial or amenity space on the ground level of designated pedestrian-oriented commercial streets in Town Center.
- 8.5 Establish urban design regulations for Town Center that require active, street-fronting ground-floor uses, pedestrian-oriented build-to lines, and prohibition of off-street parking between buildings and the public right-of-way.
- 8.6 Study potential revisions to off-street parking requirements for commercial uses in the core area of Town Center.
- 8.7 Implement Complete Streets and Vision Zero policies in the Town Center public right-of-way, such as ‘road diets’, bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements, and street beautification, to make the public realm a more safe and inviting place to be. (See also *Goal 1 of the Transportation Element*)

Policy 9

Allow attached residential housing types and mixed-use development in East Rockville on blocks proximate to the Rockville transit station, as mapped on the Land Use Policy Map.

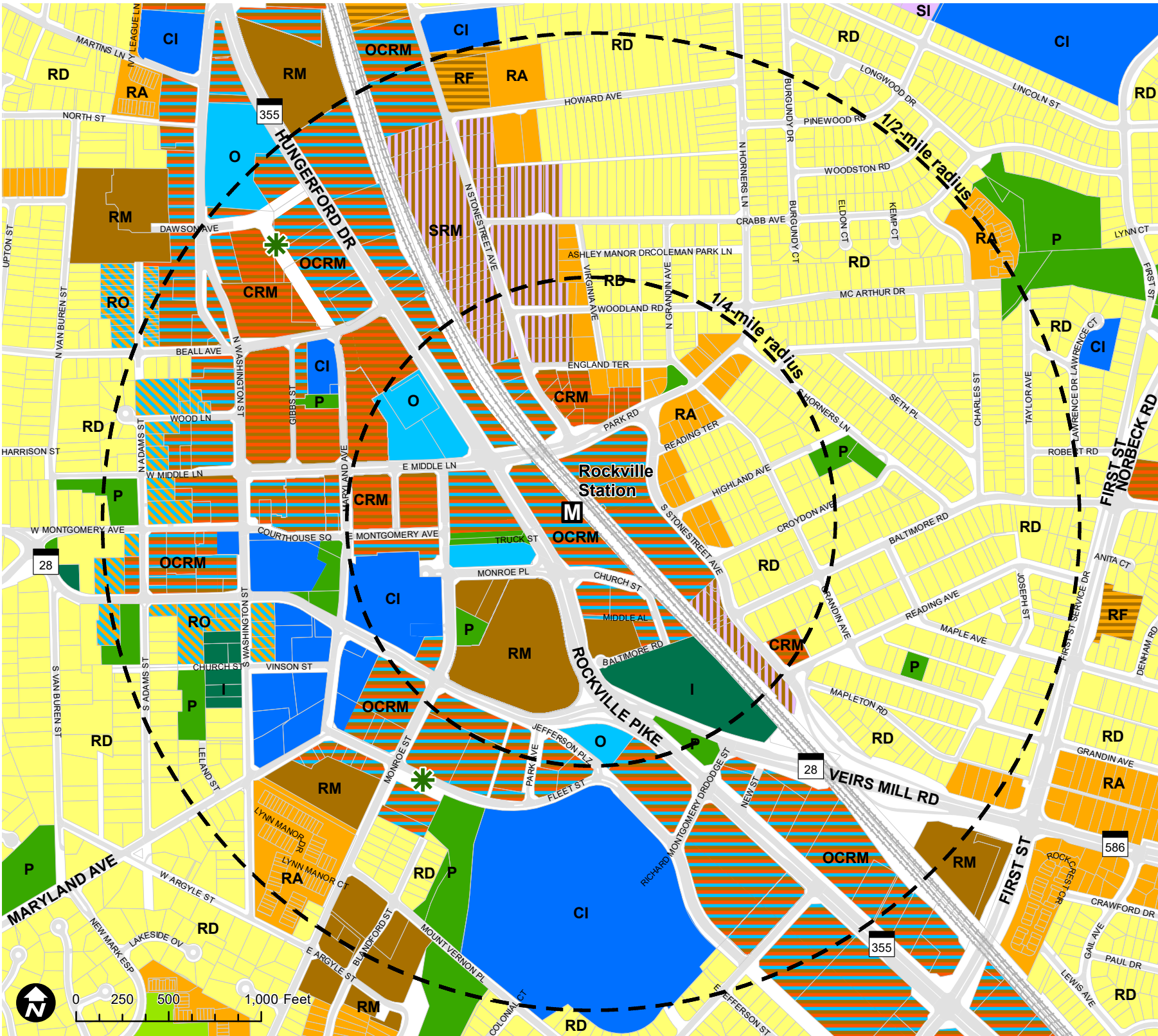
Immediately to the east of the Rockville transit station, this Plan (see Figure 4) updates past land use policy from exclusively detached houses to allow a mix of attached residential housing types, including duplex, triplex, townhouses/row houses, and small apartment buildings up to a maximum of four units on blocks facing the station across South Stonestreet Avenue. Single-unit detached homes are also allowed in this area of the land use plan.

The goal of this land use change is to allow slightly higher density within the immediate station area, provide a transition of housing types between the transit station and the single-unit detached homes of the East Rockville neighborhood, and respond to a demand for new housing types in the area. This change is in response to the fact that housing demand has grown since the opening of the Rockville Metro Station in 1984. This demand is reflected in both rising housing prices and the proliferation of informal apartments and rentals located in single-unit houses.

This Plan seeks to recognize this market-based demand for additional housing within the immediate station area, as well as interest in housing types that are more affordable because they share the cost of the underlying land across additional units, for instance in duplex or townhouse types. Allowing new development types, while also enforcing zoning regulations, is the recommended approach.

This Plan also calls for a mix of commercial and residential land uses along the north side of Park Avenue, and commercial or office uses in the narrow space between the railroad tracks and North Stonestreet Avenue. Incorporating recommendations from the 2018 Stonestreet Avenue study, this Plan provides for a mix of service industrial, commercial, and multiple-unit residential along North Stonestreet within a half-mile walk of the station. Attached and detached residential homes are allowed in specifically mapped areas

Figure 4: Land Use Policy Map, Rockville transit station area



This Plan emphasizes transit oriented development (TOD) west of the Rockville transit station and the introduction of new TOD to the east of the railroad tracks. Blocks immediately east of the station are recommended for Residential Attached ('RA' in orange) and mixed uses along Park Road as a transition to the East Rockville and Lincoln Park neighborhoods.

on the western edge of the East Rockville neighborhood, adjacent to the North Stonestreet corridor.

Creating a new gateway into East Rockville at Park Avenue and Stonestreet Avenue, in addition to more residents living nearby, will help make the station area more secure, while also strengthening a community node facing the station as a welcoming place for the East Rockville community (see Figure 6, page 36). An improved node would also be more inviting to visitors who cross under the tracks from Town Center to experience a growing variety of businesses, artist and maker studios, and accessible car repair shops.

Actions

9.1 Allow attached residential housing types in the East Rockville neighborhood on blocks in the immediate vicinity of the Rockville Metro Station, mapped as Residential Attached (RA) on the Land Use Policy Map (*see also Planning Area 2*).

9.2 Promote mixed-use development along Park Road and North Stonestreet Avenue, per the Land Use Policy Map (*see also Planning Area 2*).

Policy 10 Enhance Rockville Pike's market position as a premier shopping area, supported by residential uses and plan for additional growth near the Twinbrook Metro Station.

