Rockville Summit Report – Preserving Rockville's Character

Introduction

Rockville is "The Small City with the Hometown Feel." We are a bedroom community, a business hub, a government center, and increasingly, an urban center. We are a desirable location where residents and businesses feel welcome, safe and secure. We value our history, our environment, our growing diversity, and we work to give everyone the opportunity to participate in a government that listens to and values all viewpoints. We offer a wide variety of businesses, residences, recreational facilities, and cultural options that make it possible to live, work, and play all within the boundaries of our City.

This report describes our Character as a City, the qualities that make Rockville "Rockville." We identify and categorize these qualities, examine some of the issues that challenge our identity, and finally provide a set of recommendations that will help preserve the elements that make Rockville special.

Defining Our Character

There is no one thing that makes Rockville unique. To understand what gives the City its flavor, to understand why people find Rockville a comfortable, desirable place to live and work, you need to look at different facets of the City: its physical makeup; its social components; and its cultural richness. Each of these characteristics is deeply interwoven with the others and contributes to creating the qualities that define Rockville's Character.

Physical Characteristics:

While Rockville is a Small City, we offer a wealth of living, working, business, and recreational landscapes. Our housing ranges from multi-acre estates, to moderately priced homes and apartments, to new planned communities, to rising hubs of urban-style living. We welcome and house small businesses, larger retail stores, professional and governmental offices, and the area's growing participation in the Science Corridor.

History is Honored

Since colonial times, our City has played an important role in American history. Evidence of that history dots our landscape and reminds us of the struggles and successes that have occurred in the development of our country, state and county. Rockville takes great pride in its heritage and constantly works to preserve these historic structures and their surrounding environments. Historic districts and participation in the Montgomery County Heritage Area program help us integrate respect for our past with the need for us to grow and remain a modern city.

Everyone Can Live Here

As the middle class economy of the 20th century grew, Rockville became a focal point for people seeking the American Dream of owning their own homes. Due to the City's proximity to Washington, DC, its role as the Seat of Montgomery County Government, and the abundance and low cost of improvable land, today you can find homes of all kinds. We have the elegant Victorian residences of West Montgomery Avenue, the eclectic quaintness of the City's West End, and affordable post-war housing in the Twinbrook area. The bedroom communities of Woodley Gardens and College Gardens are two of the neighborhoods that offer comfortable houses in a 60's middle class style, and the planned communities of King Farm and Fallsgrove offer more modern opportunities for single-family, townhouse, and condominium homes. For people of more modest means, or who are not yet ready for ownership, there are many opportunities within the City to rent apartments, townhouses, and houses. In addition, different types of senior-living space, from affordable to fancy, is either available or under construction.

With the urban node trend of the early 21st Century, Rockville's housing options will continue to evolve as we begin to offer city-style living in the mixed use development zones of Twinbrook and Town Center.

Shopping is King

To many people in the DC region, the name "Rockville" means Rockville Pike, which means shopping! Our city is host to the longest stretch of retail business in the region comprising many national chain stores as well as small businesses. The newer Town Center offers even more venues and a variety of restaurants. Many areas of the City are home to independent small businesses. The Rockville Chamber of Commerce and Rockville Economic Development Inc. (REDI) actively promote the City as a location for professional and retail business venues, and provide information and encouragement to shoppers and new businesses.

Near DC, Central to the County

Rockville occupies an enviable location, a short distance from the Nation's Capital and at the center of Montgomery County. Our selection as the county seat was due in part to our historic location along an established north-south route. There are many benefits that accrue to our proximity to DC including a stable employer in the Federal Government, access to world-class museums and cultural outlets, and many other amenities that go along with living close to a major city.

Our location within the county has many benefits as well, including access to many modes of transportation. We are at the intersection of several major thoroughfares including Veirs Mill Road, Rt. 355 and Rt. 28. I-270 passes through the western edge of Rockville and there are two Metro stops within our borders.

Green Space is Central to our Identity

For residents, Rockville is also about what is **not** built up. Our extensive system of parks, play fields, and recreational facilities, and our integration into the Chesapeake Bay Watershed give an open, green feel to our city. Even in our most built-out areas, residents and workers are never more than a few minutes' walk from a park, playground, or preserve. On a warm day our open spaces are filled with families, sports teams, runners, tennis players, basketball games, walkers and picnickers. Every day you see

people biking, walking, and running along our network of bike and walking paths. Our open space, more than anything else, helps people feel that Rockville gives them room to breathe and play, and that helps make Rockville feel like home.

