

# ROCKVILLE PIKE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

ADOPTED PLAN

AUGUST 1, 2016

AN AMENDMENT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN OF THE CITY OF ROCKVILLE



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# Executive Summary

## OVERVIEW

**T**HE ROCKVILLE PIKE NEIGHBORHOOD Plan is an update of a portion of the City's 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) and replaces the 1989 *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Corridor Plan*. It establishes and communicates a vision for how Rockville's portion of the Rockville Pike corridor and adjoining areas can be transformed from an architecturally non-distinctive suburban retail strip into an attractive and vibrant neighborhood for shopping, living, and working. It strives to conform to the principles of Smart Growth and makes the best use of decades of significant public investment in transportation infrastructure along the corridor.

The CMP is an active document. Portions of it are constantly under review and being updated. Amendments may be made to this *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* in the future to

comply with the goals and objectives of the overall CMP.

An adopted updated plan provides direction, policies and strategies so that the City can coordinate and collaborate with public and private organizations to achieve the vision. This plan brings forward many of the concepts presented in the 1989 plan, but it also better addresses today's increasingly complex transportation and land use issues. These issues are discussed briefly below and expounded more fully in later chapters.

Regional projections indicate that there will be approximately 11,800 residents and 13,900 jobs in the Plan Area by 2040,<sup>1</sup> compared with about 3,530 residents and 9,050 jobs in 2015. Projected increases would account for about 40% of Rockville's population

<sup>1</sup> City of Rockville, Department of Community Planning and Development Services, as part of Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Round 9.0 projections, 2015.

growth during that timeframe, and approximately one-third of the employment growth. These projections signal the need for a vision and a comprehensive plan for the corridor.

The plan's focus is the creation of a vibrant and comfortable mixed-use environment, more dense than existing suburban development, supported by high-quality public amenities and facilities, and complemented by a transportation network that will better support pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and transit riders. It takes advantage of Rockville's position as Montgomery County's seat of government and its role as a population and jobs center within the county and the region, but retains a distinctive identity for Rockville. The vision statement in the 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan states that "Rockville will continue to be a city that emphasizes the characteristics of a small town community, offers an excellent quality of life, provides a responsive government serving its citizens, and has a distinct positive identity tied to its history." Implementation of the plan should broaden the Pike's appeal from an auto-oriented retail strip to a corridor that offers a wider range of transportation choices and an improved land use framework, and enables the area to remain competitive in a changing retail industry.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The plan is the product of an intensive community planning initiative that has incorporated input from citizens, private and public sector leaders, government agencies, consultants, City staff, and other stakeholders. Extensive outreach and publicity efforts have been made throughout the planning process to maximize public knowledge about, and participation in, development of the plan.

Upon direction from the Mayor and Council in 2006, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was advertised for consulting services to assist with an update of the 1989 Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan. In 2007, a team of consultants, led by ACP Visioning + Planning, was selected to develop a plan and an associated form-based code. Numerous public meetings, stakeholder interviews and workshops were held, as well as a community design charrette, to provide input to the plan. The consultant team released its draft document, which contained both a plan and a recommended code, in December 2010.

The Planning Commission process began in January 2011. The Commission held public hearings on the consultants' draft plan in March 2011 and accepted written testimony from January through September 2011. The Commission spent more than a year in work sessions, revising the consultants' plan based on written and oral testimony. After the Commission released its first revised draft in March 2013, a second round of public hearings was held and additional written testimony was received, followed by more work sessions, resulting in a June 2014 draft.

That draft was made available to the public and to the Mayor and Council for comments. The Mayor and Council held five public hearings and several work sessions between September 2014 and March 2015. The Mayor and Council sent a list of suggested edits to the Planning Commission on April 1, 2015. The Planning Commission considered the Mayor and Council's suggestions and continued work

on the draft, resulting in the Planning Commission's Plan in March 2016.

The Mayor and Council held two public hearings on the Planning Commission's March 2016 plan, accepted written testimony, held work sessions, made revisions, and adopted the *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* on August 1, 2016.

## THE PLAN AREA

The Plan Area contains approximately 382 acres, on both sides of and including a 1.98-mile portion of Rockville Pike (Maryland State Route 355). It is bounded on the north by Richard Montgomery Drive and on the south by the City's corporate limits, near Bou Avenue. Boundaries on the western side include Wootton Parkway, the Woodmont Country Club and East Jefferson Street. The eastern boundary is the Metrorail right-of-way.

This plan recommends that a study of land use, transportation and other key issues and challenges be completed for the MD 355 corridor and adjoining areas to the north of the City, within the context of the update to other portions of the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP).

## EXISTING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* addresses key issues and challenges identified by both the public and technical analysis during the planning process.

### TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

Rockville Pike serves both as a regional "highway" and a local road serving local businesses and residents. This dual function creates multiple conflicts, especially in the outer (right) lanes. The Pike is highly congested at times, with some intersections already exceeding City standards for certain periods of the week. Traffic volume will likely increase as growth continues along the MD 355 corridor and as the area south of Rockville redevelops at high densities.

Pedestrian and bicycle conditions are poor, and often feel unsafe. Sidewalks are narrow, located uncomfortably close to fast-moving traffic, and frequently separated from businesses by expansive parking lots. There are limited opportunities to safely cross the Pike due to long distances between signalized intersections and inadequate pedestrian signal timing. Strip shopping centers are designed for cars and are not pedestrian-friendly. Bicycle infrastructure is inadequate and there is no protected bicycle route along or near the Pike. Furthermore, the rail line and the Pike itself limit travel options, especially east-west connectivity. Though Metro's Red Line runs parallel to and near Rockville Pike (there is one stop in the planning area and another just to the north), pedestrian and bicycle access to both stops is difficult, due to poor sidewalks and challenging road crossings.

## LAND USE

The predominant land use pattern in the Pike corridor is in the form of individual parcels with single-story buildings occupied by a single use, set far back from the street and surrounded by surface parking lots. This pattern uses a vast amount of land, forces multiple vehicle trips between properties, and contributes to the large total number of car trips. Recent development projects have included multi-story residential buildings.

The Pike remains an important retail destination located in a strong regional economic market with significant long-term growth potential. Enhancing the appearance and function of the Pike corridor is important, especially since new competition will be emerging from large-scale growth and development nearby, such as in the White Flint area.

There are no parks or public open spaces for recreation, social gathering, or outdoor enjoyment within the Plan Area, but facilities exist nearby.

Traffic congestion and lack of available school and sewer capacity may delay certain types of redevelopment for portions of the Pike corridor unless necessary infrastructure, as regulated by the City's adequate public facilities standards, is both funded and provided, or other accommodation is found in those instances.

## CORRIDOR PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The *Rockville Pike* public process led to the identification of a set of corridor planning principles that have guided the formulation of this plan. They are:

### **A. LIVABLE, DESIRABLE ENVIRONMENT ENHANCED BY THOUGHTFUL URBAN DESIGN**

1. Attractive and inviting community design and development
2. Mixed uses and mixed-income new neighborhoods
3. Inviting conditions for walking and biking
4. Appealing parks and public open spaces for community gathering and activity
5. Environmentally friendly and sustainable
6. An urbanizing corridor, distinct from Rockville's suburban development
7. Development that is supported by commensurate growth of infrastructure and services

### **B. MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION**

1. Access and movement choices for all travel modes that provide connections within the corridor and with surrounding areas
2. Safe and accessible pedestrian and biking infrastructure and experience

3. Efficient and reliable local and regional public transportation options
4. Smooth and safe vehicular flow
5. Easy-to-navigate environment

### C. ECONOMIC VIABILITY

1. Retention and attraction of local and national retail
2. City support for successful development
3. Financeable infrastructure and fiscally responsible implementation

## PLAN POLICIES FOR TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

### TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

The transportation policies seek to support both the transportation and land use visions of the plan to make the corridor more sustainable and more accessible for multiple modes of travel.

#### 1. Redesign and Reconstruct Rockville Pike as a Multi-Way Boulevard.

The core recommendation of this plan is to redesign and reconstruct Rockville Pike as a multi-way boulevard. A multi-way boulevard attempts to balance the competing needs of roadway capacity, local access, transit, street parking, bicycle accommodation, and pedestrian comfort. It consists of through lanes for faster-moving traffic and transit; access lanes for slow-moving local traffic, bicycles and on-street parking; wide sidewalks and green medians. The boulevard concept is crucial to meeting the transportation, place-making, and economic goals of the plan and addresses the dual (local and regional) nature of the Pike.

The boulevard design will:

- Separate local and regional trips.
- Create the conditions for a shift in the transportation modal split along the Pike, from a high degree of reliance on the private automobile to more diverse transportation choices.
- Make the Pike safer for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.
- Integrate the Twinbrook Metro Station into the corridor and make public transit a more attractive option.
- Allow for the possibility of additional high-capacity transit service along the Pike.
- Bring transit, walking, and bicycle users closer to the land uses of the Pike, protected from the fast-moving traffic on the main lanes.
- Reinforce the role of the corridor as a significant retail center in the region.

- Facilitate the transformation of the corridor into an attractive place by creating a streetscape plan and moving utilities underground.
- 2. **Expand the street network** to increase connectivity and movement choice, diffuse traffic congestion, create more frequent and convenient crossing opportunities for pedestrians, and create smaller, more pedestrian-friendly blocks.
- 3. **Make all roadway projects adhere to the City's Complete Streets Policy** to safely accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and automobile drivers.
- 4. **Optimize access to and use of public transit**, including Metrorail, local buses, and, potentially, a new rapid transit service along Rockville Pike.

## LAND USE POLICIES

*Rockville Pike* integrates the transportation policies with a set of land use policies to guide the transformation of the corridor from an architecturally nondescript automobile-dominated strip to an attractive, walkable and bikeable place. The proposed land use policies will:

1. **Seek to ensure a comfortable and functional relationship between public infrastructure and the private built environment.** The plan, and the associated development regulations, addresses the relationship between building façades and public infrastructure, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, the public spaces formed by the disposition of buildings, and the scale and types of streets and blocks.
2. **Require buildings to be adjacent to sidewalks.** In most locations, buildings will be constructed adjacent to continuous sidewalks to frame the public realm, structure the environment for pedestrians, and position pedestrians where land uses are located. The distance between building faces across the Pike will be reduced from that which was endorsed in the 1989 Pike plan.
3. **Regulate building height by location.** Maximum building heights serve walkability and economic development objectives by permitting sufficient mixed use density to create vitality while maintaining a comfortable environment. Different height standards are appropriate for different parts of the Plan Area and depend on the specific characteristics of their locations.
4. **Create smaller blocks.** Reducing the size of existing blocks as part of the redevelopment process creates a more finely-developed street network, increases connectivity and movement choices for all travel modes, and provides increased street frontage for land uses.
5. **Provide wide and pleasant sidewalks.** Sidewalks are located immediately next to land uses to encourage inter-site movement (except, perhaps, in the middle and northern parts of the east side of the Pike where sites are very narrow and the full boulevard concept will be difficult to achieve). Sidewalks are wide and continuous, and feature amenities such as street trees, benches, bike racks, and places for outdoor restaurant seating.

6. **Enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment.** This plan places emphasis on the treatment of building frontages at strategic intersections to create enlarged pedestrian environments with art, fountains, and other place-making features. It encourages opportunities for safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings of the Pike and the CSX/Metro tracks.
7. **Ensure a mix of uses** to encourage activity in the daytime and evening, reduce dependency on automobiles, provide a balance of residences and employment opportunities, and create a full-service transit-oriented neighborhood around the Twinbrook Metro Station.
8. **Ensure that new neighborhoods will accommodate residents of all incomes.** Rockville's existing housing programs, while very beneficial, are not sufficient to accommodate the full range of households that the Plan Area should include.
9. **Ensure adequacy of public facilities,** including transportation, school capacity, water infrastructure, sewer infrastructure, parks, and access to police and fire protection, as critical to maintaining Rockville's excellent quality of life and a necessary foundation for achieving Smart Growth.
10. **Encourage enduring architecture that has visual interest.** The plan does not mandate particular architectural styles, but rather encourages massing and building forms that are visually interesting and contribute to energy on the street.
11. **Provide parks.** There are no parks in the Plan Area now. The need exists and this need will grow as the number of people living and working in the Plan Area increases.
12. **Require the creation of public use space through redevelopment.** Growth and redevelopment can and should result in better public use space, including community centers and other indoor facilities, for existing and new residents.
13. **Promote development that improves environmental conditions.** Currently, there are very few mature trees, very little pervious surface area, inadequate on-site stormwater management, no parks, and scarce open space. The redevelopment that this plan calls for is subject to more stringent afforestation, stormwater, open space, and building code requirements than those in place decades ago when the Pike was developed. Redevelopment along the Pike, done well, can create a healthier and more environmentally robust community.
14. **Strategically locate and right-size parking.** This plan locates most parking in structures behind or under buildings, thereby minimizing inactive zones and reducing the visually unappealing effect of large surface lots in front of buildings. The plan also encourages less parking over time, as the area becomes more pedestrian-friendly.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

This plan incorporates numerous concepts that were part of the 1989 *Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan*. These concepts include creating service roads parallel to the Pike, expanding the street network, establishing a build-to-line along Rockville Pike, encouraging a mix of uses, and making the Pike more attractive. Nonetheless, there are many reasons why an update to the 1989 plan is needed:

- Problems identified in the 1989 plan remain – mobility, safety, appearance, function and the experience of being on the Pike continue to be inadequate.
- Development interest is surging near the Twinbrook Metro Station. This plan focuses on improving walkability and access to transit, while taking advantage of the millions of dollars that have been invested in infrastructure in this area.
- The current roadway system is close to saturation at peak periods. Traffic congestion will continue to get worse, given the development that is planned for north and south of Rockville, whether or not any new development occurs within Rockville. There is a need for a more efficient Pike design, expanded road network, improved transit, and much better conditions for walking and biking to provide people with options for getting around.
- Rockville needs to define its place in the context of competition that is coming from beyond its borders. The Pike neighborhood is important to the City's fiscal health and is economically significant to Rockville and the region. Overall, the Pike is prosperous today, but Rockville must consider how it can continue to compete successfully over the next 20 to 30 years.
- Developing a new plan for the neighborhood is an essential component of the process to manage change within the city, address pressures from development north and south of Rockville, manage the impacts of external development on Rockville's infrastructure, protect established neighborhoods from the pressures of development, and create a unique identity, distinguishable from other corridors.
- The Pike corridor is one of a limited number of locations in Rockville where substantial housing can be created near transit, thereby reducing sprawl in other places.
- Much of the built environment along the Pike is aging, unappealing, and designed primarily to accommodate automobile drivers. Increased congestion can be slowed by providing multiple transportation options.
- Montgomery County's proposal for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system that would likely include a route along MD 355 has a potentially enormous impact on this area, as do the adopted White Flint Sector Plan (2010) and the upcoming White Flint II Plan for the area to Rockville's immediate south. Given these significant impacts, which were not part of the reality of the Pike when

the 1989 plan was adopted, Rockville needs an updated adopted vision for its portion of the corridor.

- The plan, and reconstruction of the roadway, present an opportunity to advocate and develop strategies for undergrounding utilities along the Pike, a yet unrealized goal, even though it was included in the 1989 Pike Plan.

There is a need for a clear vision for the neighborhood for the coming decades. The alternative is no vision for a better functioning, more attractive, vibrant corridor; no opportunity to create parks; and more traffic congestion produced by development outside of Rockville that is beyond Rockville's control.

Implementing this plan will require strong cooperation among the City, Montgomery County, the State of Maryland, the private sector, and other organizations. It will also require a careful evaluation of appropriate funding mechanisms and options, with the understanding that Rockville must work proactively and collaboratively with other entities to fund and build infrastructure. The City will need to revise development regulations that present impediments to full implementation of the plan vision and advocate for components of the plan that are outside of its control.

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The action steps are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 and are summarized below:

### General Policy Elements

1. Maintain strong regional partnerships
2. Ensure adequate infrastructure and community facilities
3. Advocate for components of the plan that are outside of Rockville's direct control
4. Focus on place-making near the Twinbrook Metro Station early in the life of the plan
5. Develop cost estimates and funding strategies
6. Monitor progress and stay relevant to changing conditions

### Implement the Transportation Policies

1. Re-design and reconstruct Rockville Pike as a multi-way boulevard
2. Expand the street network
3. Optimize access to and use of transit
4. Expand Transportation Demand Management (TDM) activities
5. Strive to refine methodologies for measuring transportation mode share and addressing congestion management

### Implement the Land Use Policies

1. Adopt zoning amendments to reflect plan policies
2. Revise development regulations and standards
3. Make the Pike an inviting, walkable place
4. Acquire parkland
5. Allocate resources for historic preservation

These action steps bring to light the complexity of implementing the plan for the corridor. Implementing this plan in full will require a high level of collaboration between the City, other jurisdictions, and the private sector over decades. Certain components will also require appropriate funding mechanisms and commitments. Finally, implementation will require seizing opportunities, overcoming obstacles, and thoughtful timing.

## CONCLUSION

The Rockville Pike neighborhood can be more than a shopping location. It can be a great boulevard that serves both local and regional needs and wants, and can enhance its already central role in the economy of Rockville and Montgomery County. This plan seeks to achieve this vision.

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### OVERVIEW

**T**HE ROCKVILLE PIKE NEIGHBORHOOD Plan lays out a vision for how Rockville's portion of the Rockville Pike corridor can transform, over time, from a utilitarian retail strip with little aesthetic appeal, to a multi-use, economically vibrant and attractive area of pride for Rockville. The plan is an update to the *Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan*, which was approved and adopted into the City's Comprehensive Master Plan in 1989.

Some of the ideas that were articulated in the 1989 plan are advanced in this plan. For instance, the multi-way boulevard design recommended for the Pike formalizes a concept that has been developing incrementally for decades and better meets the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. The plan even anticipates the possibility of additional high capacity transit service along the Pike and increased use of ride-sharing and autonomous vehicles. Similarly, expansion of the street

network is a recommendation of both plans, but this new plan provides a more finely developed street network.

*Rockville Pike* was launched in 2007, at about the same time that the City was initiating revisions to its zoning ordinance. Both efforts included extensive public participation. As a result, the land use recommendations in the plan reflect many of the same broad goals that are contained in the 2009 zoning ordinance for the City's mixed-use zones and establishes them even more firmly in the City's Master Plan.

Development pressures near the Twinbrook Metro Station led to the decision to update the 1989 plan. The City had a desire to be more intentional and proactive in prescribing some of the urban design principles of the successful Town Square project. In addition, the City saw the need to coordinate the siting and design of private develop-

*The Plan is based on a set of corridor planning principles that captures the community's vision for Rockville Pike.*

The plan offers new strategies for mobility and safety improvements, place-making, and growth management along the corridor.

ment projects and public infrastructure, capitalizing on the public investment in Metrorail and the Twinbrook Station.

Whereas the 1989 plan focused on more parking near Metro, this plan focuses on adding residential uses and one or more parks near Metro to create neighborhoods. It also emphasizes improving walkability and access to transit that is not solely reliant on automobiles. The plan does not significantly change the overall maximum development potential from regulatory levels established under the 2009 zoning ordinance, but it does provide for a greater variety of heights.

The plan prescribes continuity of building frontage lines, architectural features that provide visual interest, and design criteria for a better pedestrian environment. Improving pedestrian conditions, an efficient land use pattern that can adjust to prevailing market conditions, the provision of public spaces, and compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods are goals of the existing mixed use zones as well as for this plan for the Rockville Pike corridor. This plan specifies the pathways to meeting these goals.

In addition to building on the best ideas of past efforts, *Rockville Pike* offers new strategies for mobility and safety improvements, place-making, and growth management along the corridor. It addresses the form that new development will take. It considers the interaction between private development and public spaces in order to activate street life on the Pike, near the Metro station, and along key commercial corridors – yet maintains a residential environment near existing neighborhoods. The plan provides the vision to create new urban neighborhoods that become attractive places for living, working, and shopping along the Rockville Pike corridor. It strives to conform to the principles of Smart Growth and makes the best use of decades of significant public investment in transportation infrastructure along the corridor.

This plan was produced by the Rockville Planning Commission, working from an initial draft provided by a team of consultants. It included a sequence of community meetings and workshops that began in December 2007, two series of public hearings and public comment periods, in 2011 and in 2013, and multiple work sessions held after each set of hearings. The Commission granted the public and the Mayor and Council a review and comment period in 2014-2015. The final version of this document was edited and approved by the Mayor and Council in 2016.

The plan incorporates input from citizens, property owners, private and public sector leaders, government agencies, City staff, consultants, and other stakeholders. The input gathered through the *Rockville Pike* public involvement and planning process resulted in a set of corridor planning principles that captures the community's vision for the corridor. The corridor planning principles are provided in Chapter 3.

In addition to incorporating extensive public input, *Rockville Pike* is based on sound technical analysis. The consultant team conducted research and analysis regarding existing transportation, land use, economic, and regulatory conditions, supplemented by staff research and analysis. The research findings, outlined in Chapter 2, and described further in the supplemental research documents, were integrated into the decision-making processes.

## WHY A PLAN, AND WHY NOW?

The *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* is a timely effort, not simply because the previous plan is more than 25 years old. Regional projections show that there will be approximately 11,800 residents and 13,900 jobs in the Plan Area by 2040, compared with about 3,530 residents and 9,050 jobs in 2015. Projected increases would account for about 40% of Rockville's population growth between 2015 and 2040, and approximately one third of the employment growth.<sup>1</sup> Several other factors have led Rockville citizens to express their desire for change and make a new plan for the Rockville Pike corridor compelling.

1. **Problems identified in the 1989 Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan remain.** Mobility and safety issues, the appearance, function, and experience of being on the Pike, and growth management in the corridor continue to be concerns. This plan provides better accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists, formalizes the service drives of the 1989 plan into real streets, anticipates and plans for the possibility of a new form of rapid transit along the Pike, adds more street network, and provides for attractive public spaces, including parks – all of which will contribute to making this part of Rockville great.

2. **Development interest is surging near the Twinbrook Metrorail Station.**

The Twinbrook Metrorail Station opened in December 1984 and had been in operation for fewer than five years when the 1989 Rockville Pike plan was adopted. The number of daily passenger boardings at the station almost doubled from 2,354 in 1985 to 4,516 in 1989. The number of daily boardings fluctuated in the 1990s and 2000s, and was reported at 4,443 in 2015, slightly less than the 1989 number.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas the 1989 plan focused, in part, on the need for more parking near the metro station, this plan focuses on taking advantage of the millions of dollars that have been invested in infrastructure making the emerging mixed-use area a complete community with open space, inviting sidewalks, and other attractive amenities.



**Figure 1.1:** Traffic congestion on Rockville Pike.  
Source: BeyondDC

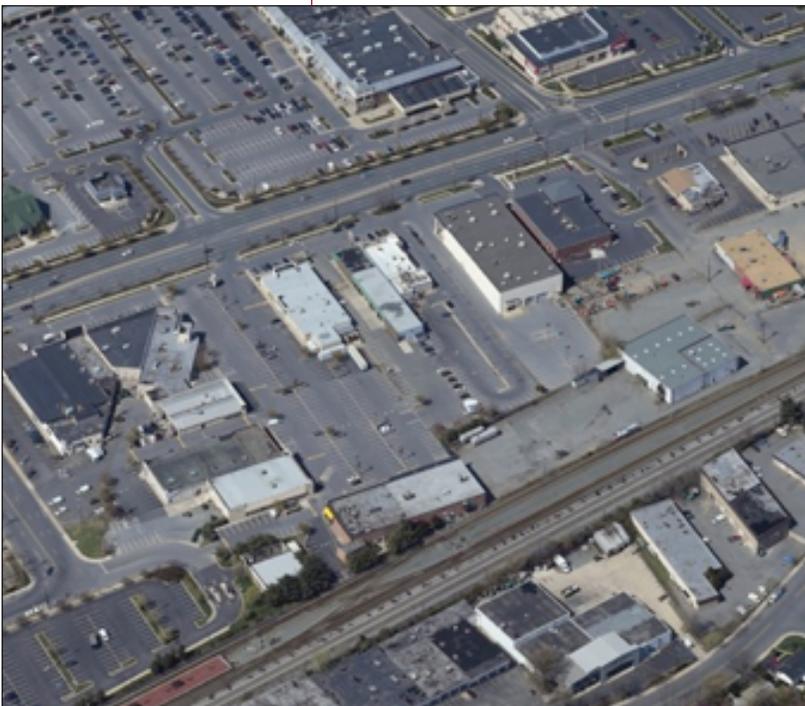
*At present, there are few sidewalks, amenities, public places, or green spaces to define the public realm and encourage pedestrian activity.*

<sup>1</sup> City of Rockville, Department of Community Planning and Development Services, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Round 9.0 forecasts.

<sup>2</sup> Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Average Weekday Passenger Boardings by Station. [https://www.wmata.com/pdfs/planning/2015\\_historical\\_rail\\_ridership.pdf](https://www.wmata.com/pdfs/planning/2015_historical_rail_ridership.pdf)

The Rockville  
Pike Plan  
Area is  
approximately  
two miles long.

3. **Traffic congestion will get worse as the current roadway system is close to saturation at peak periods.** Congestion will only increase as growth continues along MD 355 and as major nearby developments, including the potential for more than 17 million square feet in the White Flint area to the south, come on line.<sup>3</sup> The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' regional travel demand model indicates that projected growth by 2030, with or without any additional development within Rockville, will exhaust the capacity of the corridor beyond levels of service that are acceptable today. A new Pike design, an expanded road network, and improved transit, including the possibility of a new surface transit line along the Pike, will all help to facilitate other travel modes as well as improve traffic flow.
4. **Traffic congestion and lack of available school capacity, as regulated by the City's APFO,<sup>4</sup> may delay certain types of redevelopment in portions of the**



*Figure 1.2: The Pike at Congressional Plaza – a dramatic aerial snapshot of the physical character and appearance of the corridor. Source: Pictometry*

**Pike corridor.** Several intersections within the corridor are approaching inadequate capacity to accommodate traffic demand, as measured by the City's current Critical Lane Volume (CLV) standard of the transportation component of the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). Also, under current development review regulations, large developments, particularly those that include residential units that may generate children, may not be able to be approved for portions of the corridor if they exceed the APFO standard in the future, until additional investments in facilities are made. These issues should be addressed in ways that allow redevelopment to happen at a pace that the community supports and in conjunction with the necessary investments in public infrastructure and services.

5. **The Rockville Pike corridor is a prime location for new housing.** The Rockville Pike corridor provides one of the few locations available in Rockville where a substantial number of new residences can emerge, close to transit and amenities, through re-development. Adding density, particularly to the most transit-oriented portion of the Plan Area, will help to reduce sprawl and protect established neighborhoods from development pressures. It will increase the number of Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) and offer more affordable housing options. New development will also add to the City's tax base and contribute to providing high-level services to all Rockville residents.

<sup>3</sup> This reflects the build-out maximum allowed by Montgomery County's White Flint Sector Plan. Less than 100% of this total potential amount of residential and commercial development is likely to occur during the lifespan of that plan.

<sup>4</sup> Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance.

6. **Rockville needs to define its place in the context of competition that is coming from beyond its borders.** Rockville Pike remains an important retail destination located in a strong regional economic market with significant long-term growth potential. Despite recent nationwide economic fluctuations, high household incomes in the vicinity of the Pike point to continued long-term retail vitality; though this plan recognizes that the expansion of Web-based retail and continued changing retail formats will challenge the Pike to remain nimble and competitive.

The Rockville community appreciates the economic significance of the Pike and its importance to the City's fiscal health, and wants to ensure that it continues to fulfill its potential. Nearby areas just outside of Rockville are re-shaping their regulatory and infrastructure environments in order to be more predictable and financeable. Rockville must also do so, in order to remain thriving, but in a manner consistent with its values.

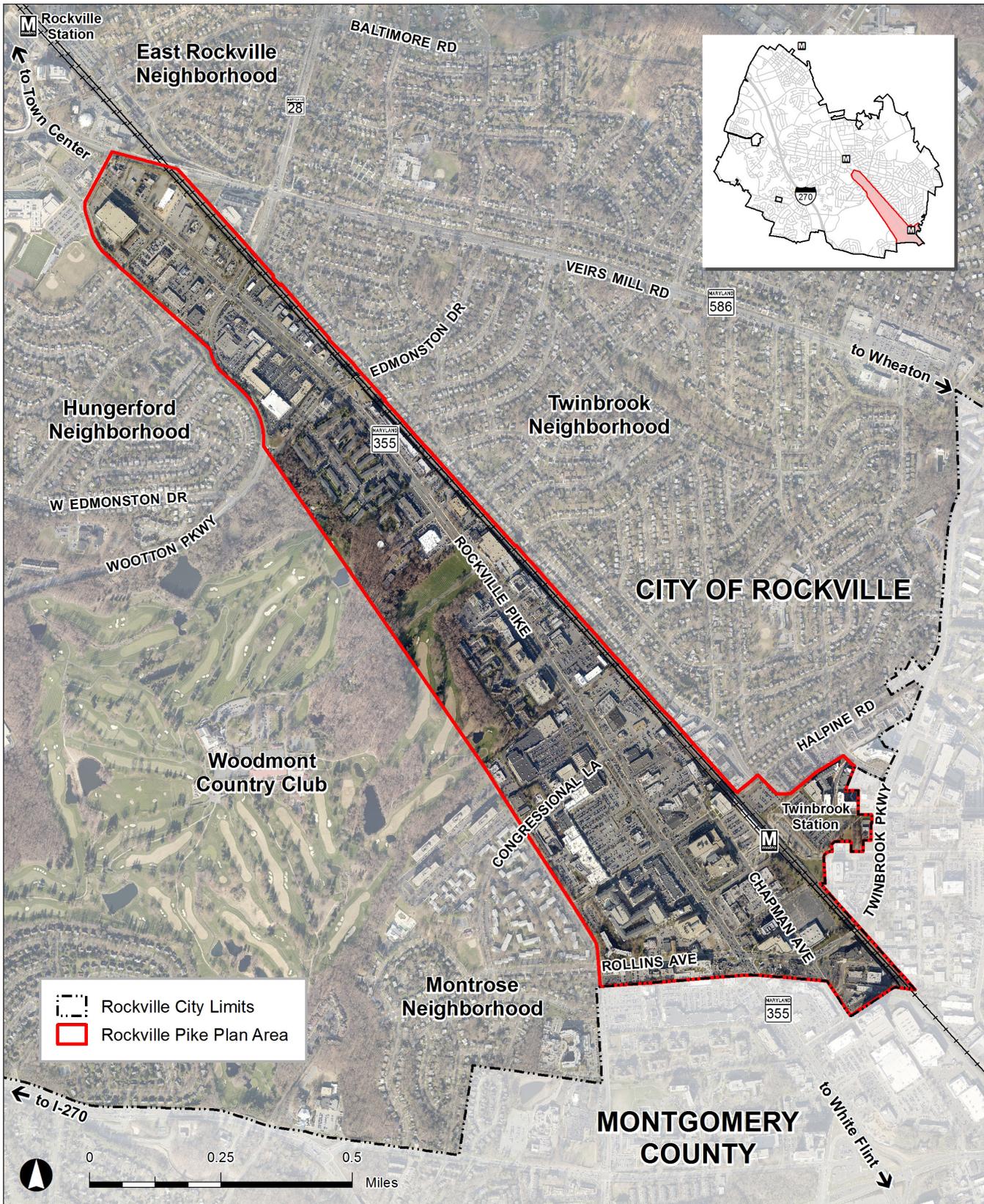
7. **Developing a new plan for the Pike is an essential component of the process to manage change within the City as well as address pressures from development north and south of Rockville.** *Rockville Pike* offers direction on how the Pike can transform itself in a manner that reflects the community's vision of a great place, distinguishable from other corridors. At the same time, the plan is a tool for managing the impacts that external development, north and south of the Rockville's borders, will have on the City's infrastructure.