Rockville Pike is known around the region as a shopping destination. Major goods (e.g., cars, appliances, and furniture) are sold on the Pike, as are other sorts of retail goods and personal services. Some of the Pike's shopping centers have become dining destinations, as well, with a wide array of restaurants offering cuisine from around the world. Popular chain stores are present, as are locally owned businesses. The 2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan set a new policy direction for the Pike; one that is more urban and mixed-use with a much larger residential population. Large redevelopment projects will change the look and feel of the area, especially in close walking or biking distance of the Twinbrook Metro Station. Planning Area 9 provides more detail on this portion of the city.

Infill and redevelopment within a half-mile of the Twinbrook Metro Station (see Figure 5) added nearly 1,500 dwelling units in the period from 2003 to 2016, and the transformation of this area from single-story commercial and service industrial buildings to higher-density, mixed-use development will continue.

The new urban form emphasizes the pedestrian experience with transit-oriented development elements, including:

- Multi-story buildings;
- Smaller blocks;
- A grid of connected new streets;
- Buildings with consistent street frontages;
- Wide sidewalks;
- Pedestrian-level street lighting and furniture;
- Ground-level storefronts; and
- Concealed structured parking.

Today, thousands of people walk or bike from the Twinbrook Metro Station to residences, offices, and shops. People walking and biking are visible and numerous on both sides of the railroad tracks and Rockville Pike. The land use plan provides flexibility for the future, allowing a mix of high-intensity office, residential, and commercial uses through the Office Commercial Residential Mix (OCRM) land use designation for the majority of land in the south Pike area.

Actions

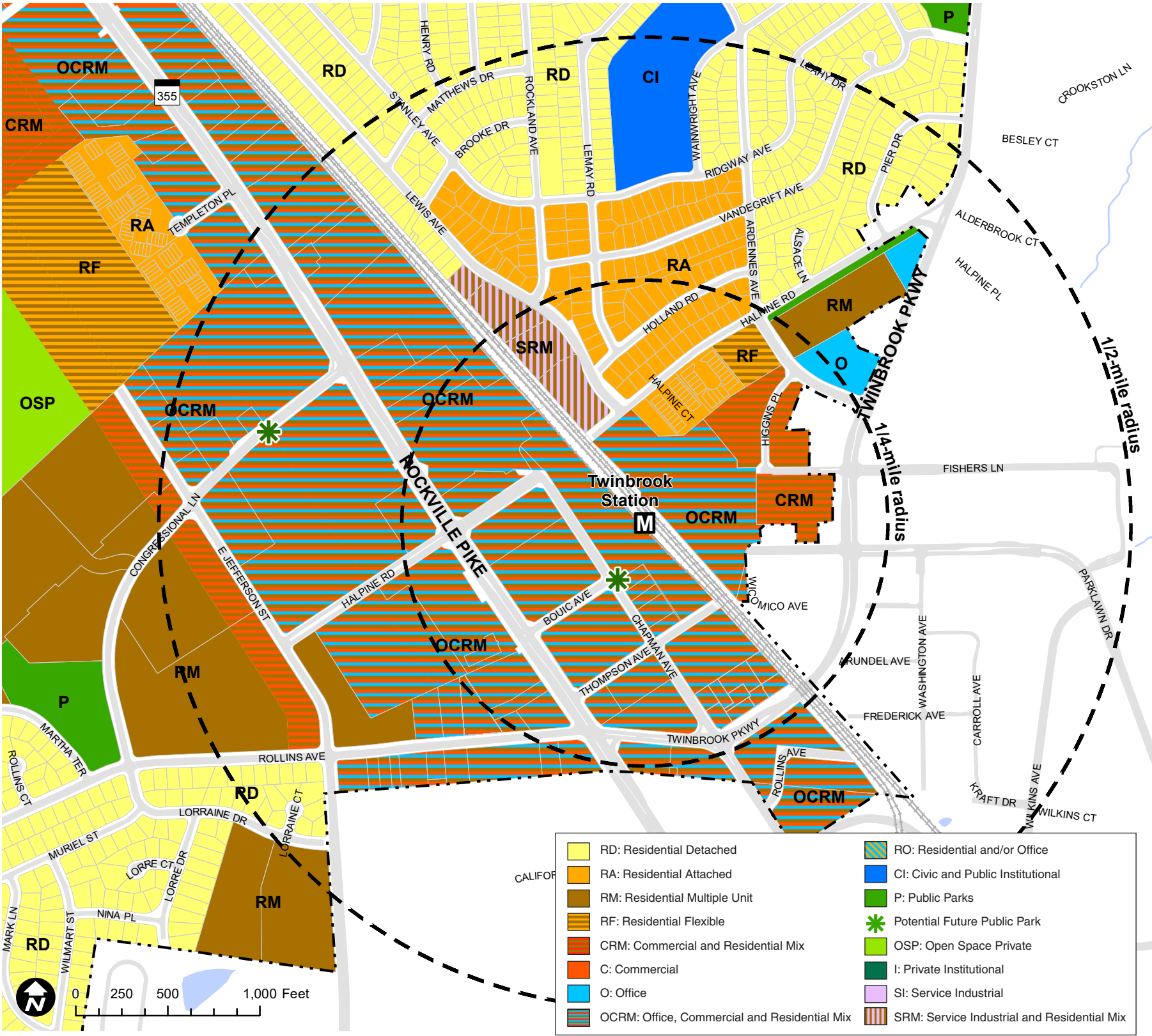
10.1 Continue to develop the Twinbrook Metro Station area and the south Rockville Pike as a major activity and growth center.

10.2 Allow small, multiple-unit and attached residential types on blocks in the Twinbrook neighborhood adjacent to the east side of the Twinbrook Metro Station, mapped as Residential Attached (RA) on the Land Use Policy Map.

10.3 Plan for new park amenities and other infrastructure to support population increases in the Twinbrook Metro Station area.

10.4 Continue a transition from highway-oriented commercial forms to a more urban Pike, based on a mix of uses, including residential, employment, and retail uses, in places oriented to bicyclists and pedestrians. (*See also Policy 9 of the Economic Development Element*)

Figure 5: Land Use Policy Map, Twinbrook transit station



To the east of the tracks, this Plan allows Residential Attached (RA) housing types on blocks between Lewis Avenue and Ridgeway Avenue. This Plan also changes the land use from Light Industrial to Service Industrial and Residential Mix (SRM) at the south end of Lewis Avenue, allowing both residential and light industrial uses.

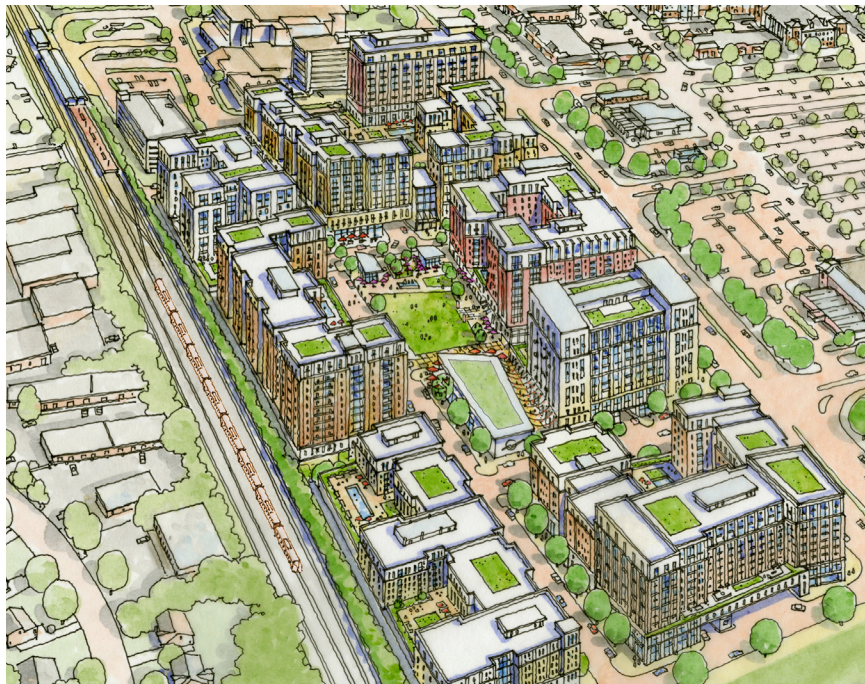
10.5 Add park amenities and new streetscape to the Pike, focusing in the near term on the Twinbrook transit station area.