Social Characteristics:

The demographics and ideals of a city's population tell a lot about a city's character. Rockville's residents cross many ethnic, educational, economic, and lifestyle lines. As broad as these differences may be, people here also hold shared beliefs like hard work, family and community.

A Diverse Community

Rockville has a long history of being home to many types of people. Today we continue to be a diverse community with 60% of residents White/Caucasian, 14.3% Hispanic, 10% Black/African American, 21% Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, .3% American Indian or Alaskan Natives, 5% other races and 4% mixed race. *(Note: numbers do not add to 100% because some people identify with multiple ethnic groups.)* The population of the City is growing and is also aging. Though we are a relatively wealthy community, not all residents are doing well. The total poverty rate in the City is 3.7%, with 8% of female heads of household and 6% of people over 65 living in poverty.

A Middle Class Community

Though all economic levels are represented in our city, we view ourselves as being mostly "Middle Class." This means that we are of average means and value strong community, neighborhood and family bonds. We also understand the value of working together for common goals and we constantly strive to make things better for ourselves, our children, and our community.

An Involved and Engaged Community

In keeping with our Middle Class values, Rockville is an involved, hands-on community. Whether about our schools and neighborhoods, or urban farming and historic preservation, we find a cause and we get involved. There are more than 60 Neighborhood, Homeowner, and Civic Associations advocating for the needs of our residents. Our very active PTAs deal with matters of education quality and school capacity. There are even several local groups committed to maintaining the Chesapeake Watershed by advocating, educating and coordinating the conservation and enhancement of the Potomac River and associated land resources of the Potomac River basin. We are a leading community in the areas of low-impact storm water management and bike route development because we saw something that needed to be done, and we rolled up our sleeves and got to it.

A Residential Community

First and foremost we see ourselves as a residential community. According to the last Census, Rockville's population density (people per square mile) is lower than Bethesda, Gaithersburg, Germantown, and Silver Spring. This is because our historical development pattern was primarily in single-family homes. In the 1930s we were one of the first communities to implement zoning regulations, which strengthened our commitment to residential communities. Rockville has grown as a location for single-family homes and we've come to take pride in our identity as a residential community. We are a great place to live, and we work to maintain an air of livability. People may first come to Rockville for the shopping, but

they end up moving here for the neighborhoods, the schools, and the parks. We see our City as an area of calm within the hectic world of life in the Nation's Capital. In Rockville you can picnic in the park, play in your yard, take a walk and meet your neighbors, and feel part of an active, established community. Even as the City grows and everything grows around us, we want Rockville to continue to be a comfortable, inviting, peaceful place to live.

Population Density, 2010	Rockville	Bethesda	Gaithersburg	Germantown	Silver Spring
Land area in square miles	13.51	13.29	10.20	17.00	7.92
Population	61,209	60,858	59,933	86,395	71,452
Persons per square mile	4,531.70	4,579.60	5,875.20	5,083.30	9,022.90

(Source: census.gov)

Cultural Characteristics:

The character of life in Rockville may be best described through an understanding of its culture: the shared history, shared experiences, and shared values that make our City a unique and interesting place to live. We are fortunate that Rockville has been an active participant in the development of our county and our country. Our residents enjoy a rich tradition of cultural arts and community-oriented entertainment, and our open, participatory government system allows everyone the opportunity to make their voices heard and to take an active role in the management of our community.

Accessible Culture and Entertainment

In 2011, Rockville released its Culture and Entertainment Plan, affirming the City's belief that the visual and performing arts along with other forms of community entertainment are essential parts of the success of the community both economically and as a place to live. Rockville has long been an advocate of the arts and maintains a Cultural Arts Commission to advise the Mayor and Council in matters pertaining to visual and performing arts as benefits to the community. The "Art in Public Places" program ensures that all new development and redevelopment projects in the City provide public art. The City promotes active participation in the arts by sponsoring a chorus, a ballet company and a concert band; and by hosting regular gallery shows at the Civic Center mansion that highlight the works of local and regional visual artists. Our history and love of the arts combine in the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre, which hosts over 150 live performances a year and honors the memory of a Rockville resident who is one of the country's great literary icons. This theatre is host to the annual nationally- recognized F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Conference.