The vast majority of development in Rockville in the future will be redevelopment and infill. Much of the growth will be concentrated along the Pike corridor. Concentrating density near transit will help to protect established neighborhoods from development pressures and protect the environment from the effects of sprawl.

8. **The appearance of the Pike is architecturally nondescript and the Plan Area lacks green space,** particularly when compared to emerging regional shopping magnets. According to public comment at the outset of the planning effort, much of the built environment along the Pike is aging, unappealing and designed primarily to accommodate cars. Above-ground utilities are unsightly. There are few attractive sidewalks, amenities, public places, or green spaces to define the public realm and encourage pedestrian activity. There are no parks at all within the Plan Area. Public input has indicated a strong desire to seize the opportunity of this new plan to transform the corridor into an appealing and interesting place that adds to the community's character.
9. **The plan must coordinate with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and White Flint boulevard plans.** Since this planning effort began in 2007, Montgomery County has adopted the White Flint Sector Plan and is embarking on the White Flint 2 Sector Plan. A County-wide Bus Rapid Transit system, that would likely include a route along MD 355, has been proposed. The City needs an adopted vision for its portion of Rockville Pike in order to coordinate and participate in future actions to design and fund the boulevard and transit system.

The combination of all of the above factors makes the *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* a timely and vital undertaking.

*There are differences between the south, middle and north segments of the Pike, and between the east and west sides.*



**Figure 1.3:** The Plan Area Boundary – Rockville Pike is surrounded by neighborhoods, but access between the Pike and the neighborhoods is limited by two major physical barriers: the Metrorail right-of-way and Woodmont Country Club

## THE PLAN AREA

The Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan Area includes the portion of Rockville Pike (MD 355) that is bounded on the north by Richard Montgomery Drive and on the south by the City's southern border, just north of Bou Avenue. It is 1.98 miles long and is shown in Figure 1.3.

To the north, the western boundary lies at the rear of the properties facing Rockville Pike; in the middle, it intersects the Woodmont Country Club property; to the south, it follows the western edge of Jefferson Street (but does not include land uses west of Jefferson Street). The eastern boundary of the Plan Area is along the eastern edge of the Metrorail right-of-way but also includes a portion of the Twinbrook Station Planned Development. The Plan area contains approximately 382 acres (including rights-of-way).

Rockville's Town Center, including its mixed-use Town Square development, is located to the northwest, outside of the Plan Area. Montgomery County's rapidly redeveloping White Flint area is to the southeast. The Plan Area is bordered by established neighborhoods to the east and the west.

This plan recognizes that the MD 355 corridor continues north of the Pike Plan Area and includes areas that could be annexed into the City. An important component of the updated Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) should be to study the full extent of the corridor and its adjoining neighborhoods, especially in the context of future rapid transit and to provide land use guidance.

### ROCKVILLE PIKE PLAN AREAS

An examination of conditions along the Rockville Pike corridor indicates that there are differences between the south, middle, and north segments, and also between the east and west sides of the Pike (see Figure 1.4). To facilitate discussion of these distinct areas, they are classified here as the South Pike, Middle Pike-West Side, North Pike-West Side, and Middle/North Pike-East Side. The different characteristics of these segments have an impact on how the plan addresses transportation and land use policies.

#### *The South Pike*

This section of the Plan Area is located south of Woodmont Country Club to the southern City limits. It is bordered by East Jefferson Street to the west and the Metrorail right-of-way to the east, but also includes the portion of the Twinbrook Station Planned Development that surrounds the Twinbrook Metrorail Station east of the tracks (see Figure 1.5).

The South Pike has the greatest potential to receive the bulk of the population growth within the corridor, as well as a significant portion of the City's population growth, over the next few decades. This area also has the most potential to transform from a commercial suburban development pattern into an urban center, complementing Rockville Town Square to the north. Much of the growth and

*The South Pike segment will likely receive the bulk of the population growth within the corridor.*

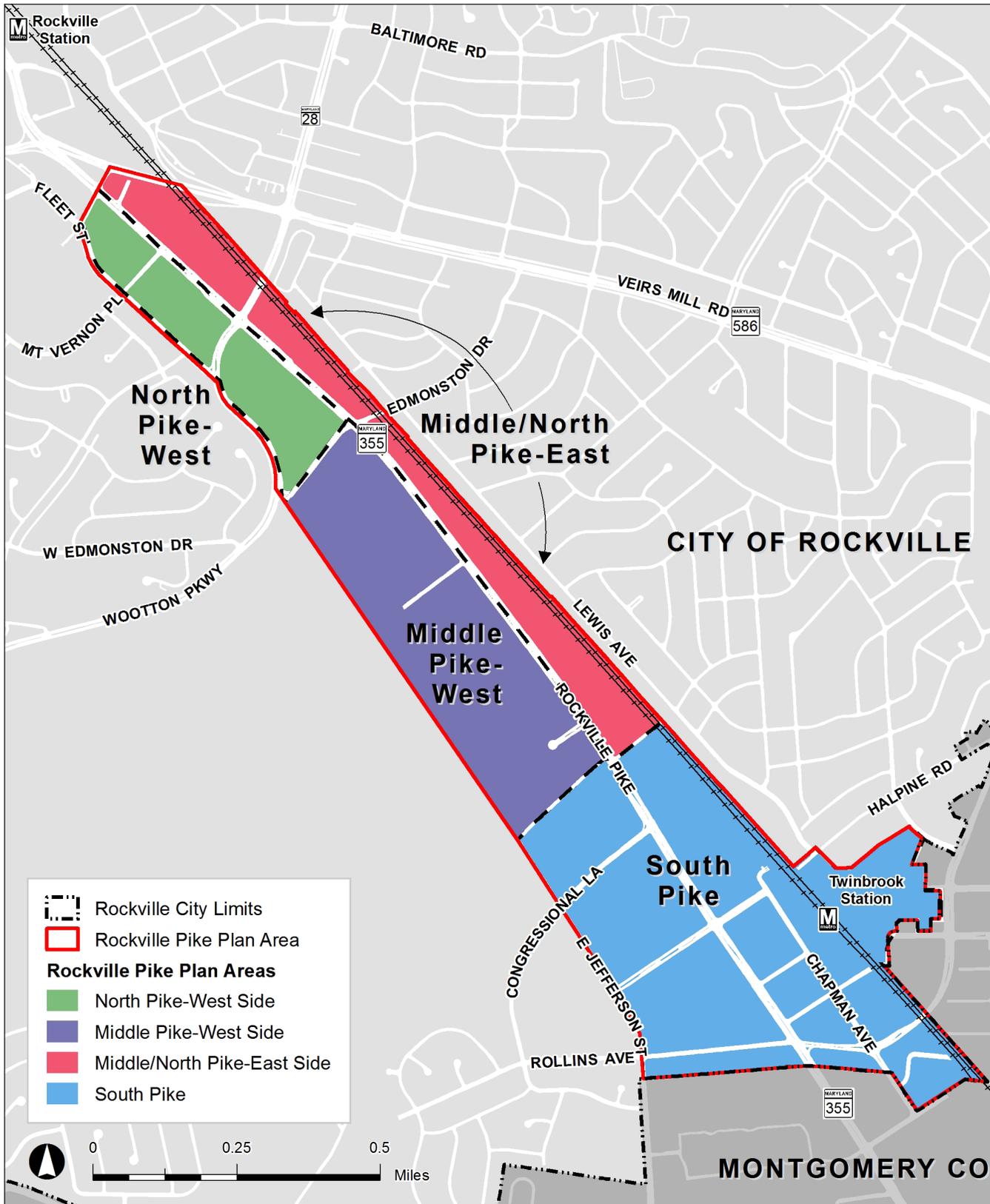


Figure 1.4: Pike Plan Area Regions

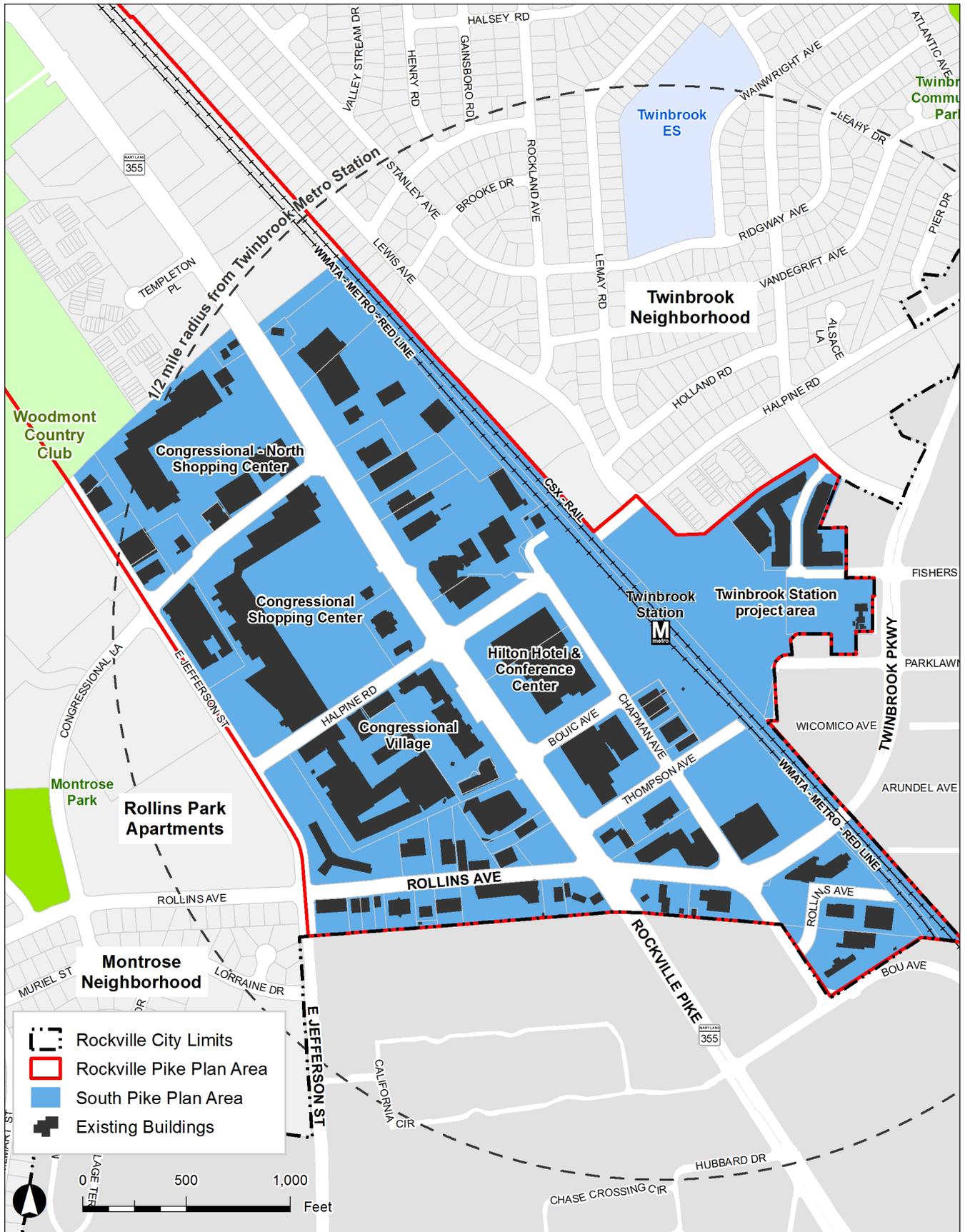


Figure 1.5: South Pike

*The different characteristics of the corridor have an impact on how the plan addresses transportation and land use.*

increased density in the South Pike is expected to be east of Rockville Pike for the near future. The following conditions and opportunities explain why growth is projected to be concentrated in the South Pike:

- Much of Montgomery County’s development activity and interest is concentrated near Metrorail stations along the Red Line. A current focus is on the area surrounding the White Flint Metro Station and moving northward.
- The South Pike has ready pedestrian access to a Metrorail station. Most of this area is within one-half mile walking distance of the Twinbrook Station.
- The South Pike has a better developed street network than other parts of the corridor, but large blocks on the west side present an opportunity for further expansion of the network.
- The South Pike is the dominant retail focus of the corridor, featuring large, national retail tenants that generate the highest rents in the corridor and serve as anchors in making Rockville Pike a regional retail destination.
- Although retail is the primary market driver, multifamily residential use has been rapidly emerging in the South Pike and in areas south of Rockville such as White Flint. The South Pike already features multifamily residential developments such as Congressional Village and higher density, mixed-use development around the Twinbrook Metro Station. The Twinbrook Station project, resulting from a joint development agreement between a developer and Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA, or “Metro”) has been described as a model of transit-oriented development.
- Areas of the South Pike west of Rockville Pike transition toward a mixture of housing types: mid-rise apartments that abut Woodmont Country Club, garden apartments, townhouses, and single-family homes in the Montrose neighborhood, which provide a range of prices and rents, owner-renter options, and unit sizes.

### **The Middle Pike - West Side**

This middle portion of the corridor, west of the Pike, extending from the lot just south of Templeton Place northward to Edmonston Drive, is adjacent to Woodmont Country Club and includes the far eastern portion of the Club as well as multifamily apartments and commercial uses (see Figure 1.6). Two six-story office buildings, at 1401 and 1451 Rockville Pike, are examples of redevelopment that occurred under the 1989 *Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan*. Woodmont Country Club is a notable land use in the corridor and the Club’s bucolic entrance on the Pike gives this section of the Plan Area a distinctive character.

This plan lays out a framework for development and infrastructure for the west side of the Middle Pike, should property owners choose to redevelop in the future.

- Currently, there are few roadway connections other than those that serve the commercial and multifamily uses that front onto the Pike north and south of the Club’s entrance. The remainder of this area is occupied by the Club entrance and a portion of one of its golf courses.



Figure 1.6: Middle Pike – West Side



- Adding street network to this area is an important plan component to accompany any major redevelopment.
- An extension of Jefferson Street northward to Wootton Parkway could be a particularly important connection for dispersing traffic within the corridor.
- This plan does not have an explicit goal of encouraging development of any portions of the Club's golf courses.

### *The North Pike - West Side*

Three large blocks comprise the west side of the North Pike (see Figure 1.7). Development is characterized by stand-alone retailers, shopping centers, automobile dealerships, and townhouse-style office space.

- Properties here generally achieve lower rents than those in the South Pike. The tenant mix includes national and local retailers and local restaurants.
- The western boundary of this portion of the Plan Area consists of a combination of two segments of Fleet Street; City-owned right-of-way, paved only with a path for walking and biking, separating those two Fleet Street segments; and Wootton Parkway. Creating a new portion of Fleet Street on the City-owned right-of-way was a recommendation of both the 1989 Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan and the 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan. This plan removes that recommendation.
- The North Pike is within one-half mile of the Rockville Metro Station. However, pedestrian access to the Rockville station is made difficult by the complex geometry of the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and Rockville Pike, which hinders walking. Any reconstruction of this intersection should include pedestrian improvements, but such redesign is beyond the scope of this plan.

### *The Middle and North Pike - East Side*

The east side of the Pike in the Middle and North portions of the corridor is wedged between the Pike and the Metrorail right-of-way (see Figure 1.8). Many of the lots are very shallow; some are as narrow as 110 feet from the edge of the State highway right-of-way to the edge of the rail right-of-way.<sup>5</sup>

- This area is dominated by commercial uses that exhibit lower average rents, and more independently owned and operated small businesses (as opposed to chain retailers), compared to what is more frequently found in the South Pike.
- Redevelopment here is expected to be limited by the size and configuration of the lots.
- This area is expected, in the near and intermediate term, to remain more auto-oriented than the rest of the corridor because it is less accessible to Metro and there is very little opportunity to create the type of street grid that encourages pedestrian and bicycle activity.

<sup>5</sup> Based on a sample of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) measurements.

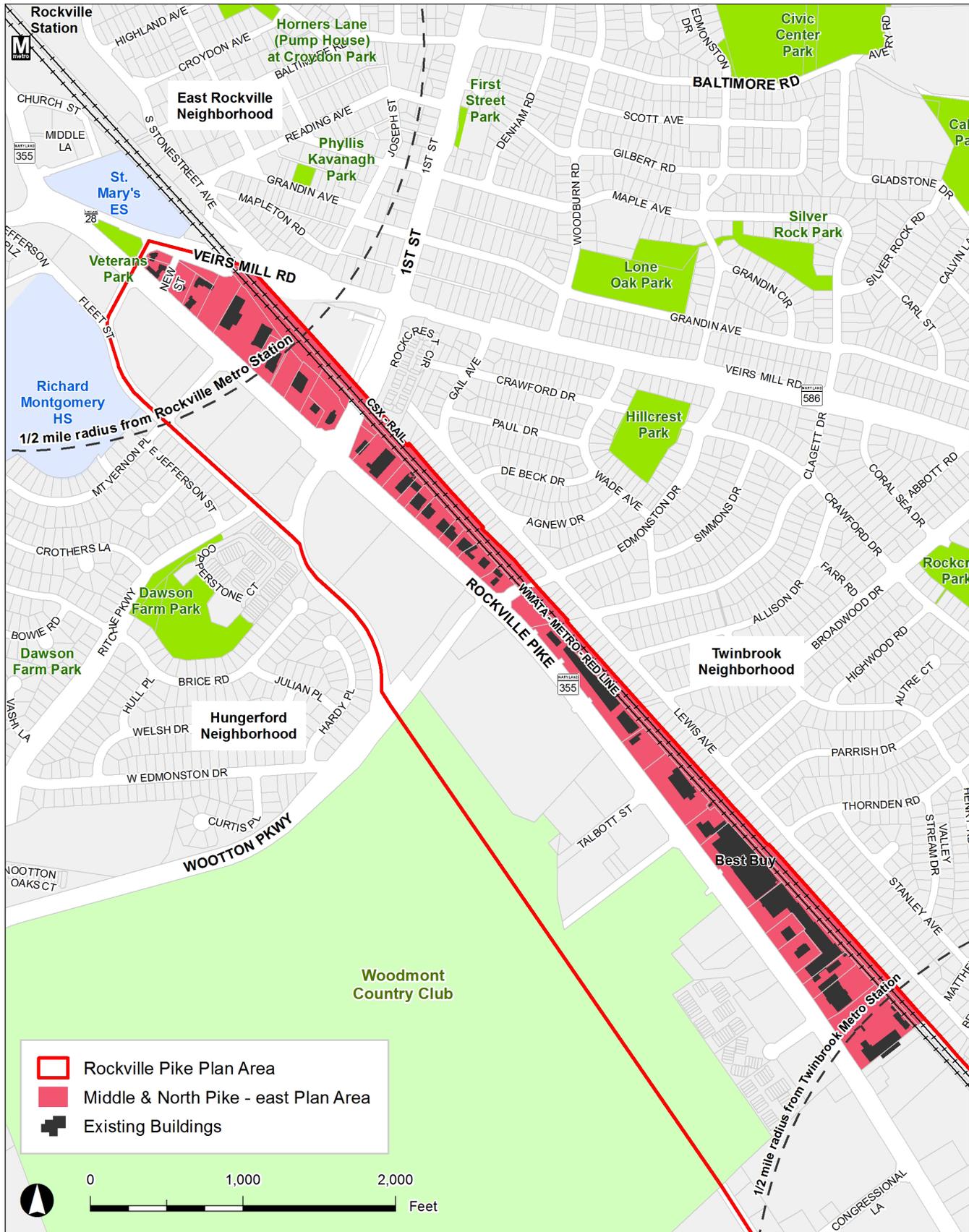


Figure 1.8: Middle and North Pike – East Side

- This plan seeks to ensure continuing and improved viability of east side, Middle Pike properties and uses.
- For this portion of the corridor, this plan recognizes the need to support the land uses that currently exist; continue to accommodate automobile accessibility; address the real parking challenges; and acknowledge the limitations for redevelopment to significantly higher density.
- Some redevelopment could occur on the east side, especially if the west side of the Middle and North Pike is activated by redevelopment and the introduction of a more refined street network, or if a new surface transit line were to include a stop in this area.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* provides a comprehensive guide for understanding the public process, the research findings, the public's vision for the future of the Pike, and the policies and recommendations to implement that vision. Following this Introduction, the plan is organized according to the following chapters:

- **Chapter 2 – Key Findings** provides an overview of the technical analysis that contributed to the development of the plan.
- **Chapter 3 – Corridor Planning Principles** describes the principles that were established through the public involvement process and used to guide the creation of the plan.
- **Chapter 4 – A Plan for the Rockville Pike Neighborhood** describes the key policies of the plan.
- **Chapter 5 – Implementation** outlines a series of implementation steps that will help turn the vision into reality.

In addition to the five chapters, the plan contains two appendices:

- **Appendix A – The Planning Process** outlines the major activities of the Rockville's Pike public involvement and planning processes.
- **Appendix B - Rockville Pike History** follows the Pike development from its beginning to the present.

Supplemental research documents are also available but are not included as part of this plan. These documents include:

- **Research Summary** expands on the key findings discussed in Chapter 2, providing more details about the technical analysis that contributed to the plan.

- **Model Sites Analysis** illustrates three conceptual examples of what redevelopment might look like. This exercise was completed for the consultant draft.
- **Critical Lane Volume Analysis** provides an analysis of available infrastructure capacity based on the parameters of the City’s Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) program.
- **Case Studies and Funding Mechanisms** provide transportation and redevelopment case studies as well as a menu of funding mechanisms that have been used in other jurisdictions.

## Chapter 2

# Key Findings

### OVERVIEW

**T**HIS CHAPTER SUMMARIZES KEY findings from the research conducted by the consultant team and staff and includes input from the public involvement process. The information is divided into seven sections:

- Transportation
- Land Use
- Economic Analysis
- Schools

- Parks
- Other Community Facilities
- Utilities

Expanded summaries of the research conducted in these categories can be found in supporting research documentation that is not part of this plan document. This documentation is available from the City's Community Planning and Development Services Department.

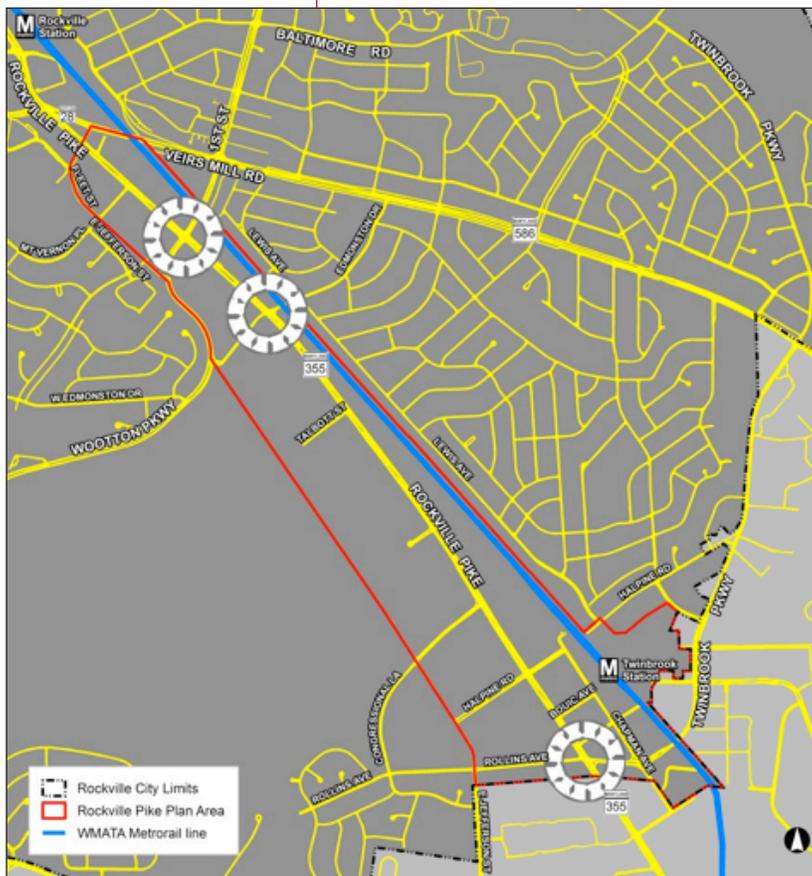
*Research conducted includes input from the public involvement process.*

# TRANSPORTATION

Rockville Pike functions as a regional arterial and as a local road.

Transportation findings focus on the functionality of the Pike and the surrounding street network, traffic, safety, transit service, and bicyclist and pedestrian conditions.

1. Rockville Pike serves two major transportation functions: as a regional arterial through Montgomery County and an access road to adjacent land uses. Parallel Interstate 270 is not a very good substitute for local movement because it only offers limited access in Montgomery County. Motorists will continue to use the Pike for reaching many Rockville retail and employment destinations.
2. Rockville Pike functions primarily as an arterial roadway on weekday mornings. Although morning volume is high,<sup>1</sup> many intersections experience relatively light overall delay because traffic signals are timed to favor the Pike and



**Figure 2.1:** Street Connectivity Diagram – This diagrammatic representation of the street network surrounding the Pike shows: the barrier created by the Metrorail right-of-way (in blue); the rich pattern of connected residential streets outside of the Plan Area (in yellow); and the dramatic vacuum of connectivity along the Pike (limited east – west connectors are circled in white). Only three roads cross the tracks within the Plan Area.

3. keep its traffic flowing. However, this approach comes at the expense of efficient cross-street vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian movements.
3. The Pike’s overall performance is weakest on Saturdays and in the afternoon weekday hours when the demand for travel to retail establishments is highest.<sup>2</sup> Rockville Pike nears its vehicle-moving capacity at these peak times. While north-south volumes are not as high on Saturdays, the cross-traffic conflicts are increased due to shopping and that increases delays at intersections. The Pike’s ability to handle through traffic is challenged when demands to move across it and from one part to another are increased, as occurs during most prime retail hours.
4. In 2011, Rockville Pike carried an average of approximately 53,000 cars per day. Traffic volume and congestion are expected to continue to increase as growth continues along MD 355 and as nearby developments, including potentially more than 17 million square feet of residential and commercial space

<sup>1</sup> In 2011, the Pike carried an average of 2,160 cars in the southbound direction during the morning peak hour.  
<sup>2</sup> In 2011, the Pike carried an average of 2,401 cars in the northbound direction in the afternoon peak hour.

in the White Flint area to the south, come on line over the next three decades.<sup>3</sup>

- More than 40% of the crashes at the intersections shown in Table 2.1 are rear-end collisions, implying that the speed differential between the Pike’s arterial function and local access function contributes significantly to collisions along Rockville Pike.

**Table 2.1  
Crashes and Severity at Selected Corridor Intersections  
from 2009 to 2011**

<b>Intersection</b>	<b>Total # of Crashes</b>	<b># Involving Personal Injury</b>	<b># Involving Pedestrians</b>	<b># Involving Rear-End Collisions</b>
Wootton Parkway	16	13	1	7
Edmonston Drive	35	16	4	20
Templeton Drive	10	3	2	5
Halpine Road	21	11	2	6
Bou Avenue	17	12	3	4

Source: Maryland State Highway Administration Accident Data

- Neighborhoods in and around the Plan Area have few connections to the Pike. On the east side of the road, access is limited due to the Metrorail right-of-way. Woodmont Country Club and Wootton Parkway impede access from the west side. As a result, congestion and delays consistently occur at the three east-west connections: Wootton Parkway and First Street; Edmonston Drive; and Rollins Avenue and Twinbrook Parkway.
- The Critical Lane Volume (CLV)<sup>4</sup> analysis conducted in the fall of 2010 revealed that the combination of the City’s traffic standards and the existing and projected traffic (based on approved development projects) will not readily allow development consistent with the recommendations of this plan. This continues to be the situation in 2016. Five of the key intersections in the corridor are already highly congested at certain peak times using the City’s current approach. Effective management of the area’s growth will require intersection improvements, additional capacity, and/or adjustments to the City’s traffic standards.
- The Metrorail Red Line provides high-capacity rapid transit service for the Rockville Pike corridor at the Rockville and Twinbrook stations and connects it to other parts of the Washington region. It is a vitally important asset for the City’s economy, regional access and for advancing the shift toward non-automobile modes of transportation, which is critical to implementing this plan. Historically, surrounding low density development and poor walking conditions have impeded pedestrian access to the Twinbrook station. Low density

*Neighborhoods in and around the Plan Area have few connections to the Pike.*

<sup>3</sup> Although the White Flint Sector Plan includes the potential for up to 17.6 million square feet of new residential and commercial space through 2040, including up to 9,800 dwelling units, this amount of development is unlikely to occur because actual build-out is rarely equivalent to zoning capacity.

<sup>4</sup> CLV analysis is a method of calculating intersection capacity to estimate an order-of-magnitude level of development that could be permitted under the City’s existing Comprehensive Transportation Review system of concurrency management.

*Street connectivity is impeded by the Metrorail right-of-way and CSX railroad tracks.*

is an impediment because it limits the number of people who are within walking distance of the station. Recently approved redevelopment projects near the Twinbrook Station have increased density and include a mix of uses, so this condition is beginning to change.

9. Montgomery County's Ride On transit provides the majority of bus service in the corridor. Route 46 provides local service up and down the Pike. Other Ride On bus routes provide coverage to most of the Pike Plan Area, but service is compromised by a lack of a connected street network; buses cannot rely on parallel streets for routing and circulation.
10. Pedestrian conditions are poor throughout the Plan Area.
  - Sidewalks are narrow and often squeezed between parking lots and fast-moving traffic on the Pike.
  - Long distances between signalized intersections limit opportunities for pedestrians to cross the Pike safely in much of the plan area.
  - Signal timing at intersections is not always sufficient for safely crossing the Pike.
  - Pedestrians share crossing times with vehicles, which increases the risk of accidents as turning vehicles cross the pedestrian's path.
  - Pedestrians are at risk crossing shopping center driveways and cross streets where drivers are turning off of, or onto, the Pike.
  - Strip shopping centers are designed for automobiles and are not pedestrian-friendly.
  - There are numerous physical barriers to accessing Metro on foot or bicycle.
11. Bicycling along Rockville Pike is uninviting and unsafe due to the road's design, speed, and heavy traffic volume.
  - The lack of a protected bicycle route along the Pike is a missing link between the County's Bethesda Trolley Trail and the Carl Henn Memorial Millenium Trail along Wootton Parkway.
  - Development regulations historically have been geared toward cars and have not been designed to accommodate cyclists in the corridor, though recent changes have been more accommodating.
  - Bicycle parking is limited, even at the Metrorail station. The lack of bicycle parking is an added deterrent to those wishing to substitute bicycling in place of driving to destinations along the Pike.

## LAND USE

Land use findings focus on types of activities (retail, residential, office, etc.), ownership patterns, physical character and appearance, amenities, spatial qualities, and prevailing densities.