GOAL 4

Promote a walkable and bikable city with connected neighborhoods and amenities.

One of the most repeated comments pertaining to land use from Rockville 2040 participants was that they would like to be able to safely walk or bike to a destination in their neighborhood, for instance to a park or ‘for a gallon of milk.’ These comments refer to broad areas of low-density residential that have little or no land use diversity or destinations within reasonable walking or biking distance and/or inadequate infrastructure.

Rockville’s current land use pattern includes a handful of neighborhood shopping centers, most of them spread out



The B.F. Saul Company project, known as Twinbrook Quarter, on 18 acres north of Halpine Road will be the largest TOD project to date in Rockville. The approved concept plan (above) calls for up to 1,900 dwelling units, 400,000 square feet of office, 475,000 square feet of commercial, and an entertainment venue. Build-out over coming decades will create a dramatic change, from a suburban highway commercial corridor, to a dense, walkable and bikable neighborhood with employment and amenities.

along major roadways at a scale that depends on access by automobile. In some parts of the city, it is difficult to access any kind of business or public gathering space, such as a coffee shop or corner market, without driving. And yet, small shops, a corner pub, or a restaurant within walking or biking distance are desired amenities for neighborhood life.

This Plan (including the Transportation Element) offers a number of approaches to make our existing and new neighborhoods places where residents can more safely and comfortably walk and bike, both within their neighborhood as well as between neighborhoods. Walking and biking offers health, social, and environmental benefits, such as:

- Reducing obesity, diabetes, and heart disease;
- Cutting carbon emissions associated with driving; and
- Increasing social interaction and security.



Walking is used in this Plan as a general term that includes a person traveling by foot, whether walking or running, and may include use of a white cane, audio-assistance device, or other physical assistance. While this goal focuses primarily on the land use patterns that can promote the safety, comfort and purpose of walking, such other non-vehicular modes as bikes, scooters, and wheelchairs can also support and take advantage of these policies. This Plan discusses walking, biking, and other non-vehicular rolling modes elsewhere in this and other elements and planning areas.

At the citywide scale, it is useful to consider where neighborhood-serving land uses exist, primarily in the form of commercial and civic uses open to the public, and where these uses might be introduced through land use change supported by improved transit service, higher-density housing, civic facilities, and other amenities. One way of thinking about these concentrations of uses and services is that they act as community nodes, as discussed in the text to the right of Figure 6.

Policy 11

Increase the walkability and bikability of the city's existing and new neighborhoods and between neighborhoods by expanding infrastructure and amenities at key spots to promote the increased ability, safety, and comfort of walking and biking.

Actions

11.1 Create new community nodes with small-scale commercial, diversified housing, and civic amenities. (See Figure 6)

11.2 Continue to develop new walkable and bikable, mixed-

A man walks from the office area along King Farm Boulevard to the commercial village center (top image, opposite page), demonstrating walkability as a key New Urbanist design principle that shaped the King Farm neighborhood. Older parts of Rockville, such as Monroe Street (bottom left, opposite page), were designed for walking before wide spread use of cars.

use activity centers on available land, primarily commercial sites deemed ready for conversion.

11.3 Add and improve sidewalks and trails within and between existing neighborhoods. (*See also Goal 2 of the Transportation Element*)

11.4 Ensure adequate pedestrian and bicycle safety at new and existing community nodes, including implementation of the City's Complete Streets Policy and Vision Zero Plan. (*See also Goal 1 of the Transportation Element*)

Policy 12

Develop plans for Rockville's older neighborhood shopping centers that address issues of pedestrian access, storefront aesthetics, land use mix, and urban design.

Actions

12.1 Work to retain existing neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

12.2 Consider inclusion of higher-density housing as part of shopping center revitalization and redevelopment planning, as a financial incentive and support for future businesses.

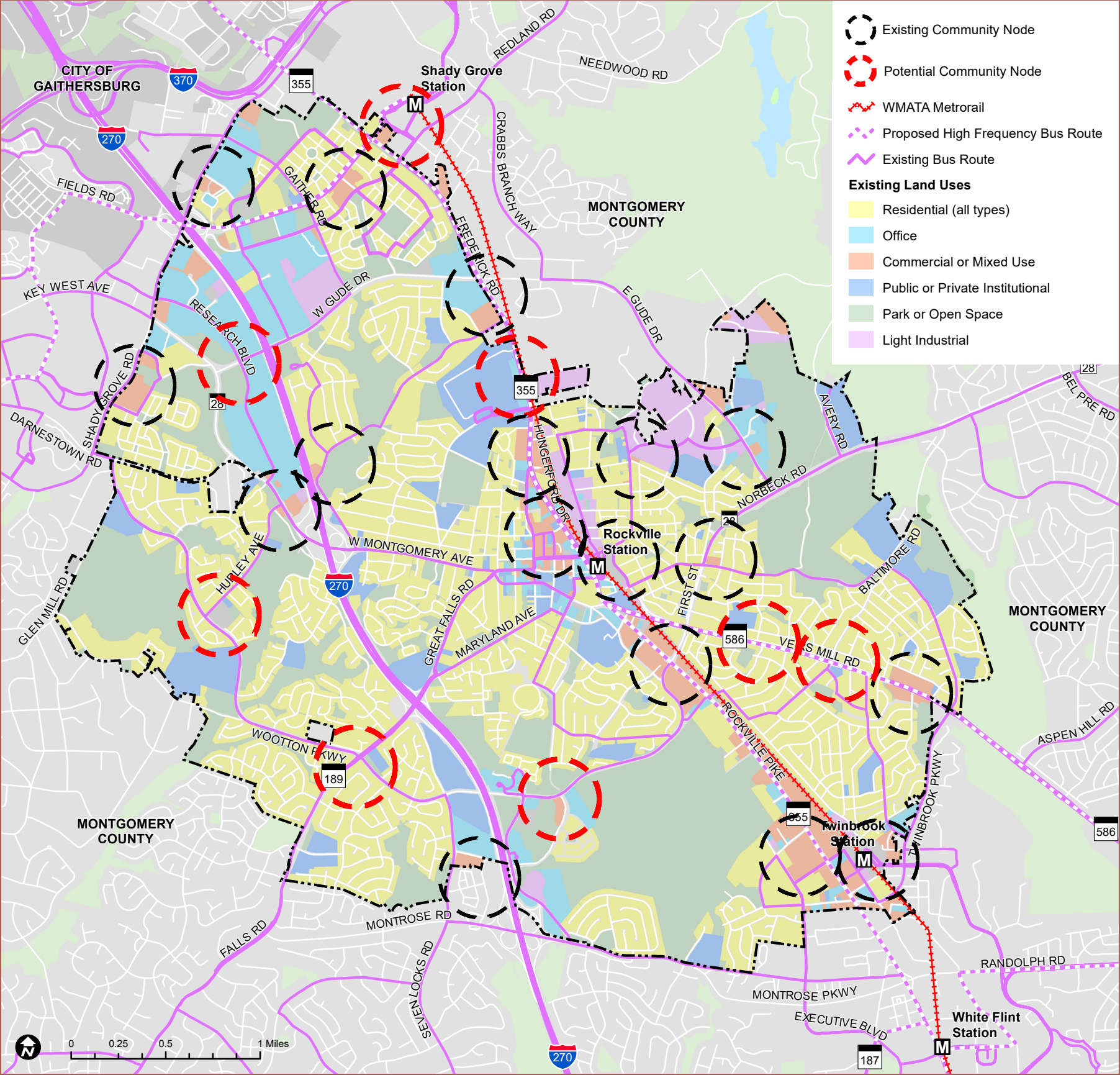
Policy 13

Allow growth at the edges of neighborhoods along major arterial roadways where vehicular movement will have the least impact on existing residential areas.

