

MUNICIPAL GROWTH

Vision

Rockville will expand and annex land in a manner that enhances the city's quality of life, while continuing to provide and advocate for adequate public facilities, services, and infrastructure.

An aerial photograph from 2015 shows the eastern edge of the City of Rockville near Twinbrook Parkway and Rock Creek Park, which is a good topographical boundary for future expansion of the city.



State of Maryland law requires all municipal comprehensive plans to include a Municipal Growth Element, or MGE. The law requires that the MGE include consideration of future growth areas outside the existing corporate limits, and define the limits of municipal growth. These limits are defined and mapped by Rockville as its maximum expansion limit, or MEL. State law stipulates that a property must be within a municipality's defined growth limits for that property to be annexed.

The City of Rockville has grown in land area and population for a variety of reasons since its founding in 1803. Annexations from Montgomery County have added to the city's municipal boundary over the years, from whole planned communities to single properties at a time. A map depicting how the city has annexed land over time is shown on Figure 35.

This Municipal Growth Element defines Rockville's maximum expansion limit. Growth projections and trends are provided in the demographic section of the Introduction chapter; and the Land Use Element shows the City's plan for future land use within the city. A map of Rockville's preferred land use for areas outside the city but within the MEL is provided at the end of this Element (see Figure 41).

Rockville is situated within the larger urbanized area of Montgomery County, with a mix of development and parkland surrounding the city. In general, annexation in Rockville is a matter of shared interest between the City and property owners within potential annexation areas, rather than that of increasing land capacity to sustain growth. The following goals and policies establish the City's priorities and guidance for annexing property.

GOAL 1
Guide orderly annexation of land into the city, including a proactive annexation strategy.

Annexation is the legal process by which land is incorporated into a city. A municipal corporation may annex land from unincorporated areas of a county if that land is contiguous and adjacent to parcels within the city. An annexation may be initiated by a petition by the owner, or owners, of the property seeking annexation, or by a municipal legislative body, under rules defined in State law.

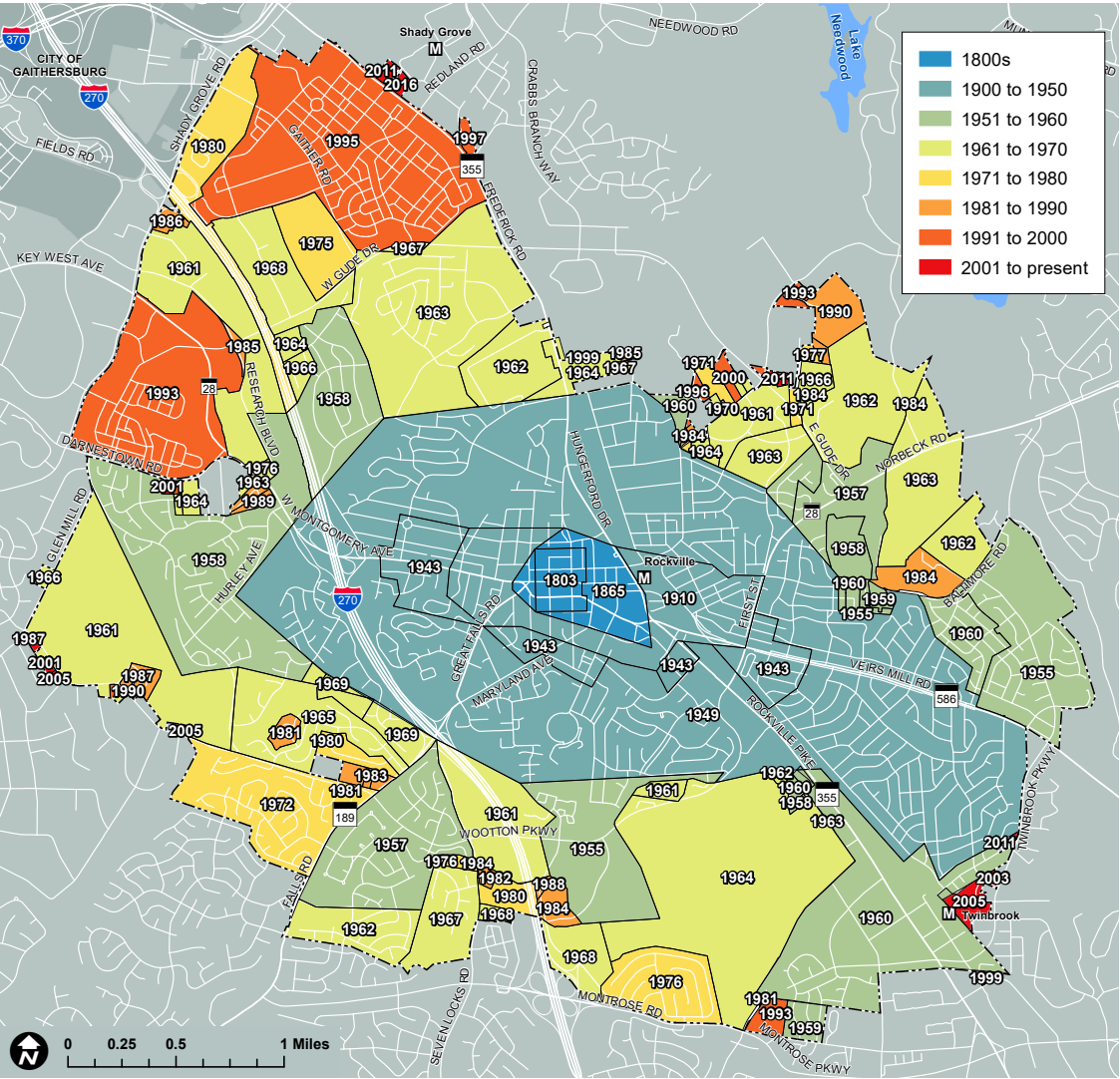
Policy 1
Strategically annex property into the City of Rockville, in accordance with State of Maryland law and the best interests of the City.

This Plan recommends an annexation strategy within the maximum expansion limit (MEL) based on a preliminary analysis of the potential for and value of annexation. Maps and descriptions provided in this element show where the City should conduct proactive outreach to property owners to explore any interest in annexations; and areas where the City should take a passive approach, and wait for property owners to approach the City. Properties within the MEL, but not in the indicated proactive annexation areas, may also annex into the city, either from initiation by either the property owner or the City.