1. Retail makes up more than half of the total developed land within the corridor.
2. Transportation rights-of-way, including roads and railways, make up one-fifth of the total land area.
3. Impervious surfaces cover 60 percent of the Plan Area. Pavement covers nearly 71 percent of the impervious surface area, or approximately 43 percent of the total study area. Very little of the impervious surface area is designed for pedestrians or bicyclists.
4. The predominant land use pattern along the corridor is in the form of individual parcels with single-story buildings occupied by a solitary use, set far back from the street and surrounded by surface parking lots. This pattern uses a vast amount of land, forces multiple vehicle trips between properties, and contributes to the large total number of car trips in the corridor.
5. There are no public open spaces or parks in the Plan Area. Woodmont Country Club represents approximately 9% of the land area, but it is private.<sup>5</sup>
6. The corridor includes extremely long blocks. Most notably, nearly 7,000 feet separate the Pike's intersection with Edmonston Drive and the next intersection to the south at Halpine Road. Although there are signalized locations that allow pedestrians to cross the Pike within this area, there are no cross streets. The lack of cross streets in this portion of the Pike, in particular, creates a barrier between the east and west sides.
7. Much of the Rockville Pike corridor has the undistinguished look of generic and aging suburban strip development. This condition stems from a lack of building frontage continuity, functional pedestrian environment, and visual interest – all ingredients of great places.
8. Many of the existing stores in the Plan Area are locally unique and/or ethnic/specialty stores. The continued existence of these stores can provide a level of distinction from other redevelopment projects that focus on national chain store tenants, while also serving Rockville's ethnically diverse population and promoting local ownership as a part of the Pike's overall business mix.
9. One- and two-story developments and low density do not take advantage of the proximity to the Twinbrook Metro Station. Low density means that fewer people are within walking distance of the Twinbrook Metro Station, hindering the ability of Metro to become a viable alternative to the private automobile. Some people choose to drive because getting to Metro is inconvenient; others drive and park at the station, which does not help to reduce the number of vehicle trips.

*The corridor has extremely long blocks.*

<sup>5</sup> The entire Woodmont Country Club property is more than 400 acres, which is approximately the same total as the Plan Area. The 9% refers to the 38 acres that are located within the Plan Area.

# ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

1. The 2015 population in the Plan Area was estimated at 3,530. Population is projected to more than triple to approximately 11,800 by 2040.<sup>6</sup>
2. There were an estimated 1,800 housing units in the Plan Area in 2015. This number is projected to increase to about 5,840 in 2040.<sup>7</sup>
3. There are currently 218 Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) in the Pike Plan Area, representing approximately 12% of the Corridor's total existing residential units. An additional 61 MPDUs are under construction. In addition, 251 affordable senior units are located in Bethany House on Rollins Avenue.
4. The number of people employed in the Plan Area in 2015 was estimated at 9,050. At-place employment is projected to grow by more than 50%, to approximately 13,900 in 2040.<sup>8</sup>
5. Rockville Pike is a well-established and economically viable commercial corridor in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and a major source of revenue for the City of Rockville and Montgomery County.
6. Historically strong household and job growth and a relatively vibrant economic environment suggest positive long-term development potential, in spite of the recent recession.
7. Rockville's median household income in 2010-2014 was estimated at \$98,530 and Montgomery County's median household income was estimated at \$98,704 during the same period, compared to \$54,482 in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> High household incomes in the region contribute to the economic vitality of retail.
8. Services and retail trade account for almost three-quarters of employment in the area surrounding Rockville Pike.

Retail is the  
primary  
economic  
driver in the  
corridor.

## REAL ESTATE AND MARKET TRENDS

This section reviews retail, office, and residential trends in the study area. Analysis included review of existing patterns of real estate development, including rents, occupancy, and absorption trends of various land uses. The key findings of these analyses include:

1. The retail market is the primary driver in the corridor. The corridor serves as a regional destination retail center and one of the best performing agglomerations of retail in the region.

<sup>6</sup> City of Rockville, Community Planning and Development Services Department, Round 9.0 forecasts for Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014

2. The South Pike is comprised of predominantly national retail tenants that tend to pay higher rents and have larger footprints.
3. The Middle and North Pike areas have a greater proportion of locally owned businesses with smaller store sizes and lower average rents.
4. Multifamily residential is rapidly emerging as a use along the Pike with the market developing at a quicker pace south of the City near the White Flint Metro Station.
5. Recently approved and constructed development projects near the Twinbrook Metro station have included mixed uses, higher densities, and multi-story buildings such as Congressional Village, the Avalon, the Galvan, and the Tera-no. More than 1,200 multifamily dwelling units were approved in the immediate vicinity of the Metro Station between 2011 and 2015, with more expected in the future.
6. Commercial office is a relatively small component of the overall Rockville Pike development pattern, with a few free-standing office buildings in the corridor. There are more than two million square feet of office space, with close to 10,000 employees, in the County's Twinbrook Sector Plan area, within walking distance of the Twinbrook Metro Station.
7. As incomes rise and as place-making happens in the corridor, store productivity and rental rates will likely increase. However, the corridor has and will continue to have different physical and economic characteristics and it is expected that some portions will continue to provide retail space that attracts small or local businesses at lower rents.
8. Local retail trends will be affected by more global trends, including demographic changes and the impacts of online and mobile shopping.

*Local retail trends will be affected by more global trends, including demographic changes and the impacts of online and mobile shopping.*

## SCHOOLS

Rockville's neighborhoods are served by five high school clusters. The Plan Area is served by two of those, including their associated high, middle and elementary schools. The Plan Area north of Congressional Lane is in the Richard Montgomery cluster, while the area to the south and closest to the Twinbrook Metro Station, where there has been the strongest demand for redevelopment, is in the Walter Johnson cluster (see Figure 2.2 for existing boundaries). Both have experienced enrollment that exceeds capacity, as defined by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

In the Richard Montgomery cluster, over-capacity enrollment is being addressed through expansion of Julius West Middle School and the planned construction of a new elementary school. Expansion of Richard Montgomery High School may also be required in the future.

In the Walter Johnson cluster, expansion of the high school will be necessary, and is being considered. In addition, a working group has been convened to study



other ways to address overcrowding, including changes to cluster boundaries. No decisions of this nature have been made at the time of plan adoption.

Rockville’s Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) establishes that no residential development that is permitted to include children may take place if the new residences will be within the boundaries of a cluster that has an average enrollment/capacity ratio, for at least one of its school levels, projected to be 120% or greater within five years of the proposed project. (“School levels” are defined as high school, middle school and elementary school). According to the Montgomery County Public Schools 2017-2022 Adopted Capital Improvements Program (CIP), none of the school levels for either cluster is projected to exceed the standard, assuming that two construction projects are completed: 1) a planned fifth elementary school in the Richard Montgomery cluster, and 2) a proposed, but not yet approved, eight-classroom addition for Walter Johnson High School. Table 2.2 provides data for the school levels for both clusters.

**Table 2.2**  
**Schools-Existing and Projected Enrollment/Capacity**  
*Schools with service areas within the Plan Area*

School Cluster	Projected Enrollment 2021	100% Capacity	Cluster % 2021
<b>Richard Montgomery Cluster</b>			
Elementary School*	2,750	2,884	95.4%
Middle School	1,392	1,445	96.3%
High School	2,508	2,236	112.2%
<b>Walter Johnson Cluster</b>			
Elementary School	4,513	4,631	97.5%
Middle School	2,313	2,429	95.2%
High School**	2,865	2,515	113.9%

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools, Division of Long-Range Planning

\* Assumes completion of Richard Montgomery Elementary School #5

\*\* Assumes an 8-classroom-addition placeholder, currently being applied by MCPS. The 2021 enrollment is projected to exceed 120% of capacity if the addition is not completed.

*The Plan Area is served by two high schools and their associated clusters.*

## PARKS

The City of Rockville’s Department of Recreation and Parks owns or maintains 69 parks, recreation, and open space sites totaling approximately 1,105 acres.<sup>10</sup> This includes 14 citywide parks and facilities, 40 neighborhood parks and facilities, four athletic parks, and 11 open space parks. An additional 164 acres are at public school sites and Montgomery College. None of the parks or open space sites are located within the Plan Area.

<sup>10</sup> City of Rockville Community Facilities Trends Report, 2016

Parks and green spaces are needed in the Plan Area now and this need will grow as development continues and the population in the Plan Area increases. The City's Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (2009) recommends obtaining funding for parkland acquisition in certain parts of the City, including the Rockville Pike corridor. Park needs are discussed in Chapter 4.

## OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Projected growth places demands on other community facilities, as well. The City's Municipal Growth Element (MGE), adopted into the Comprehensive Master Plan in 2010, anticipated the general level of growth that is projected for this plan and provided assessments regarding the needs for additional facilities. They are discussed below.

### *Public Libraries*

For the foreseeable future, Rockville far exceeds the American Library Association standards for library space (pp. 42-43 of the MGE), based on the City's expected population. Rockville, including the Pike corridor, is well-served by the two branches of Montgomery County Public Libraries within the City limits, and other branches nearby. However, changing use for these facilities should be monitored with the advent of new media.

### *Police*

The new headquarters for the Rockville Police Department, opened in 2012, is expected to provide sufficient space to serve the City's population growth through 2040. If the proportion of police officers to population remains the same, there will be a citywide need of 19 new officers (pp. 43-45 of MGE), approximately 8 of whom would be generated by the growth in the Rockville Pike corridor. Changing factors in crime and policing may change this proportion. In addition, the City collaborates extensively with Montgomery County, which also plays a role in Rockville, and, together, they will respond to changing factors.

### *Fire and Emergency Response*

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS) provides fire, rescue and emergency medical services to the City of Rockville (pp. 45-48 of MGE). One of the two fire stations in Rockville is in the Plan Area, on Rollins Avenue (Station 23). It is in need of expansion and renovation, and MCFRS has indicated a desire to relocate this station further south, within the White Flint Sector. Such a move would provide greater capacity for service but the station would no longer be located in Rockville. The corridor is also served by the fire station at the intersection of Hungerford Drive and Beall Avenue (Station 3). This station is also in need of renovation, or of a new station. Rockville must stay engaged with MCFRS plans to ensure that there is sufficient service to the Rockville Pike corridor, and to the

*Parks and green spaces are needed in the Plan Area.*

City as a whole. Fire and rescue deployment, with respect to protecting the Plan Area, will need to meet the City's adequate public facilities requirements.

## UTILITIES

Rockville-maintained utilities include water, wastewater and storm water systems in the Rockville Pike Plan Area. Additionally, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) maintains a portion of the water and sewer system for this area. Other critical utility infrastructure includes PEPCO's electric system, Washington Gas's gas system, Verizon's telecommunication system, Comcast's cable television system, as well as numerous other communication system providers.

Rockville's Water Resources Element (WRE) of the Comprehensive Master Plan, which was adopted in 2010, documents that, overall, adequate water and wastewater capacity exists to accommodate projected growth through 2040; identifies infrastructure concerns that may restrict projected growth; and protects and preserves Rockville's watersheds. Redevelopment in the Plan Area, which was envisioned in the WRE, presents some challenges due to age and capacity of the existing water and wastewater infrastructure in this area. However, infrastructure upgrades for the water and wastewater systems are being implemented through Rockville's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and through development-funded projects. Other systemic obstacles are being studied to understand better current and projected conditions.

### Water System

Sufficient treatment capacity exists at Rockville's Water Treatment Plant through 2040, the last year for which projections have been made. However, the water distribution system in the Plan Area requires upgrades to restore fire flow protection and to ensure the delivery of drinking water that meets or exceeds Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) water quality standards. Much of the local deficiencies in the Plan Area have been recently corrected. Other upgrades are scheduled in Rockville's CIP or included in current developers' infrastructure requirements. Future developers of sites may face similar requirements to upgrade specific segments of the water distribution system to ensure that adequate capacity exists for their projects.

### Wastewater System

All of the wastewater generated in the Plan Area is treated at the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility (Blue Plains), which is owned and operated by DC Water. Rockville owns sufficient treatment capacity at Blue Plains through 2040. However, the wastewater collection system in the Plan Area requires upgrades to rehabilitate failing sewer pipes (for instance, sealing cracked pipes) and to ensure sufficient flow capacity to transport the wastewater. All wastewater collected in Rockville's system is transported through WSSC and DC Water waste-

water systems for treatment at Blue Plains. Many of the local deficiencies in the Plan Area have been recently corrected. Other upgrades are scheduled in Rockville's CIP or included in current developers' infrastructure requirements. Future development projects may result in a requirement to upgrade specific segments of the wastewater collection system to ensure that adequate capacity exists.

### *Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) Water and Wastewater*

The WSSC directly provides water and wastewater service to a small portion of the Plan Area. This area is the southeastern portion, east of the railroad tracks, in the vicinity of the Twinbrook Metro Station. Water and sewer are regulated by the WSSC in this area.

### *Stormwater System*

The Plan Area is divided nearly equally between the Cabin John and Rock Creek Watersheds. The northern and the southeastern portions, in the vicinity of the Twinbrook Metro Station, are in the Rock Creek Watershed; the remainder is in the Cabin John Watershed. Although there are no public stormwater improvements planned within the Plan Area, public downstream storm drain capacity upgrade and stream restoration projects are identified. Additionally, retrofit opportunities on private property within this Plan Area have been identified in the 2011 Cabin John Watershed Assessment and the 2013 Rock Creek Watershed Assessment.

Rockville's Stormwater Management (SWM) Law and Regulations will be applied to all development, including the Rockville Pike Planning Area. Accordingly, Environmental Site Design (ESD) techniques must be integrated into all development to the maximum extent practicable. Additionally, flood control (for the ten-year storm) must be provided either by structural, on-site facilities, or through participation in Rockville's Regional SWM program, which is typically accomplished by a monetary contribution.





## Chapter 3

# Corridor Planning Principles

## OVERVIEW

**T**HE CORRIDOR PLANNING PRINCIPLES presented in this chapter are statements of intent that describe how the physical environment in the Rockville Pike corridor should be treated in the future. A set of draft principles for the *Rockville Pike Plan* came directly out of the extensive public input that was generated at the kick-off meeting in December 2007 and the stakeholder workshop in February 2008. These principles were used to guide the work of the City during the Community Design Charrette (May 31 - June 3, 2008), and contributed directly to the development of the *Draft for Planning Commission*

*Public Hearing* which was released on December 29, 2010.

The draft principles were amended during work sessions with the Planning Commission and the Mayor and Council and are organized under three headings:

- A. Livable, desirable environment enhanced by thoughtful urban design
- B. Multimodal transportation, and
- C. Economic viability.

This chapter lists each principle, along with a short description to help understand the intent.

# CORRIDOR PLANNING PRINCIPLES

## **A. LIVEABLE, DESIRABLE ENVIRONMENT ENHANCED BY THOUGHTFUL URBAN DESIGN**

### *1. Attractive and inviting community design and development*

The Pike will have a coherent relationship among the buildings, transportation infrastructure, and open spaces, in a manner that creates an attractive and inviting community. This approach places a greater emphasis on building form rather than use, brings buildings closer to the street, encourages façade improvements, reduces the prominence of surface parking, and emphasizes green areas and public gathering spaces, among other strategies. The plan recommends defining the character of the public realm through development regulations and design guidance that will create more consistent development patterns and greatly improve the appearance of the Pike, while allowing for architectural diversity and visual interest.

### *2. Mixed uses and mixed-income new neighborhoods*

Mixed-use development will contribute to the desirability and vitality of the Pike by placing residences, employment and services in proximity to each other, enabling less reliance on motor vehicles, and a greater sense of community. The plan supports creation of great new mixed-income neighborhoods within the Plan Area through focus on planning and design of the public realm to enable public culture and distinct neighborhood character. Areas that are closest to the Twinbrook Metro Station are most appropriate for intensive mixed-use development.

### *3. Inviting conditions for walking and biking*

Providing an environment that is safe, pleasant and convenient for pedestrians and cyclists will make it more likely that the travel mode share in the corridor will shift away from automobiles in the future. The plan recommends a series of changes to meet this principle, including a finer street grid, smaller blocks, wider sidewalks in more protected locations, and travel lanes or paths for bicycles. Street trees, landscaping, underground utilities, and visually appealing building façades will also enhance the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

### *4. Appealing parks and public open spaces for community gathering and activity*

Today's Pike, with its extensive surface parking lots and high speed traffic, may not seem conducive for public gathering spaces and outdoor activity. However, such community amenities are envisioned as important components of the corridor in the future. Public input supported the creation of a pleasant public realm that will invite outdoor activity and community interaction, including open space such as plazas and squares, public spaces that integrate flowers, fountains, and public art; civic areas that support community activities and City-owned parks that can provide active and passive functions.

### 5. *Environmentally friendly and sustainable*

The planning process revealed a strong community desire for an environmentally friendly corridor. This principle will be met by providing more parks and open space, planting more trees, improving landscaping, reducing impervious surfaces, and supporting green building, among other initiatives. The plan encourages building designs that can be adapted to changing uses over time and, where appropriate, the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings. More broadly, a development approach that mixes uses, especially near transit, encourages a shift away from reliance on the automobile and will have a beneficial impact on air quality and the level of carbon emissions, compared to development not in a mixed-use context.

### 6. *An urbanizing corridor, distinct from Rockville's suburban development*

Rockville will assert its land use authority in the corridor, while continuing to coordinate with other jurisdictions to ensure functionality and compatibility. Portions of the Plan Area will be distinguished from the more suburban development patterns of Rockville as well, by having regulatory standards that are customized to those urbanizing areas. In addition, attractive and adequate signage, and lighting and landscaping elements, will improve the appearance of the Pike, establish a distinctive character for the corridor, promote an appreciation of the Pike's role in Rockville's history, as well as maintain and enhance its economic success.

### 7. *Development that is supported by commensurate growth of infrastructure and services*

The development of the Pike must be in balance with commensurate growth in such key infrastructure and service areas as school capacity, fire and police protection, traffic management, transit infrastructure, and utilities such as water, sewer and power, which all add to costs. Maintaining this balance is a challenging proposition both practically and legislatively due to factors that are beyond the City's control. Examples include development outside of Rockville, new births, in-migration, changes in household composition, and other trends that lead to population growth and demographic change. The City looks forward to continuing our partnership with Montgomery County, other government entities, and the residents and businesses of Rockville to address these important quality-of-life topics.

## B. MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

### 1. *Access and movement choices for all travel modes that provide connections within the corridor and with surrounding areas*

Many stakeholders cited the need to better connect Rockville Pike in terms of adjacent shopping centers and surrounding neighborhoods and streets. The current configuration of the street network features incomplete service roads and multiple driveway entrances, which tend to force much of the local traffic onto Rockville Pike – even for very short trips between nearby shopping centers. This plan seeks to formalize the Pike's service roads and expand the street network to enhance connectivity throughout the corridor for both cars and pedestrians. It also

recommends improving pedestrian and bicycle connections between the Pike and its surrounding neighborhoods, which will reduce the need to use a car for every local errand.

## 2. *Safe and accessible pedestrian and biking infrastructure and experience*

Stakeholder recommendations included sidewalk enhancements, bicycle lanes or paths, signal timings that allow pedestrians to cross the Pike comfortably, improved accessibility to shops and surrounding neighborhoods, and the reconfiguration of buildings and parking lots to enhance the pedestrian environment, among others. Whereas the Pike today prioritizes the private automobile over all other modes of transportation, the Pike corridor envisioned in this plan safely supports multiple modes of transportation – including walking, biking, and public transit – and infrastructure to assist seniors and people with mobility impairments or other disabilities.

## 3. *Efficient and reliable local and regional public transportation options*

The mixed-use and multi-modal approach supported in this plan relies on availability of efficient, safe and reliable transit. The corridor's proximity to Metro-rail's Red Line and the location of the Twinbrook Metro Station is an enormous asset to the plan area. In addition, the potential for a county-wide Bus Rapid Transit system will have significant implications for this Plan Area, as Rockville Pike is one of the routes contemplated by Montgomery County.

## 4. *Smooth and safe vehicular flow*

Traffic congestion and the need for improved traffic safety are significant concerns for people who travel along the Pike. It is a goal of the City, in its design of roadways and implementation of this plan, to work toward eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries as expressed by Vision Zero.<sup>1</sup> Participants in the planning process provided numerous suggestions for addressing traffic concerns including street pavement repairs, improved signal timing, redesign of intersections, and improving access to and from shopping centers. The boulevard concept, which separates fast-moving traffic from slow-moving traffic and reduces the number of curb cuts off of the main thoroughfare, street network enhancements, and intersection improvements recommended in this plan conform to this principle of smoother and safer vehicular flow.

## 5. *Easy-to-navigate environment*

Stakeholders indicated they would like to see wayfinding improvements that will maintain and enhance the economic success of the Pike. They want to see better signage and lighting that will make the Pike more welcoming and navigable

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<sup>1</sup> *Vision Zero is a collaborative international movement to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries through a series of practices that put the safety and health of human beings as the primary interest of a road network.*

for residents and visitors alike. The plan incorporates these recommendations and also provides for a boulevard and expanded road network that will break up some of the largest blocks and create a more coherent system for maneuvering along the Pike. Structured parking and an attractive pedestrian environment will also enable shoppers to “park once” and comfortably reach nearby shops on foot. Elements such as maps, consolidated signage, and informational boards can be integrated into new developments to further facilitate wayfinding along the Pike.

## C. ECONOMIC VIABILITY

### 1. *Retention and attraction of a diverse retail community*

Retail is central to the economic success of Rockville as a whole and the Pike’s neighborhoods. Throughout the planning process, residents and other stakeholders identified the Pike’s commercial and retail success as an element that should continue to be supported. The plan strongly encourages small, large, locally-owned and national chain retail, all of which draw shoppers from Rockville and throughout the region, and contribute to the commercial character of the Pike. Residents and other stakeholders expressed that they would like to see the shops and restaurants that they patronize remain in the corridor as shopping centers age and redevelopment opportunities arise. Additional support from the City, or Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI) may be needed in some cases to help fulfill this principle.

### 2. *City support for successful development*

The City’s infrastructure and regulatory environment should support development and businesses so that they have ample opportunity to thrive economically. The highest density in the Plan Area should be the area closest to the Twinbrook Metro Station. Concentrating development near transit and other existing infrastructure has environmental and economic benefits. It helps to reduce automobile dependence, congestion and pollution and results in a more efficient provision of public services. Successful redevelopment will support and increase Rockville’s tax base, and bring new vitality and energy to this already urbanizing area.

### 3. *Financeable infrastructure and fiscally responsible implementation*

The public consistently communicated that the plan must be realistic and achievable. Infrastructure and other required investments must be realistically financeable and supported by anticipated development. In order to achieve the plan goals, significant funding from City, County, State and Federal entities must be secured.



## Chapter 4

# A Plan for the Rockville Pike Neighborhood

## OVERVIEW

**T**HIS CHAPTER IS THE CORE OF THE *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*.

It describes the policies for transforming the Rockville Pike corridor into an attractive, walkable area, enhancing its prosperity, and improving mobility, while acknowledging the distinct characteristics of different sectors of the Plan Area.

The vision for the Rockville Pike corridor emerged from the extensive public involvement process that began in 2007, and is described in Appendix A, integrated with the findings of the transportation, land use, and economic analysis that are summarized in Chapter 2.

The plan vision is to transform much of the Rockville Pike corridor

from a utilitarian, aesthetically conventional retail strip into a special place featuring improved overall mobility, economic vibrancy, and a pleasant and greener environment. These themes are articulated as the Corridor Planning Principles, outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 is organized into the following sections:

- Overview
- Principal Transportation Policies
- Principal Land Use Policies

Even though one of the main purposes of the plan is to integrate transportation and land use policies, they have been separated in this chapter for the sake of clarity.

# PRINCIPAL TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

This section describes the transportation policies for the Rockville Pike Plan Area, which are designed to improve mobility, safety, and connectivity for automobile drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. Enhancements to the infrastructure will improve functioning for every travel mode, while reducing conflicts. These improvements also serve the land use policies that are described later in this chapter by helping to create a vibrant, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly place. Strategies for implementing infrastructure improvements and transportation policies are discussed in Chapter 5, Implementation.

**The principal transportation policies are as follows:**

1. Re-design and reconstruct Rockville Pike as a multi-way boulevard
2. Expand the street network
3. Adhere to the City’s Complete Streets Policy
4. Adhere to the principles of Vision Zero
5. Optimize access to and use of public transit

## **I. RE-DESIGN AND RECONSTRUCT ROCKVILLE PIKE AS A MULTI-WAY BOULEVARD.**

Rockville Pike serves a dual transportation role in terms of mobility and access. It is part of a regional corridor through Montgomery County, as well as a local road for drivers trying to reach local land uses. A “multi-way” boulevard design will allow the Pike to serve both functions better.

### *What is a multi-way boulevard?*

A multi-way boulevard is analogous to mixed-use development in that it is a “mixed-use” public way that attempts to better serve the sometimes competing needs of roadway capacity, local access, transit, street parking, bicycle accommodation, and pedestrian comfort.

A multi-way boulevard can handle a large volume of relatively fast-moving through-traffic on central travel lanes as well as slower local traffic within the same corridor, but on separate yet adjacent and parallel roadways. Through traffic and local traffic are separated by attractively landscaped medians. The combination of medians, local access lanes flanked by on-street parking, bicycle paths, and wide sidewalks together create extended, comfortable pedestrian areas where movement is at a slow pace. Pedestrians are visually and physically removed from faster-moving through traffic and sidewalks become pleasant places to walk and socialize.

Multi-way boulevards have been a design choice for significant streets throughout the world, including the United States. The iconic boulevards of Paris and Barcelona; the Esplanade in Chico, California; and Ocean and Eastern Park-

*A multi-way boulevard attempts to balance numerous roadway functions.*

ways in Brooklyn, New York are all examples that demonstrate their success.

### Rockville Pike as a Multi-Way Boulevard

The central main lanes of Rockville Pike and parallel side access roads together form the envisioned multi-way boulevard with a distance between building faces of approximately 252 feet (the boulevard cross-section is described in detail later in this chapter). This cross-section is possible because there are currently very few buildings on the land where the boulevard would be built. Building setbacks created in the 1970s, and refined by the 1989 plan, have been establishing the build-to-line at 135 feet from the centerline of the Pike, for a total distance of 270 feet from building face to building face.<sup>1</sup> Since that time, at least 50% of any new building's façade on the Pike has been required to be located 135 feet from the road's centerline, with no portions of the buildings being closer to the center.

Montgomery County is considering developing a countywide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network that would include a route along Rockville Pike. The boulevard cross-section, shown in Figure 4.3, incorporates the proposed two-way BRT line in the center median of the main travel lanes. The inclusion of the BRT infrastructure, which includes bus guideways and stations, increases the curb-to-curb distance of the Pike's main lanes from 84 feet to 120 feet, a net increase of about 36 feet. It also provides for a wider and safer respite area for pedestrians crossing the road in two phases.

The setback area along the Pike (between the build-to line and the property line) is used today for parking and/or as a rudimentary access lane that functions much like a parking lot drive aisle. The 1989 Rockville Pike Plan called for the creation of access roads to separate through traffic from local traffic along Rockville Pike and, as the name implies, to provide access to private property. Informal access roads have been built sporadically in conjunction with redevelopment projects



*Figure 4.1: Long recognized as the major high-end shopping street in Barcelona, the elegant Passeig de Gràcia is a classic multi-way boulevard. Source: ACP Visioning + Planning*



*Figure 4.2: Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn, New York was designed by Frederic Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in the late 19th Century. Source: City of Springfield, OR, Public Works Department*

<sup>1</sup> A build-to-line is a setback line that sets the location of building construction on the lot and is established to create a uniform building façade along the street.

since that plan was adopted, but do not provide complete connections. The right (outer) lane of Rockville Pike continues to be punctuated by individual driveways for almost every parcel and a significant portion of local traffic is forced onto Rockville Pike even for short trips between nearby properties.

The multi-way boulevard recommended by the *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* transforms this undefined swath of land from a confusing and relatively uncontrolled auto circulation arrangement into a much greater asset for all of the Pike’s users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, bus riders, and motorists. It sets the build-to line closer to the Pike than did the 1989 plan, while ensuring a strong buffer between fast-moving traffic and pedestrians. It provides the framework for the vibrant place envisioned by the Rockville community during public meetings and through public testimony.

Figure 4.3 provides the boulevard vision, although modifications are described for the east side of the Middle and North Pike sections and for certain projects (“Champion Projects”) in the South Pike.

### Primary Roadway

The key purpose of the main lanes of the proposed multi-way boulevard is to carry faster-moving and non-local auto traffic, as well as local buses. Features of the primary roadway are listed below:

- Approximately 52 feet of right-of-way width for a two-directional Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)<sup>2</sup> line in the center of the Pike with medians on either side for BRT stations and automobile left turn lanes, which widens the overall curb-to-curb crossing distance of the primary roadway by about 36 feet. Medians provide refuge for pedestrians crossing the Pike. The 52 feet could be used as a wide median or for additional automobile lanes if the BRT line is not built, or until it is built.
- Three automobile travel lanes in each direction.
- The outer curb lane is wider (12 feet) than the other two (11-foot) lanes to accommodate local buses.
- Local buses travel in the central roadway (per Montgomery County’s Department of Transportation preference, but consideration may be given to providing the local service in the access roads).
- This infrastructure can all be built within the existing 120-foot State right-of-way.

Ultimately, the State and the County will strongly influence decisions about the main lanes and BRT. The full boulevard design is included in this plan, however, for three reasons:

1. It is important for Rockville to articulate its desires because both the State and the County have indicated that Rockville’s input will be considered;
2. Rockville must establish the overall framework and location for the access roads because they are likely to be a City-led project and could be built before

<sup>2</sup> See page 4-19 of this chapter for a discussion of BRT.



Figure 4.3: Typical Multi-Way Boulevard Street Section

the main lanes or the BRT line is built;

3. Rockville controls land use and, therefore, has the authority to set a defined build-to line for new development. The width of the boulevard is a key factor in determining the build-to line.

### Access Roads

The access roads recommended by this plan provide access to private property that is not directly connected to the main thoroughfare. They are also intended to reduce the number of curb cuts and driveways along the portion of the Pike designed for through traffic, thereby improving flow in those main lanes. Access roads can link multiple adjoining properties to enable a “park once and walk” environment. Their design is for slower speeds, reducing the vehicle conflicts among faster-moving vehicles, slower-moving vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians that currently occur on the Pike.

Access roads also help break down the scale of the formidable width of the boulevard by allowing pedestrians to cross in more than one stage, if necessary. They provide safe and attractive areas to drop off and pick up patrons of businesses along the Pike, both with existing ride-sharing services and emerging autonomous vehicle uses. Medians serve as buffers from moving traffic and provide a safe waiting area for pedestrians who are crossing the Pike. Pedestrians may not have to wait for a traffic signal change to safely cross the access roads, due to their slow speeds, though they will have to wait for a signal to cross the main roadway. Trees between the primary and the access roadways help with the demarcation, provide an overhead canopy, and make the boulevard attractive. In addition to trees, Environmental Site Design (ESD) storm water management, such as micro bioretention or bio swales, can be installed in the green medians.<sup>3</sup>

The complexity of the activity that the access roads must accommodate can actually contribute to their safety.<sup>4</sup> In addition to low speed limits, drivers are forced to use greater caution and move slowly due to the volume and proximity of pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians dominate and feel safe on the sidewalks, in the medians, and in the access road. Cars should be in the access roads only for a block or two; they are likely to have sufficient incentive to move back to the faster-moving main lanes if traveling further.

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 include street parking on the access roads. Advantages of street parking are that it provides short-term parking for those accessing businesses whose storefronts will be adjacent to the public sidewalk (as is described in section 2 of the Land Use portion of this chapter) and an incentive to patronize those businesses. On-street parking also slows traffic, encourages street-oriented development, and may increase the number of pedestrians. Sections of the parking lane on the access road may be striped and signed to allow for intermittent pull-off

<sup>3</sup> Other ESD techniques should also be considered, such as permeable pavement for sidewalks and inside BRT wheel tracks, and proprietary devices such as tree box fillers. Like all of the boulevard design considerations, the management of storm water will need to be coordinated with the State Highway Administration; with storm water approval by the Maryland Department of the Environment.

<sup>4</sup> *The Boulevard Book*, Allan B. Jacobs, Elizabeth MacDonald, Yodan Rofo, 2002, MIT, Part 3, “Safety, Professional Standards, and the Importance of the Pedestrian Realm.”