Actions

13.1 Allow a range of small-scale residential types, from single-unit detached homes to small apartments along Veirs Mill Drive, with opportunities for mixed-use community nodes at Edmonston Drive and Broadwood Drive, as shown in the Land Use Policy Map.

Figure 6: Community Node Concept in Rockville



Community Nodes

Community nodes are where travel paths converge, or along paths leading to high-frequency transit service.

The components of a community node can vary, but generally include:

- Commercial businesses, such as a clothing, grocery, or convenience store;
- Gathering places like coffee shops, cafés, taverns, or restaurants;
- Safe, comfortable, and accessible pathways and infrastructure that support non-vehicular access, such as walking, biking, rolling, wheelchair, and other modes, usually at a street corner;
- Roadways designed for vehicle and non-vehicular safety and comfort, such as through Complete Streets design (*See Policy 1 of the Transportation Element*) and appropriate traffic calming;
- Transit service, with high frequency or multiple routes; and
- Civic amenities, such as a park, community center, or library.

Figure 6 shows the location of some existing neighborhood commercial centers that serve as community nodes and potential new community nodes in locations that can serve broad areas of residential neighborhoods.

The impulse to walk or bike supports goals to reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion and is an important part of healthy lifestyles and neighborliness. But neighborhood shops, independent ‘mom and pop’ or franchise businesses, struggle to survive in even the best locations with much higher density residential development than found in the city’s residential detached areas, because density is necessary to provide a customer base to support local businesses. Trying to hold onto the existing neighborhood shops may be difficult, let alone creating new nodes.

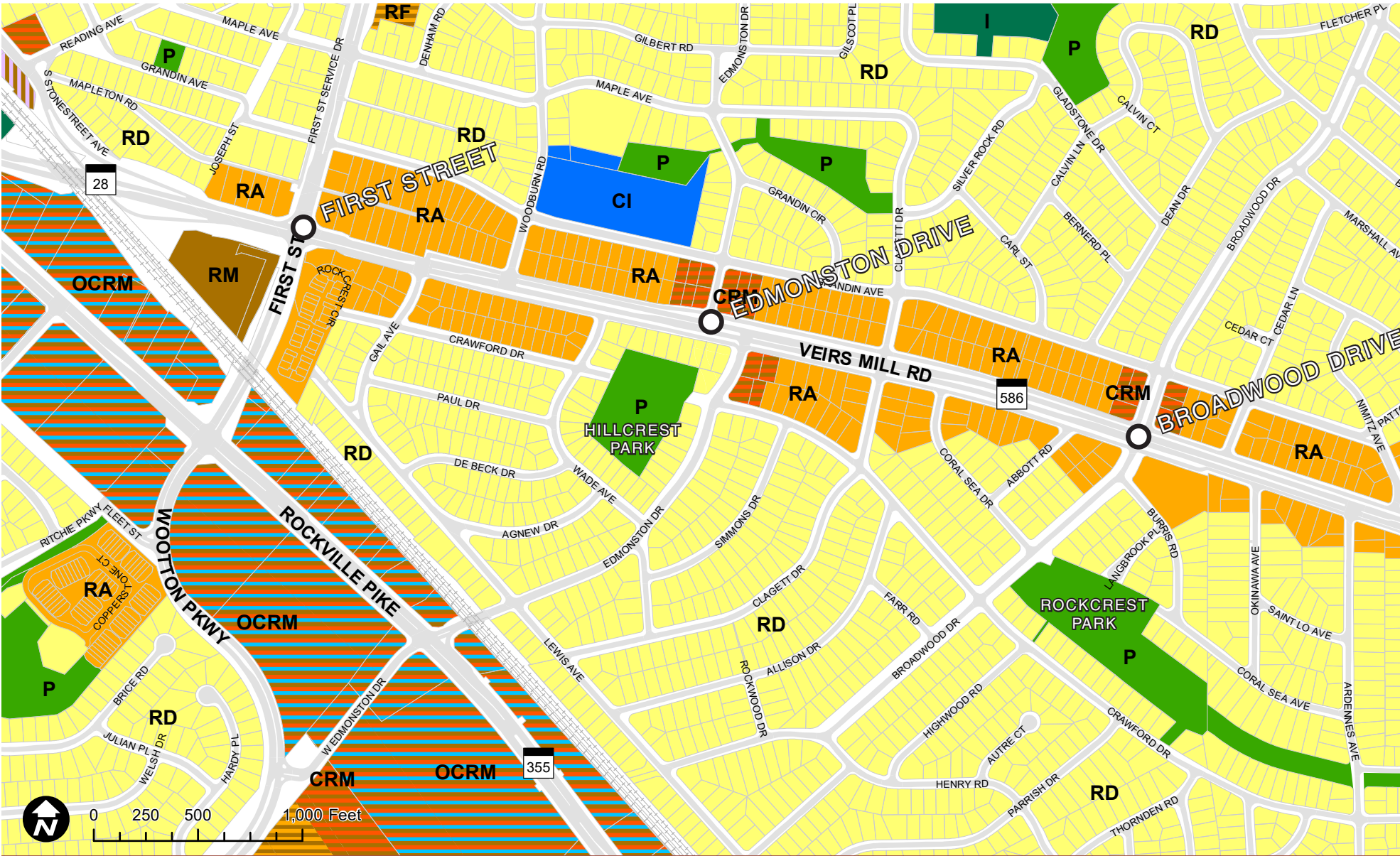
The challenge is clear in locations, such as the Rockshire Village Center, where there is strong interest in retaining the existing commercial businesses as a neighborhood amenity, and yet competition from newer grocers a short drive away contributed to the closure of the anchor grocery store in 2012. In the era of retail consolidation, ‘big box’ stores, and Internet shopping, each sale to a neighborhood-based

business becomes crucial to the viability of the business and its continuation as a walkable and bikable neighborhood amenity. The support and expansion of community nodes in the city is one way to provide small-scale commercial and gathering places within a short distance of city residents, accessible by more than just an automobile trip.



Woodley Gardens Shopping Center (top) is a popular neighborhood destination for nearby residents as well as visitors to Woodley Gardens Park. A locally-owned retail shop in King Farm (below) with a pedestrian-oriented store front.