Throughout the year the City sponsors community-oriented events like Hometown Holidays, Farmer's Markets, the Antique Car Show, a Fourth of July Celebration, and concerts in Town Center. Even when there is no event, the Parks and Recreation department sponsors community centers, sports programs, lessons in arts & crafts, and nature classes.

Most every day you can find free or reasonably-priced exhibitions, performances, festivals and other community events. When you live in Rockville, you never have to be at a loss for ways to amuse, educate, and enrich yourself.

Respect for our History

The history of Rockville is long and diverse, and we've not always had a good relationship with our past. We've come to appreciate the connection between our built environment and the legacy of our cultural history. From its early role in the Revolutionary war, through its establishment as a government center (designated county seat in October, 1776) to its participation in the Civil War and establishment of early communities and schools for freed blacks, Rockville has been a major cornerstone in the development of Montgomery County.

We greatly value efforts to preserve the historic fabric of our City, even while we acknowledge that growth and change are inevitable. Our historic resources tell the story of Rockville. We must constantly work to preserve and respect our past without limiting the potential our City holds.

Open, Participatory Government

Rockville has an accessible and open government. At every turn, Rockville works to give its businesses and residents the opportunity to participate in a government that is dedicated to serving the best interests of its population.

"In a statement announcing her selection (as Rockville City Manager) [Barbara] Matthews said she was honored to be selected. 'The City of Rockville is well known for its professional management, innovation and forward thinking approach to serving the public.'" (Source: The Gazette, October 2, 2012.)

The City's open government model and proactive communication attempts to keep everyone informed about the workings of their community and give everyone the opportunity to be heard on issues of importance to them. Our consistently excellent professional staff is helpful and treats everyone with respect. Rockville's 23 volunteer boards and commissions, numerous ad-hoc committees, and non-governmental organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and REDI allow residents and business owners to take active roles in determining the directions and decisions that the City makes.

Challenges to Our City

One strong indicator of character, whether for people or for cities, is how they face the challenges presented in their lives. Rockville is certainly not perfect, nor does it exist in a perfect environment. The obstacles the City faces, both internal and external, are real, and addressing them in a way that protects the best interests of the City and its residents will not only preserve Rockville's character, but it will also help to define it.

Constrained Tax Base

A city is only as good as the services it can provide to its residents and its businesses. Providing the excellent services our City offers, like parks, snow removal, water and sewer service, and police protection, takes money. The main source of money that we directly control is property taxes. Over half of our revenue comes from property taxes, and 60% of that tax revenue comes from taxes on homes.

As the areas around Rockville continue to grow and urbanize, and our own urban node zones evolve, more and more pressure will be put on our City to provide services. If the proportion of residential property tax to city revenue remains the same, then either an increasing tax burden will be placed on Rockville's homeowners, or Rockville will have no choice but to cut or lower the quality of services it provides. Neither of these is acceptable, and both would lead to homeowners moving away from the City.

Rockville must find ways to increase its tax revenue from the County, the State, and from businesses without discouraging growth within our City or placing heavier burdens on its residents.

Business Red Tape

Rockville has a reputation among businesses as being unfriendly. If the City does not act to change this perception, then there is a danger that desirable businesses will choose to locate outside city limits, lowering the quality of retail and professional representation in Rockville, constraining the tax base, and leaving the City with empty, run-down, or abandoned buildings in its business districts.

As a result of the recent annexation of a property just north of the City to Gaithersburg rather than to Rockville, the Rockville Chamber of Commerce held several meetings with business leaders to begin to determine if the anti-business reputation is deserved. Their consensus was that the reputation is deserved due to long, complicated permitting processes, higher than average fees, restrictions imposed by forestry rules and by the APFO, and the fear that decisions on permitting, development, and zoning exceptions may be reversed midstream.

There is also an ongoing tension between residents and business owners and developers. Some residents see developers as profit-driven, opportunistic, and heedless of the needs of residents. Some developers see residents as obstructionist, shortsighted, and unwilling to adjust to changing times. Obviously neither of these characterizations is completely true, but the escalating level of acrimony between the two groups is a consistent roadblock to finding meaningful solutions that benefit both sides of the issue.