A reduced  
number of  
curb cuts can  
improve traffic  
flow.

areas within the parking lane for delivery trucks and other temporarily stopped vehicles in order to discourage double parking and frequent disruptions to the flow of the local traffic.

It is preferred that the access roads be built as part of an overall Rockville Pike-BRT construction project. Combining the reconstruction of the main lanes, BRT, and the access roads would minimize disruption and result in fiscal savings and a well-coordinated engineering effort. While Rockville holds easements along approximately 50% of the Pike's linear distance within the Plan Area, it does not own the land where access roads would be built. The City may need to develop a funding plan that includes participation and funding assistance from federal, state and county sources and may need to commit its own funds to building access roads, either through existing revenue streams or the creation of a dedicated funding source.

### **South Pike and west side of Middle/North Pike**

The full design of the boulevard access roads envisioned for Rockville Pike (see Figure 4.3) can best be achieved on both sides of the South Pike and along the west side of the Pike through the Middle and North sections of the Plan Area. Here, the access roads (see Figure 4.4) will provide:

- wide sidewalks that contain a clear walking area and an amenity zone;
- a two-way dedicated bike path with a buffer zone between it and parking;
- one lane of parallel on-street parking;
- one lane of slow-moving local traffic, with the direction of travel corresponding to the adjacent travel lanes of the Rockville Pike mainline;
- landscaped dividers between the main lanes and the access roads that also accommodate bus stops for local bus traffic in the main boulevard lanes.

### **Exceptions to Requiring Access Roads**

The typical Pike cross-section (Figure 4.3), including the access roads (shown in detail in Figure 4.4) should be retained as a component of this plan for both sides of the South Pike and for the entire west side of the Pike until there is a firm commitment to provide BRT and/or build the East Jefferson Street extension. The plan may be modified at that point to eliminate the access roads, abandon existing easements, and stop acquiring new easements.

There are two exceptions to the access roads requirement. One exception is for properties on the east side of the Pike in the Middle and North Pike areas. The other is for "Champion Projects" that are located in the South Pike and meet certain criteria. Each of these exceptions is described below.

#### **Exception 1: Middle/North Pike – east side**

The constrained configuration of parcels on the east side of the Pike in the North and Middle Pike sections is a significant and unique issue compared to



*Figure 4.4: Typical Access Road Section Detail.*

other sections of the Plan Area. The net addition of approximately 36 feet (18 feet on each side) for the future BRT in the primary roadway would result in a significant loss of developable land area and parking for many of the properties. Surface parking is critical to these sites and structured parking may not be feasible for many, given their narrow site dimensions.

Implementation of the boulevard vision for properties in these locations may include modifications to support the auto-reliant nature of this portion of the corridor and preserve viability of businesses, as long as inter-site vehicular and bicycle movement, a continuous public sidewalk, and pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular safety are assured. Two-way vehicular inter-site

movement may be allowed since there is no opportunity to provide street network east of the Pike in this portion of the corridor.

It is important to retain existing easements and to continue to obtain easements along the Pike to allow inter-site vehicular movement, and to require that all sites in this area provide for inter-site movement when they redevelop. A continuous ADA-compliant sidewalk must be provided, with a preferred location adjacent to buildings. A build-to line should be established in this area at 116 feet from the Pike centerline, which will bring buildings 10 feet closer to the centerline than the rest of the Pike, and provide more developable area for individual sites.

Reducing the number of curb cuts from the main travel lanes should be a priority in this area, as it is in the entire corridor, to improve traffic flow in the main lanes while maintaining access to all properties.

### **Exception 2: Rockville Champion Projects**

A “Rockville Champion Project”, as defined by this plan, is a development project

- 1) that is located in the South Pike;
- 2) that contains at least five contiguous acres;
- 3) for which the Mayor and Council is the approving authority; and
- 4) that advances one or more of the following goals:
  - Supports increased multifamily housing near the Twinbrook Metro Station by, for example,
    - providing more than the minimum requirement of affordable housing,
    - or

- increasing the number of dwelling units that can be built.
- Provides more than the required 15% publicly accessible space. A portion of the publicly accessible space could be indoor space for a community amenity.
- Provides increased mobility options by building new streets and/or providing or constructing Vision Zero infrastructure, and/or providing pedestrian-bicycle connectivity over/under the CSX/Metro tracks between Lewis Avenue in Twinbrook and Rockville Pike. (See page 4-19 for a description of Vision Zero).

Any project that meets all of the four above-stated numbered criteria will not be required to provide access roads or easements for access roads, and any existing access easements would be abandoned, if that is the preference of the property owner. An alternative street section for Champion Projects, that eliminates the access lane and adjacent on-street parking but includes the sidewalk, bicycle infrastructure and other features and dimensions of those features, is shown in Figure 4.5. All buildings of any Champion Project must be located at least 103 feet from the centerline of the Pike. The specifics of the individual features may vary at implementation with the approval of the Mayor and Council, as long as there is continuity of the bike lanes and sidewalks with adjoining parcels. Champion Projects also may be eligible to build at higher heights than are allowed by zoning, if approved by the Mayor and Council.

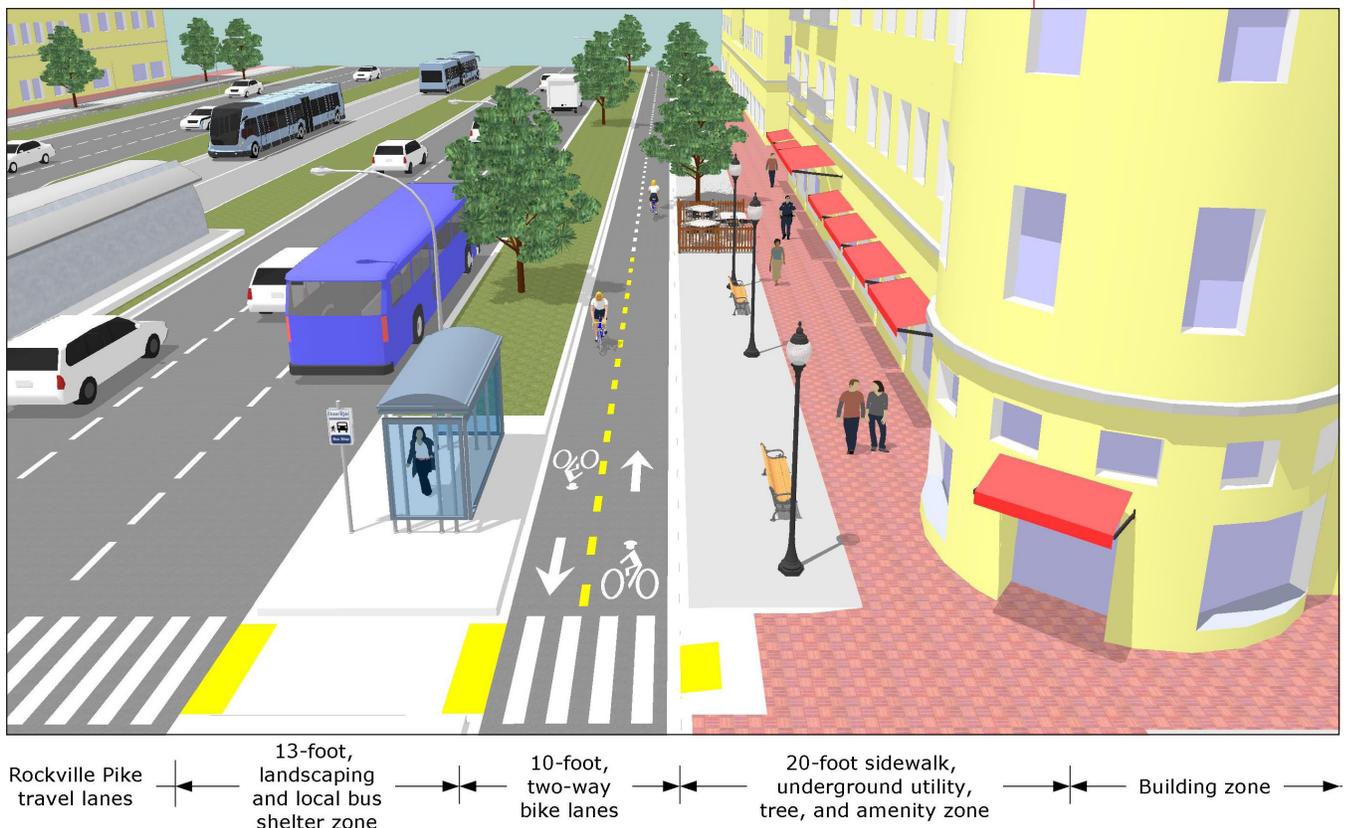


Figure 4.5: Alternative Pike Street Section (Rockville Champion Projects)

### *Benefits of the multi-way boulevard approach*

Besides increasing transportation efficiency and safety, one of the best reasons for converting the existing Pike arterial to a multi-way boulevard is to enrich the pedestrian experience. The access road is really where place-making begins because walking alongside the access roads, buffered from the central roadway, is more like walking beside an urban neighborhood street than walking alongside a busy, high volume thoroughfare. Using this design, pedestrians will be at least 56 feet from the edge of the main thoroughfare in the South and West Pike sections where the formal access roads will be built. Today, sidewalks are immediately adjacent to the Pike, or separated only by a narrow strip of grass. The design for the access road shown in Figure 4.4 can greatly improve walking conditions elsewhere on the Pike.

#### **The multi-way boulevard approach will:**

- *Allow for the separation of local and regional trips.* The separation improves the flow in the outer lane of the Rockville Pike mainline as vehicles no longer need to slow down to make right turns into individual driveways. The boulevard design offers a more controlled situation with limited ingress to and egress from the access roads and fewer curb cuts. The outer right lane, in particular, is safer and is kept flowing by reducing the number of driveway conflicts and turning movements.
- *Create the conditions for a shift in the transportation modal split along the Pike,* from heavy reliance on the private automobile to a range of transportation choices.
- *Make the Pike safer* by separating pedestrians and cyclists from faster-moving vehicles. The large number of curb cuts, long blocks, limited pedestrian connections, and lack of protected bike facilities, make today's Pike challenging for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians alike.
- *Provide a variety of tools to ensure that pedestrians may cross the Pike safely,* including refuge areas and adequately-timed pedestrian walk signals.
- *Integrate the Twinbrook Metro Station into the corridor and make transit a more attractive option* by increasing convenience for Metrorail and bus riders through improved sidewalks, protected crossings at intersections, an expanded street network, and the creation and improvement of pedestrian-friendly streets linking the station to the Pike. This is an important benefit because the Twinbrook Station is one of the City's two major transit locations (the other being the Rockville Station, located just north of the study area) and provides direct access from the regional rail transit network to the South Pike area that has the greatest potential for redevelopment.
- *Anticipate and plan for additional high capacity transit* to operate along the boulevard, if the County implements its Bus Rapid Transit initiative.
- *Bring pedestrians and bicycle users closer to the land uses of the Pike,* improve the experience of the road for non-motorized users, and expand bicycle access and safety through the multi-way boulevard's protected bicycle lanes.
- *Reinforce the role of the corridor as a significant commercial attraction in the region,*

*while planning for increased numbers of residents.* Paralleling national trends, Washington D.C. region consumers have shown increasing acceptance of and participation in pedestrian-oriented shopping/mixed-use environments in which significant numbers of residents and local workers walk or bike to retail clusters.

- *Facilitate the transformation of the corridor into an attractive place.* This is accomplished by the replacement of today’s undistinguished appearance with tree-lined streets and sidewalks and the relocation of above-ground utility lines to below ground. It is also accomplished through development regulations that, over time, will shape redeveloped properties in ways that are consistent with the vision of the community as expressed in this plan.
- *Create a healthier community* in terms of a reduced carbon footprint, better air quality, and the promotion of more active lifestyles.
- *Provide space for stormwater management* in the medians that separate the main lanes from the access lanes.

**Access points, median breaks, and intersection movements**

Access points between the main roadway and the access roads are limited with the recommended boulevard design, resulting in a significant reduction in curb cuts along the thoroughfare’s right lanes (see Table 4.1). Eliminating individual driveways for every property adds capacity and improves safety in the thoroughfare’s right lanes, by reducing the “stop and start” experience that is common at present, and reducing encounters between through traffic and pedestrians. As shown in Figure 4.6, traffic from the main lanes would generally enter the access roads beyond a signalized intersection and merge back into the main lanes prior to the next signalized intersection.

**Table 4.1  
Comparison of Existing & Recommended Intersections & Access Points**

	Existing	Recommended
Signalized Intersections	8	10
Unsignalized Median Breaks	11	0
Pike Access Points/Curb Cuts	85	38

Unsignalized median breaks would be eliminated at the time that the BRT infrastructure is built, but traffic signals are added to two intersections (one in the Middle Pike and one in the North Pike, with definitive locations to be determined based on new street alignments and coordinated with Maryland State Highway Administration). The new signals will further improve intersection operations, allow for more vehicular movement choices, and provide additional locations for pedestrians to safely cross the Pike. They would be coordinated with existing signals to maintain traffic flow along the Pike.

There are two recommended intersection traffic patterns that may be applied along the “typical” sections of the boulevard, identified below as Options 1 and 2.

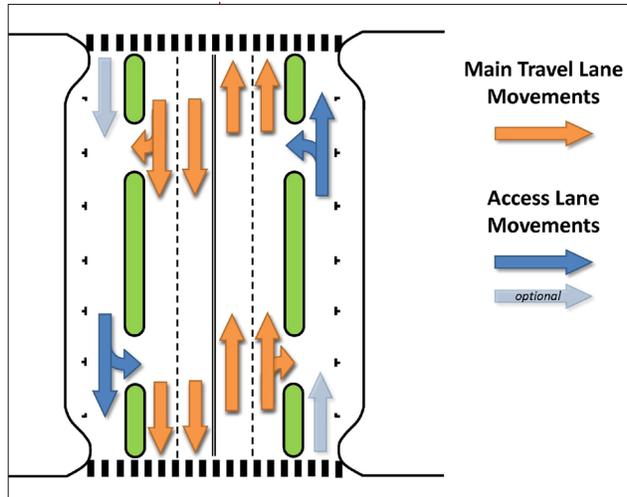


Figure 4.6: Typical Access Lane Operation Concept

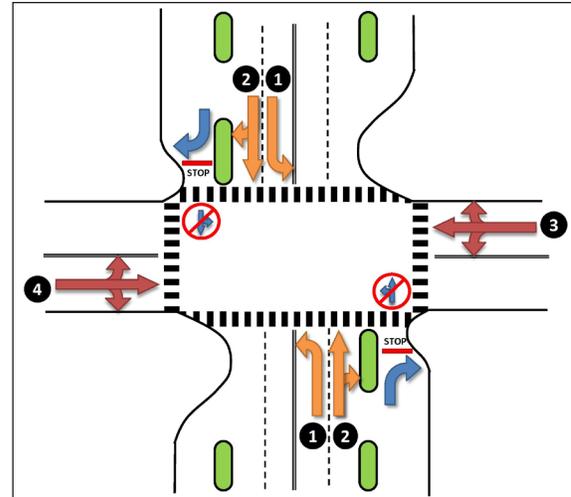


Figure 4.7: Intersection Option 1

Note: Figures 4.6-4.8 are derived from Kinley-Horn and Associates, Inc. intersection graphic in *Institute for Traffic Engineers, Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*, March 2010.

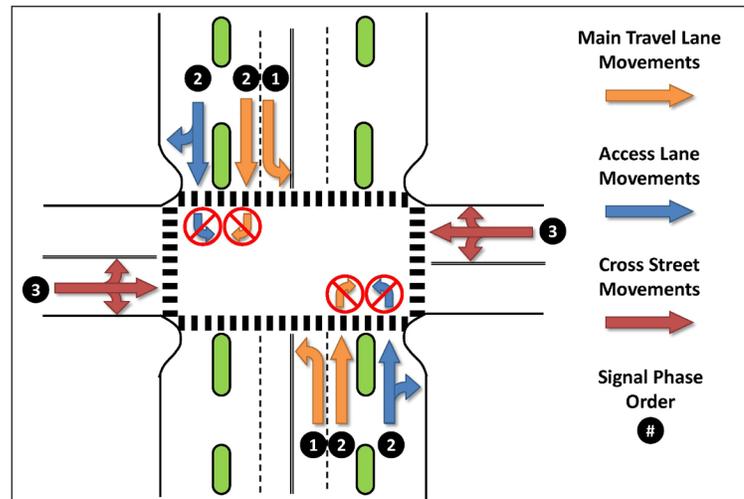


Figure 4.8: Intersection Option 2

Each option has its own advantages for different circumstances. The choice for each intersection will be made at the engineering phase of plan implementation.

**Option 1: (Figure 4.7)**

- All turns are permitted directly from the main line at signalized intersections.
- Right turns are allowed from the access lanes, after stopping and yielding to main line turning vehicles.
- Vehicles in the access lanes may not turn left or continue straight through the intersection.

**Option 2: (Figure 4.8)<sup>5</sup>**

- Traffic on the access lanes is able to proceed through or turn right at an intersection under signal control, but not turn left.
- Right turns are not permitted directly from the main roadway to a side street.

<sup>5</sup> Figures 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 do not reflect the number of lanes for each function. These figures are only meant to show movement options. They are not reflective of the boulevard cross-section design.

- To access a side street from the main road, traffic would enter the access lanes prior to the intersection or stay on the main lanes to make a left turn.
- Traffic on the access lanes going through the intersection up to the next entrance from the main lanes would yield to the traffic entering the access lanes.
- Traffic can exit the access lanes at a designated exit point prior to the next signalized intersection.

## 2. EXPAND THE STREET NETWORK

Expanding the street network will increase connectivity and movement choice within the Plan Area, diffuse traffic congestion, space intersections for more frequent and convenient pedestrian crossing opportunities, and create a regular pattern of developable urban blocks. The proposed alignments for new and extended streets are shown in Figure 4.9, the Street Master Plan. The Street Master Plan will require the construction of new streets as development occurs along the corridor, but the general locations and alignments shown are illustrative and could be changed based on specific development proposals and engineering data.

In the North Pike, an extension of Fleet Street between Ritchie Parkway and Mt. Vernon Place was a recommendation of the 1989 Pike Plan and the 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan. This plan removes that recommendation. Recommendations for the expanded street network in the South and Middle Pike are described below.

### South Pike

The South Pike offers a good opportunity to expand the corridor's street network because of the existing large blocks. Major road recommendations for the South Pike are shown in Figure 4.10 and described below.

#### Chapman Avenue Extension

The key transportation element in the South Pike, on the east side, is extending Chapman Avenue north to one block beyond Congressional Lane (as shown also extended in Figure 4.10) and creating a grid connecting Rockville Pike and Chapman Avenue. This extension of Chapman Avenue will improve circulation and provide an alternative to using the Pike for local trips. The extension does not continue north through the entire corridor because of the dimensional constraints on properties on the east side of the Pike. Instead, it would end at a new east-west street that would cross the Pike and connect to East Jefferson Street.<sup>6</sup>

The alignment of the Chapman Avenue extension that was recommended in the 1989 Rockville Pike Plan only anticipated development on the west side of

<sup>6</sup> South of the City border, Chapman Avenue is a private street. A southward extension of it will likely be a transportation network discussion in the context of Montgomery County's White Flint 2 Sector Plan, which is underway now. The Rockville Pike Plan supports extension of this road to the south to improve connectivity.

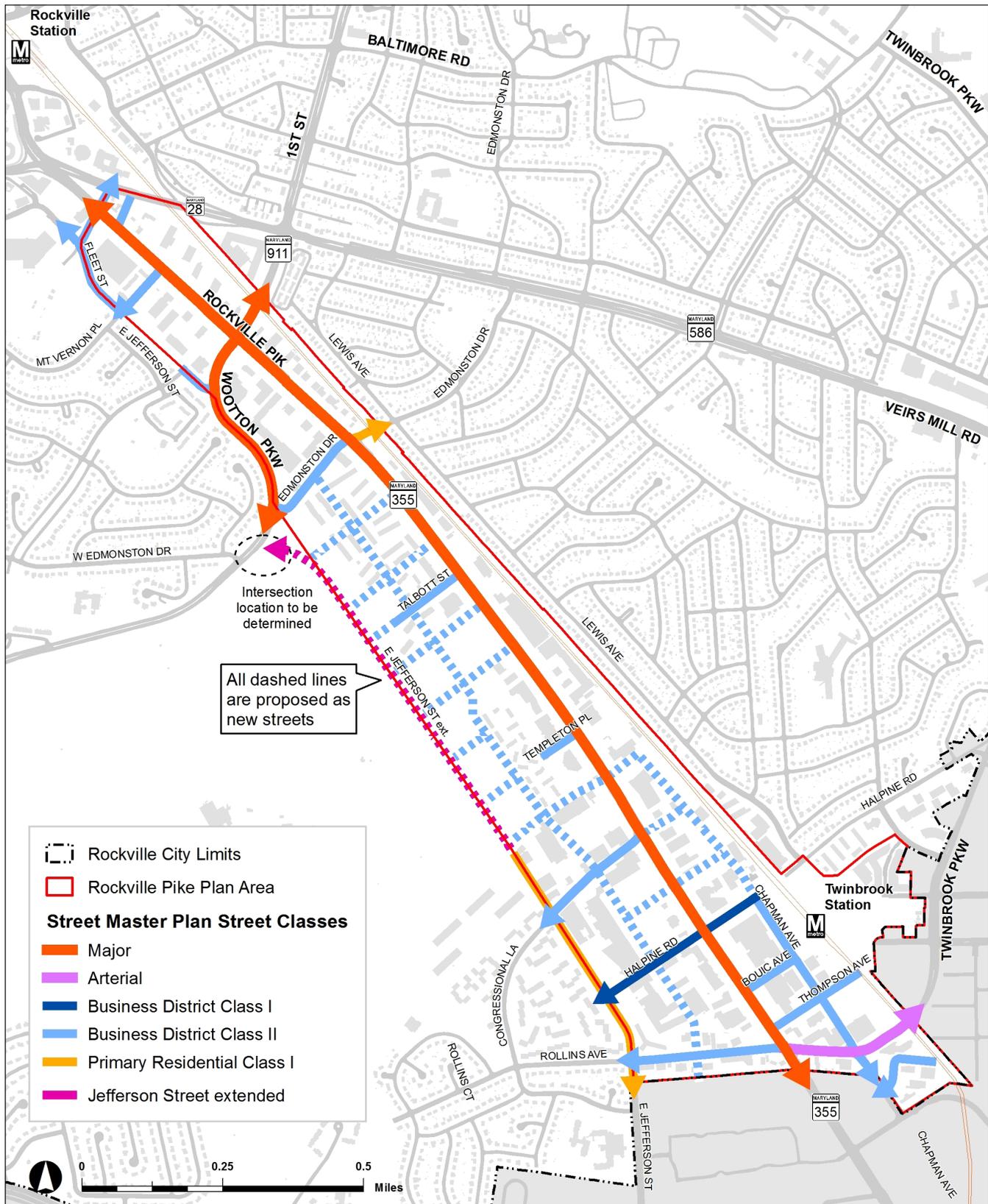


Figure 4.9: Street Master Plan

Chapman, but explicitly endorsed that the final alignment could be adjusted. The alignment for the first segment of this extension was adjusted in 2011 in the context of the approval of a development project. Through negotiations with other affected property owners, a revised alignment that allows development to occur on both sides of the road was conceived and approved. This level of flexibility is appropriate for the street network proposed in this plan.

**Other street network**

A north-south street is recommended west of the Pike, between the existing Jefferson Street and the Pike, which would continue through the Middle Pike to Edmonston Drive. Other streets would add connections between the east and west sides of the Pike and create smaller blocks. Congressional Lane is shown connecting Rockville Pike and Chapman Avenue extended, and a new street is proposed between Congressional Lane and Halpine Road.

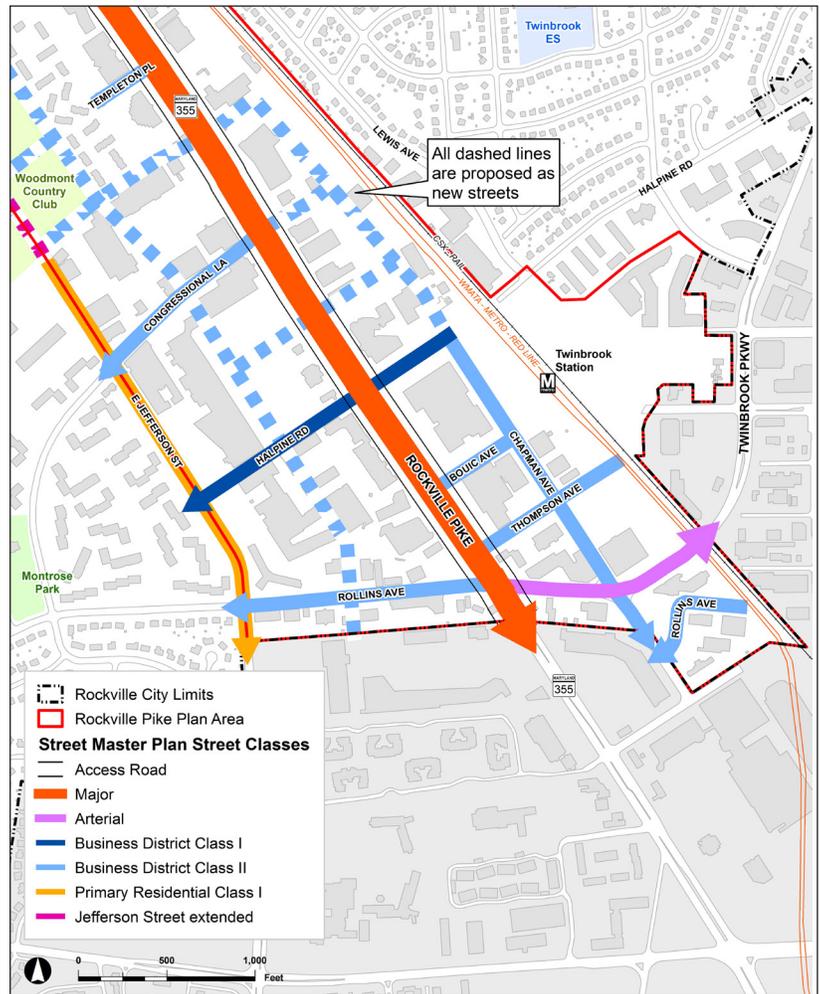


Figure 4.10: South Pike Street Master Plan

Figure 4.10 is illustrative only. As elsewhere in the Plan Area, the recommended street alignments could be altered based on specific development proposals and engineering data.

**The Middle Pike**

This section of the corridor currently contains the fewest roadway connections, but it has the opportunity to add the most road network, on the west side of the Pike. This plan’s approach to improving connectivity, given the unique conditions of the Middle Pike, is discussed below.

**The East Jefferson Street Extension**

The most important transportation element for the Middle Pike is the extension of East Jefferson Street from where it currently ends, just north of Congressional Lane, northward to Wootton Parkway (as shown in Figure 4.12). Because it would offer a parallel alternative to Rockville Pike, this extension would alleviate some of the congestion on the Pike, such as at its intersections with Congressional Lane and Twinbrook Parkway, both of which are highly congested at peak times. The East Jefferson Street extension should be considered in conjunction with any development or

*Added street network improves walkability and connectivity.*

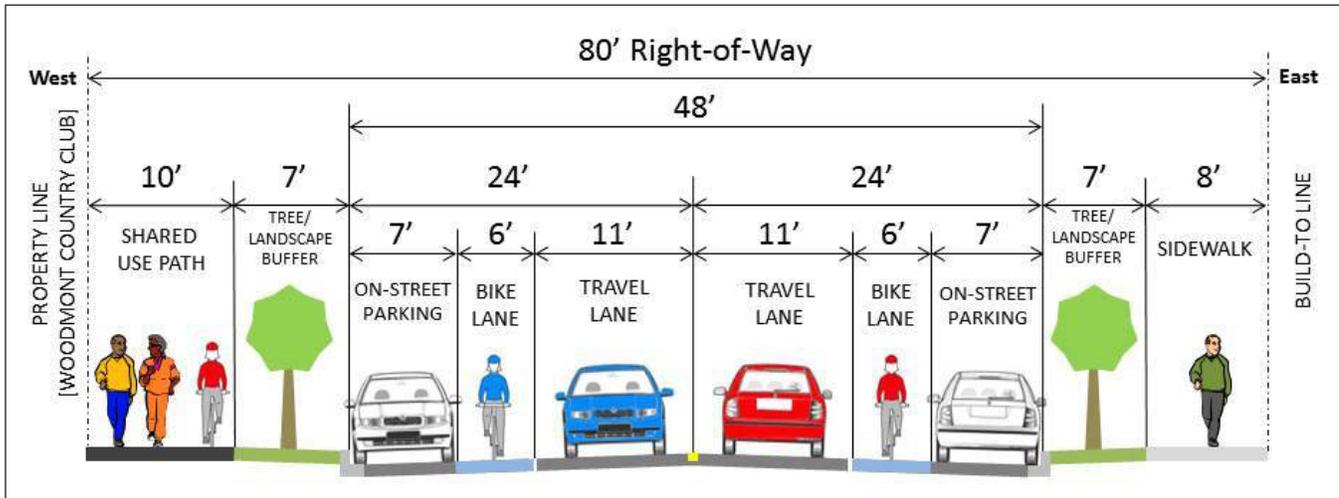


Figure 4.11: E. Jefferson Street Conceptual Street Section

redevelopment that produces a significant impact on these intersections.

The conceptual cross-section, shown in Figure 4.11, includes two travel lanes (one in each direction), bike lanes, on-street parking, tree lawns, a sidewalk on the east side, and a shared use path on the west side. These road components are consistent with the City’s “Complete Streets Policy,” which was adopted in July 2009. Complete streets provide facilities for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists, to the extent appropriate for the land use or the context of the street.



Figure 4.12: Middle Pike Street Master Plan

This cross-section design assumes development only in the Rockville Pike plan area. Should the road be built in the context of a larger-scale development on the Woodmont Country Club site, it would be appropriate to re-evaluate the cross-section. In any case, the street should conform to the City’s Complete Street Policy.

Incorporating these components into the design of the Jefferson Street extension would not only add multi-modal capacity, it would strengthen connections between existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure at the north and south ends of the Pike corridor. The Millennium Trail along Wootton Parkway and the Bethesda Trolley Trail are two of the key bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout central Montgomery County. While

implementing the multi-way boulevard design for Rockville Pike is an important step in linking the Pike to these two facilities, a future extension of Jefferson Street should further accommodate cyclists and pedestrians in making the link.

The cross-section and alignment shown in this plan are for illustrative purposes only. The exact dimensions, operating characteristics, and alignment of the extension and its connection to Wootton Parkway will be determined based on conditions at the time of implementation, including development proposals and the area's geography. Under all circumstances, however, the alignment and road design should be protective of existing residences and take into account impacts to the club.

### **Added Street Grid between Rockville Pike and the Jefferson Street Extension**

Figure 4.12 conceptually illustrates the recommended street additions in the Middle Pike. It shows a grid of approximately equally dimensioned blocks, roughly four acres in size. This is consistent with the land use section of this chapter, which establishes that block faces be no longer than 500 feet in length without an alley, common drive, access easement, or pedestrian pathway providing through access. Blocks should also be no larger than four acres, or 1,600 feet in total perimeter.

This approach will help to achieve the goal of creating developable blocks in a more pedestrian environment. The grid respects existing property lines and buildings where feasible, but it is expected that this network would be built only in conjunction with owners redeveloping their properties, in which case current building locations may be irrelevant.