Figure 7: Land Use Policy Map, Veirs Mill Road Corridor (with planned BRT stations)

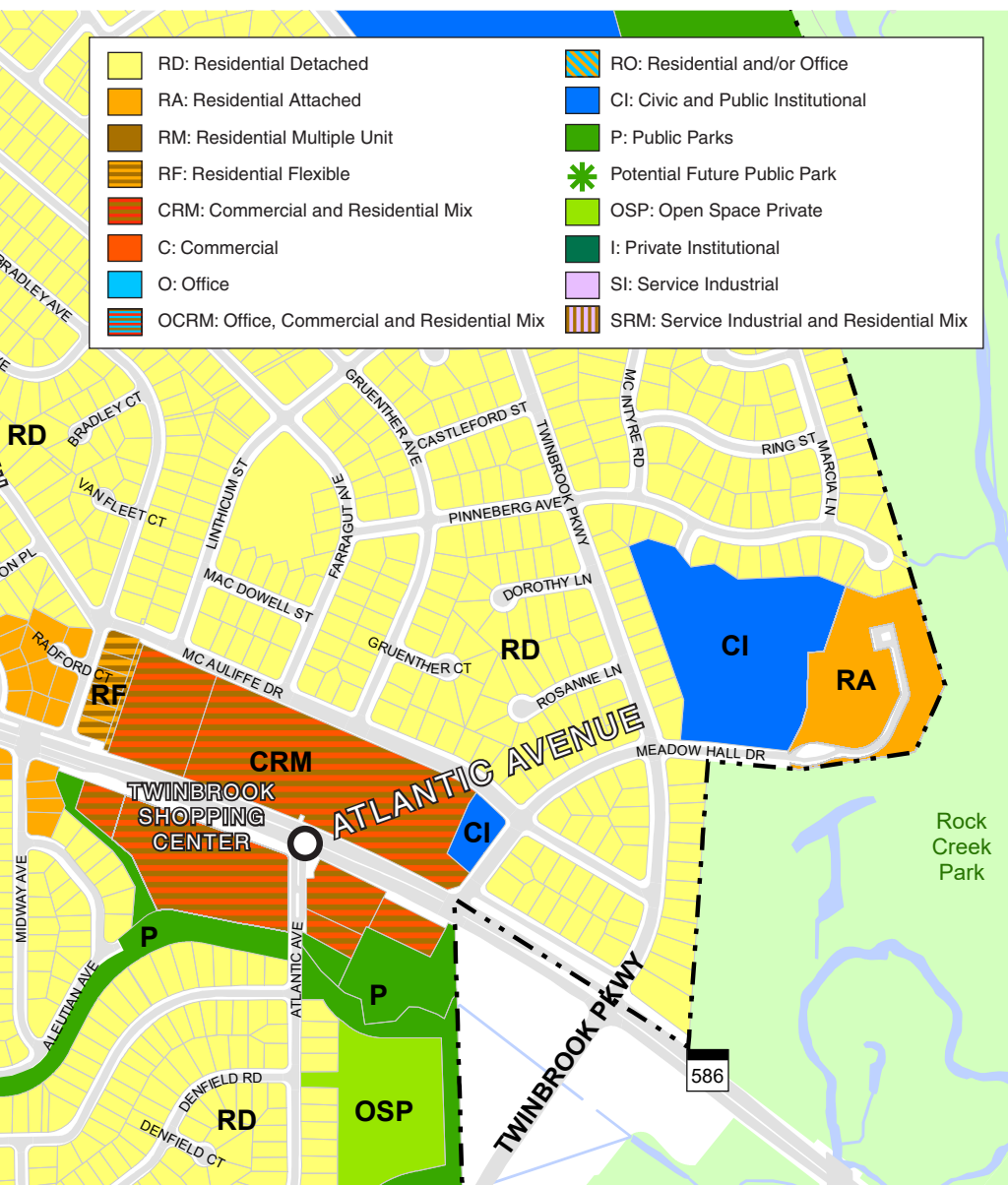


This Plan recommends a land use policy to create community nodes along Veirs Mill Road, with transit stations as a key component to encourage walking and biking along with higher densities and mixed uses (see Figure 6). The Commercial Residential Mix (CRM) land use designation is applied to properties within some of these nodes to allow redevelopment to small apartments with corner storefronts in the immediate vicinity of Edmonston Drive and Broadwood Drive (See Figure 7).

The land use plan anticipates the implementation of bus rapid transit (BRT), a transit system using buses that provide faster service than traditional bus routes, through improvements

in infrastructure, vehicles, and scheduling, on Veirs Mill Road by identifying the City of Rockville’s preferred station locations and changes to land use policy in the corridor. Results from the Rockville 2040 process strongly favor a BRT station at Atlantic Avenue, which is currently the corridor’s sole area with commercial and civic uses, and also its highest ridership-generating bus stop. Land use and zoning policy has allowed mixed-use development on the commercial properties since 2009, but no new construction has occurred to date.

BRT stops are also identified on Figure 7 at Broadwood Drive, Edmonston Drive, and First Street. A choice may need to be made, in coordination with Montgomery County government,



between Edmonston or Broadwood, which are four-tenths of a mile apart, to reduce the overall number of BRT stops in the corridor.

Combining storefronts with a bus rapid transit station supports new businesses while reducing parking demand.

Allowing diversification of housing types is recommended in the areas shown as Residential Attached (RA). Expansion of Hillcrest Park towards Veirs Mill Road is envisioned. The other land use changes would depend on private transactions between private property owners, based on new zoning that would allow new housing types.

13.2 Require a portion of the mixed-use development to include storefronts that create walkable and bikable commercial or civic destinations.

13.3 Develop strategies to manage on-street parking and access along the Veirs Mill Road corridor as part of design development and review. Ensure adequate pedestrian and bicycle safety, including implementation of the City's Complete Streets Policy and Vision Zero Plan. (See also Policies 1 and 2, respectively, of the Transportation Element)

Policy 14

Locate bus rapid transit stations where ridership and economic development potential is greatest.

Actions

14.1 Designate Atlantic Avenue as the City's preferred bus rapid transit (BRT) station on Veirs Mill Road, instead of, or in addition to, a BRT station at Twinbrook Parkway.

14.2 Designate Edmonston Drive and/or Broadwood Drive as a preferred BRT station location and an anchor of a new mixed-use, higher intensity, community node. (See Figure 6)

14.3 Conduct station area planning for BRT stations, including identification of economic development opportunities and necessary bike and pedestrian connections. Economic development efforts along BRT routes in the city should not be at the expense of displacing residents or small businesses, unless efforts include providing assistance to return to the same location or in another area within the city.

14.4 Consider the potential for new development when selecting BRT stations along the MD 355 corridor.

Figure 8: Land Use Policy Map, Research Boulevard



Images above, top to bottom, show the intersection of Research Boulevard and West Gude Drive; the Research Boulevard corridor from above the Key West Avenue and West Gude Drive intersection; Westat headquarters on Research Boulevard; and a relatively new wet laboratory at the south end of the Research Boulevard corridor.

GOAL 5

Encourage and support office clusters in areas with good regional access.

Rockville is fortunate to have large areas with office uses, including laboratories and research & development, which help to fund City operations through property taxes, provide employment, and add to the vitality of the city and its commercial businesses. The success of office development along Research Boulevard and Piccard Drive is due in no small part to the forethought of City leaders expressed in the 1960 and 1970 master plans that designated these areas for 'restricted industrial' uses in the era of I-270 expansion. Offices and laboratories in the I-270 Technology Corridor benefit from good regional access from the expressway and this land use also provides a buffer to the expressway from nearby residential neighborhoods.

It took decades for the land planned and zoned for office uses in the Research and Piccard areas to reach build-out in the 1990s. In recent years, however, some early structures dating from the 1950s or 1960s have been demolished and/or redeveloped with a mix of uses, for example the Upper Rock project along Shady Grove Road, and land once reserved for office development is now occupied by residential buildings and commercial centers.

This interest in converting low-density, office buildings to higher-value residential or commercial uses led to the City adopting new mixed-use zones in 2009, particularly the Mixed Use Employment (MXE) zone. However the MXE zone, while focused on employment-generating uses, does not require office as a primary use in redevelopment projects, challenging the decades of planned office uses in Rockville's past master plans.