Goals for Rockville's municipal growth include:

- 1. Guide orderly annexation of land into the city, including a proactive annexation strategy.
- 2. Establish a maximum expansion limit for the city.
- 3. Evaluate the impacts of annexation on a case-by-case basis.

Figure 35: Rockville Annexation Over Time



This Plan recommends a proactive approach for properties when the following conditions exist:

1. Annexation is possible in the near-term, because of adjacency or the ability to create adjacency through annexation of other property or right-of-way.
2. There is an identifiable advantage to the property owner, such as City zoning or services, for being part of Rockville, and therefore a reasonable likelihood of owner interest in annexation.
3. The potential annexation is likely to be fiscally beneficial to the City and adequate public facilities, services, and infrastructure can be provided.
4. The annexation is likely to benefit the overall economy, or other aspects, of the city.

5. Annexation would eliminate an enclave of unincorporated parcels surrounded by the city limit on all sides.
6. The annexation would provide additional open space.

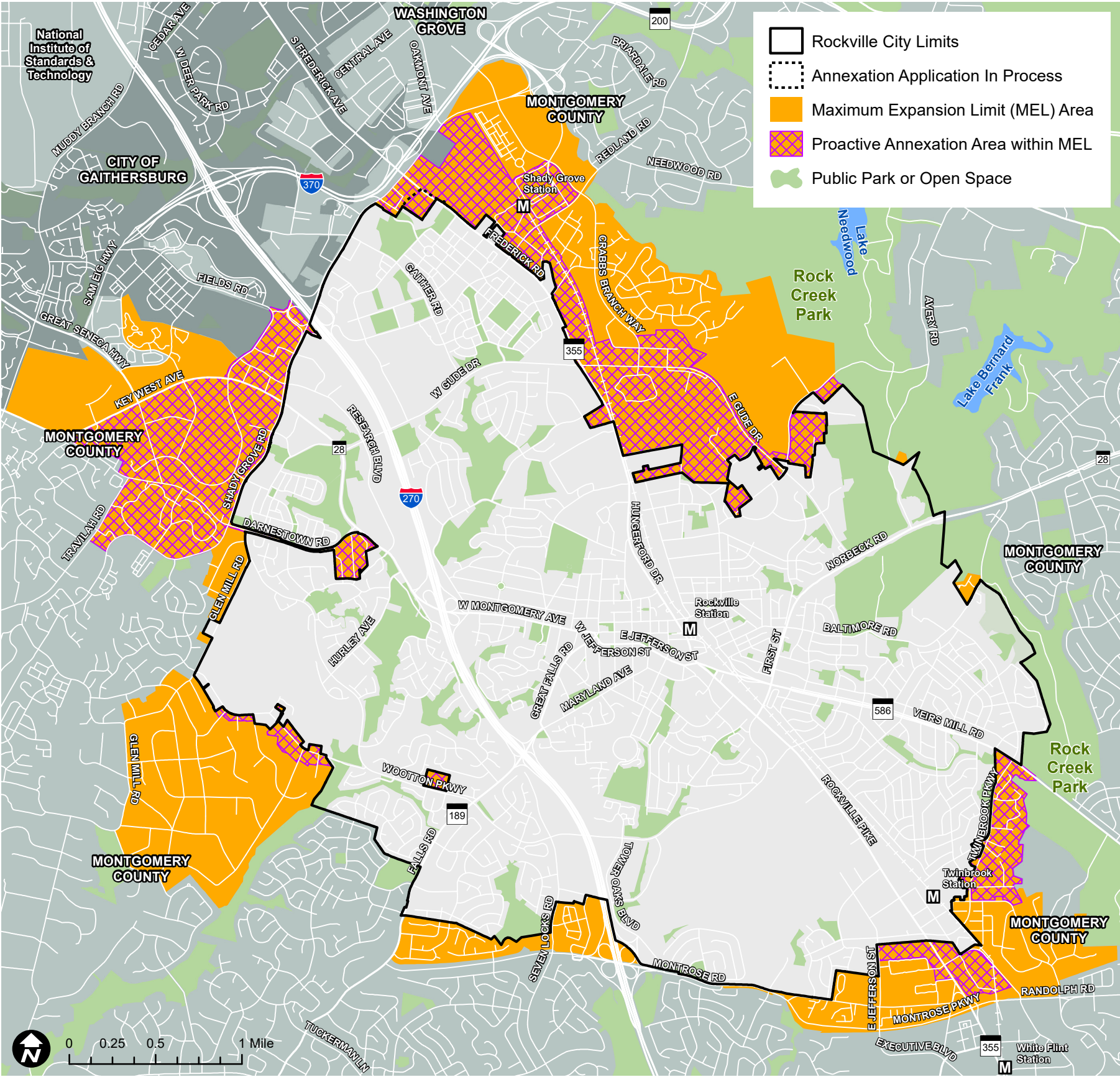
A fiscal analysis is a key part of any annexation review process, with a determination of the level of infrastructure, additional programs and services, and other investments, if any, that the City would need to make versus the long term revenue from future property taxes on the annexed land.

Where the proactive analysis shows a benefit to the City, outreach to property owners is supported. The City will be more passive with respect to properties in other portions of the MEL. While the City may have a long-term interest in these properties becoming a part of Rockville, those decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis as the situation arises.

Actions

- 1.1 Consider annexation only for properties that are within the City's maximum expansion limit, per State law.
- 1.2 Consider annexation only for properties that are adjoining to property or right-of-way within the city, per State law.
- 1.3 Annex properties that are completely surrounded by the City of Rockville.
- 1.4 Consider each annexation petition on its own merits and on a case-by-case basis.
- 1.5 Be proactive in regard to annexations that are logical and feasible and in the City's interest.
- 1.6 Conduct a fiscal analysis for each proposed annexation to determine the costs and benefits to the City that includes additional infrastructure, programs, and services.

Figure 36: City of Rockville Maximum Expansion Limit



Policy 2

Re-establish a working arrangement with the City of Gaithersburg and Montgomery County governments in regard to logical annexations.

In 1992, Montgomery County government and the cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg signed a memorandum of understanding that established a framework for annexation that was to be followed for a “twenty-year planning horizon.” That horizon ended in 2012 and no subsequent agreement has been discussed since then.

Montgomery County government continues to plan for a significant amount of development just beyond Rockville’s municipal boundaries. State of Maryland law requires municipalities to complete a municipal growth element. To the north and northwest are areas that could potentially annex into Rockville, or Gaithersburg, since both the cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville have overlapping areas in their maximum expansion limits, or remain outside of both in Montgomery County.