Road and Public Transportation Congestion

In the 1800s, it might take you an hour to travel the length of Rockville Pike from the southern to the northern borders of the City. Today, thanks to modern transportation, it takes… pretty much the same amount of time! Traffic volume is a growing and continual problem for our city. Not only are we a major north/south commuter corridor, but all of our roads are impacted by the high-density development taking place in White Flint, Science City, and eventually in Shady Grove. The Metro Rail Red Line is overloaded, and mitigating services like Bus Rapid Transit and the Corridor Cities Transitway are still only in the early discussion stages. Even with Ride-On buses, bike paths, sidewalks, and mixed use development, Rockville is still very much a driving town, and the inability to drive somewhere in a reasonable amount of time will discourage customers from making Rockville their shopping/dining/entertainment destination and cause people to look elsewhere when they buy a home.

Growing Population and Diversity

The population has increased quickly in recent years, rising from 47,388 in 2000 to 61,209 in 2010, and the population is predicted to reach 82,414 by 2040. This rapid growth, which will happen mostly in the urban node zones, places increasing pressures on the City to provide adequate housing, transportation, and other essential services. In addition, the population mix of the City is changing. Different ethnic and cultural groups are moving into the area and increasing their presence in Rockville. The Asian population, which is diverse within itself, increased from 9.8% in 1990 to 20.6% in 2010 and represents the largest percentage increase. The African American presence in the City has increased from 8.25% in 1990 to 9.6% in 2010, and Hispanic groups have increased from 8.62% in 1990 to 14.3% in 2010.

In addition, our population is aging. The median age in Rockville of 40.2 years exceeds that of Montgomery County, the State and the region, and is almost 3 ½ years older than that the median age of the entire United States. The 0-19 age group, which represented nearly half of the population in 1960, now only accounts for one quarter. (Source: Mayor's State of the City address June 15, 2010.) This age shift presents further challenges to the City, such as meeting the needs of those who wish to age in place while remaining active in civic and other activities.

This growth and change in our population mix is good in that it broadens our cultural horizons. However, they also present a new challenge to Rockville: to figure out how best to serve the needs of these populations, some of which can be quite insular due to language or cultural issues, and bring them into more active roles in civic life.

County-Run School System

The Montgomery County Public School system (MCPS) is generally regarded as one of the better school systems in the country, with students scoring significantly higher on standardized tests (1637 out of 2400) than the national average (1500 out of 2400). This quality of education is a big draw to the area, especially since some of MCPS's best schools serve Rockville students.

Education and school capacity issues directly affect the quality of life in Rockville, but the Board of Education is a county entity and its priorities do not always coincide with Rockville's needs. Of particular concern is school overcrowding. Schools are expensive to build and enrollment rates difficult to project. The economic downturn (which has led many families to move their children from private to public schools), combined with the high degree of attractiveness of our schools, has led to overcrowding at many Rockville schools. This is an issue for many Rockville families, but unfortunately is one over which the City has little to no control. Compounding the situation is that school boundary lines do not coincide with the City lines, leading to situations where Rockville residents attend non-Rockville schools.

Recommendations

We want to maintain the Character of our City even as we face expanding population, increasing urbanization, and the economic uncertainties of Rockville's future. To do this we need to acknowledge the challenges presented to us and find creative ways to address them. We also need to know the features of our City that we value and how to maintain them. There is always room for improvement, and we hope that these recommendations can help our City continue to be an inviting and comfortable place for its businesses and its residents.

Maintain Our Residential Feel

If Rockville is to continue to be a place where people want to come to put down roots and raise families, we have to make a concerted effort to maintain the residential quality of our City. This does not mean we do not grow or don't encourage business or refuse to develop urban nodes, but it does mean we must work to maintain our suburban-style neighborhoods, our parks, our schools, and our historic districts. We should limit and control areas of density, making sure they taper down so they do not overwhelm and overshadow single family, townhouse and garden apartment neighborhoods. Within our neighborhoods we need to encourage the upkeep and modernization of homes, but discourage mansionization, infill, and the creation of pipestem lots. Finally, we need to encourage convenient neighborhood retail centers and small, locally-owned businesses because they go a long way towards making people feel their town is interesting and unique.

Encourage Business/Broaden Our Tax Base

Currently 53.4% of the City budget comes from property taxes; 24.6% from other governments, 14.4% from services, charges and fees; and 7.3% from other sources. Of the property taxes, 60% comes from residences. The City is "built out" for single-family homes and, short of a major annexation, no significant increase in the number of tax-paying single-family homes can be expected. The amount of revenue from other governments (Federal, State, and County) is not directly in the City's control. In some cases Rockville's fees for permits and such are already higher than similar fees for the County. This means that the greatest potential for increasing City revenue comes from broadening the property tax base by carefully encouraging and increasing the number of businesses in Rockville.