The office market in general is cyclical, but trending toward less space per employee. A report conducted for Montgomery County government and published in 2015 noted the weakness in the office market, concluding: "The most successful office clusters in Montgomery County are part of mixed-use development with a strong sense of place and quality environment. Transit connectivity is increasingly important to office tenants." Other studies have shown that office lease rates are highest within a quarter-mile of a Metrorail station, as well. Therefore, transit is a key

amenity for office uses, which are also supported by nearby restaurants, attractive streetscapes, and urban park spaces.

This Plan expects that Rockville will remain a major employment center while continuing to allow some mixing of uses within office clusters in order to provide support with amenities and, where relevant, nearby residences. Additional policies and actions that support office uses and businesses are provided in the Economic Development Element and in the relevant planning area sections.

Policy 15

Plan for office land uses in locations that have good access to the regional transportation network and other amenities.

Actions

15.1 Plan for office uses as part of mixed-use developments within a quarter-mile of Rockville and Twinbrook Metrorail stations.

15.2 Consider reducing the minimum parking requirement for office uses to promote economic development.

15.3 Retain the majority of land in the Research Boulevard corridor for office uses as shown on the Land Use Policy Map. (*See Figure 8*)

15.4 Plan for a new community node to serve the Research Boulevard corridor at its intersection with West Gude Drive. (*See Figure 6*)

15.5 Explore the best methods for encouraging and preserving office land uses in those areas mapped for Office (O) on the Land Use Policy Map.

15.6 Continue to allow conversion of office uses to other land uses in areas that do not have superior access to the regional highway and transit systems.

15.7 Coordinate provision of neighborhood amenities as part of the approval process for conversions of office to residential uses.

GOAL 6

Provide areas for service industrial and other high-intensity uses.

Rockville's industrial uses are not as prominent as its civic, commercial, or residential uses; and yet businesses located in areas of the city with service industrial uses support the economic life of the Rockville community and provide services and employment needed by residents. The majority of land designated for industrial uses is occupied by service businesses, with a large percentage focused on automobile service, such as body shops and collision repair. There is some small-scale manufacturing—including machine shops, sheet metal shaping, and electrical and mechanical engineering—and a growing sector of 'maker' craft manufacturing, primarily focused on food processing such as brewing or bakeries; but also stonecutters and others.

Other types of service industrial businesses in Rockville include building contractors and building supply, and an eclectic mix of uses that provide services directly to businesses and homeowners, including movers, self storage, janitorial and lawn care, small engine repair, upholstery repair, and kennels. Their location in Rockville, or 'down county', is crucial to many of these businesses because being here cuts travel time, and therefore cost, for the concentrated population in the southern part of Montgomery County and makes access to, for instance, automobile repair convenient for residents. Other businesses that are located within, and well-suited to, the city's service industrial areas are high-intensity and/or large recreation uses—such as indoor soccer, shooting ranges, and gyms—and research and development businesses.

One use that is prominent, but not always recognized as industrial, is the railroad. In its early days, Rockville's regional position and growth was promoted by the double track railroad corridor running through town operated by the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad. While the freight railroad, now owned by CSX Transportation, no longer serves customers within the city limits, the tracks are a key physical feature of the city, reinforced by two Metrorail tracks, and the operation of freight and passenger trains in the corridor.

Just beyond the northeast border of the city, a large natural gas storage and pipeline operation precludes other potential



A common type of service industrial use found in the Southlawn area is characterized as 'flex space,' with a linear building divided into bays, individual addresses and entrances, and roll-up doors.

future uses. Elsewhere along West Gude Drive, a 40-acre Pepco maintenance facility is located among the residential neighborhood of King Farm and offices along Piccard Drive and Gaither Road. Industrial uses buffer the railroad tracks along portions of Stonestreet Avenue and Lewis Avenue, yet the presence and accessibility of Metro stations in these locations makes the eventual transition to more transit-oriented uses likely.

A study of the Southlawn service industrial area conducted by the City in 2016 concluded that the service industrial uses were still in demand and that a transition to other uses, such as retail, is not supported by the market or the physical layout of the area. In many ways, Rockville's service industrial uses are a hallmark of the community: Rockville is not just a bedroom suburb to the District of Columbia, or the County seat—it is a place where many different types of pursuits, businesses, and technical employment opportunities can be accommodated. Therefore, this Plan maintains a Service Industrial (SI) land use classification for the Southlawn area on the Land Use Policy Map, which corresponds to Light Industrial (IL) zone, in recognition of its importance as a service industrial district in the city, as well as Montgomery County.

Land along North Stonestreet Avenue has been zoned Mixed Use Business (MXB) since 2009. This zone allows a mix of

Development activity in Rockville is putting redevelopment pressure on industrial properties in the path of mixed-use redevelopment close to Metro stations, while also providing a pipeline supply of residential and commercial space that appears to be meeting Rockville's growth needs. As a result, these conditions appear to be reinforcing market interest in the industrial properties in and around the Southlawn study area while providing a path for residential and commercial growth outside of the Southlawn area. Anecdotal reports by local industrial real estate professionals indicate that the loss of service industrial buildings due to redevelopment around the Twinbrook Metro Station is prompting more industrial tenants to seek space in and around the Southlawn study area, the closest area where there is industrial space availability. At the same time, the pipeline of approved projects in three areas of the city – adjacent to the Twinbrook transit station, in Town Center, and in the King Farm area at the city's northern end – account for most of the city's recent and planned development activity.

Southlawn Industrial Area Feasibility Study, Feb. 2017, p. 28

uses, including continuation of service industrial uses, but also allows residential and commercial uses. Following a study of the Stonestreet Avenue Corridor in 2017-18, the City adopted the North Stonestreet Avenue Plan Amendment and Park Road and North/South Stonestreet Avenue Plan Amendment to recommend a change in zoning on certain properties along Stonestreet Avenue that would allow commercial and residential mixed-use development rather than service industrial uses. The policies from these plans are incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan, both in the Elements and in Planning Areas 2 (East Rockville) and 6 (Lincoln Park). The Land Use Policy Map of this Plan applies a Service Industrial and Residential Mix (SRM) category to properties on North Stonestreet Avenue between these two plan amendment areas, which is consistent with their current MXB zoning.

The 2009 Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan engaged land owners of service industrial properties on Lewis Avenue in a discussion about future land use and zoning. At that time, the decision was made to retain the Light Industrial zoning, which does not allow residential uses. Given the proximity of these parcels to the Twinbrook Metro Station,

however, there is potential for a transition to residential uses. This Plan changes land use policy from service industrial uses to Service Industrial and Residential Mix (SRM), and recommends a rezoning to Mixed Use Business (MXB). As with other service industrial areas, the Lewis Avenue industrial uses are a good buffer for the busy railroad tracks, and service industrial uses provide space for needed businesses and employment. This Plan offers the opportunity for property owners and the neighborhood to gradually remake the area if they find it is in keeping with their current business plans and as opportunities arise.

Policy 16

Preserve areas for service industrial, research & development, and high-intensity recreation uses, while also allowing property near Metro to transition to a wider mix of uses.

Actions

16.1 Maintain the Southlawn area as reserved for primarily service industrial uses through the Service Industrial (SI) land use designation on the Land Use Policy Map.

16.2 Allow service industrial uses to remain along Stonestreet Avenue and Lewis Avenue, while also allowing a transition to a wider mix that includes residential, commercial, arts and cultural, or office uses.