The Middle Pike street grid follows the north and south property lines of the Woodmont Country Club entrance fronting Rockville Pike, which would allow that property to be developed intact as a single project without crossing property lines or being bisected by a street. It also aligns a north-south street between the Pike and the East Jefferson Street extension at the rear of the Woodmont Overlook townhouse complex, as this residential area is not expected to be redeveloped during the timeframe of this plan.

The new roads are required; however, alignments of all of these streets, as with the Jefferson Street extension, are flexible and may be adjusted based on actual development programs. Sensitivity to existing residences and businesses will always be an important consideration in determining the final alignments. Compliance with the City's regulations on road dimensions, which can be found in Chapter 21 of the City Code, is also important. This is discussed further under the section "Adhere to the City's Complete Streets Policy," which follows.

### **Middle Pike - East Side**

There are no recommendations for added street grid on the east side of the Middle Pike because of the narrowness of this portion of the Plan Area. New signalized intersections, added street grid on the west side, and flexibility for the access road design on the east side, as previously discussed, will help to provide some circulation choices.

*Streets in the Rockville Pike Corridor will conform to the City's Complete Streets Policy.*

### 3. ADHERE TO THE CITY'S COMPLETE STREETS POLICY<sup>7</sup>

The boulevard features of Rockville Pike have been described above. The Street Master Plan shows other street types within the Plan Area, specifically Business District Class I and Business District Class II streets (Figures 4.13 and 4.14). These streets conform to the City's Complete Streets Policy in that they include features that create a multi-modal-friendly environment that accommodates all road users to the extent appropriate for the land use or the context of the street. The Business District Class I and II streets described here will be designed in accordance with Chapter 21 of the Rockville City Code, but their general characteristics are described below. Their wider sidewalks, landscape/tree buffers, and bicycle accommodations all contribute to the land use policies of this plan.

#### Halpine Road – Business District Class I Street

A Business District Class I street consists of two or more lanes in each direction and may be divided by a median. Halpine Road is identified as the only Business District Class I street in the Plan Area. It is an important road in that it provides a connection across Rockville Pike to the Twinbrook Metro Station. Halpine's current road design and width changes from the west side of the Pike to the east side: it is a multi-lane road that is divided by a median west of the Pike, but not east of the Pike; and it has on-street parking only east of the Pike. Halpine will likely continue in its current configuration in the near term, as existing buildings prevent any significant changes. Extensive redevelopment, however, would prompt the City to implement the full Business District Class I street design shown in Figure 4.13. Additional right-of-way would need to be obtained. As recommended in this plan, the Halpine Business District Class I street would be a multi-lane, divided roadway with dedicated bike lanes, wide sidewalks and landscaped buffers between the bike lane and the sidewalk. On-street parking also could be included if needed.

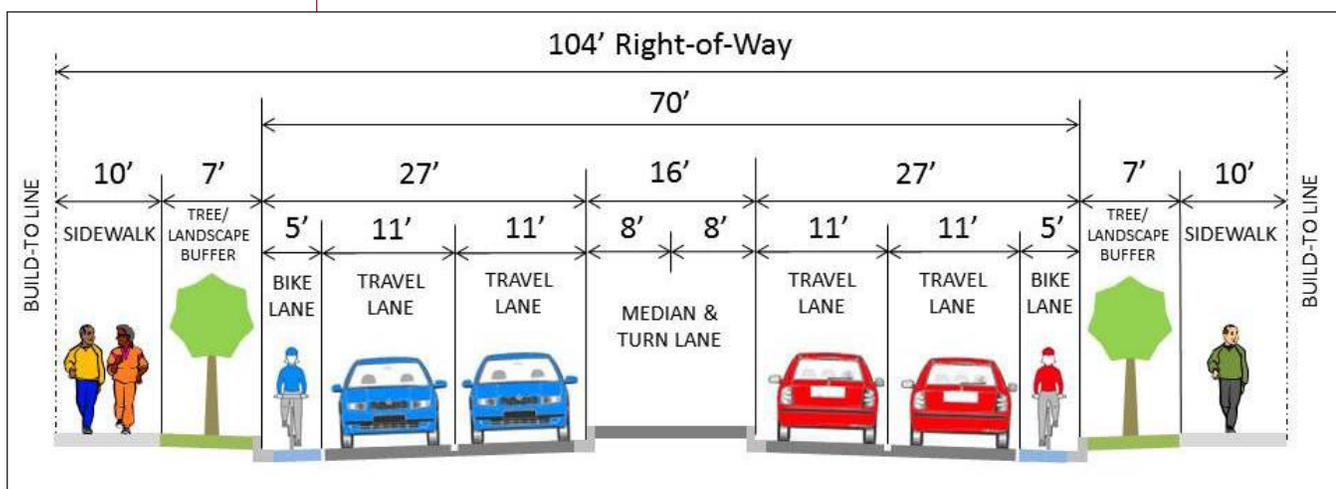


Figure 4.13: Business District Class I Street Cross Section

<sup>7</sup> According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, "complete" streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

### Business District Class II Streets

A Business District Class II street consists of one lane in each direction and is not separated by a median. Most of the streets within the Plan Area, both existing and proposed, are identified in the Street Master Plan as Business District Class II streets (see Figure 4.14). These streets are undivided roadways with one travel lane in each direction, as well as on-street parking, sidewalks and buffer areas between the sidewalk and parking lane. Bicycle facilities (such as bike lanes or shared use paths defined with sharrow symbols<sup>8</sup>) may also be included on Business District Class II streets, as directed by the City’s Bikeway Master Plan.

This plan establishes that the City take advantage of opportunities to upgrade all Business District Class II streets to the standards provided by this plan.

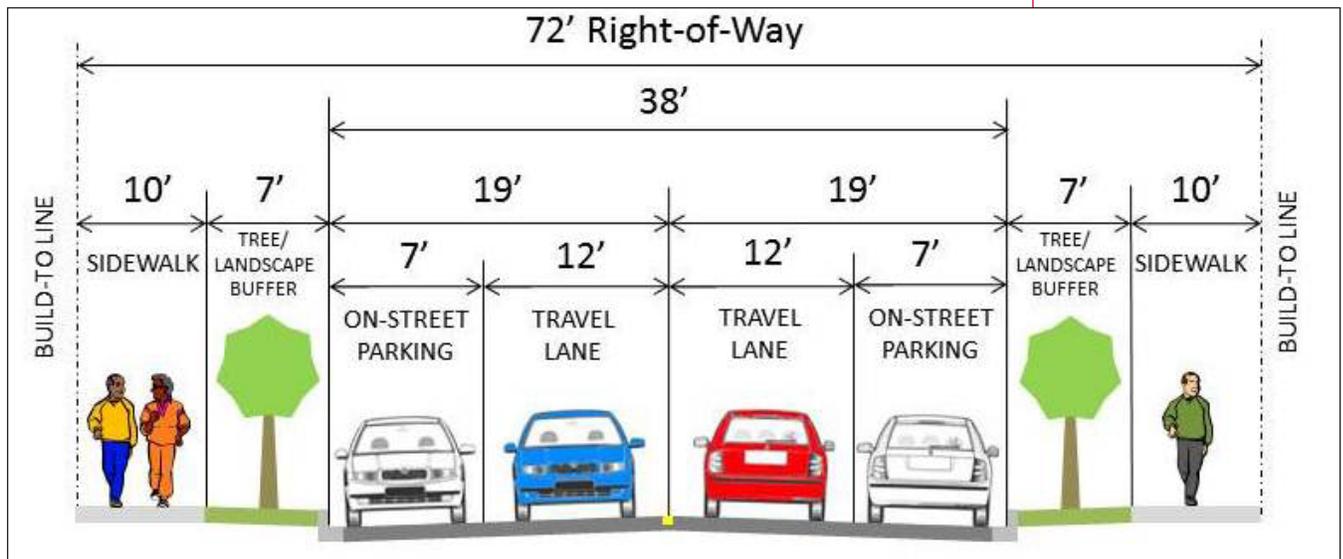


Figure 4.14: Business District Class II Street Cross Section

### Other Streets

Other roads in the Plan Area include residential (existing East Jefferson Street) and existing arterials (First Street and Wootton Parkway, west of Rockville Pike).

## 4. ADHERE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF VISION ZERO

Vision Zero is a collaborative international movement to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries through a series of practices that put the safety and health of human beings as the primary interest of a road network. There is a wide variety of strategies, including many that focus on improved safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and other vulnerable users. As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), Vision Zero has four main principles:

- 1) *Ethics*. Human life and health are paramount and take priority over mobility and other objectives of the road traffic system.

<sup>8</sup> Sharrow symbols are pavement markings that indicate that bicyclists may share the lane.

- 2) *Responsibility*. Providers and regulators of the road traffic system share responsibility with users.
- 3) *Safety*. Road traffic systems should take account of human error and minimize both the opportunities for error and the harm done when they occur.
- 4) *Mechanisms for Change*. Providers, regulators, and road users must be ready and willing to change to achieve safety.

Rockville already incorporates many of the Vision Zero principles to some degree. They can continue to be implemented through the City's Complete Streets Policy, the Road Code, pedestrian safety CIP projects, and development review. Wider implementation of Vision Zero practices will likely require designated funding.

## 5. OPTIMIZE ACCESS TO AND USE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Rockville Pike corridor is currently served by a combination of transit routes and modes. Ride On buses provide local and county-oriented service, while Metro bus and rail serve the larger metropolitan area. The provision of safe, reliable, and convenient transit is critical to providing a more robust suite of travel options in the corridor, which will also reduce pressure on automobile infrastructure.

*A goal is to produce inviting public spaces.*

### *Metrorail*

The proximity to the Metro Red Line and the location of the Twinbrook Metro Station are significant assets in this corridor, whose value will only increase over time. However, safety and capacity issues must be addressed. Planning initiatives to the north and south of Rockville also assume increased transit use and the same modal shift goals. This plan advocates for the full utilization of Metro's Red Line in terms of extending all northbound service to the Shady Grove Station, providing minimum safe headways, and maximizing the number of cars on trains as needed to accommodate the anticipated increase in use within and outside of Rockville. The Twinbrook Metro Station should be integrated into the corridor by providing good pedestrian and bicycle access and adequate bicycle storage.

### *Other Rapid Transit*

The currently proposed countywide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, and the proposed Rockville Pike BRT route in particular, have the potential to yield an enormous impact on the corridor and the share of travel accommodated by transit. The City should continue to participate actively in discussions regarding any BRT system. If such a system is to be implemented, Rockville should solicit support for at least one BRT stop in the Middle Pike, because that section of the Plan Area is least accessible to Metrorail, in addition to stops near Metrorail stations to ensure that the transit systems integrate. The City should also advocate for bicycle parking at or near BRT stations.

## Local Buses

It will be particularly important, as the City moves toward a more multi-modal environment, to ensure that local service is not only retained, but improved, for people within the corridor as well as those using it to access the corridor from other neighborhoods. Rockville should participate fully in any discussions of re-routing local bus service in the context of adding a new transit service. If BRT plays a regional role, Rockville will need to ensure that it does not displace local service and that the local bus service increases to serve everyone, particularly those who are not within walking distance of the BRT or Metro. Consideration should also be given to providing a local bus or shuttle service that would connect Rockville's commercial nodes.

The public transportation that is available today does not offer adequate service to provide a practical alternative to people driving vehicles to and from most residential locations in Rockville. Consideration should be given to developing a system of local shuttles that routinely circulate through routes that link the Plan Area to other parts of the City and for which a largely sustaining demand can be generated over time.

## PRINCIPAL LAND USE POLICIES

This section describes the land use vision for the Rockville Pike Plan Area, provides guidance for its implementation and direction for future revisions to regulatory documents. The vision is for a livable, desirable, and economically vibrant environment defined by thoughtful urban design, multi-modal transportation, active public spaces, and green spaces.

During the planning process for *Rockville Pike*, the concept of transforming the Plan Area into a more appealing environment for walking generated the strongest and most consistent support from public participants. Making the corridor walkable renders stores and other destinations more accessible to everyone – bus riders, drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users – because walking becomes at least a part of every trip, even if it is just from the bus stop to one's apartment or from a car to one or more destinations.

The transportation improvements recommended earlier in this chapter will help to improve the safety of pedestrian and bicycle experiences by separating travel modes and creating a more finely developed street network. These improvements need to be supported by intentional design that will also help to make walking and biking pleasant, create a distinctive corridor and new urban neighborhoods. This plan's land use recommendations are in service of this goal.

While enhancing the pedestrian environment is an important goal, this plan acknowledges that the character of the Rockville Pike corridor is not, and should not be, the same for the entire two miles. Different parts of the corridor contain their own set of unique characteristics, land use and economic conditions, and related challenges and opportunities. These factors have an impact on how the plan addresses land use solutions and how future growth may be accommodated.

As noted earlier in the Principal Transportation Policies section of this chap-

*The vision is for a livable, desirable, and economically vibrant environment.*

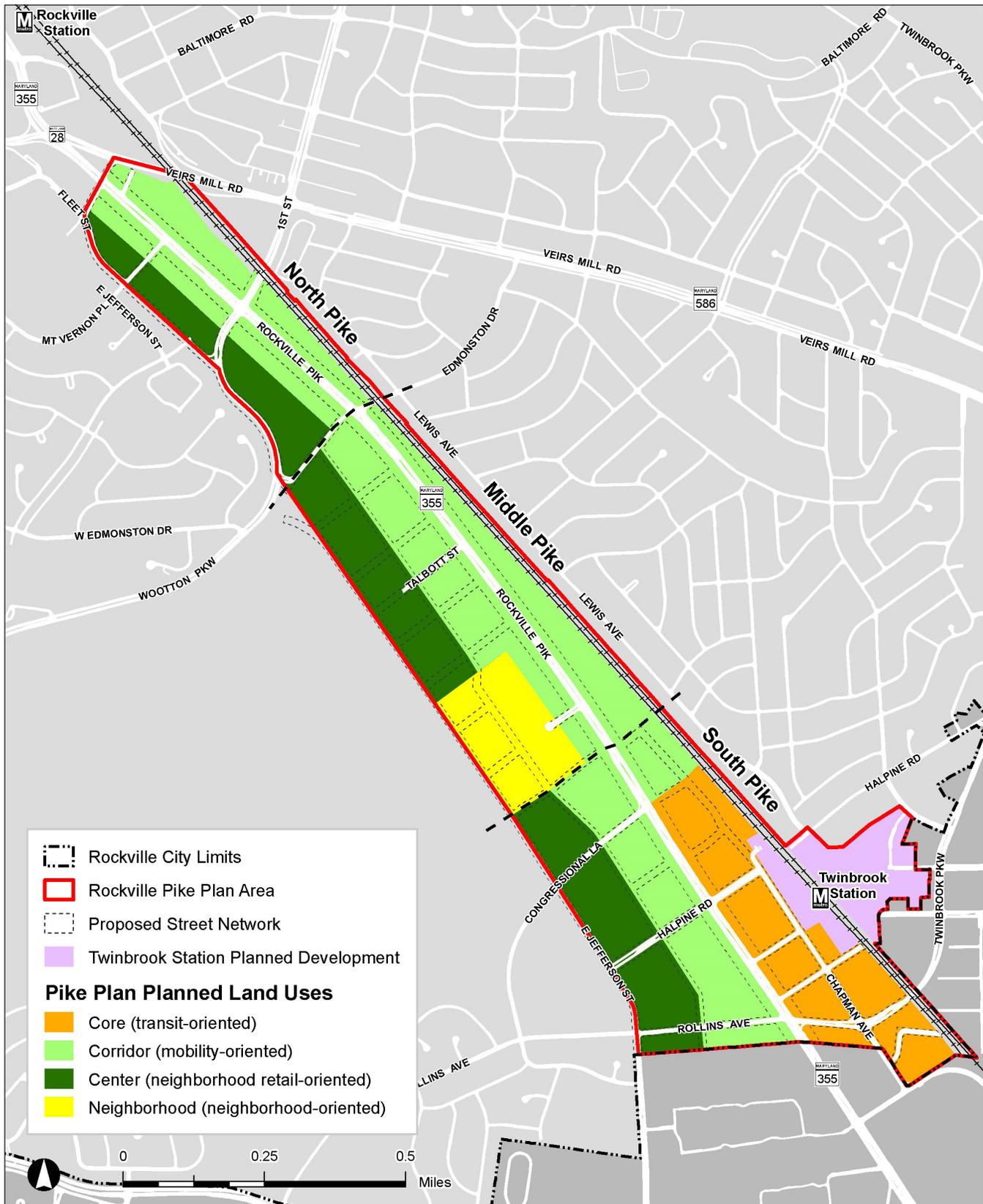


Figure 4.15: Land Use Plan

ter, the east side of the Pike, in the North and Middle sections of the plan area, presents specific challenges. This area, due to its narrow geographic configuration, wedged between the railroad tracks and the Pike, has limited potential to achieve some of the objectives that are desired for the South and West Pike, such as multi-story buildings and a highly pedestrian environment. The economics of development could change here, however, if a BRT line is built along the Pike or if the west side of the North and Middle Pike becomes activated through redevelopment.

**Principal land use policies of this plan include the following:**

1. Seek to ensure a comfortable and functional relationship between public infrastructure and the private built environment
2. Require buildings to be adjacent to sidewalks
3. Regulate building height by location
4. Create smaller blocks
5. Provide wide and pleasant sidewalks
6. Enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment
7. Ensure a mix of uses
8. Ensure that new neighborhoods will accommodate residents of all incomes
9. Ensure adequacy of public facilities
10. Encourage enduring architecture that has visual interest
11. Provide parks
12. Require the creation of public use space through redevelopment
13. Promote development that improves environmental conditions
14. Strategically locate and right-size parking

**I. SEEK TO ENSURE A COMFORTABLE AND FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE PRIVATE BUILT ENVIRONMENT.**

This plan addresses the relationship between building façades and public infrastructure, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, the public spaces formed by the disposition of buildings, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. This physical form approach emphasizes the built environment and the public realm's character with the goal of producing inviting public spaces. At the same time, it allows flexibility for the uses and activities that occur behind the building façade. The emphasis on form and scale means that a variety of uses can be allowed and mixed, as long as they conform to specified physical requirements.

The land use plan provided in Figure 4.15 divides the Plan Area into four land use designations: Core, Corridor, Center, and Neighborhood. These designations provide guidance for building standards and other development regulations that

*The location of buildings next to sidewalks structures the environment for pedestrians.*

are provided in the Zoning Ordinance.

Some areas will support a very active pedestrian environment, made possible by easy access to multiple transportation modes and a mix of uses. Most of the South Pike, east of Rockville Pike, is identified in the land use plan as the “**Core**” area. The Core is where the highest density should be encouraged, by 1) allowing the tallest building heights in the Plan Area and 2) requiring that the majority of building façades be located at the sidewalk.

The land use plan identifies all of Rockville Pike as the “**Corridor**.” However, building placement, height, and form standards should be refined to reflect the different characteristics of the South, Middle, and North Pike and the east and west sides. Maximum building heights should allow for a coherent look along the length of the boulevard, while allowing for some differentiation in heights. Lower heights should be mandated on the east side of the Middle and North Pike where parcels are located proximate to existing Twinbrook houses on Lewis Avenue. As in the Core, the majority of any building façade in the Corridor should be located at the sidewalk.

A “**Center**” designation is appropriate for locations where a similar, but less intense, development character to the Core and Corridor is desirable. These areas support an active pedestrian environment and a mix of uses, including retail, that primarily serve the surrounding neighborhood, but maximum building heights are lower than in the Core and the Corridor.

“**Neighborhood**” areas are more conducive to serving residential uses of varying scales, styles, and densities, with some inclusion of business services. Maximum building heights are the lowest in the Neighborhood areas.

## 2. REQUIRE BUILDINGS TO BE ADJACENT TO SIDEWALKS

This plan establishes that buildings will be constructed adjacent to public sidewalks, to frame the public realm, structure the environment for pedestrians, and position pedestrians where land uses are located (in contrast to the 1989 *Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan* where sidewalks were separated from land uses). Building facades create an edge that helps to define public and private space, minimize ambiguous spaces, and establish an appealing place.

A continuous, yet varied, edge can be achieved by establishing a “build-to” line at the sidewalk on all streets within the Plan Area, and then requiring a certain percentage of building façade to be placed at that build-to line. While 100% of all façades of all buildings may be placed right at the build-to line, the percentage that is required to be at the build-to line should vary throughout the Plan Area, depending on the volume of pedestrian activity expected and desired.

Providing a clear delineation of public versus private spaces with a build-to line reduces the number of areas that are not obviously public or clearly private. Examples of such spaces are sprawling parking lots. People are often uncomfortable in these spaces, particularly when other people are not around, and they are always difficult places to walk.

All street-fronting building façades should be allowed to step back a small amount from the build-to line to allow for bay windows and other façade articulation on buildings, planters, stoops, stairs, etc. without encroachment into the public realm.

The lowest floors of a building are most important to providing street level activity as well as a sense of enclosure. For these reasons, the minimum percentage of building required at the build-to line should be applied only to the first two floors. Developers are given flexibility as to how they will achieve this goal. For example, if 70% of the building is required to be at the build-to line, 100% of the ground floor could be placed at the build-to line and only 40% would be required at the second story level, or vice versa. Other permutations would be allowed, as long as the average percentage required for a particular land use area is achieved by the first two floors.

The highest proportion of building façade at the build-to line is recommended for buildings that face Rockville Pike and streets that are closest to the Twinbrook Metro Station where pedestrian activity, and associated retail uses, is anticipated to be high. It is important for these buildings to frame the street and provide a sense of spatial enclosure.

Lower proportions of building façade at the build-to line should be required where pedestrian activity is expected to be less, such as areas with the Neighborhood land use designation. A more flexible requirement in these areas allows for residential driveways and small front yards and will allow more “private” uses to be set back from the street.

In all cases, any lot section along a build-to line that is not defined by a building should be defined by a wall, vegetation, or some other delineation to continue the clear edge to the street-space where the buildings do not do so. A change in paving material or color may serve this purpose when a commercial or residential driveway meets a sidewalk.

The build-to line is zero feet from the back of sidewalk for all streets within the Plan Area, except along the east side of the Pike in the North and Middle Pike where the formal access road is not required, meaning that there may not be a public sidewalk at the front of buildings. If the public sidewalk is located adjacent to the Pike, there must be a buffer between the sidewalk and the travel lanes. There the build-to line is defined as 116 feet from the Pike centerline; it is 126 feet from the Pike centerline for all other Pike fronting properties, except Champion Projects that do not include access roads. Properties adjoining the west side of the existing and proposed East Jefferson Street segments are located outside of the Plan Area and their setbacks from E. Jefferson Street would not be determined by this plan.

No side or rear setback is required anywhere in the Plan Area, but if a side or rear setback is provided, there should be a minimum setback established to allow access for maintenance and other needs.

### 3. REGULATE BUILDING HEIGHT BY LOCATION

#### Building Heights

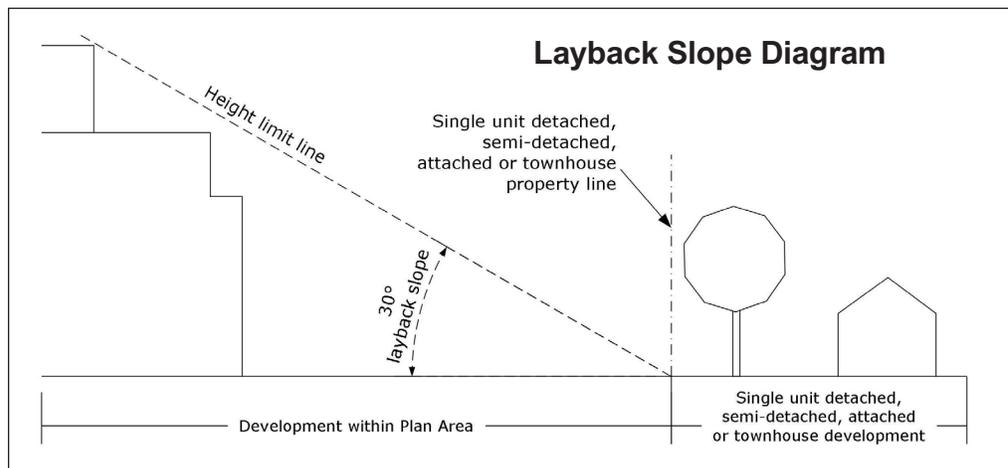
This plan provides a framework for policies on building heights in different parts of the Plan Area. The regulations for building heights are contained in the Zoning Ordinance. Different height standards are appropriate for different parts of the Plan Area. This plan recommends that buildings fronting Rockville Pike have variable heights to frame the wide boulevard and provide an opportunity for a vertical and horizontal mix of uses.

Taller buildings are acceptable in the Core, close to the Twinbrook Metro Station where strong potential exists for creating the type, intensity, and mix of uses that serve and promote transit. Developers of Champion Projects, as defined on page 4-8, may be eligible to build at greater heights than the by-right maximum heights in the Zoning Ordinance, if approved by the Mayor and Council. The maximum potential height of buildings should taper down towards the west side of the Plan Area and be lowest in the proximity of existing residential uses.

Building height should be measured in stories. Regulating height by stories is likely to result in greater variation because ceiling heights, interstitial space between floors, and roof forms will be different among buildings. There will be more incentive to design diverse roof slopes because they will not count against maximum height. Variation of building heights provides greater visual interest than rows of buildings that are all at the same elevation.

Layback slopes (see Figure 4.16) should be used to protect residential zones inside and outside of the Plan Area where single-unit detached, semi-detached, attached, or townhouse development exists or such development is recommended, without regard to intervening roads or other transportation facilities, including railroad and Metrorail right-of-way. In particular, layback slopes should also be applied to development in the Corridor frontage, on the east side of Rockville Pike, that is located across the tracks from residences on Lewis Avenue in Twinbrook. Layback slopes would not apply to development within the Core frontage of the South Pike.

*The tallest buildings are allowed near the Twinbrook Metro station, while less building height is allowed near existing residential neighborhoods.*



**Figure 4.16:** Per 25.13.05.2(d) of the City Code, a layback slope is a line beginning from the closest ground point of the lot line of any property in a residential zone measured at a 30-degree angle, within which no building can exceed in height.

## Story Heights

Ground floors, in areas where retail is allowed and envisioned, should be designed and built to accommodate retail-type uses. This approach will allow retail uses to occupy the pedestrian-level space in the future, even if the market does not yet call for that use at the time of redevelopment. It will also make buildings better able to adapt to changing market conditions and more sustainable over time. Ground floors in areas that are not envisioned to have retail uses should not be required to be designed or built for retail in terms of a minimum ceiling height.

Maximum floor-to-ceiling heights should be established for ground and upper floors in all buildings to ensure that buildings cannot be excessively tall. The maximum floor-to-ceiling height should be flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of uses. Established maximum ceiling heights would be a regulatory standard. However, if a specific desired use in a specific location has a higher height requirement, it could be approved by the appropriate approving authority.

## Accessory Buildings

Accessory buildings are allowed throughout the Plan Area, but their locations and uses should be clearly subservient to the primary building.

## 4. CREATE SMALLER BLOCKS

Since the mid-20th century, street networks in the U.S. frequently have been aligned to serve highways and high-speed traffic, resulting in declines in neighborhood connectivity and increased block sizes.<sup>9</sup> The Rockville Pike Corridor is an example, in that it features long blocks that restrict opportunities for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connectivity.

On the east side of Rockville Pike, the alignment of the Metro line parallel to the Pike has limited the number of roadway access points, resulting in an extended block length of almost 6,000 feet between Edmonston Drive and the next intersection to the south at Halpine Road.<sup>10</sup> Another long block (approximately 1,500 feet) occurs between the intersections of Edmonston Drive and First Street with the Pike. Woodmont Country Club and Wootton Parkway create similar situations on the west side of the Pike.

Long blocks discourage walking. Studies have shown that blocks that are less than 500 feet in length create better walking conditions than longer blocks and can significantly improve pedestrian connectivity. Shorter blocks allow pedestrians more choices of movement.

One of the keys to making a neighborhood walkable is having a traditional grid system of streets with good connectivity throughout the neighborhood and to areas outside the neighborhood. This approach provides for shorter walking trips

*A traditional grid system of streets provides for shorter walking trips.*

<sup>9</sup> City blocks in older U.S. cities are typically shorter than 500 feet. Ewing, R. T. Schmid, R. Killingsworth, A. Zlot and S. Raudenbush. 2008. Relationship Between Urban Sprawl and Physical Activity, Obesity, and Morbidity. *American Journal of Public Health Promotion*, 18 (1): 47-57.

<sup>10</sup> In this case, a "block" is defined as the area between two significant street crossings of the Pike.



**Figure 4.17:** On the east side of Rockville Pike, there is a block length of approximately 5,700 feet between Edmonston Drive and Halpine Road, almost as long as the National Mall in Washington, DC

and allows easy and efficient pedestrian access.

The *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* recommends reducing the size of existing blocks as part of the redevelopment process, wherever possible and practical, by creating a more developed street network than currently exists. In addition to increasing connectivity and movement choices for all travel modes, reducing block sizes produces a regular pattern of developable blocks and increased street frontage for land uses, and provides access to new development. It also increases the likelihood that a resident, employee, visitor or shopper can access multiple destinations without needing to make additional vehicular trips; they can “park once” and visit several places. Improving the pedestrian environment in this manner is a key strategy for reducing automobile trips.

Creating smaller blocks can be most readily accomplished in the South Pike and on the west side of the Middle Pike. The network can be improved by extending north-south streets such as

Jefferson Street in the Middle Pike and Chapman Avenue in the south, as well as extending east-west streets such as Congressional Lane from Rockville Pike eastward to Chapman Avenue and streets that connect the Pike to East Jefferson Street. (The recommended street master plan for the entire Plan Area is shown in Figure 4.9.)

*The sidewalk is the key component of a walkable neighborhood.*

The east side of the Plan Area, north of Templeton Place to Richard Montgomery Drive/Dodge Street, has limited potential for added street network because of its wedged position between the Pike and the railroad tracks. As previously noted, some of the lots in this approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile stretch are only about 110 feet deep. As a result, this area may not have the same potential to become as pedestrian-oriented as the South Pike or the areas west of Rockville Pike. Pleasant and safe sidewalks certainly should be provided, but some of the amenities recommended for less constricted parts of the Plan Area should be reduced or eliminated on the east side. This will ensure that there is adequate land area to accommodate viable uses and adequate unstructured parking since auto access will likely continue to be predominant here for the foreseeable future.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See the discussion of the modified boulevard access road recommended for the east side of the Middle and North Pike in the *Principal Transportation Policies* section of this chapter.

This plan encourages the creation of streets or alleys, especially when a single block or large lot is controlled by a single owner or is developed at one time, when the opportunity to incorporate street grid is most feasible. Alleys help to maintain desired connectivity and movement choices. Like the local access roads that are recommended to run parallel to the boulevard, they can also reduce the number of curb cuts on streets by providing access to multiple buildings. Alleys improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation, safety, and attractiveness of parallel streets by allowing deliveries and trash collection to be diverted from the parallel streets to the alleyways. Alleys are encouraged to be incorporated into site plans wherever they can improve connectivity and reduce curb cuts on thoroughfares.

To create optimal walking conditions, blocks should be no more than four acres in size and no block face should have a length greater than 500 feet without a public or private road, alley, or pedestrian pathway providing through-access to another street or alley. The perimeter of any block should not exceed 1,600 feet. These dimensions do not apply to the areas between the Pike and the CSX/Metro tracks or between Chapman Avenue and its extension and the tracks where east-west streets would result in dead-ends.

The street master plan (Figure 4.9) indicates general locations where streets are required, in keeping with these general guidelines and making some adjustments for properties that are not expected to redevelop during the timeframe of this plan. The street master plan should be implemented with the stipulation that these street locations and alignments may be adjusted based on specific development proposals and engineering considerations.