In areas just outside Rockville’s city limits, the County continues to allow growth in both jobs and residential units. For instance, the County’s Shady Grove Sector Plan, Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan, and its White Flint Sector Plans 1 and 2 all envision major activity centers with thousands of jobs and new residential units. This growth can be beneficial to the city, but also impacts roadway capacity within the city and capacity for other County-controlled community facilities, schools in particular. Rockville’s MEL includes portions of these County growth areas, which provide the City some ability to engage with the County and landowners in planning for land development at the city’s borders.

It is in the City’s best interest to engage in active discussion with the City of Gaithersburg and Montgomery County governments regarding a shared understanding on annexation since it is likely that Rockville and Gaithersburg will continue to annex land from the County in the Shady Grove Road area.

Actions

2.1 Work towards an updated memorandum of understanding with the City of Gaithersburg and Montgomery County governments regarding future annexations.

GOAL 2

Establish a Maximum Expansion Limit for the city.

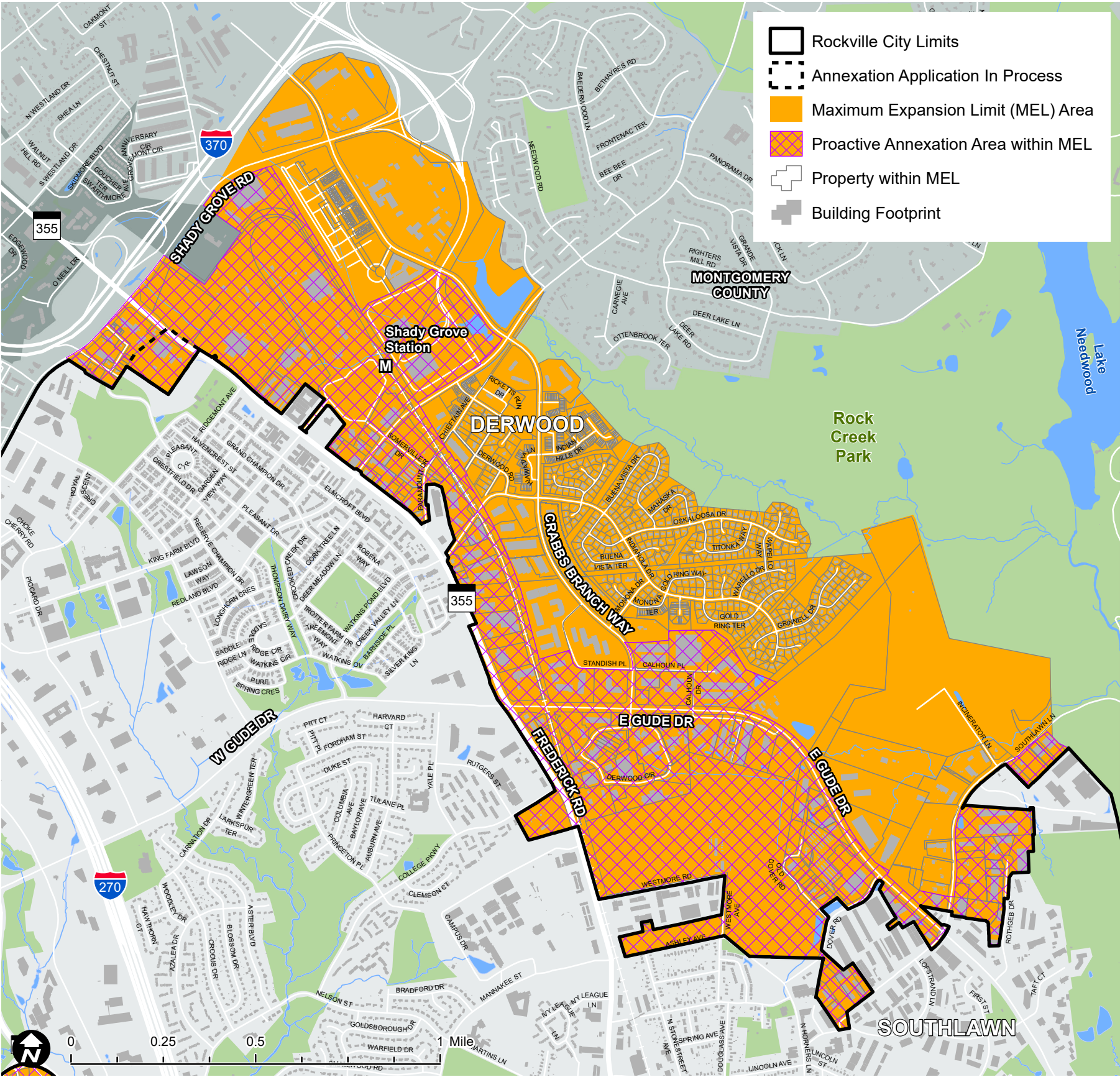
In prior City plans, the ability of Rockville to provide water and sewer services was central to the question of annexation because properties just outside of the city were not comprehensively served by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC). That condition is rarely the case anymore, though there are exceptions. As such, other principles will influence where the City establishes its Maximum Expansion Limit (MEL). In general, because inclusion in Rockville’s MEL does not obligate Rockville to annex, being more expansive leaves more options available to the City, with little identifiable cost.

The following general guidelines were used to determine this Plan’s recommended MEL:

- Base the MEL location on logical topographic features (i.e., major roads, water features, or neighborhoods).
- Only include areas where the City will be able to provide public services in an efficient and effective manner.
- Include areas for which there is a reasonable possibility that annexation could occur over the next 25 years.
- Include properties that have the potential to yield economic, fiscal, or other benefits if annexed.
- Include areas that offer the potential to add to the customer base for Rockville water services.
- Include properties that could help to support Rockville’s image and marketing brand.

The Rockville MEL established in this Plan is shown in Figure 36. Detailed views are included in subsequent pages, divided into city quadrants.

Figure 37: Maximum Expansion Limit - Northeast Detail



Policy 3

Set the MEL north and east from the Southlawn area to Rock Creek Park and I-370.

Rock Creek Park makes a logical eastern boundary for the city's municipal boundary. The current city limit in the Southlawn area is a relatively complex boundary, meandering between various adjacent industrial properties (see Figure 37). The County zoning allows heavy industry in this area, which includes needed services, for instance metal and paper recycling. The city does not have a heavy industrial zone, so annexation is not a priority for these uses; however, proactive annexation in select properties on the border could benefit the city.