However, increasing business presence in Rockville does not mean sacrificing our neighborhoods, parks, open spaces, and all the other things that make our City a residential community. It means implementing mixed use development where appropriate, carefully redeveloping outdated or underused business properties, bringing in corporate and professional offices as well as expanding retail businesses, and encouraging the creation of small, locally-owned businesses.

Increasing business presence also means finding constructive ways to diffuse the tension between residents and developers. Some healthy tension should always exist, but the relationship between the two groups has grown rancorous and counterproductive. Ultimately, the needs of the developers and the needs of the residents are interdependent. Managed properly both sides can benefit. Managed poorly, the residents, the businesses, and the City suffer. We recommend that Rockville make it a

priority to open a productive dialog between residents and developers , creating a forum where both sides can share their concerns, proffer their ideas, and ultimately come to solutions that benefit us all.

The City is always going to walk a fine line between encouraging business growth, encouraging residential growth, and maintaining the small city feel its residents want and expect. Finding the right balance will mean a stronger financial base for the City, greater availability of goods and services for its residents, and the lessening of the tax burden on homeowners.

Be an Advocate for Education

The quality of education is a major draw to our area. All of our schools are at, above, or very near capacity. As the City does not have direct control over plans of Montgomery County Public Schools, we need to develop a good and close relationship with school leadership, lobbying them to build the schools needed to support Rockville's current population and projected growth.

Montgomery County has initiated a capacity abatement fee that requires developers on County land to contribute to a school construction fund if the projected school impact of their development pushes local school capacity over a 105% ceiling. Developments within the City, however, are exempt from this fee because the City cannot collect funds on behalf of a non-city entity like MCPS. We recommend that the City work with State and County legislators and find a way that Rockville can collect similar fees and apply that money directly to schools in or that affect our City.

Finally, Montgomery College, which is wonderful resource to have within our City, is another organization that is outside of our direct control. Growth within the campus along with changes in campus policies directly affect the quality of life in adjoining neighborhoods, the traffic on roads leading to and around campus, and the vitality of businesses that serve the faculty, staff and students. Again we recommend opening and maintaining an ongoing dialog with the College so that issues that impact life in Rockville can be identified early in their planning processes, which would allow solutions to be developed that meet the needs of all concerned parties.

Balance Heritage with Growth

Our historic districts are a source of pride, education, and tourism. While we understand that none of our historic districts is "under glass" and never subject to change, we should continue to preserve the aspects of our districts that best describe our historic character. It is hard to know what will tell our past and present story best to future generations. Our assessment is colored by our perspective, taste, and economic priorities. We should continually review structures and locales for designation and preservation to best tell the history of our City, good or bad. This review should be informed by our goals for the growth and vitality of our City, and our need for sustainability.

It is a privilege to build in the City of Rockville. We should continue to require that anyone who seeks to make a change to the built environment in the City first understand the priorities of the City, and to meet with all interested and impacted parties to the development.

Involve All Interests and Encourage Voting

With our inevitable growth in population, our mix of cultures, religions, ethnic heritages, languages, and lifestyles is going to be in a continual state of flux. To keep the City vital and maintain its livability and inclusiveness, it must be the express intention of the government to reach out to, and try to involve, as many different groups as possible. Our government, programs, recreation options, art, music, and festivals should reflect the cultures of all the people who live in Rockville. We need to make connections with some of the more insular segments of the population and encourage them to vote in local elections and otherwise become more involved in civic affairs. A city is only successful if it addresses the needs of all its citizens.

We recommend the creation of a Community Outreach Commission. The charge of this body would be to monitor the different segments of Rockville's population and to advise the Mayor and Council on ways the City can better involve and meet the needs of all its citizens.

Keep Our Green Spaces Green

As the City continues to grow and prosper, we must not lose sight of the need for open areas for relaxation and recreation. The City's parks, sports areas, and nature preserves are necessary for the physical and mental health of our residents, and contribute to the biological health of the Chesapeake Bay and our entire region. Currently the City boasts 65 parks that encompass approximately 905 acres. We must ensure the stability of the current green space and continue to create additional open spaces within the urban nodes, such as the public fountain, play area, and ice skating rink located in Rockville Town Square. We should maintain the mix of land developed for business or residential use and the undeveloped land used for structured parks or natural preserves. The health of our natural and man-made environment is critical to the vitality and viability of our City.