## 5. PROVIDE WIDE AND PLEASANT SIDEWALKS

A sidewalk is more than a path for getting from one point to another; it is also a place to gather, browse in shop windows, stand while waiting for a bus, eat at outdoor cafes, or rest on a bench. Just as streets perform multiple roles as public places and as transportation corridors, sidewalks perform multiple roles as well and can be destinations in and of themselves.

The sidewalk is a key component of a walkable neighborhood. The design and location of sidewalks are core elements of this plan. “Good” sidewalks include the following characteristics, especially in areas with commercial activity:

- They are continuous – with no gaps in the sidewalk network.
- They are installed on both sides of all streets.
- They are protected from moving traffic by a planting strip or street trees. (Parked cars also provide separation of pedestrians from traffic.)
- Wherever possible, they are contiguous to visually interesting features, such as shop windows.
- They incorporate “street furniture” and aesthetically appealing amenities.

The 1989 Rockville Pike Plan included some of the same recommendations that are proposed by this plan, including moving buildings forward, closer to the Pike. However, the 1989 plan provided for Pike sidewalks that are separated from

*This Plan encourages the creation of streets or alleys to increase connectivity and movement choices.*



*Figure 4.18: Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Conditions – Rockville Pike's pedestrian environment is limited. Pedestrians encounter narrow sidewalks, sometimes only four feet in width, and complicated intersection crossings that present challenges to disabled persons.*

the land uses by the access drives and a landscaped setback. As a result, the continuous sidewalk as envisioned in the 1989 plan is more a feature of the Pike itself, and much less a part of a complete pedestrian environment, making it still difficult and unpleasant to walk from one site to another along the corridor. This plan proposes that the continuous sidewalks be located immediately next to the land uses to encourage inter-site movement.

Sidewalks in the Plan Area should provide sufficient space that is free and clear for walking, with enough width beneath it for containment of underground public utilities. This “pedestrian zone” should be adjacent to an “amenity zone” that would serve as a buffer between the active pedestrian travel area and moving vehicular traffic. It should contain the utilitarian fixtures of an urban street, which, depending on the street and location, may include parking meters, signs, trash and recycling receptacles, and fire hydrants, as well as amenity features such as street trees, planting strips, street furniture such as benches, bike racks, and outdoor restaurant seating. Locating these sidewalk components together in the amenity zone keeps them from being obstacles in the clear pedestrian travel zone. This zone also protects pedestrians from splashes and serves as a snow storage area after street and sidewalk clearing.

The Pike (South Pike and entire west side) is recommended to have the widest amenity zone in the Plan Area. Its wide amenity zone reflects the broad dimensions of the road and also contributes to the corridor’s open space. A landscape/streetscape plan is a recommended implementation step for this plan that would provide guidance for the treatment of amenity zones by location, among other public spaces in the corridor. Undergrounding of aerial utilities is also recommended with new roads and with the redesign of Rockville Pike.

A “frontage zone” is an area adjacent to the build-to line that may be defined by a building façade, landscaping, wall or fence. This is the area where pedestrians slow down to window shop as well as enter and exit buildings. Approximately 18-24 inches is needed to allow room for doors to open, a merchandise display, or a bench against a building wall. Architectural elements that would otherwise encroach into the sidewalk, such as stoops, may occupy this zone.

A frontage zone should be provided along streets in the Plan Area. This frontage zone is in addition to the sidewalk width. All street-fronting building façades should be allowed to step back a short distance (as defined in the Zoning Ordinance) from the build-to line to allow for bay windows and other façade articulation, planters, stoops, stairs, etc. The location of the build-to line would not change. The percentage of building façade at the build-to line would apply to the areas within the frontage zone rather than to a set line. The frontage zone is privately owned and maintained space adjacent to the public sidewalk.

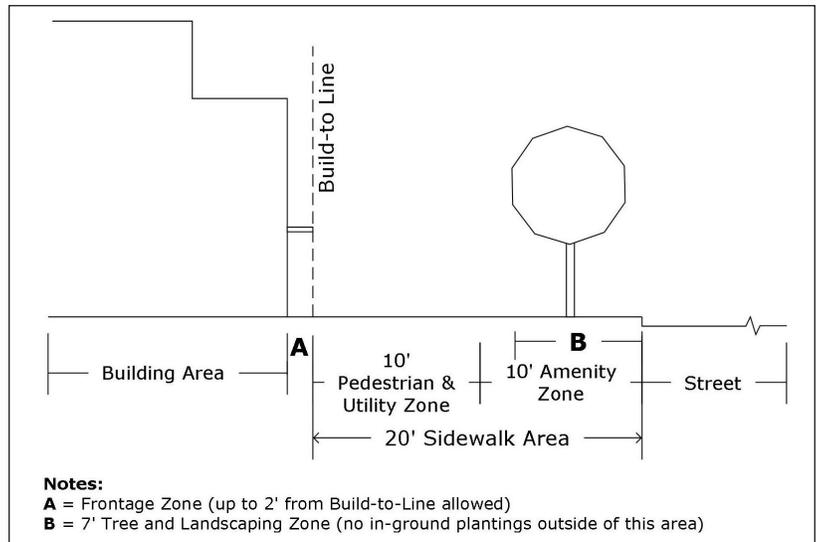


Figure 4.19 – Example of sidewalk components on Rockville Pike

## 6. ENHANCE THE PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ENVIRONMENT

Intersections can serve as points of reference and as transitional areas. This plan recommends placing emphasis on the treatment of building frontages at strategic intersections: where Rockville Pike intersects with Twinbrook Parkway and Halpine Road, and on the west side of the Pike at Edmonston Drive, Wootton Parkway, and First Street. Buildings at these corners should be chamfered (i.e., cut symmetrically at a 45-degree angle) or otherwise designed to increase the face exposure of corner buildings and to create a larger pedestrian environment (see example, Figure 4.20). These areas can be used for additional landscaping, open-air cafes and restaurants, and to mark entryway to shops. Distinctive architecture, artwork, clocks, flags, fountains, unique shops, and other place-making features are encouraged in these locations.

In addition, the first story of building facades along Halpine Road should be allowed (but not be required) to be recessed along the north side of Halpine, from Jefferson Street to the Twinbrook Metro Station, to create pedestrian arcades, similar to those recommended in the 1989 Rockville Pike Plan. This would allow for special pedestrian treatment along this important east-west street that provides direct pedestrian access to the Twinbrook Metro Station.

This plan also would favorably consider future opportunities to provide an underground, or otherwise grade-separated, crossing of Rockville Pike, at or near

*Undergrounding of aerial utilities is recommended with new roads and with the redesign of the Pike.*



**Figure 4.20:** This illustrative rendering shows the pedestrian environment created by the multi-way boulevard. It also shows how the chamfering of buildings at key intersections creates special places. Source: ACP

*This Plan  
encourages a  
mix of uses.*

include multifamily residential, retail, office and hotel. New residential and retail uses are planned.

- There are currently no residential units in the North Pike, or east of Rockville Pike in the Middle Pike. The majority of development in these locations is occupied by retail uses.
- There are some multifamily units and townhouses on the west side of the Middle Pike, as well as office buildings. Retail is proportionately less represented there than in other parts of the Plan Area.

The result is that, while the Plan Area overall includes a mix of uses, often they are not proximate to each other or to Metrorail.

### Recent Trends

Since the economy emerged from the recession of 2008-2009, multifamily housing has been in strong demand in the region. Within the Plan Area, demand for multifamily housing has been strongest in the eastern side of the South Pike, near the Twinbrook Metro Station. The demand for office space, in contrast, has been much weaker. Should this trend continue well into the future, the existing balance between the number of people living in in the Plan Area, relative to the number of people

Halpine Road, as a safer crossing alternative at this important intersection near the Twinbrook Metro Station. A pedestrian and bicycle crossing of the CSX/Metrorail tracks, between Edmonston Drive and Twinbrook Parkway is also desirable. Such a crossing would improve connectivity and accessibility between the Twinbrook neighborhood and the Pike. Providing this connection could be a goal that is advanced by a Champion Project, but other options should also be explored.

## 7. ENSURE A MIX OF USES

### Existing Conditions

Existing and approved development in the Plan Area represents a mix of residential and non-residential uses (as well as residents and employees), although the mix varies between different locations, represented by South, Middle, and North, and east and west sides of the Pike.

- Existing uses in the South Pike

working there, will be altered. This plan promotes taking proactive approaches to achieve a mix of uses as expressed by the Corridor Planning Principles.

### Plan Policy

A mix of uses, within walking distance of each other and transit, along with supporting urban design and infrastructure, can enhance the pedestrian experience, encourage activity in the daytime and evening, reduce dependency on automobiles, and provide greater opportunity for people to conduct many of their daily activities within a short distance. Market forces, and mixed-use zoning that simply allows a mix of uses, do not always produce a desirable balance of complementary uses. This plan seeks to create some assurance that housing, retail and office all remain features of the Plan Area. The City should regularly monitor the emerging mix as redevelopment occurs and take action, as necessary, to steer toward a healthy balance.

#### **This plan endorses the following approaches for achieving a mix of uses:**

Most non-industrial uses can be accommodated within the Plan Area, including, but not limited to, residential, commercial, institutional, assembly, recreation, entertainment and civic uses.

- Residential uses (other than single-unit detached houses) may be located anywhere in the Plan Area. Ground floor dwelling units in multi-family residential buildings must be set back from the build-to line, except in the Neighborhood frontages, to encourage activating uses facing the streets at the pedestrian level.
- Most office and service uses are allowed anywhere, but services that are more retail in nature, in that they generate a high level of pedestrian activity (such as a retail bank branch) are not allowed in the Neighborhood frontages.

Uses should be integrated whenever possible, whether in a single building, on a single site, or within a reasonable walking distance, in a way that creates synergy among the uses, mutually benefits each use, and begins to create vibrant urban neighborhoods.

- Development proposals must address the contribution that the proposed use(s) make(s) to the plan's mixed use Corridor Planning Principle. Development proposals must be considered in the context of the existing and, to the extent known, future mix of uses to ensure that an appropriate mix is obtained.
- Floor-to-ceiling heights on the ground floor must, in most frontages, be high enough to accommodate retail uses to encourage activating uses at the street level.
- Many lots on the east side of the Middle Pike and North Pike have limited redevelopment potential. It is anticipated that uses on many of these sites will continue to be retail-oriented and accessed primarily by automobiles, since transit accessibility is limited, and the potential for robust pedestrian activity is not as strong as in the South Pike. This could change if a high capacity transit station were to be located here in the future.
- Rockville should take proactive and regulatory steps to ensure that housing, employment and services/retail uses all remain strong features of the Plan

*Most non-industrial uses can be accommodated within the Plan Area.*

Area and that all uses have proximity to each other and to transit. In particular, Rockville should take steps to attract stable office users and major employers to the Plan Area, as market forces alone may not be sufficient.

- A report on the status of plan implementation, including an analysis of the existing and evolving mix of uses throughout the Plan Area, shall be produced biennially.

## 8. ENSURE THAT NEW NEIGHBORHOODS WILL ACCOMMODATE RESIDENTS OF ALL INCOMES

High housing costs in the Washington, DC region place a heavy burden on household income, and housing affordability is a challenge for Rockville's existing and future residents. According to the American Planning Association's (APA) Policy Guide on Housing, a cost burden is defined as paying more than 30 percent of household income on housing, while a severe cost burden is defined as paying more than 50 percent.

A Housing Market Analysis and Needs Assessment for Rockville is underway at the time of this plan's adoption. Once completed, that study will provide a comprehensive analysis of the city's housing issues and needs, the demand for and supply of rental and owner-occupied housing, and a projection of the long-term needs for market-rate and affordable housing for a variety of household types and income ranges. The study's findings will help to inform the citywide housing policies in the Comprehensive Master Plan.

The *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* endorses accommodating residents of all income ranges. Rockville's existing housing programs, while very beneficial, are not sufficient to accommodate the full range of households that the new neighborhoods in the Plan Area should include.<sup>12</sup> It is a plan policy to seek mechanisms to ensure a broad level of inclusion and to use the housing study and any future updates of the study to assist in selecting those mechanisms. Including more affordable housing in development projects than is required is a City goal that Champion Projects may choose to target.

## 9. ENSURE ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES

It will be a challenge for the City of Rockville and surrounding jurisdictions to stay on par with the demand for adequate public facilities, presently and as anticipated in the future, and particularly in times of tight budgets. New development places added burdens on infrastructure and services, but it also provides

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<sup>12</sup> The Housing Programs office of the City's Department of Community Planning and Development Services (CPDS) administers Rockville's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program. The program requires that a portion of units in new residential developments be made available to households within a defined income range. All new developments that have at least 50 dwelling units must provide 15% as MPDUs in the Pike corridor.

The Housing Programs office also administers the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. CDBG is a federal grant that the City has recently used to help low-income homeowners make repairs to their homes, renovate Rockville's public housing units, and provide social services.

new sources of revenue to help maintain and expand those services. It is important that development remain in balance with the expansion of key infrastructure and services, particularly when some components, such as school capacity, are not controlled by the City. Rockville must monitor this balance to ensure that new development or redevelopment does not overburden public facilities, including schools, roads, public transportation, water, sewer, parks and public safety infrastructure.

## 10. ENCOURAGE ENDURING ARCHITECTURE THAT HAS VISUAL INTEREST

A building's façade serves as the interface between public and private spaces and, thereby, contributes to the pedestrian experience.

"Enduring" refers both to a building's ability to adapt to different uses over time and for its architecture to transcend trends. This goal can best be achieved by incorporating the ability to change uses, should the market change over time, through a building's sustainable design. This design consideration makes it less likely that a building will become vacant or be demolished if its use becomes obsolete or out of sync with market conditions. For example, the ground floor of buildings in most frontages should be built with ceilings that are high enough to accommodate retail uses, even if the ground floor is not initially occupied by a retail tenant. Retailers generally prefer to be on the ground floor of buildings, so such a requirement reserves that ability.

This plan does not mandate a particular architectural style but, rather, encourages massing and building forms that are visually interesting, contribute to energy on the street, and help to establish an environment that encourages and facilitates pedestrian activity. Frequently spaced doors and windows at eye level, expression lines, and other façade articulation or building adornment oriented to pedestrians are examples of design features that serve all of these objectives.

Design guidelines should be considered to encourage varied scale and fenestration, and design elements to soften the impacts of massing and blank walls, without imposing too much rigidity or specificity that could produce an overly homogenous "themed" appearance for the corridor. Consideration should be given to developing coherence in other ways, i.e. sidewalks, street trees, artwork, way-finding signage, etc. through a streetscape plan.

There are few buildings on today's Rockville Pike that offer enduring architecture. As noted in Appendix B, Rockville Pike History, most of the existing buildings were built after World War II as single-story strip commercial centers or single-use retail buildings. Some well-designed or notable buildings are located within the Plan Area; however, there are no sites that have been designated for preservation. Any building or site that may be significant would require further evaluation to determine its level of significance and whether it is eligible for designation under local criteria. The City should allocate sufficient resources to analyze which buildings within the Plan Area, if any, qualify for historic designation.

*This plan encourages massing and building forms that are visually interesting, but does not mandate particular architectural styles.*

## II. PROVIDE PARKS

Currently, there are no parks in the Plan Area. This plan establishes a goal of creating new parks. The need for parks and open space will grow as redevelopment occurs and the number of people living and working in the Rockville Pike corridor increases. Regional projections show that approximately 11,800 residents can be expected to be living in the Plan Area by 2040<sup>13</sup>, compared with approximately 3,530 currently, and most new residential development will be multifamily. In addition, approximately 13,900 employees may be working in the corridor by 2040, compared to about 9,050 today. New residential units will be predominantly in mid-rise buildings, with some potential for attached single-family housing (townhouses) as well. According to the section on recreational land and open space in the Municipal Growth Element (MGE) of Rockville's Comprehensive Master Plan, adopted by the Mayor and Council in December 2010, "The most pressing [open space] need in the context of mixed-use redevelopment is expected to be ensuring the availability of open space within walking distance of multifamily homes."<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 4.21:** Fountain at the Rockville Town Square Plaza. Source: City of Rockville

Redevelopment offers an opportunity for the creation of open and green spaces for recreation and visual amenities, and to improve environmental sustainability. Community centers and indoor recreational and leisure facilities likely will be needed within and near the Plan Area to accommodate the corridor's population growth. Indoor facilities can serve multi-purpose functions that appeal to a broad range of user interests and age groups. They may provide for cultural activities such as theatres and museums, meeting and community gathering spaces, as well as indoor sports and recreation.

Residents create the greatest demand for parks. Just over 40% of the City's population growth is projected to occur in the Rockville Pike Plan Area over the next few decades and there will be substantial demand there for parks and open space. This is especially true given the fact that there are no parks now and few nearby. Moreover, there is a need for recreational opportunities for people of all abilities.

New parks in the Plan Area also can be expected to draw from the wider City population, neighborhoods adjacent to the Plan Area, and existing and future residents of the surrounding county. Some parks in the vicinity, such as Montrose Park just west of the southern end of the Plan Area, are already often used to capacity. Improvements to existing nearby parks and facilities will likely need to be included in the City's CIP, especially as population increases. At the same time, Rockville's

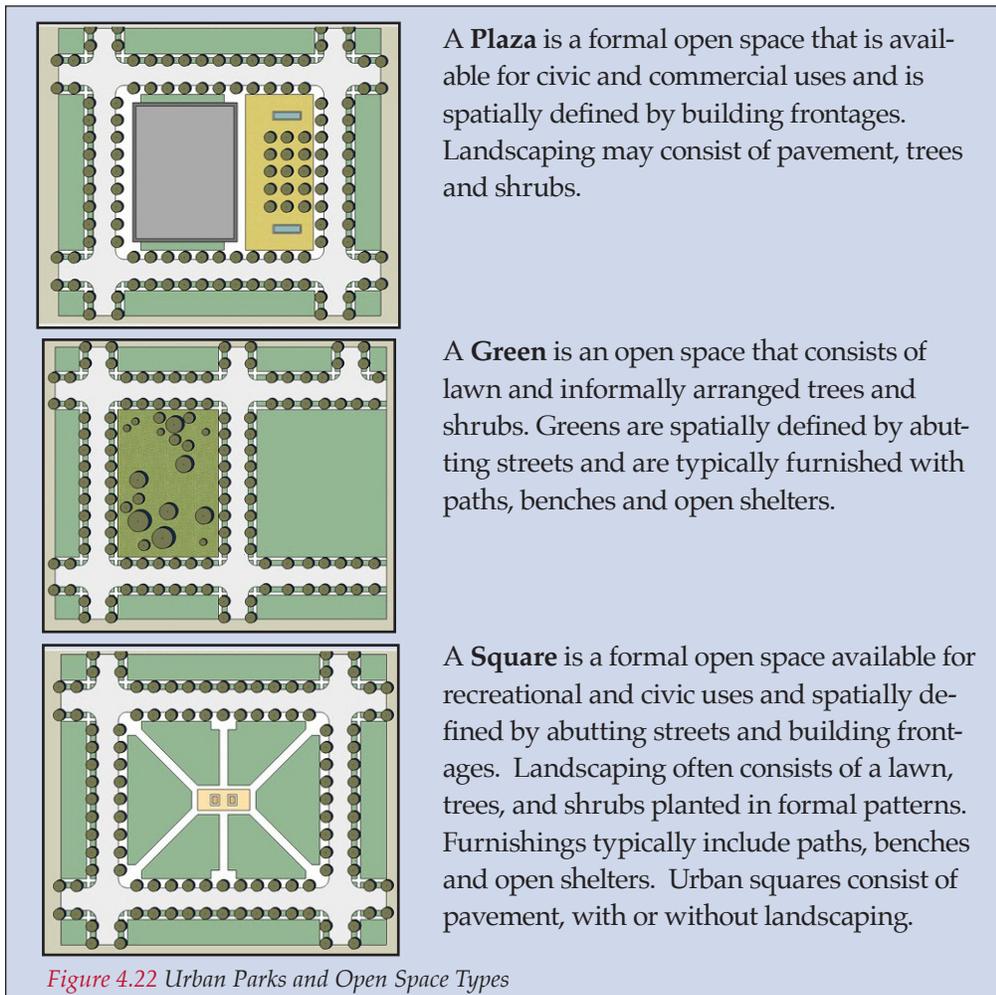
<sup>13</sup> Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Round 9.0 projections

<sup>14</sup> Municipal Growth Element of the Comprehensive Master Plan, adopted December 13, 2010, p. 52. <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/masterplan/elements/MunicipalGrowth121310.pdf>.

parks outside of the Plan Area and resources beyond the City limits will also provide some of the amenities demanded by new residents of the corridor.

A goal of Rockville’s Department of Recreation and Parks is to have a park within ten minutes walking distance of any point in the City.<sup>15</sup> This plan recommends that parkland be located within a ten-minute walk from any residence within the Plan Area. A ten-minute walk equates to roughly one-quarter to one-half mile distance, acknowledging that this varies for different individuals.

A goal of this plan is for there to be at least one park on each side of the Pike in the South, one on the west side of the Middle, and, possibly, one on the west side of the North. Small, publicly accessible open spaces that are not necessarily dedicated to the City could augment, but not replace, dedicated parkland. Parkland should be well-distributed throughout the corridor to provide a wide range of functions, including recreational facilities (such as a skate park, playgrounds, and other facilities), neighborhood parks, a dog park, a community garden, and other open spaces that would serve a diverse community and people of all ability levels.<sup>16</sup>



*This plan calls for a minimum of ten acres of new parkland in the corridor.*

<sup>15</sup> Rockville Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, September 2009, p. 4-22

<sup>16</sup> Rockville Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan identifies specific facility needs on pp. 4.26-4.31.

A minimum of ten acres of parkland is the goal for the entire corridor. The minimum acceptable size for a park to count toward this goal is 3/10 acre, and some may be primarily hard-scape. (Pervious materials should be used for hard-scape elements whenever feasible.) Plazas, greens, and squares are types of open space that fit well into an urban area and that typically range between 1/3 and 2 acres. (As an example, Rockville Town Square's plaza is one-half acre). Rockville should remain receptive to new and creative approaches to providing urban open spaces. Green roofs and privately provided open space and recreational amenities are encouraged, especially for residential buildings, but do not substitute for public parks. Landscaping with native plants is encouraged.

The City should seek the creation of a large active park in the context of any large-scale development that may be proposed in the future on the west side of the Middle Pike. This plan recognizes that a large-scale project that would occur on the Woodmont Country Club property may not be restricted to the boundaries of the Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan Area and therefore is not subject to the policies of this plan. However, this plan recommends a similar approach as other portions of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan are amended.

## **12. REQUIRE THE CREATION OF PUBLIC USE SPACE THROUGH REDEVELOPMENT**

This plan recommends that, in addition to parks, development projects incorporate publicly accessible open space into projects. In general, at least 15% of the property for development projects should be made available for publicly accessible open space, or for fee-in-lieu of that public use space. Providing more than the 15% minimum is one of the options that might be chosen for approval of a Champion Project.

The space should be oriented in such a manner that it is not hidden from public sidewalks and that the public may easily gain access to it and use it. To the greatest extent possible, the public open space should be assembled into large or adjoining land areas, rather than scattered throughout the site so as not to constitute usable space.

Fee-in-lieu funds should support parks located in or within a short walking distance (generally no more than 1/5 mile) of the Plan Area. However, there are no woodlands, forested areas, meadows, wetlands or other areas in the Plan Area that provide significant flora for wildlife. These are desirable types of parklands, and their acquisition or development and maintenance should be included in fee-in-lieu considerations of locations that are not in the Plan Area, along with garden plots, gazebos, picnic areas, pathways, passive areas, and landscaped areas.

The corridor is also underserved by indoor gathering and climate-controlled recreational spaces. As this is a growth area and a receiving area for new residents, there is an increasing need for community centers and similar indoor facilities that will supplement the amenities that may be provided in private development.

With growing urbanization in the Corridor, more flexibility for what constitutes public use space is appropriate, but the key factors are general public access and visibility. Arcades, courtyards and other gathering spaces may be included

if the general public has access because such spaces may be used for community gathering and events and enable vibrant neighborhood life.

### *Rockville Pike as Public Space*

The “complete street” multi-way boulevard itself will provide public open space in the Plan Area by providing broad continuous sidewalks, bikeways that connect to the City’s trail system, and trees and landscaping along the medians. In the case of a Champion Project fronting the Pike, extra care must be given to activate the sidewalk and amenity areas. “Greening” the Pike (with native plants) would improve the pedestrian and biking experience as well as make it more visually distinctive and environmentally friendly. A streetscape plan will be needed to implement this recommendation.

### *Art in Public Spaces*

Well-sited and compelling artwork helps to express the City’s sense of identity, values and heritage, demonstrate pride of citizenship, and energize public spaces. Local artists should be commissioned when possible. Placing artwork in parks or spaces intended for gathering is desirable. Significant public art at a gateway location on the Pike and for Metro passengers exiting the Twinbrook Metro Station would provide a welcoming entry to Rockville. Northern gateway locations may also be enhanced with artwork.

## **13. PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT THAT IMPROVES ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS**

A policy of this plan is to improve the existing environment in the plan area through redevelopment plans that address environmental issues and establish procedures to measure effects of redevelopment on the surrounding area environment.

The Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan Area contains few remaining natural areas to protect with environmental policies, with the exception of portions of Woodmont Country Club. There are very few mature trees, very little pervious surface area, little effective on-site stormwater management, no parks, and very little open space. Redevelopment actions may positively or negatively impact environmental conditions outside the area. However, the redevelopment that this plan calls for is subject to more stringent afforestation, stormwater, open space and building code requirements than those in place decades ago when the Pike was developed. Redevelopment on the Pike, done well, can create a healthier and more environmentally robust community.

Periodic reviews of environmental ordinances and policies should be undertaken to ensure that regulations meet current technology goals and evolving environmental standards and practices. Rockville should implement the best methods available for measuring environmental impacts citywide and continue to evaluate, adopt and pioneer new methods as the science develops so that program adjustments can be made to further improve results. Sources of funding for monitoring methods will need to be addressed.

## 14. STRATEGICALLY LOCATE AND RIGHT-SIZE PARKING

This plan locates, wherever possible, parking in structures behind or under buildings, thereby minimizing inactive zones and reducing the visually unappealing effect of large surface lots in front of buildings. Structured parking also reduces the amount of impervious surface relative to the number of cars and provides more street-front opportunities for stores and businesses. There should be a minimum parking setback at the first floor on street-facing façades so that parking garages do not dominate sidewalk areas and are not visually prominent. Parking drives should be discouraged in active pedestrian-oriented areas where there are alternative options.

On-street parking should be provided on the boulevard's access roads, on the entire west side and on both sides in the South Pike (except for Champion Projects where access roads may not be required), and on all other streets in the Plan Area. This type of parking serves multiple functions beyond providing convenience to drivers and benefits to adjacent retailers. On-street parking slows traffic and actually becomes part of the pedestrian realm. Drivers tend to travel at slower speeds in the presence of on-street parking and parked cars provide a buffer, both of which help to create a safer pedestrian environment. On-street parking is not a requirement for the more flexible boulevard configuration on the east side of the North and Middle Pike.

At present, the prevailing parking standards in the Plan Area are appropriate. Shared parking arrangements are encouraged and may be a basis for reducing the amount of parking that is required. The burden for providing the required amount of parking will lie with private property owners. The City should periodically assess parking conditions within the Plan Area to ensure that City needs are being met. It is generally anticipated that more parking will be needed in the early years of plan implementation than in later years because the factors that reduce parking demand will take time to evolve. Allowing less parking in later years of plan implementation is based on the concept that movement in the corridor will become less reliant on automobiles and more urban and multi-modal over time and will, therefore, require less parking. Parking that can be converted to other uses over time is also encouraged.

Sites in the Middle and North Pike, on the east side of Rockville Pike, may not have the land needed to build parking structures and, therefore, may depend on surface lots for most of their parking needs into the future. These sites may also need to provide a greater amount of parking longer into the future than areas in the South Pike that are close to the Metro station and that will likely transition to a multi-modal environment more quickly. Improvements to transit in this portion of the Pike could alter this dynamic.

# Chapter 5

## Implementation

### OVERVIEW

**T**HIS CHAPTER PROVIDES THE KEY steps to implementing the *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*. It leads with a set of broad policies, followed by the steps needed to implement the transportation and land use policies presented and described in Chapter 4. Many of the implementation steps related to the land use policies of the plan – such as the heights of buildings, their position on the site, and their relationship to sidewalks – are intended to be regulated through the Zoning Ordinance and are not individually repeated here.

A summary of the major implementation steps, including items that need to be included in the City's Capital Improvements Program (CIP), is provided in Table 5.1 at the end of this chapter. The chapter is divided into the following sections:

- **General Policy Elements**
  1. Maintain strong regional partnerships
  2. Ensure adequate infrastructure and community facilities
  3. Advocate for components of the plan that are outside of Rockville's direct control
  4. Focus on place-making near the Twinbrook Metro Station early in the life of the plan
  5. Develop cost estimates and funding strategies
  6. Monitor progress and stay relevant to changing conditions
- **Implement the Transportation Policies**
  1. Re-design and reconstruct Rockville Pike as a multi-way boulevard

2. Expand the street network
  3. Optimize access to and use of transit
  4. Expand Transportation Demand Management (TDM) activities
  5. Strive to refine methodologies for measuring transportation mode share and addressing congestion management
- **Implement the Land Use Policies**
    1. Adopt zoning amendments to reflect plan policies
    2. Revise development regulations
    3. Make the Pike an inviting, walkable place
    4. Acquire parkland
    5. Allocate resources for historic preservation

These action steps bring to light the complexity of implementing the plan for the corridor. Implementing this plan in full will require a high level of collaboration and cooperation between the City, other jurisdictions, and the private sector over decades. Certain components will also require appropriate funding mechanisms and commitments. Finally, implementation will require seizing opportunities, overcoming obstacles, and thoughtful timing.

## GENERAL POLICY ELEMENTS

The following actions are at the foundation of the implementation of the *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*:

### I. MAINTAIN STRONG REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The City must continue to engage in planning efforts with Montgomery County, the City of Gaithersburg, the State of Maryland, and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to establish joint policies that will ensure compatible infrastructure and development throughout the MD 355 corridor. Rockville must also work proactively and cooperatively with these entities to fund and build adequate infrastructure.

Montgomery County adopted the Twinbrook Sector Plan in 2009 and the White Flint Sector Plan in 2010. The latter includes two different cross section options for the Pike south of the Montrose Parkway bridge. Both cross sections have dedicated or semi-dedicated lanes for transit. The White Flint Sector Plan proposes mixed uses and building heights up to 300 feet for properties fronting the Pike.

In addition, the White Flint 2 Sector Plan is underway at the time of the Rockville Pike Plan adoption and includes the portion of the Pike from the Rockville city limits south to the Montrose Parkway bridge. No cross-section for this portion

of the Pike has been produced yet.

The transportation, land use, and urban design recommendations of these three County plans, the County's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) feasibility studies, and the recent and ongoing redevelopment activities in the area around the Twinbrook Metro Station at the border of Rockville and Montgomery County are each important inter-jurisdictional considerations toward creating a coherently planned corridor and a well-connected community.

*Rockville Pike* acknowledges that this dynamic portion of Montgomery County, both inside of Rockville and to the south, continues to evolve and that Rockville must have an adopted plan and stay engaged in order to help shape that evolution.

## 2. ENSURE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Currently, certain types of development cannot occur in parts of the City because roadway intersections are overburdened and they do not meet the APFO standards that the City has put into place to ensure that requisite infrastructure is available to serve existing and new development. The APFO standards for schools could limit certain types of residential development in the future if they are exceeded. As discussed in Chapter 4, parks and open space are also greatly needed in the Plan Area.