The site of the former WINX radio station, at 1000 Westmore Avenue, was recommended for residential development if annexed into the city, per the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan (2007). Currently the WINX property is zoned for industrial uses in the county. The City provides the property with a small amount of water service, which would need to be expanded if additional development were to take place. A forest conservation easement on a portion of the land is held by the Montgomery County Planning Board. Annexation of 1000 Westmore Avenue into the city for the purpose of residential development would be consistent with this Plan, subject to maintaining the forest conservation easement as a buffer between any future development on the site and the residences in Lincoln Park to the south.

Moving north, the Washington Gas fields and former landfill site on either side of East Gude Drive do not offer any redevelopment opportunities; however, annexation would allow adjacency to the properties along East Gude Drive and enable a consolidation of the overall East Gude Drive corridor into the city, some of which is already within city limits. Existing office uses along Crabbs Branch Way and residences in the Derwood subdivision appear to be stable, as well. The City does not anticipate redevelopment of these properties should they be annexed into the city in the future. Annexing property along East Gude Drive would also provide the benefit of the City owning and maintaining the roadway right-of-way that includes the Carl Henn Millennium Trail.

Properties on the East Gude Drive corridor, both within

the city and within the city's MEL, are associated with the emerging Rock East District (RED), a business district promoted by Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI) that seeks to foster and support art, creator, and 'maker' spaces along the corridor. The district will focus on businesses such as breweries, distillery, restaurants, trails, sports businesses, retail, auto repair, and home improvement businesses.

This Plan shows the area between Frederick Road (MD 355) and the CSX railroad tracks as an area for proactive annexations, along with properties at the intersection of Frederick Road and Shady Grove Road. There are opportunities for land use change in both of these areas, which are currently used for a wide variety of highway-oriented commercial uses. Rockville's most recent annexations to the east side of Frederick Road, for a multiple-unit residential development, shows the potential for reinvestment proximate to the Shady Grove Metro station.

Actions

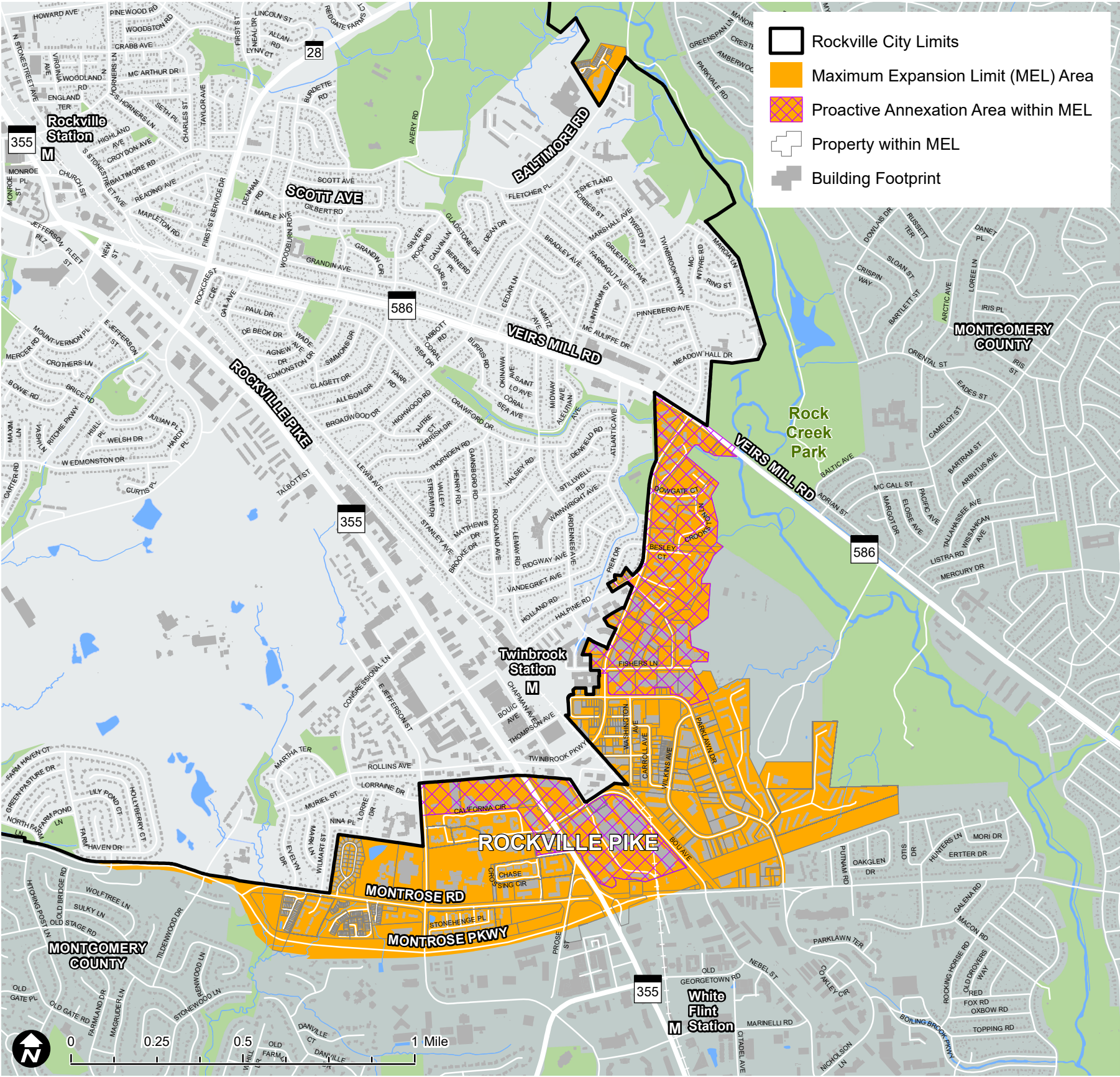
- 3.1 Be proactive in outreach to property owners for potential annexation in the Southlawn industrial area.
- 3.2 Work with owner of the property at 1000 Westmore Avenue (former WINX site) to reach an annexation agreement for a primarily residential development.
- 3.3 Make annexing property on the east side of MD 355 (Frederick Road, north of College Parkway) to the CSX railroad tracks a priority for Rockville and reach out to the property owners to discuss annexation options.
- 3.4 Support and promote the service industrial and creative/maker district of the Rock East District (RED). (*See also Planning Area 17 and Action 16.6 of the Land Use Element*)

Policy 4

Set Rock Creek Park as a logical boundary for the city east of the Twinbrook neighborhood.