Support Transportation Alternatives

The envisioned Corridor-Cities Transitway and Bus Rapid Transit, which are still many years away, will help ease commuter traffic and transportation issues to some degree. To help reduce traffic congestion, encourage commerce, and make the City more accessible to its residents, shoppers, and office workers right now, Rockville must continue to explore and support alternative means of transportation.

Mixed use and transit-adjacent development bring residents and businesses closer together and encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic, as does the creation and redevelopment of neighborhood-accessible convenience plazas (local stores that meet everyday shopping needs). Expanding our walking trail and bike path networks, and providing secure bike parking areas, will allow easier non-vehicle access of nearby neighborhoods and stores. In our urban node areas we can expand the use of car-share programs like "Zip Car" to allow public transit-oriented residents access to cars when necessary.

Though the County's Ride-On bus system is helpful, it is limited, and does not reach back into our more purely residential areas. Perhaps a shuttle bus system could be developed that would help give these residents better access to public transportation. Finally, expanding police presence at our Metro Rail stations, especially during off-peak and evening hours, will help residents and visitors to our City feel more comfortable using the Red Line for non-commuting purposes.

Conclusion

The City of Rockville is a constantly growing and changing entity. From its earliest days as the seat of a new and growing Montgomery County to the City it is today, Rockville has been a strong, unique, and vital part of our State, our region, and our country's history. Throughout it all we have always maintained our identity as a government center, a business district, and most importantly as a desirable place to live.

As we go forward into an unknown but hopefully bright future, Rockville must never let up on preserving those attributes of the City that keep it special. Our parks, our businesses, our homes, our cultural arts, our open government, and the determination to be an inclusive and inviting community all feed into the reputation that Rockville is a great place to live, work, and play.

We value our hometown feel, and we must continue to keep growing and moving in the direction that upholds the characteristics of Rockville that have retained its longtime residents, while supplying an ever-growing population with the wants, needs and services necessary to remain an inviting and vibrant City.

Finally

Saying "Rockville's character is…" is like saying "I love you because…" There is no one thing that defines it. Rather, it is the unique combination of characteristics, strengths, problems, and the way we view them and address them as a community, that makes our City special, vital, and inviting to us all.

The Committee on Preserving Rockville's Character

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Thank you to all the friends and families of our members for their input and their patience!

Executive Summary

The City of Rockville is a constantly growing and changing entity. From its earliest days as the seat of a new and growing Montgomery County to the City it is today, Rockville has been a strong, unique, and vital part of our State, our region, and our country's history. Throughout it all we have always maintained our identity as a government center, a business district, and most importantly as a desirable place to live.

This report describes our Character as a City, the qualities that make Rockville "Rockville." We identify and categorize these qualities, examine some of the issues that challenge our identity, and finally provide a set of recommendations that will help preserve the elements that make Rockville special.

To understand what gives the City its flavor, to understand why people find Rockville a comfortable, desirable place to live and work, you need to look at different facets of the City. Our physical characteristics are part of what make us unique including a diverse collection of historical structures, strong neighborhoods that offer all kinds of housing options, an important shopping destination for the Rockville and County residents, a convenient location and green space throughout the City. Social components describe the kind of people we are; diverse, middle class, and involved in the community. Finally Rockville possesses a cultural richness that adds additional flavor to our character. This includes robust visual and arts programming, as well as City- sponsored events like Hometown Holidays that create a strong sense of community. Each of these characteristics is deeply interwoven with the others and contributes to creating the qualities that define Rockville's Character.

Rockville is certainly not perfect, nor does it exist in a perfect environment. The obstacles the City faces, both internal and external, are real. We have overcrowding issues in our schools which are beyond our control, real and perceived obstacles related to red-tape at City Hall, a constrained tax base, road congestion, and a rapidly growing and changing population.

Addressing these issues in creative and aggressive ways will not only help preserve Rockville's character, but it will also help to define it. Our recommendations include: a commitment to maintaining our residential feel, encouraging business to broaden our tax base, working with County and State governments to resolve education bottlenecks and transportation issues and most importantly coming up with new and creative ways to continue to the high level of civic engagement as our population grows and changes.

We value our hometown feel, and we must continue to keep growing and moving in the direction that upholds the characteristics of Rockville that have retained its longtime residents, while supplying an ever-growing population with the wants, needs and services necessary to remain an inviting and vibrant City.

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