### a. Schools

The City's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) establishes that no residential development that is permitted to include children may take place if the new residences will be within the boundaries of a cluster that has an average enrollment/capacity ratio, for at least one of its school levels, projected to be 120% or greater within five years of the proposed project. Key Montgomery County Public Schools projects that would ensure sufficient capacity for the anticipated growth, are: 1) the planned fifth elementary school in the Richard Montgomery cluster, and 2) a proposed eight-classroom addition for Walter Johnson High School. The City must continue to monitor school capacity in both clusters and advocate for sufficient school capacity, both for existing residents and to allow for implementation of the plan.

### b. Roadway intersections

Several intersections within the corridor have reached or are approaching inadequate capacity to accommodate traffic demand, as measured by the City's current Critical Lane Volume (CLV) standard of the transportation portion of the APFO. Pike intersections that are at or reaching critical capacity, such as that at Edmonston Drive, should be studied to identify potential improvements. The function of these intersections is likely to limit development along the Rockville Pike corridor and present challenges to implementation of this plan.

The transportation and land use approaches presented in Chapter 4 both add

<sup>1</sup> *Montgomery County Public Schools, Division of Long-Range Planning*

transportation capacity and encourage non-auto travel modes, which will allow some level of redevelopment to occur. However, development consistent with the full plan vision may not emerge with the City's current Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) methodology of development review, according to the conclusions of an intersection CLV analysis that was prepared by AECOM in November 2010. After plan adoption, the City should continue to monitor the impact of increasing traffic demand upon development review that applies the transportation component of the APFO. If, after full public participation, the community decides that it is willing to accept potentially greater traffic levels in order to accommodate a larger scale of development, it may choose to consider alternative approaches in the APFO transportation component.

#### *c. Other Community Facilities*

The City should continue to monitor the need for other community facilities, such as libraries, community centers, and police and fire service, through citizen input and the Municipal Growth and Community Facilities Elements of the Comprehensive Master Plan.

#### *d. Utilities*

For all roads that are being constructed or improved throughout the Plan Area, the City should coordinate any planned replacement and upgrading of the water and sewer infrastructure and place aerial utility lines underground, as was established in the 1989 Rockville Pike Plan and as continues to be the policy approach of this plan. After plan adoption, a strategic plan should be prepared to identify locations and timing where utilities should be relocated underground. The strategy will be used to coordinate proposed capital projects and funding with other agencies and utilities.

### **3. ADVOCATE FOR COMPONENTS OF THE PLAN THAT ARE OUTSIDE OF ROCKVILLE'S DIRECT CONTROL**

Despite the direction provided by this plan, there will continue to be unknowns that may have significant impacts on the future of the corridor. Of primary importance is the uncertainty regarding the provision of new rapid transit in the corridor. Although the Montgomery County Council adopted the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan in December 2013, which advances the progress for implementing a BRT system, funding and construction of the MD 355 line may not occur for years.

The status of BRT is beyond Rockville's control, but the City should play a partnering role, with neighborhood stakeholders involved in all relevant study groups appointed by Montgomery County. A BRT line along Rockville Pike has the potential to significantly increase transit usage and reduce traffic congestion and the proportion of automobile trips in the corridor.

Public schools are another essential component in planning for new residential

development yet they are under the purview of Montgomery County, not the City of Rockville. As previously noted, the City will need to lobby the County and the State for funding to produce the additional school space that will be needed.

The City should provide a coordinated mechanism for collecting, assessing and transmitting relevant residents' concerns to the appropriate authorities. Communication of legitimate citizens' concerns to such entities as WMATA (Metro) and Pepco would provide credibility and support to concerns relevant to development around Rockville Pike (as well as in the entire City). Issues might include safety considerations for users of Metro facilities, crowding of Metro parking lots and stations, difficulties with commuter travel (bus, rapid rail, car, bike), concerns with Pepco service, bike issues on County land, and concerns with road and sidewalk conditions on County roads that connect to the City. The City's Community Forum at Mayor and Council meetings, Engage Rockville, and neighborhood blogs are just some of the vehicles that could be employed for this purpose.

#### **4. FOCUS ON PLACE-MAKING NEAR THE TWINBROOK METRO STATION EARLY IN THE LIFE OF THE PLAN**

The City should be particularly proactive about making the southeast portion of the Plan Area function according to the plan vision in the near term because it is already actively redeveloping.

The City should be prepared to contribute to place-making in the South Pike early in the life of this plan by coordinating the construction of road network; possibly purchasing and building a neighborhood park of at least one acre in size; and providing streetscape amenities such as attractive sidewalks, signage, benches, etc. Redevelopment activity can produce some of the funds for this infrastructure, but the City will likely need to invest in the South Pike up front to make it a livable place more quickly, demonstrate the plan vision, and serve as a catalyst for the remainder of the Plan Area. The City can ensure that the plan vision is achieved, even if other investments that are out of Rockville's control, such as BRT, do not materialize.

#### **5. DEVELOP COST ESTIMATES AND FUNDING STRATEGIES**

Implementation of this plan will require considerable funds. The estimated potential construction cost of the entire Rockville Pike boulevard (within the Plan Area), including construction of main lanes and access roads, undergrounding of utilities, landscaping, and streetscaping is likely to exceed \$50 million.<sup>2</sup> A large portion of this cost would probably not be borne by the City because the main roadway is a state highway, but Rockville will likely need to contribute a signifi-

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum from Joel Mann, AECOM, December 22, 2011, "Cost Estimating Exercise for Rockville Pike Conceptual Design, Alternatives 2 and 9." The road cross sections have been changed since this memorandum was written, but the estimates are still relevant for indicating the order of magnitude for this project.

cant match as is typically required in Federal funding programs. As noted in #3, above, this is a regional roadway and the creation of a boulevard and/or BRT is unlikely to happen unless it is a City/County project and without State and Federal funding. Given development pressures in the White Flint area and the recent base relocation and expansion of Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the National Institutes of Health, federal and state funding is imperative.

There will be additional costs for acquiring right-of-way and parkland. The amount of additional right-of-way needed will depend on multiple factors, including engineering decisions, the amount of area that the City already holds in easements (see Figure 5.1), and the amount that may be dedicated through redevelopment projects.

Parkland will likely be acquired through the public use space requirement for new development, provided as dedication or as fee-in-lieu, as determined by the Approving Authority. Fee-in-lieu funds may also be used to build parks, though the City may need to contribute in some cases. The City may need to identify an appropriate site, acquire the land, and/or build the park recommended for the east side of the South Pike, as this is the fastest-growing portion of the Plan Area and has immediate park and open space needs.

More refined cost estimates for each of the main infrastructure components of the plan for which the City may be primarily or partially responsible (such as the boulevard access lanes, or acquiring a park in the South Pike) will be needed. A careful and deliberate strategy must be developed for funding each component once the costs are known. Use of General Fund appropriations and bonding will be insufficient and other sources will be needed, such as state and federal grants, County participation, and private contributions through redevelopment.

Businesses may find it in their interest to participate in a special taxing district for enhanced public services such as maintenance, security, marketing and other activities relevant to a thriving commercial area. If interest in such a district is indicated by the business community, the City should consider working in partnership with those businesses to enable the special taxing district. If this approach is pursued, further study would be required to determine the exact capacity and structure of one or more taxing districts, with sensitivity to the needs and desires of both property owners and their tenants. The study should determine priorities for the use of funds and the amount of funding to be used for specific projects.

As of this writing, fiscal constraints make envisioning investments of this scale difficult. However, this plan is a vision for 20 to 30 years, during which time there will be multiple renewed opportunities to fund infrastructure and public amenities. The City must be creative and take advantage of opportunities as they emerge to invest in the corridor, as it is one of Rockville's core economic engines.

## **6. MONITOR PROGRESS AND STAY RELEVANT TO CHANGING CONDITIONS**

In order for the plan to remain relevant and vital, the City must stay attuned to the progress of development in and near the Pike Corridor and be aware of

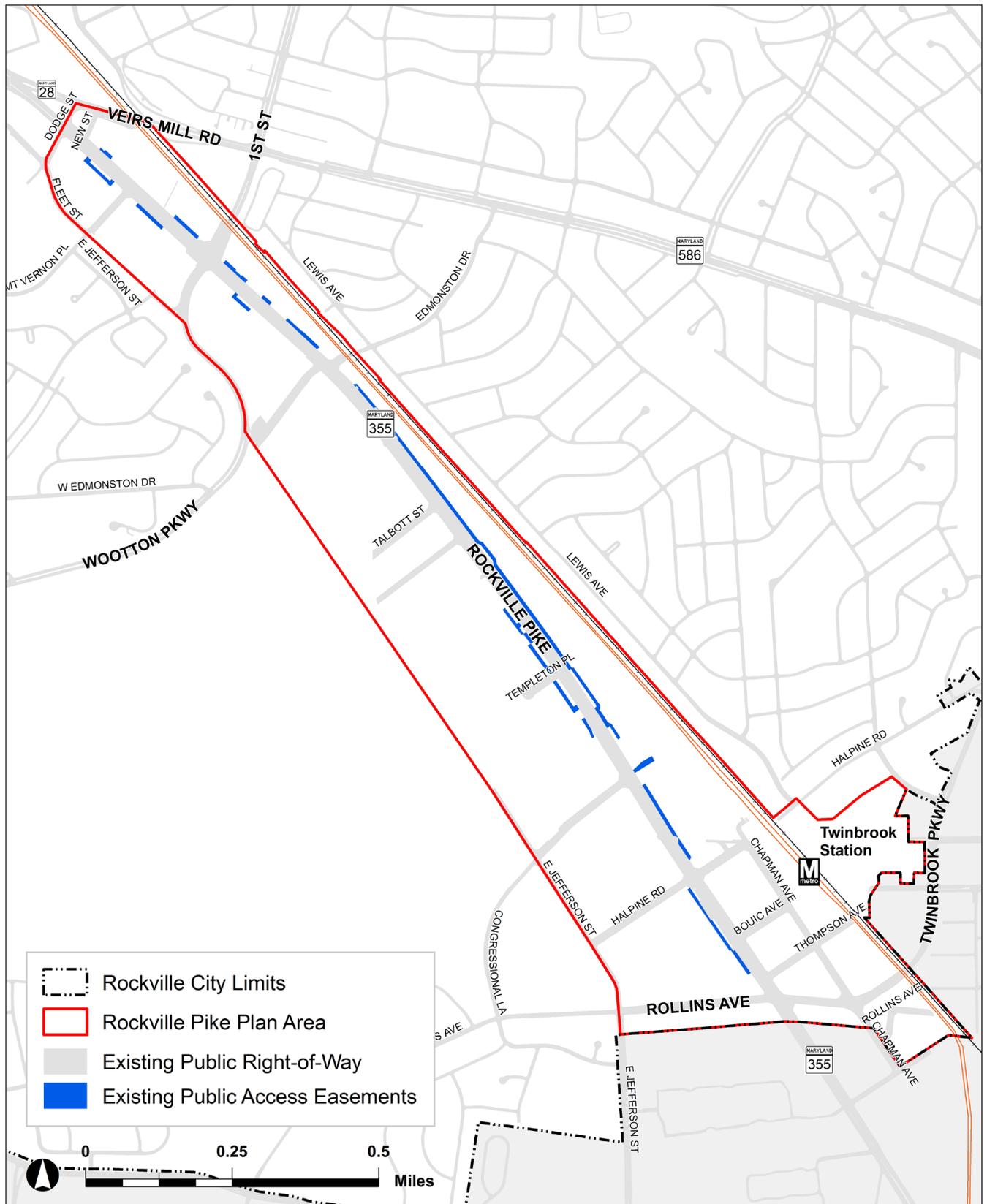


Figure 5.1: Existing Service Lane and Public Access Easements

changes in conditions affecting the implementation of the plan (including economic conditions, traffic, transportation, land assemblies, development trends, job growth, population trends, schools, etc.). It is recommended that City staff provide a biennial report on the status of plan implementation to the Mayor and Council and the Planning Commission to ensure that the action steps outlined in this chapter are being implemented; that they are producing the desired results; and to provide adequate lead times and coordination of City actions and financing. It is further recommended that biennial reports be published and well publicized to the community, including community organizations, to stimulate and afford opportunity for community feedback.

## IMPLEMENT THE TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

This section outlines the broad approaches to implementing the transportation elements of the plan. It discusses how to transform the City's portion of Rockville Pike into a multi-way boulevard, expand the street network, establish a street hierarchy to conform to Rockville's Complete Streets Policy, and optimize access to and use of public transit. Transportation demand management strategies, including the formation of a transportation management association, are also discussed as strategies to decrease auto trip demand. Each of these elements is complex and, therefore, will require more specificity in order to reach full completion. This section provides the framework for the key items.

### I. RE-DESIGN AND RECONSTRUCT ROCKVILLE PIKE AS A MULTI-WAY BOULEVARD

Reconstruction of the main lanes of the Pike will require strong inter-jurisdictional coordination in developing an engineered roadway design that includes planning for BRT, while minimizing disruption caused by construction. The City should ensure that access to properties fronting the Pike is not disconnected during road construction and that property owners are involved in the process. Coordination with other jurisdictions also will be required for selecting the financing mechanisms to fund the complete boulevard project.

#### *Main Roadway*

Reconstruction of the main roadway is likely to be dependent on construction of the proposed BRT line along the Pike and will not be funded or led by the City. Funding may be provided by a combination of federal, state, county and, potentially, private sources. Design and engineering studies for the reconstruction of Rockville Pike with BRT will be led by the Maryland State Highway Administration, which owns MD 355, and Montgomery County, which operates traffic signals and

transit on the Pike. The City's main task will be to remain engaged and advocate for funding and the cross-section envisioned in this plan.

### Access Roads

The boulevard's access lanes are likely to be City roads, yet they are important components for improving the overall functioning of the state highway. The City will therefore need to ensure that they are built to implement the full boulevard concept envisioned by this plan.

It is preferred that the access lanes be built as part of an overall Rockville Pike - BRT construction project rather than as a separate project. Combining the reconstruction of the main lanes, BRT, and the access lanes would minimize disruptions and would result in fiscal savings and a well-coordinated engineering effort. However, if it becomes evident that BRT will not be implemented within a reasonable time period, the City should then develop a plan to build the access lanes independently. Such a plan should incorporate the ability to add BRT in the future.

Below are steps that the City must take in either case:

#### a. Continue to obtain easements

Construction of the boulevard access roads will require some additional right-of-way in order for the plan's boulevard concept to be realized. This plan continues the City's long-standing policy of obtaining easements on all properties fronting the Pike consistent with the boulevard description in Chapter 4. The easements shall start from the edge of the State right-of-way to the "build-to" line. As shown in Figure 5.1, the City already has easements on approximately 50% of the linear distance that is needed to build the access roads. The remainder will need to be secured by continued dedication during redevelopment and possibly by acquisition. Champion Projects may be exempt from providing or maintaining easements if their developers choose to not include access roads.

#### b. Phasing

This plan establishes that the east side of the South Pike be an early priority for the City in building the access roads and that this should commence within the next decade, preferably in conjunction with BRT construction. Decisions will need to be made about how and when the remaining portions of the access roads (including sidewalks, bike paths/lanes, medians, undergrounding utilities, etc.) are completed – whether it is all at once, in segments, in conjunction with BRT construction or redevelopment, or some other way. Decisions will also need to be made about how inter-site connectivity and a continuous sidewalk will be provided on the east side of the North and Middle Pike where the full access road is not required.

#### c. Funding

There are no funding sources dedicated for construction of the access roads at this time. Ideally, they would be financed and constructed as part of the BRT and boulevard roadway construction project, which will involve multiple entities. If the BRT does not move forward, the City will need to develop a funding plan that includes seeking participation and funding assistance from federal, state and county

sources, as well as participation from private landowners. The City may also need to consider committing its own funds to building the access roads, either through existing revenue streams or the creation of a dedicated funding source.

**d. Coordination with other jurisdictions**

The City will need to actively coordinate with the State and County to ensure that intersections and access points are designed to work together with the State road. The City should work with Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to eliminate unsignalized intersection median breaks on the Pike; reduce the number of curb cuts from the main travel lanes as part of the construction of the access roads; and add new signals at intersections along the Pike, the timing of which will need to be coordinated with existing signals. Determinations of which traffic pattern (option 1 or 2 as described in Chapter 4) is appropriate for each Pike intersection within the Plan Area also would be done in coordination with Maryland DOT.

## **2. EXPAND THE STREET NETWORK**

As explained in Chapter 4, expansion of the street network is critical to diffusing traffic congestion and increasing capacity, connectivity and movement choice. It is also critical to shrinking block sizes, thereby contributing to a better pedestrian environment. Most new streets will be built in conjunction with redevelopment projects, to provide access and help support those projects and the additional traffic that they may generate.

**a. South Pike Network**

The expansion of the road network in the South Pike includes the extension of Chapman Avenue, a parallel north-south Business District Class II street between Jefferson Street and the Pike, and the new east-west streets that the Street Master Plan shows traversing the Pike. This plan establishes that developers will dedicate the land and contribute toward the construction of these streets as part of property redevelopment, but the City will need to be an active participant in ensuring that the design is consistent with the plan vision and that segments are connected. If Chapman Avenue continues not to be completed through redevelopment far into the future, the City may choose to more proactively complete it according to the general alignment established in Chapter 4.

Retrofitting existing streets to include the complete streets components recommended by the plan (wide sidewalks, bicycle facilities, on-street parking, etc.) will also happen in the context of redevelopment. While full reconstruction will likely be done in conjunction with redevelopment of properties along them, there are opportunities to make some improvements now. Examples include Halpine Road (a recommended Business District Class I street) and Congressional Lane (a recommended Business District Class II street). While neither currently has the necessary width to fully implement the recommended design, these streets can become more “complete” than they are now. Components of the design recommendations may be added as opportunities arise. Developers are expected to dedicate the additional land for the right-of-way in these cases. The City may build them, with developer participation in the financing.

**b. The East Jefferson Street Extension and the West Middle Pike grid**

The extension of East Jefferson Street, from where it currently ends just north of Congressional Lane northward to Wootton Parkway, is a critical part of the proposed road network as it will provide an alternative to Rockville Pike and diffuse traffic throughout the corridor. Construction of this extension may allow some additional redevelopment to occur within the existing parameters of the transportation portion of the APFO.

Rockville should expect to receive dedication of new streets from developers. This plan permits more intensive land use and more street frontage in the Middle Pike, west of MD 355, than does the prior plan and the 2009 Zoning Ordinance. The property owners that will benefit from these changes, therefore, will participate in the construction of these roads through dedication and financing when related to development.

In wholly owned sites of significant scale, developers will be expected to construct their portion of the street network envisioned in this plan, under the City's direction. Where multiple sites are involved, or where segments need to be connected, the City may need to play a more proactive role to ensure that the network is completed. Individual property owners would still be expected to contribute since the new roads are an important piece of the plan's redevelopment strategy.

The location of the connection of East Jefferson Street to Wootton Parkway will need to be determined at the engineering stage. Topography issues may need to be addressed in choosing the exact alignment of the road.

**3. OPTIMIZE ACCESS TO AND USE OF TRANSIT**

The City should advocate for full utilization of Metro's Red Line in terms of extending all northbound service to the Shady Grove Station and maximizing the number of cars on trains as needed to accommodate the anticipated increase in use both within and outside of Rockville. This will be even more critical once the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) is operating as the volume of passengers transferring to Metro's Red Line will be increased even without redevelopment along the Pike. The City should also seek to ensure that adequate bicycle storage is provided at the Twinbrook and Rockville Metro Stations.

Rockville should participate fully in any discussions of re-routing or supplementing local bus service in the context of adding a new transit service. It will be particularly important, as the City moves toward a more multi-modal environment, to ensure that local service is not only retained, but improved, for people within the corridor and those using it to access the corridor. If BRT plays an important regional role, Rockville will need to ensure that the local bus service continues to serve everyone.

Enhanced transit, whether it comes in the form of BRT, increased Red Line Metrorail capacity, and/or improved local bus service will further the plan goals and the City should be prepared to advocate for it, including supporting expanded funding opportunities. Consideration should be given to developing a system of local shuttles or circulators.

#### **4. EXPAND TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM) ACTIVITIES**

The City should explore opportunities to expand and enhance its TDM program to reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel and encourage use of alternative modes. As one example, the City should take an active role in forming a transportation management association. This will allow the City to track the ongoing efforts of member businesses and organizations in reducing trips taken by single-occupant vehicles and thereby preserving corridor-wide capacity for additional development. It will also provide a framework for cooperation among businesses to provide services that may not be economical for individual businesses.

#### **5. STRIVE TO REFINE METHODOLOGIES FOR MEASURING TRANSPORTATION MODE SHARE AND ADDRESSING CONGESTION MANAGEMENT**

Both Montgomery County's White Flint Sector Plan and Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan established baseline mode shares based on data from the American Community Survey (ACS), part of the U.S. Census, and employer surveys. These sources use relatively small sample sizes, have fairly large margins of error, and are imperfect tools in a mixed-use environment where a substantial number of trips are not commuter-generated. The baseline mode share may be over- or under-estimated and, therefore, there is some risk in using it to establish future mode share goals. At this time, Rockville does not have access to a more reliable methodology, but this is an evolving area.

The ability to track changes in travel mode share is very valuable in assessing the relative effects of plan implementation on mobility in the plan area, particularly as population and activity levels increase over time. This plan recommends that Rockville use state-of-the-art methodologies at all times to establish a baseline, set realistic goals, and monitor progress.

### **IMPLEMENT THE LAND USE POLICIES**

Place-making improvements will play an important role over time in providing viable and attractive travel options in the corridor, including transit, biking and walking. The plan recognizes that private developers bear a great deal of the responsibility for creating the attractive physical environment that complements the transportation elements but that the City has a key role to ensure they do so consistent with the plan vision.

The bulk of the recommendations that address how the redevelopment process can transform the character and visual quality of the Plan Area will be includ-

ed in the Zoning Ordinance. Other recommendations indicate additional ways to ensure that the corridor is a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

## **I. ADOPT ZONING AMENDMENTS TO REFLECT PLAN POLICIES**

The Zoning Ordinance is intended to be the primary tool for land use policy implementation.

## **2. REVISE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

The City's regulations concerning zoning, road specifications, forestry, and others influence how developers may build on their sites. Some of these regulations are in conflict with or present impediments to full implementation of the plan vision. These challenges will need to be addressed. Examples include:

### **a. The Zoning Ordinance**

The City needs to amend its adopted Zoning Ordinance to incorporate land use policies. A Sectional Map Amendment will be required to apply the new zone and delineate the Rockville Pike District boundary on the zoning map.

### **b. Forestry and Tree Preservation Ordinance (FTPO)**

The FTPO presents certain challenges in urban redevelopment scenarios such as the Rockville Pike corridor. Modifications to the FTPO that are oriented to a more urban environment should be explored for private development specifically in the Plan Area.

As a balance to any modification of the FTPO within the Plan Area, the *Rockville Pike Plan* establishes new parks, open space, and street trees as amenities that will greatly improve the quality of life for those living in the Plan Area and that will encourage more people to walk and bike versus drive. Trees are an important component of the boulevard concept. Buffer areas that may include trees and other amenities are already included in the design of all business district roads in the City's Road Code. The inclusion of trees along all roads in the Plan Area will transform a primarily concrete environment into an attractive and "greener" place.

## **3. MAKE THE PIKE AN INVITING, WALKABLE PLACE**

The City should develop wayfinding and streetscape plans for the corridor, which will require City funding.

### **a. Develop a Wayfinding Plan**

Wayfinding signage should include a "high-speed" sign system for vehicles moving along the primary roadway; a "low-speed" sign system to guide vehicular and bicycle traffic in the access lanes; and a sign system oriented to pedestrians.

The wayfinding plan should recommend a consistent identity based on colors, icons, type fonts and typeface size and that becomes, de facto, an element of the branding of the Rockville Pike Plan Area. If deemed appropriate, the boulevard identity could allude to or replicate the signage system developed for Rockville Town Center or the City as a whole.

**b. Develop a Streetscape Plan**

A streetscape plan should focus on creating a continuous, comfortable and safe pedestrian and bicyclist environment throughout the Plan Area. It should address surfaces, the location and species of trees, native plants, planters, street furniture, lighting and undergrounding of utilities. The streetscape plan should implement the recommendations of greening Rockville Pike, making it a public green space within the Plan Area.

**c. Identify Locations for Public Art**

Locate sites for public art at gateway locations along the Pike. Well-sited and compelling artwork can help to express the City's sense of identity, demonstrate pride in citizenship, and energize public spaces. Rockville's Cultural Arts Commission should be consulted when selecting artwork and appropriate locations for art.

## **4. ACQUIRE PARKLAND**

The City must ensure that parks are built at a pace to keep up with development to create the great place envisioned by this plan. The transformation of the Pike from a primarily commercial corridor to a mixed use environment, which will likely include housing for thousands of new residents, requires the City to be proactive in planning for the facilities that make it greener and livable.

As noted in Chapter 4, parks will be needed in the Middle, South and, perhaps, the North segments of the corridor. As the South Pike is expected to be the dominant location for redevelopment early in the life of the plan, the City may need to allocate resources through its Capital Improvements Program (CIP) to purchase land for or develop a neighborhood park, approximately one acre in size, east of the Pike and west of the Metrorail tracks. As of now, parkland acquisition is not funded in the City's CIP, but future funding could come from bonds, fee-in-lieu collected from developers, as well as the State and Federal government. Additional parks and open space are likely to come through dedications as part of the development process, though the plan does not foreclose the possibility of the City proactively creating needed community amenities.

## **5. ALLOCATE RESOURCES FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The City should allocate sufficient resources, starting early in the life of the plan, to proactively evaluate buildings, structures and other elements within the Plan Area that may qualify for historic designation, presently and in the future. Plan implementation, including road alignments, should take into consideration

properties that could be designated as historic, in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This plan also encourages taking actions to increase the public's appreciation for the Plan Area's on-going contributions to history.

Among the properties that could be eligible within the Pike neighborhood, there may be examples of the "recent past." These are buildings and structures, generally built during the last half century, that may be architecturally or culturally worthy of preserving. Resources were allocated in the 2016 budget to update the City's Historic Resources Management Plan (1986), with an expectation that a historic context will be included for Rockville's historic resources that were built in the recent past, or roughly the last 50 years. That context will be a valuable resource to identify potential recent past candidates.

There are other ways to celebrate the history of the area in addition to historic designation. The Pike has continuously been an important transportation route, as described in Appendix B, serving as a foot path for Native American tribes, a toll road for horse-drawn vehicles, a route for Civil War troops, as well as a corridor for transit and, of course, the private automobile. However, most of the relics of these eras have disappeared over time. The Pike's "car culture" of the last century resulted in numerous automobile-oriented businesses along the Pike, including strip retail centers, gas stations, motels, and fast food restaurants. These businesses only came about because of the rapidly growing popularity of the automobile in the mid-20th century. Many of the Pike's early car-friendly buildings are gone, or drastically altered in appearance, and therefore not eligible for designation. Public appreciation of the diversity of transportation modes served by the Pike should be encouraged through signage, art in public places, informational material, or otherwise creatively incorporated into new development in cases where historic designation is not possible or appropriate.

## CONCLUSION

Implementing the *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* will require proactive steps by the City. By being committed to bringing about the vision, Rockville can lead the corridor through a successful transition from an auto-oriented convenience shopping corridor to a series of walkable urban neighborhoods that are distinctively Rockville.

**Table 5.1  
Implementation Actions**

	Advocate	Monitor	Timing dependent on redevelopment	City Initiative
Continue to maintain strong regional partnerships	✓			
Amend zoning ordinance to reflect plan policies				✓
Monitor impacts of APFO on plan implementation		✓		
Explore modifications to Forestry & Tree Preservation Ordinance				✓
Advocate for Julius West Middle School expansion completion in 2016	✓			
Advocate for R. M. elementary school #5 opening in 2018 and for more capacity	✓			
Advocate for classroom addition to Walter Johnson High School	✓			
Continue to monitor enrollment/capacity conditions & advocate for adequate school capacity	✓	✓		
Identify site, acquire land, build park in South Pike (CIP)				✓
Identify and evaluate potential locations for a pedestrian and bicycle crossing over/under the tracks				✓
Acquire land/build parks in other parts of plan area (possible CIP)			✓	
Build South Pike access road on east side (CIP)				✓
Develop cost estimates and funding strategies for roads and parks				✓
Reconstruct main lanes of the Pike	✓			
Construct other access roads (South Pike west, Middle, North) (possible CIP)			✓	
Continue to obtain easements along the Pike (possible CIP)			✓	
Facilitate building of Jefferson Street, Chapman Avenue & other new streets (possible CIP)			✓	
Improve existing streets in context of redevelopment (possible CIP)			✓	
Advocate for improved transit: red line capacity, enhanced local bus service, BRT	✓			
Expand Transportation Demand Management activities				✓
Strive to refine methodologies for measuring transportation mode share & addressing congestion management				✓
Monitor mode share		✓		
Coordinate utility replacement with road construction			✓	
Monitor need and ensure community needs are met (schools, parks & open space, etc.) (possible CIP)		✓		✓
Complete housing needs study and identify/implement inclusion strategies for households of all incomes				✓
Complete a study of the MD 355 corridor and adjoining areas to the north				✓
Develop a wayfinding plan (CIP)				✓
Develop a streetscape plan (CIP)				✓
Develop a mechanism for collecting and communicating citizen concerns to appropriate authorities	✓			
Monitor progress and stay relevant to changing conditions		✓		
Develop format for biennial report to M&C and PC, and deliver reports				✓
Advocate for BRT stops near Metro stations and in Middle Pike	✓			
Advocate for bicycle parking at or near BRT stations	✓			
Allocate resources to evaluate buildings, structures and other elements that may qualify for historic designation				✓

*CIP refers to items that must or may possibly be in the City's Capital Improvements Program*

## Appendix A

# The Planning Process

## OVERVIEW

**T**HE ROCKVILLE PIKE NEIGHBORHOOD Plan is the product of an intensive community planning initiative that has incorporated input from citizens, private and public sector leaders, government agencies, consultants, staff and other stakeholders.

Strong public involvement was a major component of the plan process from the beginning and has been central to the development of *Rockville Pike*. Extensive outreach and publicity efforts were made throughout the planning process to maximize public knowledge about, and participation in, development of the plan. Press releases, mailings, listserv messages, social media posts, flier distribution, posters at community facilities, articles in *Rockville Reports*, programs on Rock-

ville 11, and regular updates to the project Web site were all employed to encourage collaborative understanding and information-sharing among citizens, other stakeholders, City staff and the consultants. In addition, staff met with property owners, neighborhood and community groups, organizations, and City boards and commissions before and after release of the consultants' and Planning Commission drafts.

This appendix summarizes the *Rockville Pike* planning process, including the wide variety of public meetings and activities that engaged the Planning Commission, Mayor and Council, staff, consultants, stakeholders, and citizens in the creation of the plan.

## CONSULTANT SELECTION PROCESS

In May 2006, Rockville's Mayor and Council identified a vision of the City in 2020, along with associated two-year priorities for guiding the City's policies and decisions. Under the vision element of an "Exceptional Built Environment", one priority was to complete master planning for Rockville Pike.

Following this direction from the Mayor and Council, staff advertised a Request for Proposal (RFP) in October 2006 for consulting services to assist with the update of the 1989 Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan. The RFP also provided for new key elements, including an extensive public involvement process.

The Request for Proposal was advertised nationwide, posted on the American Planning Association (APA) Web site and mailed to 88 consultant firms. The RFP response deadline was December 8, 2006. A pre-proposal interview meeting was held on November 14, 2006 at which City staff briefed interested consultants on the project. Bids were received from six firms.