The MEL encompasses properties on both sides of Twinbrook Parkway up to the edges of Rock Creek Park and Parklawn Memorial Park, a cemetery (see Figure 38). The

Figure 38: Maximum Expansion Limit - Southeast Detail



area between Twinbrook Parkway, south of Veirs Mill Road, and the parks is recommended for proactive annexation. The current land use for these properties is multiple-unit residential in the form of garden apartments. Residents of these apartments shop in the commercial area at Atlantic Avenue within the city and use Rockville facilities, including the Twinbrook Community Center. Some of these property owners have expressed interest in redevelopment to higher intensity residential uses, which have the potential to impact City services, facilities, and infrastructure. Additionally, the City recognizes the importance of the existing apartments as affordable and family-oriented communities. Annexation of these properties should not necessitate redevelopment of the existing garden apartments and any future redevelopment should seek to avoid gentrification and displacement of the current residents. Engaging these property owners in discussions regarding annexation to the city is recommended.

Further south, the current city boundary twists around a number of properties to the west of Twinbrook Parkway; annexation would provide a logical boundary for the city.

Annexations of former light industrial properties have been an important step in the creation of transit-oriented development on the east side of the Twinbrook Metro station. New mixed-use development on Fishers Lane, with ground-floor storefronts, provides a good walking environment from the station to the cluster of offices further east on Fishers Lane, anchored by large buildings occupied by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This area served by Fishers Land and Parklawn Drive is recommended for proactive outreach to property owners for consideration of annexation.

East of the Twinbrook Metro station, the large area from Twinbrook Parkway to Rock Creek Park is covered by the County's Twinbrook Sector Plan (2009), which includes a technology employment area and light industrial area. Residential uses are adjacent to the park. All of this area is within Rockville's MEL, which extends south to the County right-of-way corridor reserved for the extension of Montrose Parkway to Veirs Mill Road. Annexation of office and laboratory properties in this area would promote economic development in Rockville, with a focus on biotechnology, science, and health technology.

Policy 5

Follow Montrose Parkway and Randolph Road as the MEL in the south Rockville Pike area.

The area immediately to the south of the city limits along Rockville Pike is recommended for proactive outreach to explore annexation (see Figure 38). Shopping centers are the primary current uses. A proactive annexation strategy is recommended for the properties in the area for the following reasons:

- The properties are consistent with the character of the MD 355 corridor within the city and the themes in the Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan.
- The properties have a high likelihood of being economically beneficial to the City.
- Rockville will be in a better position to control impacts and promote a favorable development if the sites were located within the city.

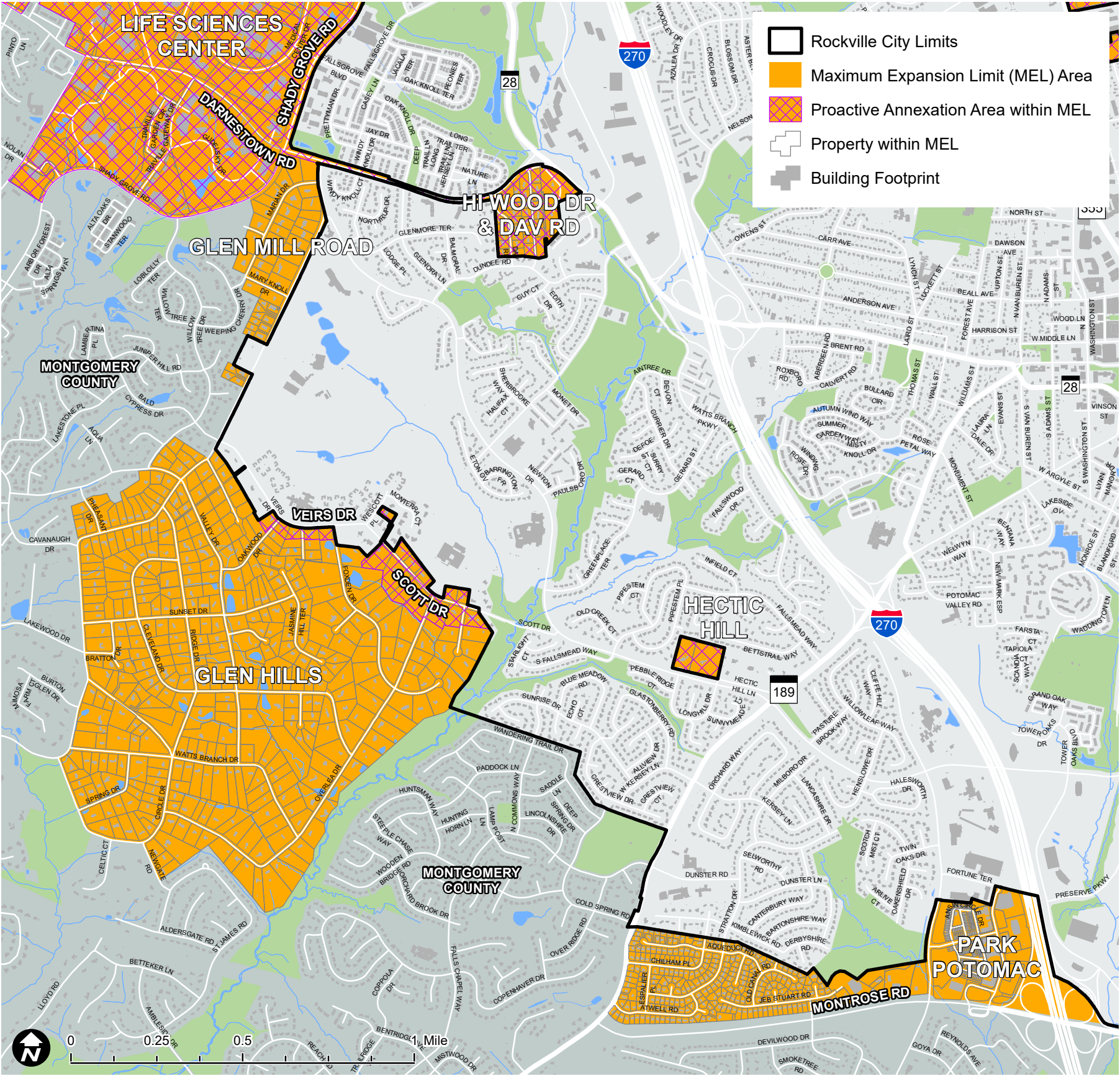
Using the new Montrose Parkway alignment as a boundary for the MEL allows for a logical expansion of city boundaries, allowing for a better-defined service and delivery area. Montrose Road served this purpose in the past. There are many property owners in this district who already use Rockville as a mailing address, indicating their affinity and identification with the City of Rockville.