16.3 Change the Light Industrial (IL) zone on south Lewis Avenue to Mixed Use Business (MXB), to permit a wider mix of uses.

16.4 Preserve industrial land use as a valuable freight and economic development resource while mitigating impacts on surrounding communities. Industrial land uses include warehouse, shipping logistics, research and development, manufacturing, and maker/creative/artisan businesses.

16.5 Continue to allow high-intensity and/or large indoor recreation, arts, and cultural uses in the City's light industrial zones.

16.6 Support and promote the service industrial and creative/maker district of the Rock East District (RED).
(See also Planning Area 17 and Action 3.4 of the Municipal Growth Element)

GOAL 7

Support a robust commercial base.

Commercial land uses are dynamic, changing over shorter periods of time than other uses in order to stay fresh and compete with the latest shopping experiences. This Plan defines commercial uses to include all types of businesses that provide direct customer services and sales, from retail goods to groceries to restaurants to personal care services. Professional services—such as accounting, real estate, or small medical offices—that are open to the public and mixed in with other storefronts are also included in the commercial category, as are lodging uses, such as hotels, inns, and B&Bs. In some cases, these commercial uses are mapped on the Land Use Policy Map to distinguish them from office buildings that are not generally open to the public.

Profound changes are taking place in the city's commercial sector with regard to how people shop and how goods are sold. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21 brought rapid disruptions to the city's commercial sector, expanding use of online shopping, home delivery, and in-store pick-up, and changing the types of goods and services people buy, a long-term trend of Internet shopping and home

delivery brought increasing challenges to 'bricks and mortar' shops in the city.

It is uncertain at this time whether and how the pandemic-related changes in shopping behavior and the commercial environment will continue to affect the city's commercial sector and shopping districts. Still, Rockville has much to benefit from the current phase of retailing that emphasizes shopping experiences through placemaking and mixed-use development that places customers just an elevator ride or short walk or bike away from new restaurants or shops. Rockville's major corridors (e.g., MD 355, Shady Grove Road, Veirs Mill Road) remain viable locations for commercial businesses. A projected increase in the city's population may also help offset losses in Rockville's customer base as a result of any changing behavioral or market trends.

Policy 17

Support retail uses along Rockville's commercial corridors and other shopping areas.

King Farm and Fallsgrove shopping centers primarily serve their neighborhood and sub-regional market areas rather than as regional destinations. There are dozens of commercial centers along MD 355 north of the downtown Rockville, including many businesses on the east side of the highway beyond the city limits. Like Rockville's service industrial areas, these places provide space for a wide



A commercial strip shopping center on Rockville Pike is one of the many kinds of commercial developments located in Rockville.

variety of businesses, such as small grocers, print shops and drive-in banks or fast food. Flexible parking standards would enable new businesses to form in existing spaces without prescribing a rigid calculation based on past practices.

Actions

17.1 Review and revise regulations, specifically parking minimums, that limit the use of existing commercial space.

17.2 Allow off-site signage, where deemed useful and beneficial, to direct customers to Rockville's shopping areas that are not visible from major arterials.

GOAL 8

Plan for parks and rich civic and cultural life.

In addition to places to work, reside, and shop, a community requires civic and public spaces where residents and visitors can participate in activities that broaden the lives of individuals and the community as a whole. Participants of Rockville 2040 identified a need for a richer cultural and social life in the city, in their vision of the future. Something as simple as a walk or bike in the park can be an important part of daily routines, while participation in religious worship plays a central role in the personal and social lives of many residents. Both of these activities require space or land where the civic life of the community can flourish. In addition, the City seeks to promote a rich cultural life, including performance and material arts, and an active nightlife. Rockville successfully sponsors and hosts community events, which are an important part of the social and economic life of the city.

In the past, land was set aside for places of worship as part of large development projects and also recognized on the City's land use plan. Recent major developments have not included sites for religious or other institutional uses, and, as demographic and cultural values change, attendance at any particular institution may or may not correlate with its surrounding neighborhood. In some cases participants drive into Rockville from many miles away to attend a particular church, while Rockville residents drive out of the city to do the same. Conversely, Rockville is also home to religious communities that specifically locate their place of residence within a short distance of their house of worship.

The civic life of the community is also supported by land uses that provide space for educational, cultural, and recreational activities. Public school sites are indicated on the Land Use Policy Map with the Civic and Public Institutional (CI) land use designation, including those of Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College.

Beyond the basics of schools, parks, and religious uses, there is a need for places where cultural activities, such as visual and performance arts, can be pursued. Commercial uses can play an important role in providing this space, whether as a dance studio, art gallery, or performance space. Rockville currently has one movie theater, and it is an important destination in Town Center.

The Arts and Innovation Center in Rockville Town Center was developed as a public-private partnership, with the City owning parts of the building that host the VisArts visual arts galleries and studios. The City also owns and operates the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theater, an auditorium for live performances with 450 seats. The Robert E. Parilla Performing Arts Center on the Montgomery College campus has an auditorium with 509 seats.

Weddings or other large social gatherings find space in some of Rockville's hotels, at VisArts, private country clubs, and the City's Glenview Mansion. A handful of restaurants host live music, but none have a stage, and there are no nightclubs in the city. Montgomery County government studied the nightlife issue and published a report of recommendations in 2013, with input from Rockville, that identified Town Center as one area with potential for additional activities.

The mixed-use land use designations of this Plan (CRM, SRM, and OCRM) support the creation of a richer cultural life in Rockville. These designations are mapped in the Town Center, along Rockville Pike, and other parts of the MD 355, I-270, and railroad corridors. In many cases, entrepreneurial start ups of a dance studio, art gallery, live music space, or small theater are challenging, risky businesses that require low rents. This type of space can be difficult to find in Rockville. The North Stonestreet Avenue corridor and emerging Rock East District (RED) may offer an opportunity for more experimental arts, creator, or 'maker' spaces to occupy converted industrial or warehouse buildings.

Rockville has had great success hosting annual events, with Hometown Holidays and the Antique and Classic Car Show drawing many thousands of residents and visitors each year. Opportunities to create additional events on flexible sites is supported by this Plan. One concern is that undeveloped space held by surface parking lots in the Town Center, once available for large event crowds, is being replaced by ‘infill’ development. This Plan recommends City action to create new park space in the Town Center to serve the many new residential units and large community events.

Policy 18

Support individual and group efforts to create space that will sustain social interaction, community life, and a flourishing arts and culture scene in Rockville.

Actions

18.1 Plan for a new public park in Rockville Town Center of sufficient size to host community-wide events and meet the needs of a growing population in the Town Center.

18.2 Establish Rockville Town Center as a civic and cultural destination, including shopping, dining, arts and cultural amenities, and a live entertainment venue.



Hometown Holidays is Rockville's most important civic and cultural event staged in the Town Center each year over the Memorial Day weekend.

GOAL 9

Provide zoning tools for major development projects, and master plans as needed, for development of large areas.

Starting in the 1960s, the City utilized a planned development (PD) approach that allowed for flexibility from the base zoning and development standards through adoption of project concept and urban design plans. This approach allowed for variation in lot sizes from the rigid standards of the single-unit residential R-60 or R-90 zones and allowed narrower or shorter lots and adjustments for topography or roadway designs. It also allowed the developer to mix in townhouses or other uses, such as a shopping center, as part of a holistic approach to community development. New Mark Commons and Rockshire are early examples of 'PD' projects in the city.

Residential planned developments were usually built out in a relatively short time frame, of less than ten years. In other cases, the project plan under a 'PD' envisioned a much longer build-out that could take decades. For example, Tower Oaks or PDs in Town Center are still being realized today and portions of them may never be as they were originally approved. These PDs were approved with a maximum amount of commercial square footage or number of dwelling units.