Policy 6

Include all land north of Montrose Road between I-270 and MD 189 in the MEL, including Park Potomac.

The MEL encompasses all land north of Montrose Road from I-270 west to MD 189 (see Figure 39). This area includes the growing Park Potomac development, which was in discussions with the City about annexation prior to its development. A benefit to the City would be its additional tax base. The area also includes a neighborhood of single-unit detached houses, which is immediately adjacent to an established neighborhood within the city.

Figure 39: Maximum Expansion Limit - Southwest Detail



Policy 7

Include all of the Glen Hills subdivision in the MEL, along with similar large-lot property west of Glen Mill Road and south of Darnestown Road without sewer access.

The area between Watts Branch and Glen Mill Road, known as the Glen Hills residential subdivision, is included in the MEL because problematic septic systems have led some residents of this neighborhood to inquire whether annexation into the city would be possible to obtain City sewer services (see Figure 39). Some properties in the Glen Hills area also have well water as their source of fresh water and may need City water service at some point in the future. The area is within the WSSC District boundary (known as WSSD), but is not comprehensively serviced by WSSC. The City would be permitted to provide water and sewer services only if an agreement were established between the City and WSSC. Such agreements have been achieved in the past for other properties. The City does have a water service line in Rockville near this neighborhood.

Analysis has not been undertaken by Department of Public Works, Recreation and Parks, or Finance staff regarding the engineering, City programs and services, and financial parameters involved in serving this area. Such analysis would need to be conducted before any annexations were to take place.

Additionally, the properties in this area are zoned RE-1 (minimum 40,000 square-foot lots) by the County and reserved for large-lot single-unit detached houses. Some property owners have expressed an interest in subdividing and developing additional single-unit houses as a means to help finance needed water and sewer improvements. The City can accommodate such development if the properties are connected to Rockville utilities and annexed into the city. This area is solely residential and is expected to remain so.

Policy 8

Offer annexation to residential lots fronting on Scott Drive and Veirs Drive.

These properties are adjacent to the current city limits and this Plan recommends reaching out to the property owners to discuss annexation (see Figure 39). The properties are relatively high value and are likely to be net fiscally positive to the City. However, infrastructure costs of providing water and sewer, if needed, should be determined prior to any annexation considerations.

Policy 9

Make annexing enclave properties a priority.

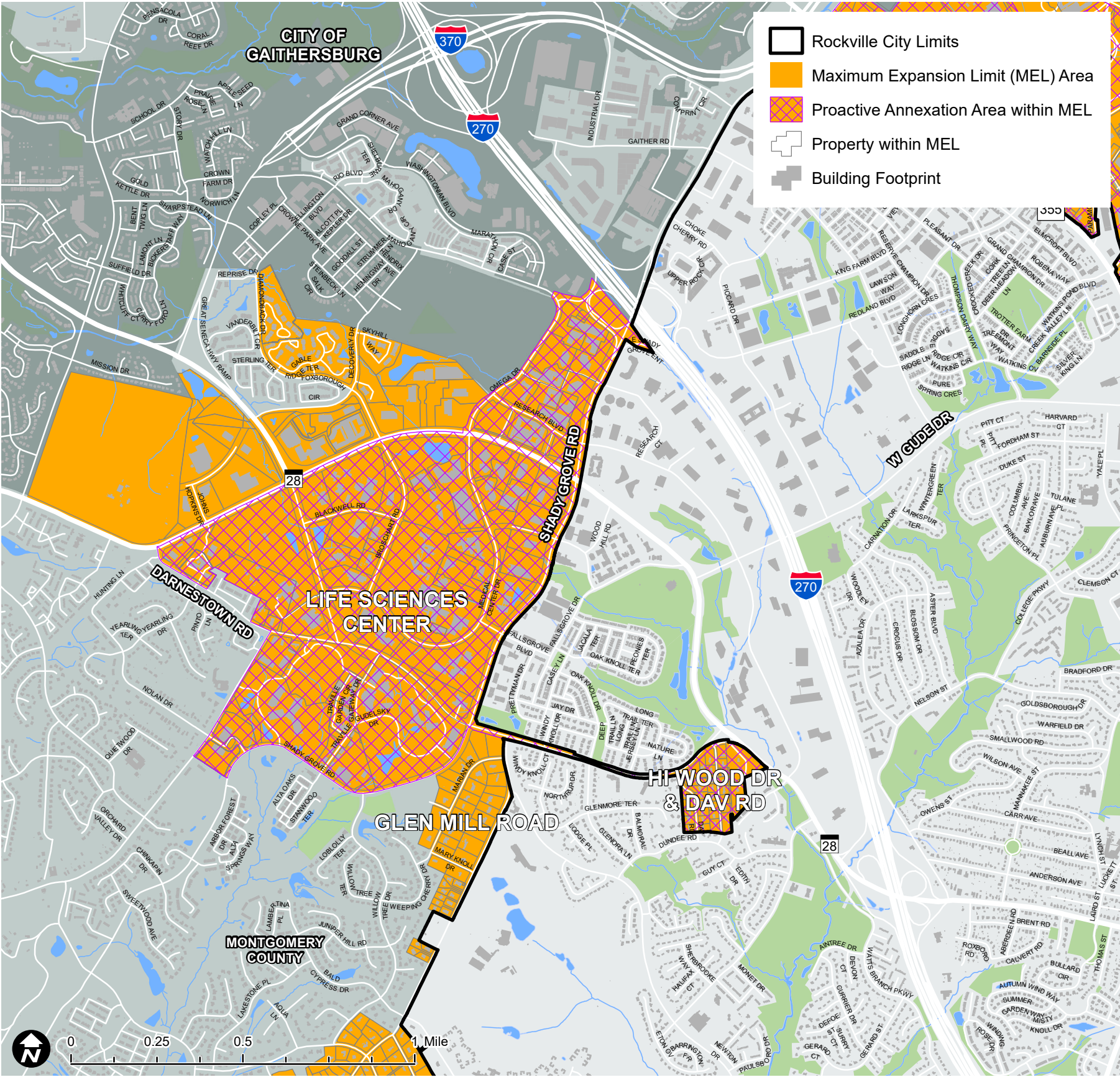
Enclaves are areas that are either completely or nearly surrounded by city land. State law provides municipalities certain rights to annex enclaves, subject to set procedures.

Two properties, at 8321 and 8311 Hectic Hill Lane, are unincorporated enclaves surrounded by the city (see Figure 39). Prior annexation agreements from 1983 with respect to the Hectic Hill subdivision annexation should be reviewed to determine if the properties are in compliance with the annexation agreements. The City is prepared to annex these properties if it is determined that the terms of annexation agreement are not in compliance.

Properties along Hi Wood Drive and Dav Road are practically, but not legally, an enclave because they are connected to areas of the county along Darnestown Road, which is a County road (see Figure 39). Therefore the City cannot annex the properties by-right under the State allowances for true enclaves. The major obstacle, for years, has been the cost of bringing the entire neighborhood up to City standards for sidewalks and water and sewer service; these properties are on well water and septic systems. Annexation has been discussed in the past without resolution because of significant infrastructure costs.

The area comprised of Hi Wood Drive and Dav Road is a proactive annexation area, with the understanding that it would take a broad plan and agreement for how to build and finance the infrastructure. The annexation should only be

Figure 40: Maximum Expansion Limit - Northwest Detail



considered if the fiscal analysis shows the long-term impacts to be positive for the City.

Policy 10

Include the Shady Grove Road and Life Sciences areas northwest of Shady Grove Road and southwest of I-270 within the MEL.

The northwest maximum expansion area quadrant includes properties to the northwest of Shady Grove Road, and southwest of I-270, where the Life Sciences Center is being developed (see Figure 40). This area is part of the larger Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan area, as planned by the County. The city's MEL also includes adjacent industrial and commercial properties.

Major current uses within the area include:

- Shady Grove Adventist Hospital
- The Universities at Shady Grove
- Johns Hopkins University-Montgomery County
- National Cancer Institute
- National Cybersecurity Center of Excellence

These are major institutions that would add to services available within the city and the prestige of Rockville. There is significant potential benefit, and no risk, to including these areas in the MEL, as Gaithersburg has done.

The vision of the County's Great Seneca plan calls for enhancing the Life Science Center and the biotech niche by adding development and infrastructure capacity, a greater mix of uses, and creating a walkable, multi-modal activity center. Construction of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), a bus rapid transit project proposed by the Maryland Transit Administration, is a centerpiece of the development plan. Four CCT stations are planned to serve the area, which will open additional development capacity that is currently limited by County-imposed calculations for traffic, by shifting trips to the bus mode. All of the planning for growth, up to 17.5 million square feet of new development, is being done by Montgomery County government, and this growth will happen whether or not it is included in Rockville's MEL. Project approvals are phased by the County, based on

shifting more and more trips to non-automobile modes, with the bus rapid transit a key aspect of serving those trips.

This Plan recommends proactive outreach for annexation of properties fronting along the west side of Shady Grove Road. This proactive area also includes Shady Grove Adventist Hospital and The Universities at Shady Grove.

Actions

10.1 Establish a strategy to conduct outreach to owners of property fronting on the northwest side of Shady Grove Road to discuss potential annexation.

GOAL 3

Evaluate the impacts of annexation on a case-by-case basis.

The State of Maryland requires that comprehensive plans include in the Municipal Growth Element (MGE) an assessment of the impacts of projected growth, including whether the municipality will be able to provide service to new areas. This section provides the required discussion, in a manner similar to Rockville's 2010 MGE, which was approved by the State.

There is no expectation that all areas within the MEL will be annexed into the city in the foreseeable future. Therefore, prematurely projecting the impacts on City services of this growth will not provide a meaningful view of future



The northwest side of Shady Grove Road is lined by commercial and institutional uses, include many professional office buildings. Annexation into the City of Rockville may provide an opportunity to coordinate new investments and an improved environment along Shady Grove Road.

City service needs. It should be noted, however, that the County provides public schools, libraries, and the fire and emergency medical services for all properties within the MEL; and the City shares the responsibility for providing police service as well as recreation services and parks. In order to ensure that adequate services are provided to properties annexed into the city, the City should advocate for Montgomery County government to provide adequate public facilities, services, and infrastructure in those areas for which the County is responsible.

Policy 11
Analyze the potential impacts of each proposed annexation on public services.

By 2040, the population of Rockville within the existing municipal boundaries is projected to grow to nearly 92,000 people, living in nearly 37,000 households; employment is projected to grow to more than 90,000 (MWCOC Round 9.1 regional projections, October 2018). Areas available for growth in Rockville are virtually all infill locations, where projects will involve redevelopment of previously developed sites, mostly along the MD 355 and Shady Grove Road corridors. At present, these areas are mostly single-use commercial or single-use office/laboratory spaces, where the existing zoning and the future market are likely to support mixed-use development; the past decade has already begun to see these changes. None of these growth areas are suitable for large amounts of single-unit housing, which bring high demands for school, roadway, and water investments. As a result, the vast majority of new residences in Rockville are projected to be apartments (or condominiums) and townhouses.

Rockville maintains prudent budgeting and investment policies and has adjusted quite well, historically, to its projected growth; yet the City of Rockville does not control all of the services and facilities that will be needed to accommodate future growth. Montgomery County government and the State of Maryland are also important service providers in accommodating growth.

Rockville, Montgomery County government, and the State of Maryland will, at minimum, need to be prepared to provide resources for schools, higher education, community and recreational facilities, facilities for police,