At present, there are 27 Planned Development (PD) zones in the city, each with their own governing documents that contain specific development standards. Over eighteen percent of parceled land in the city is currently in a PD, including some of the more recent large development sites. And yet, the rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance in 2009 did not include a planned development option and no new PDs have been created since.

The Planned Development approach is particularly useful when planning large areas of undeveloped land, with King Farm and Falls Grove as the best recent examples. The flexibility of the PD allowed the majority of the single-unit residential lots within them to be smaller than the minimum 6,000 square feet of the R-60 zone, and also allowed reductions in setbacks, lot coverage, and other development standards. As a result, for example, King Farm has some of

the largest houses in the city, but on some of the smallest lots. No comparable zone in the city's base zoning districts would allow this type of development. Any proposed development of one of the two remaining golf courses in the city would benefit from the option for a Planned Development process.

Policy 19

Establish a flexible zoning regulatory and approval procedure for major projects that allows for creative site planning.

Major development projects will continue to be proposed by property owners that could benefit from a flexible, planned development process as an option. There is value in a flexible approach for approving future projects so that public benefits can be weighed and negotiated. Creative site planning could include measures that address: mixed land uses and densities; subdivision and lot sizes; setback, lot coverage, and height standards; vehicular parking requirements; pedestrian and bicycle facilities; and open spaces and placemaking amenities.

The 2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan established a development option for 'Champion Projects' in the South Pike area, near the Twinbrook Metro Station, that allows for greater building heights and other incentives for large projects in exchange for delivering benefits to the City that would not otherwise be required. However, the 'Champion Project' process leaves some site development issues unaddressed, which can slow project approval and create friction that can be avoided by starting with the optional method of a planned development.

Actions

19.1 Amend the zoning ordinance to create a Planned Development approval process while simplifying and shortening the process for amending approved Planned Developments.

19.2 Explore phasing out older Planned Development zones, specifically for projects that are complete, and where another existing or proposed zoning district can be applied.

19.3 Amend the Zoning Ordinance to establish an optional method of development review to allow development

incentives or zoning relief in exchange for significant public amenities and facilities of importance to the community.

Policy 20

Establish a floating zone specifically written to correspond with areas designated Residential Attached (RA) on the Land Use Policy Map.

The land use plan recommends an incremental approach to land use change, specifically with regard to allowing new areas of attached residential housing types within areas that previously only allowed single-unit detached residences. There are two basic approaches for allowing this change under the Zoning Ordinance: either a Zoning Map Amendment can be proposed after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan to rezone specific properties, or the current zoning can be retained and proposed zoning changes can be made under a ‘floating zone’ approach.

At present there is no floating zone option in the Zoning Ordinance, which, like the PD, was left out of the 2009 update. However, when the City had a Residential Townhouse (RTH) floating zone, it was used to deliver successful projects. This Plan recommends amending the Zoning Ordinance to create a new floating zone, specifically for attached residential uses. The application of this new floating zone can be restricted to those areas specifically mapped for Residential Attached (RA) on the Land Use Policy Map. This approach provides a transparent process for land use change, guided by the land use plan.

Policy 21

Require that a concept plan be completed prior to, or as part of, any substantially scaled development proposal involving Rockville’s two private golf courses.

The largest remaining parcels in the City of Rockville that have the potential to become major development sites are occupied by two private golf courses. Woodmont Country Club, west of Rockville Pike, is the largest at 458 acres, with

Floating Zone

A ‘floating’ zone is a zoning district that can be applied to a property in addition or replacement to a traditional zone, where certain conditions must be met for its application and various zoning standards may be modified from a traditional zone. Rather than being placed on the zoning map as a traditional zone, the floating zone is written as an amendment in the zoning ordinance and used on an as needed basis. (Source: City of Rockville)

two 18-hole courses. The 193-acre Lakewood Country Club, accessed from Glen Mill Road, has one 18-hole course.

Both courses provide recreational opportunities, and their private clubs also have additional sports facilities and play an important role in the social life of their members and the community. However, changing demographics, costs, and time constraints in today’s lifestyles have reduced interest and participation in golf in some parts of the country, including in Montgomery County. In recent years, private golf courses, such as Montgomery Village and Indian Springs have closed. The City’s RedGate Municipal Golf Course closed in 2018 and the Mayor and Council thereafter opted to transition the property to active and passive recreation use.

Any proposed changes in land use to these golf courses other than that of private open space and recreation would require a concept plan that would include a significant amount of community engagement, followed by a Zoning Map amendment. A concept plan would enable any partial or complete changes in use to be considered in full context and to ensure orderly development of these large sites over time. This process could be carried out through the planned development process as recommended in Policy 19 of the Land Use Element.

Woodmont Country Club has sold land for development on the edges of their property in the past, and more recently engaged with City staff during the Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan process and during Rockville 2040. The zoning along the property’s Rockville Pike frontage

was changed from R-400 to new mixed-use zones after the adoption of the Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan in 2016. The Pike Plan also recommends extending East Jefferson Street across the country club property in conjunction with any development or redevelopment on the country club property that produces a significant traffic impact on nearby intersections (*See also Action 19.4 of the Transportation Element and Planning Areas 3, 9, and 11*).

Any proposed development on land that is part of the Lakewood Country Club should begin with a concept plan, in conjunction with a planned development, if and when the owners of the club seek such changes.

Concept plans for these large development sites should include:

- A land use concept plan for the entire site;
- Recommended zoning, or a planned development proposal, for the area being redeveloped;
- An environmental analysis with identification of critical features for conservation and consideration of environmental impact;
- A transportation framework plan, with roads network and connections to the surrounding area, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit service concept;
- A concept plan for community facilities, such as schools, parks, and community centers; and
- Significant community engagement.

Actions

21.1 Continue to engage the Rockville community in a public visioning and planning effort to weigh options for RedGate Park (the former RedGate Municipal Golf Course), and create a master plan that retains the property for active and/or passive recreation. (*See also Action 3.3 in Recreation and Parks Element and Project 1 of Planning Area 17*)

21.2 Continue to engage with Woodmont Country Club and Lakewood Country Club about short-term and long-term planning issues on their properties. (*See also Planning Area 11 for Woodmont Country Club and Planning Area 14 for Lakewood Country Club*)

Policy 22

Undertake a study of parking regulations and recommended changes to the Zoning Ordinance to promote access via modes other than private automobiles and reduce the financial and site development burden.

Parking is not a land use per se, and yet the storage of automobiles takes up huge amounts of land, and is a major consideration for any development project. The impact of parking on urban design is profound. In Rockville Town Center, high minimum parking requirements for office uses are impacting the potential for new office development and limiting the use of available sites. Structured parking, while smaller in its footprint, is very expensive to build and impacts the financial feasibility and physical design of development projects, with the potential to raise the cost of housing and commercial rents.

Despite the impacts of parking lots and garages on development, vehicle parking also provides vital access to residences and businesses. Changes to parking requirements and standards should consider Rockville's older and mobility-challenged residents and visitors who may not be able to take advantage of the city's transit or walking and bicycling infrastructure to reach their destination. This Plan recommends a comprehensive study of the City's parking requirements, considering all of the issues mentioned above.

Actions

22.1 Study potential reductions to minimum parking requirements and other parking measures in order to promote non-vehicular modes of transport, as well as economic development, while ensuring sufficient access for those who to drive by choice or necessity. (*See also Actions 12.4 and 14.7 of the Transportation Element, Actions 1.4 and 10.5 of the Housing Element, and Action 10.2 of the Economic Development Element*)