Land Use Policy Map Designations

RESIDENTIAL

 RD: Residential Detached

 RA: Residential Attached

 RF: Residential Flexible

 RM: Residential Multiple Unit

COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE

 O: Office

 C: Commercial

 RO: Residential and/or Office

 CRM: Commercial and Residential Mix

 OCRM: Office, Commercial and Residential Mix

 SI: Service Industrial

 SRM: Service Industrial and Residential Mix

PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONAL

 CI: Civic and Public Institutional

 I: Private Institutional

 OSP: Open Space Private

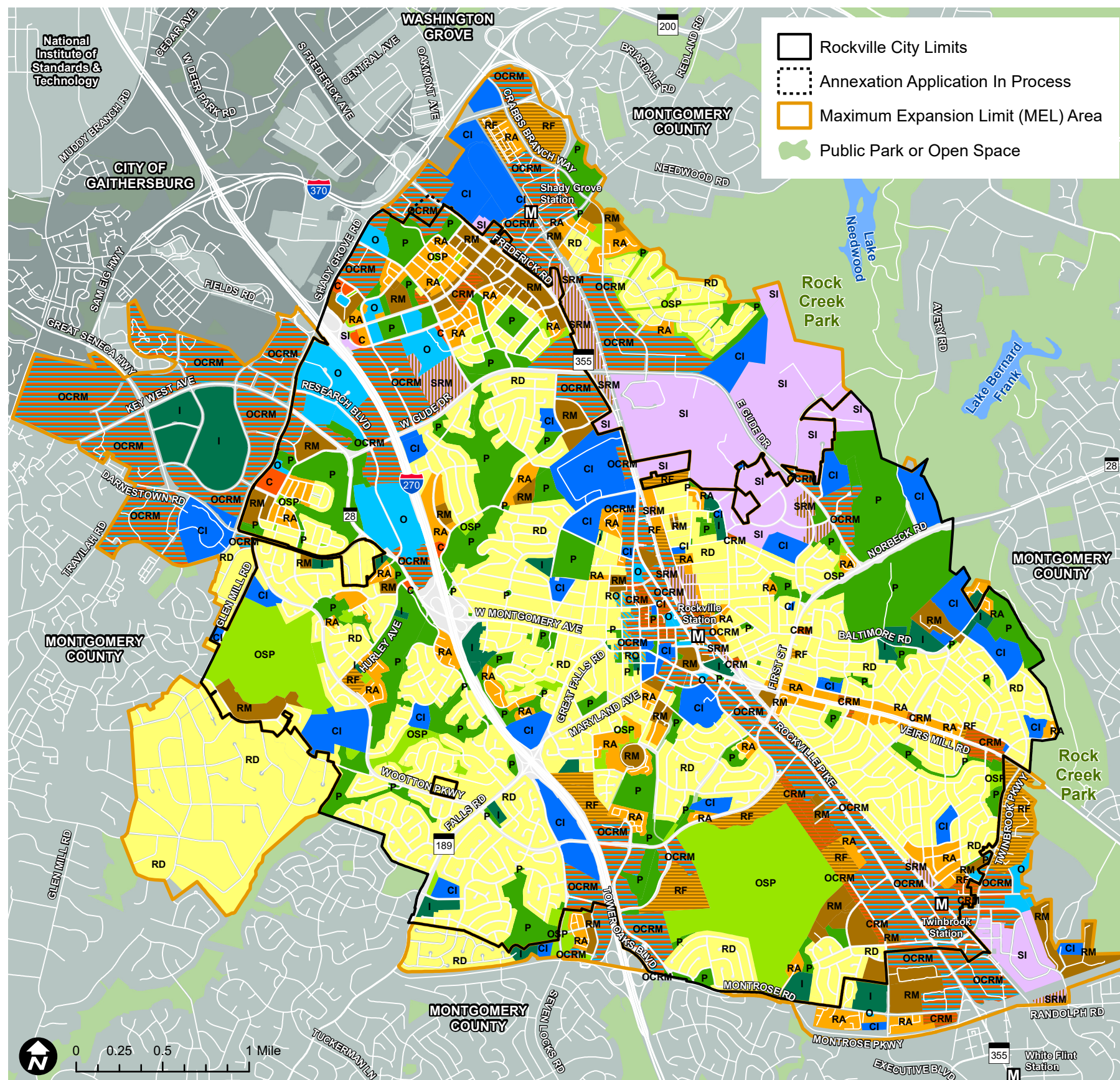
 P: Public Parks

 Potential Future Public Park

244 Municipal Growth Element

City of Rockville Comprehensive Plan

Figure 41: Maximum Expansion Limit with City of Rockville Land Use Policy Map Designations



fire, and emergency medical personnel and services, and transportation infrastructure. Rockville and Montgomery County government will also need to maintain policies by which developers provide appropriate levels of infrastructure, or resources that help to fund such investments, as part of their project approvals.

The projected growth in Rockville by 2040 can be accommodated within Rockville's existing municipal boundaries, as long as the public facilities and infrastructure are available to meet the public needs generated by that growth. Therefore, there is no demand-generated need for Rockville to expand its municipal boundaries. However, there may be positive benefits to opportunistic expansion if an owner adjacent to Rockville expresses the desire to become part of the city. Furthermore, there are benefits to expanding Rockville's municipal boundaries in order to open the possibility for the positive fiscal benefits and obtain some control over future development in areas that already affect Rockville.

Rockville is identified by Montgomery County government and the State of Maryland as being in the center of a key growth corridor. Rockville also sees value in vitality-enhancing growth, though not at the expense of important quality-of-life measures for the city's residents, businesses, property owners, and visitors. Rockville will continue to invest in services, facilities, and infrastructure for which it has authority, but Montgomery County and Maryland must do the same in their areas of authority and service.

Development Capacity Analysis (Growth Projections)

Maryland State law requires that the Municipal Growth Element includes a projection of future growth in population and resulting land needs based on a capacity analysis of areas selected for future municipal annexation and growth. It also requires an examination of the effects of growth on infrastructure and natural features both within and adjacent to the present municipality and on future growth areas that may be annexed. The primary purpose of the development capacity analysis is to estimate the growth that is expected in a local jurisdiction, including whether the available land within a jurisdiction can accommodate the projected demand. State guidance provides local governments with flexibility regarding the approach to the development capacity analysis.

Rockville has limited remaining vacant land available for development within its municipal boundaries and in its defined Maximum Expansion Limits (MEL) for which there is any near-term prospect for development. As a result, almost all new development in the City of Rockville, or within its MEL, are expected to be in the context of redevelopment and/or adding density to locations that currently have low-density development.

The State had endorsed Rockville's methodology of projecting growth with the approval of Rockville's Municipal Growth Element in 2010. The City is currently using the same methodology to generate population, housing, and employment forecasts 20 to 30 years into the future, and coordinate its forecasts with local jurisdictions by participating in the regional cooperative forecasting effort that the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) coordinates for the region. The Council of Governments Board of Directors approves the regional forecasts, that are generally updated every two to three years. Montgomery County government also participates in the same forecasting process and generates projections for areas that are within the City's MEL. Therefore, growth projections are in place for the areas within the City's MEL. The City of Rockville and Montgomery County government continue to plan for future growth and infrastructure in the areas of authority within their respective jurisdictions.

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