A four-member citizen group of property owners and residents was established to serve on the consultant selection team. A seven-member staff team from different City departments was also assembled. The staff team used evaluation criteria from the RFP to select the top four candidates.

Interviews were conducted on January 8 and 9, 2007. The four finalists were evaluated and ranked by the citizen and staff committees based on experience and technical qualifications (80%) and cost of services (20%). The consultant team of ACP Visioning + Planning was selected as lead project manager, with Economics Research Associates (ERA) for economic and market analysis support and Glatting Jackson Kerscher Anglin (later part of AECOM) for transportation support. Kim Littleton also became part of the selected consulting team to develop the form based code that was included as part of the consultant draft plan.

## EARLY PREPARATION

As with any planning effort, one of the first steps was to familiarize the consultant team with the study area. An initial orientation meeting with City staff and consultants was held in September 2007. This day-long meeting included a bus and walking tour of the Pike. Staff members shared plans and studies relevant to the Pike and its surrounding neighborhoods, as well as information on proposed new developments such as Twinbrook Station. Throughout the fall of 2007, the consultant team worked closely with Rockville staff to build community awareness about the upcoming planning process.

# THE CONSULTANT-LED PUBLIC PROCESS

In order to gather input and test ideas with the public, numerous meetings were held by the consulting team and staff over a period of seven months between December 2007 and June 2008. These meetings were open to everyone who lives, works, shops, or has other interests in Rockville and were consistently well-attended. Participation at each public meeting ranged from about 65 to 150 people, indicating a strong community interest in the future of the Pike. Throughout the process, all ideas from the public were carefully documented, posted on the project Website, and used to inform the development of the plan.

The *Rockville Pike* public process presented an opportunity to unify technical input with intuitive local knowledge. The consultant team shared the technical findings - outlined in Chapter 2: Key Findings - at various public meetings, giving participants a chance to learn more about how their community functions in terms of land use, transportation, and market conditions. Small group discussions and facilitated activities gave community members a chance to use this information to generate more informed recommendations about the future of the Pike. Through a process of joint discovery, the public, consultant team, and staff identified a set of planning principles that served as the foundation for design work and effectively captured the community's vision for the Pike.

Exit questionnaires distributed at each meeting tracked demographic representation and helped the City tailor its outreach strategies accordingly. In some cases, the City intensified its efforts to reach out to underrepresented groups. For example, field surveys were conducted to gain input from bus riders, who were seen as less likely to participate in evening meetings due to limited public transportation service.

A summary of the consultant-led public process follows:

## I. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The consultants conducted a series of stakeholder interviews in November and December 2007 to gain a better understanding of critical issues and community perceptions and attitudes related to Rockville Pike. The interviews were also used to encourage the participation of key interest groups.

Stakeholders interviewed included representatives from: City departments, the development community, regional agencies (such as Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and State Highway Administration), property and business owners, neighborhood and civic associations, Rockville citizen commissions (including the Planning, Historic District, and Human Services Commissions), and a group of Richard Montgomery High School students. The Mayor, all members of the City Council, and the City Manager were also interviewed individually.

The interviews produced three key outcomes. First, they provided the consultant with an initial understanding of the opportunities and challenges that the

plan should address. Second, they illustrated the variety of ideas, perceptions, and attitudes that exist concerning the Pike. Finally, they identified a set of critical issues and questions that were later tested during the *Rockville Pike* kick-off meeting.



*Figure A.1: The Kick-Off Meeting participants listen to the kick-off presentation.*

## 2. KICK-OFF MEETING

The kick-off meeting took place on December 4, 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to initiate a dialogue between the public and the consultant team, share ideas, and highlight critical issues to be addressed in order to lay the groundwork for the project.

The meeting consisted of three main parts: a general presentation by consultants on transportation, economics, urban design, and development regulations; small group table dialogues that allowed participants to brainstorm on critical issues that were identified through the stakeholder

interviews and offer ideas on how to address them; and a question and answer session with the consultant team.

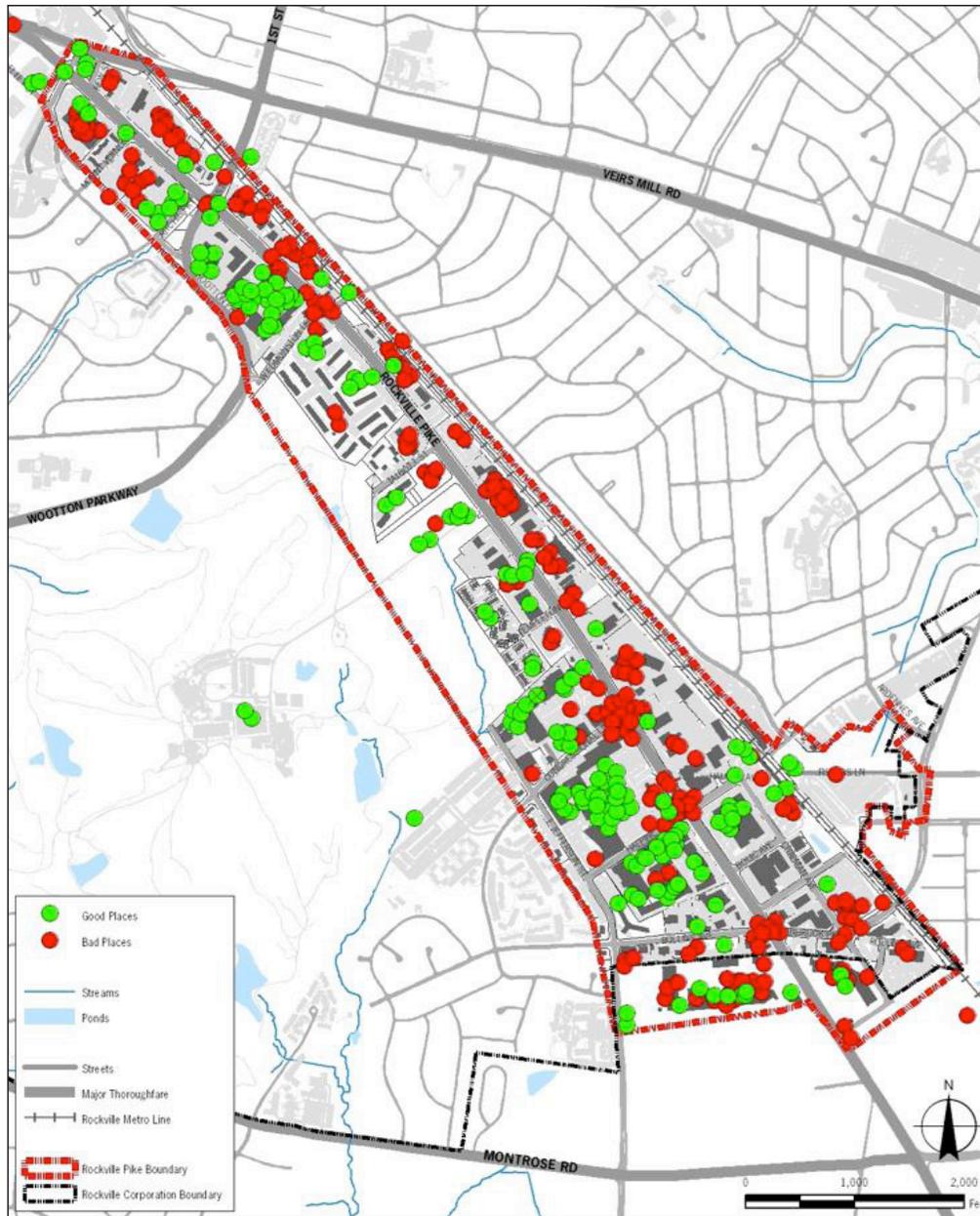
## 3. STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

The stakeholder workshop took place on February 26, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to identify physical strengths and weaknesses along the Pike and test issues that emerged from public input at the kick-off meeting.

Activities at the stakeholder workshop included: an overview of the major themes that emerged from the kick-off meeting; a small group exercise known as Good Places, Bad Places which engaged participants in mapping physical strengths and weaknesses along the Pike; a facilitated discussion about critical questions; and a reporting period that allowed each small group to present results of their activities.

## 4. REPORTS TO THE COMMUNITY

The kick-off meeting and the stakeholder workshop both emphasized small group activities, designed to elicit extensive input from the public about their ideas and their vision for the future of the Pike. The two subsequent public meetings, called Reports to the Community, placed more emphasis on providing detailed presentations about the consultant team's work. Reports to the Community gave the consultants opportunities to share the preliminary results of their technical research and analysis and receive additional feedback from the public.



**Figure A.2:** *Good Places, Bad Places Map* – This image shows the composite allocation of dots from the Good Places, Bad Places exercise. Participants placed green dots on the maps to indicate “good places” and red dots on the map to indicate “bad places.” Then, trained facilitators at each table led a discussion to identify the physical characteristics that make good places “good” or bad places “bad.” The detailed input on physical characteristics helped to inform the creation of a first draft of planning principles for the Pike. Source: ACP

**a. First Report to the Community: Transportation and Land Use**

The first Report to the Community took place on March 18, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to present an analysis of existing transportation and land use conditions along the Pike. The presentation included a history of development along the Pike, and an analysis of existing conditions, including issues such as connectivity, traffic congestion, safety, walkability, transit, and land use patterns.

The meeting also presented an opportunity to review the results of the *Good Places, Bad Places* exercise (see Figure A.2), present draft planning principles based

on input from the first two public meetings, and allow participants to rate the importance of each of the draft principles on a scale from 1 to 5.

**b. Second Report to the Community: Economics**

The second Report to the Community took place on May 6, 2008. The focus of this meeting was the economic and market conditions of the Pike. The consultant team highlighted key findings about economic conditions, discussed potential market demand for residential, retail, and office uses, and introduced the idea of identifying “model sites”, i.e., sites that have the potential to simulate the plan’s recommendation. “Model sites” were investigated during the course of the charrette, as described in Section 5, below.

## 5. THE COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE

A charrette is a planning technique that has been widely applied throughout the world. It brings together and engages the multi-disciplinary talents and energies of community members, consultants, city staff, and all interested parties in a creative, intensive planning effort over a compressed period of time. This use of the term is said to originate from L’École des Beaux-Arts in Paris during the 19th century, where proctors circulated a cart, or charrette, to collect drawings from students as they worked hard to meet their exam deadlines.

The *Rockville Pike* community design charrette was tailored to provide the widest range of opportunities for public input over a short period of time. It built upon the months of earlier public engagement described above, which provided a solid foundation of technical analysis, as well as publicly endorsed development principles that would inform the plan for the Pike. This section describes each of the major charrette activities.



*Figure A.3: The Design Workshop – Trained facilitators at the design workshop helped participants express their ideas on a large map.*

**a. First Public Meeting: Public Design Workshop**

The first charrette event was a public design workshop held on May 31, 2008. The workshop began with a presentation that provided an overview of the *Rockville Pike* process. Next, participants completed a visual survey to provide input on physical design issues.

The central activity of the public design workshop was a facilitated mapping exercise. Each table was randomly assigned to investigate one portion of the Pike, either the North, Middle, or South section.

Participants received prompt sheets that encouraged them to con-

sider road network and connectivity, type and intensity of land use, and green infrastructure and public spaces. A trained facilitator at each table helped to transfer participants' ideas onto the map. Participants were also encouraged to draw and describe their ideas directly on the map, and the exercise resulted in a collaborative design plan from each table.

The meeting ended with a reporting period in which each table presented their map and the results of their design exercise. There was a great deal of consistency across the eight tables, and the ideas gathered through this exercise provided a foundation for the consultant team's work at the design studio for the remainder of the charrette.

### b. Design Studio

The design studio is the creative center of any charrette—a place where consultants collaborate with staff, stakeholders, and members of the public to formulate design solutions over a condensed period of time. The *Rockville Pike* design studio was located at 718 Rockville Pike, the site of the former Koons Ford dealership. The team conducted the design studio from the afternoon of Saturday, May 31 through Tuesday, June 3.

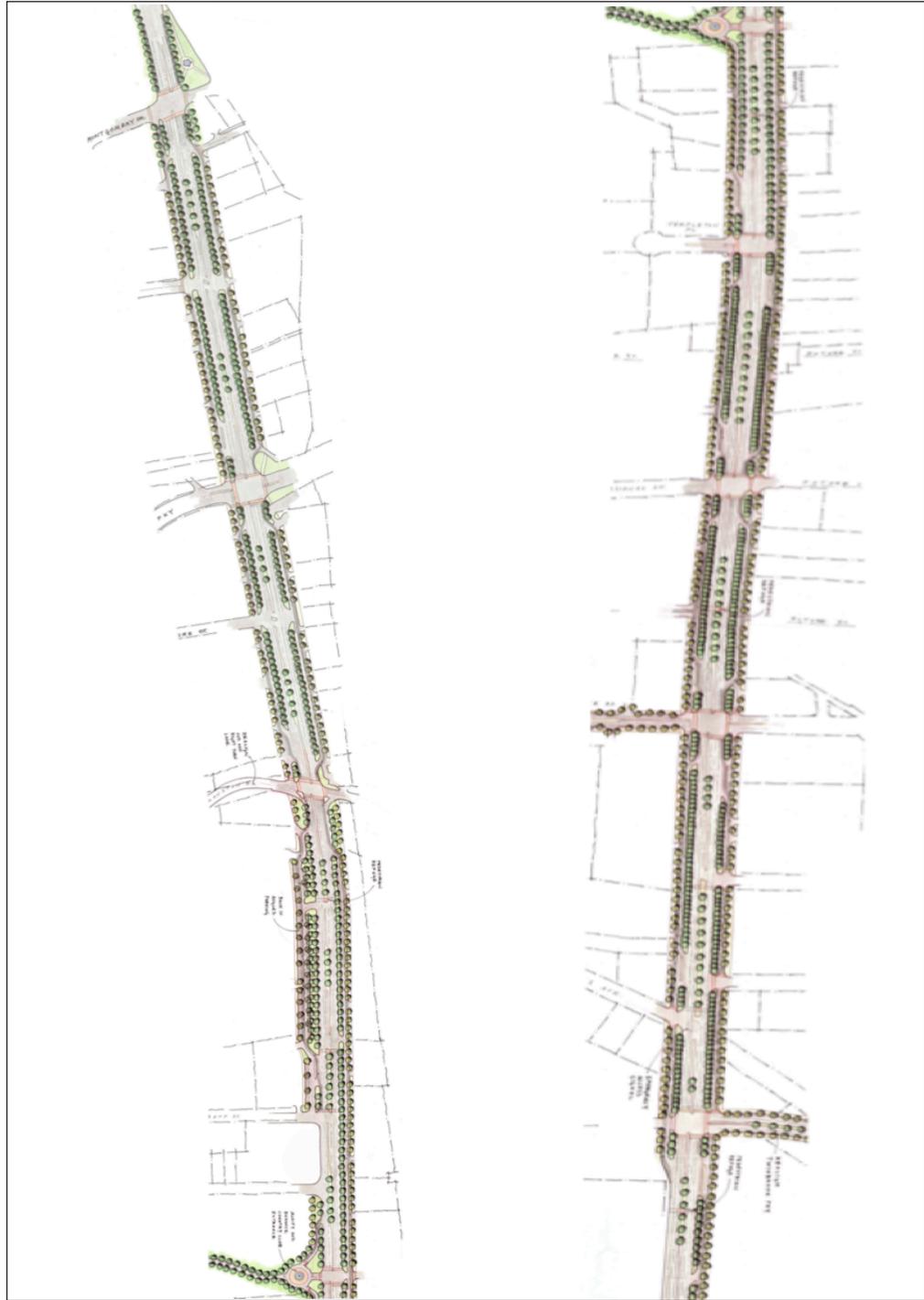
At the studio, City staff members were engaged to share data and provide clarity on conditions and policies that affect the Pike and surrounding neighborhoods. Meetings were held with the development community and owners of potential model sites to help envision the types of redevelopment that would be appropriate for various portions of the Pike. The team also met with representatives from regional agencies, including the Maryland Department of Transportation, Montgomery County Park and Planning, and Ride On. Members of the public stopped by the studio regularly to check on the progress of the effort and offer comments and ideas.

On Sunday, June 1, visitors to the studio were invited to join the consultant team and City staff on a walking audit where they explored first-hand some of the conditions, challenges, and possible solutions regarding transportation and land use in the South Pike. Ultimately, the design studio was a place of continuous, collaborative activity where everyone worked together to develop design solutions for the Pike.

A significant product of the design studio was a drawing that illustrated at-a-glance the depth and breadth of the changes proposed in transforming the Rockville Pike into a multi-way boulevard. Drawn at the 50-scale, it measured over 13 feet and it became the centerpiece of discussion among studio visitors. The drawing, divided in two parts because of its size, is shown as Figure A.5.



*Figure A.4: The Walking Audit – Charrette team and community members meet at the design studio before the walking audit.*



**Figure A.5:** Plan View of the of the Rockville Pike Multi-Way Boulevard –The image shows the 14-foot drawing created during the charrette. It shows on the left the northern portion of the proposed boulevard from Richard Montgomery Drive (top of the drawing) to the entrance to the Woodmont Country Club (bottom of the drawing). It shows on the right the southern portion of the proposed boulevard from the entrance to the Woodmont Country Club (top of the drawing) to Bou Avenue (bottom of the drawing). Source: AECOM

## Open House

An Open House was hosted at the design studio on Monday, June 2 and provided an opportunity for the public to check in on the emerging design for the Pike, and offer input that would guide refinements during the last day of the charrette.

### d. Final Public Meeting: Charrette Results – A Report to the Community

The final public event of the charrette was a presentation of the results. This meeting served as the third Report to the Community. The consultant team highlighted key aspects of the charrette design work, including a plan to transform the Pike itself into a green, multi-way boulevard.

Overall, participants were very supportive of the new vision for the Pike. A comment card was distributed in which participants were asked one simple question: “Are we on the right track?” In tallying the results, it was encouraging to see that 88 percent of respondents said “yes”, 12 percent were “unsure”, and zero percent of respondents felt that the design was “off-track”. This level of confidence in the design concepts and preliminary plan was a direct result of a process that: 1) allowed for ongoing feedback to balance technical findings and local knowledge, and 2) adhered to sound, publicly accepted development principles.

## DRAFT FOR PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

Staff reviewed two preliminary drafts received from the consulting team in 2008-2009. Staff provided the consultants with comments on each draft in order to clarify information and recommendations, and expand on technical analyses. Based on findings contained in those drafts, staff requested further analysis in order to understand the practical limits of plan implementation under current systems of review and infrastructure concurrency requirements. The third consultant draft included a technical memorandum entitled *Critical Lane Volume Analysis from Current Traffic and Approved Development on Rockville Pike*, that was prepared by the subcontractor AECOM in November 2010.

The consultants’ third and final draft, entitled *Rockville’s Pike: Envision a Great Place*, was released to the public on December 29, 2010 and the Public Record was opened. The draft was posted on the City’s Web site and distributed on CDs upon request. Printed copies were made available for reviewing at the Rockville and Twinbrook Public Libraries and at City Hall.

On January 5, 2011, staff sent the draft to the State of Maryland Clearinghouse, Montgomery County, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), the City of Gaithersburg, and other relevant agencies to start the State-mandated Article 66B process, which governs amendments to a City’s Master Plan.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Article 66B has since been reorganized into Chapter 426 in the Annotated Code of Maryland.

The consultant team presented its draft plan to a joint session of the Mayor and Council and the Planning Commission on January 10, 2011. On the following evening, staff and the consultants held an open house with exhibits at Richard Montgomery High School, which was immediately followed by a presentation for the public.

On February 9, 2011, Kim Littleton, the member of the consulting team who was primarily responsible for writing the draft form based code recommended by the consultants' draft plan to regulate development in the Rockville Pike corridor, gave two presentations: one for the public and a second to the Planning Commission.

To help Rockville citizens and others understand the consultants' draft so that they would be prepared to provide input through testimony, staff attended meetings of all neighborhood and community groups, organizations, City boards and commissions, and public agencies that expressed interest in discussing the plan. Staff also met with individual citizens and property owners upon request.

Community and neighborhood groups included: Americana Centre Condominium Association, East Rockville Civic Association, King Farm Citizens' Association, Lincoln Park Civic Association, New Mark Commons Homeowners' Association, Twinbrook Citizens Association, Victoria Condominium Association, West End Citizens Association, and Woodley Gardens Civic Association.

Organizations included: Rockville Chamber of Commerce, Rockville Economic Development, Inc., Rockville Housing Enterprises, Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Group, White Flint Implementation Advisory Group, and Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee.

City Boards and Commissions included: Environment Commission, Historic District Commission, Human Services Advisory Commission, Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, Traffic and Transportation Commission, and Senior Citizens Commission.

Public Agencies included: Maryland Department of Transportation, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the Montgomery County Executive Office.

## PLANNING COMMISSION PROCESS AND DRAFTS

The Planning Commission began its work on the plan by holding a public hearing on two evenings in March 2011 and reviewing all written testimony as it was submitted. The Public Record was held open for nine months until September 30, 2011. It yielded 130 items of testimony that were posted on the City's Web site along with other information about the planning process and the draft plan.

Planning Commission work sessions began in April 2011. Twenty-six work sessions were held, covering a wide range of transportation, land use, and zoning topics, and other issues raised in testimony. Members of the consulting team, as well as experts in such fields as mixed-use development, project and infrastructure financing, transit, form-based codes, urban design, and economic development participated in some of these sessions. A presentation on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was also provided to a joint session of the Mayor and Council and the Planning Commission during the work session time frame.

The Planning Commission meeting schedule was as follows:

**Table A-1: Planning Commission Meetings Schedule  
from 2011 to 2012**

<b>WORK SESSION #</b>	<b>DISCUSSION TOPIC</b>	<b>DATE</b>
	Public Hearing on consultant draft	3/09/11
	Public Hearing on consultant draft	3/16/11
1	Process & Corridor Planning Principles	4/27/11
2	Transportation – with consultant participation (AECOM)	5/11/11
3	Corridor Planning Principles	5/25/11
4	Transportation - with regional public agencies	6/08/11
	Montgomery County Transit Task Force presentation on rapid transit and Rapid Transit Vehicle system to Mayor & Council and Planning Commission	6/20/11
5	Boulevard design; Corridor Planning Principles	6/22/11
6	Boulevard design	7/13/11
7	Street network & other transportation issues	7/27/11
8	Land use & zoning	9/14/11
9	Development, economics, project finance – with expert panel	9/28/11
	Public record closed	9/30/11
10	Zoning – with consultants	10/12/11
11	Zoning – building form standards	10/26/11
12	Zoning – building form standards	11/09/11
13	Infrastructure finance – with Holland & Knight, City lobbyists	12/14/11
14	Zoning – building form standards	01/11/12
15	Architectural standards, parking, land uses	01/25/12
16	Jefferson & Fleet Street extensions	02/08/12
17	Zoning, architecture	02/22/12
18	Vision discussion with Roger K. Lewis, architect, planner & Washington Post columnist	03/14/12

**Table A-1: Planning Commission Meetings Schedule  
from 2011 to 2012 (continued)**

<b>WORK SESSION #</b>	<b>DISCUSSION TOPIC</b>	<b>DATE</b>
19	Follow-up to vision discussion	03/21/12
20	Parks & open space	03/28/12
21	Sidewalks	04/11/12
22	Jefferson & Fleet Street extensions, building height incentives	04/25/12
23	Boulevard & other street design	07/25/12
24	Code administration	09/12/12
25	Phasing	10/24/12
26	Implementation chapter	12/12/12

Based on Planning Commission direction throughout the course of the work sessions, staff revised the draft plan and separated out the zoning recommendations. The documents were publicly released on March 1, 2013 as the *Revised Draft for Planning Commission Public Hearings (plan) and the Draft Rockville Pike District Code (zoning)*. The Public Record was re-opened on March 1, 2013 and another round of public hearings was held on March 20, April 24 and May 22, 2013. The Public Record was closed on June 7, 2013.

The Planning Commission reviewed the new testimony and made further changes to the draft plan and the zoning at work sessions held between June 2013 and June 2014:

**Table A-2: Planning Commission Meetings Schedule  
from 2013 to 2014**

<b>WORK SESSION #</b>	<b>DISCUSSION TOPIC</b>	<b>DATE</b>
1	Public testimony overview	6/26/13
2	Building heights	7/10/13
3	Parks & open space, parking standards, corridor planning principles, public art, changes to regulating plan street frontages, land use & regulating plans	7/24/13
4	Fleet Street, parking standards & parking setbacks	8/07/13
5	Boulevard access roads	9/11/13
6	Boulevard access roads on east side of north & Middle Pike, street network, grade-separated Pike crossing near Halpine	9/25/13
7	Adequate Public Facilities	10/09/13
8	Code topics, review of changes to Chapters 3, 4 & 5	10/23/13
9	Mixed uses, building heights, code topics	12/11/13
10	Mixed uses	1/08/14

**Table A-2: Planning Commission Meetings Schedule  
from 2013 to 2014 (continued)**

<b>WORK SESSION #</b>	<b>DISCUSSION TOPIC</b>	<b>DATE</b>
11	Mixed uses	1/22/14
12	Mixed uses	2/12/14
13	Mixed uses	2/26/14
14	Report from subcommittee on mixed uses	3/26/14
15	Mixed uses, code topics	4/09/14
16	Plan and Code review	5/14/14
17	Direction to produce non-redlined draft	5/28/14
18	Direction to make draft available for public preview	6/18/14

The most significant changes included:

- Lowering maximum building heights;
- Eliminating bonus stories for providing more affordable housing units or open space;
- Eliminating the “General” street frontage to allow some commercial activity in more areas;
- Amending draft plan language on parks and open space;
- Amending draft plan and code language to more strongly encourage a mix of uses;
- Amending the treatment of the access road on the east side of the Pike in the North and Middle Pike to allow greater flexibility for the narrowest parcels in the Plan Area; and
- Keeping the parking standards (number of parking spaces required based on land use) that are in the City’s existing zoning ordinance, which are significantly higher than those in the earlier drafts.

The June 2014 draft was made available to the public and the Mayor and Council. The Mayor and Council hosted an open house and a public tour of the Plan Area, held five public hearings between September 2014 and March 2015, and received written testimony. On April 1, 2015, following several work sessions, the Mayor and Council sent a letter to the Planning Commission that contained a list of suggested edits to the draft.

The Planning Commission reviewed the Mayor and Council’s letter, held several work sessions between May 2015 and February 2016, formed a building heights sub-committee to articulate the Commission’s decisions regarding building heights, and made final edits to the draft plan. The Commission approved the revised plan on March 9, 2016.

## MAYOR AND COUNCIL PROCESS

The Mayor and Council received the Planning Commission's recommended plan on March 14, 2016. Given recent changes to Maryland's Land Use Article, the Mayor and Council was required to hold a public hearing and act (adopt, modify, remand or disapprove) the plan within a defined time limit after receiving the Planning Commission's plan. The Mayor and Council held two public hearings, on April 11 and on May 16, 2016. The public record was held open for written testimony through May 23. The Mayor and Council held work sessions and revised the Planning Commission's plan before adopting the plan, re-titled *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*, on August 1, 2016.

## Appendix B

# Rockville Pike History

## OVERVIEW

**A**S A TRANSPORTATION ARTERY for centuries, Rockville Pike (Maryland Route 355) can claim to be the oldest road in Montgomery County. It is identified in the City of Rockville's 1986 Historic Resources Management Plan as a historic resource within the theme of Transportation. It was one of the longest thoroughfares in the Maryland colony and one of the first paved state roads in the county. It continues to be one of Montgomery County's most traveled roads.<sup>1</sup>

Historical names for the Pike have included the Sinquea Trail, the Road from Frederick to Georgetown, the Great Road, the Rolling Road, Braddock's road, the Turnpike Road, Rock Creek Road, and, as one of the prominent retail corridors in the metropolitan area, the Golden Mile. Even today, as one heads north from Wisconsin Avenue in the District of Columbia, the

same length of road changes names to Rockville Pike, Hungerford Drive, Frederick Road, Urbana Pike, and to Market Street in Frederick.

Pike travelers have included Native Americans, colonial farmers, American presidents, fugitive slaves, Confederate and Union troops, wealthy Washingtonians retreating to their summer homes, and modern day commuters and shoppers.

## EARLY HISTORY

The Pike began as a foot trail for local Native American tribes more than 10,000 years ago. Most trails in this area ran along rivers, but the Pike was a less typical inland route that led to the Potomac River. The use of the trail was taken over by European settlers in

<sup>1</sup> Eileen S. McGuckian, *Rockville: Portrait of a City*. (Tennessee: Hillsboro, 2001) p. 3.



*Figure B.1: Charles Hungerford's tavern on Washington Street. Source: Peerless Rockville*

the 1690s. Early land patents and surveys (1690s-1740s) contain references to a trail or path used by local Native Americans.

What is now Rockville was a crossroads hamlet in a sparsely settled frontier area in the 18th century. Travelers could stop at taverns (also known as “ordinaries”) for food, drink, and lodging and local residents gathered at them as well.<sup>2</sup> Plantations were established by English and Scottish settlers and tobacco became the prime crop in the region as well as the legal

tender. A system of “rolling roads” was ordered by the Maryland Assembly in 1716 to facilitate the transportation of tobacco casks from plantations to market centers. Large barrels of tobacco, weighing as much as 1,000 pounds each, were “rolled” to market with the aid of horses, oxen, and slave labor on roads that were scarcely more than unimproved footpaths through forest, barely wide enough to accommodate the casks. By the mid-1700s, “Fredericktown” (now Frederick) to the north was well-established and the route (now Rockville Pike) became a rolling road connecting it to the port of Georgetown where tobacco was shipped to distant markets. The road was one of the longest in the Maryland colony.

Despite the importance of this road, maintenance was poor and mostly consisted of filling in major ruts and holes and clearing obstructions. Efforts to place planks over the ruts were abandoned because of a lack of funds. General Edward Braddock and his aide-de-camp, George Washington, traveled the road in 1755. Its crude condition was cited as a reason for their military defeat at Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh) that year during the French and Indian War. An act of the Maryland Assembly of 1790 was intended to straighten and mend the public roads in the county, including the road from Frederick to Georgetown.<sup>3</sup>

## THE TURNPIKE

The need for reliable and passable roads continued to be a problem at the turn of the 19th century. The Washington Turnpike Company was chartered by the Maryland General Assembly in 1805 to try again to improve the road. Turnpikes were based on a “pay as you go” system. Gates, consisting of long poles covered with spikes (“pikes”), were opened only when the toll was paid. The “Rockville Turnpike”, as it was known by 1818, became a two-lane roadway “paved” with

<sup>2</sup> The mid-1700s Pike area was scattered with taverns, including Owens Ordinary, located 16 miles north of Georgetown. Owens Ordinary (1755) was replaced with Hungerford Tavern in 1774.

<sup>3</sup> Rockville was part of Frederick County until Montgomery became a separate independent county on September 6, 1776. Rockville was chosen as the county seat but was not called Rockville until 1803.

small angular stone fragments, ten inches deep over soft dirt and rock. The road became stronger and more compact with use and over time.<sup>4</sup> Guideposts and milestones along the way informed travelers of distances to toll gates and destinations. Twice a week, stage coaches stopped in Rockville carrying passengers and mail along the toll road from Georgetown. Four horses were used to haul the coach as far as Rockville. Two of them continued the journey to Frederick.<sup>5</sup>

The Washington Turnpike Company used revenue collected from tolls for maintenance and repair. The road was heavily used by stagecoaches, herded cattle and sheep, and horses. More damaging traffic such as herds of cattle or horse-drawn carriages were charged higher tolls than pedestrians or single riders. The tolls were abandoned in the 1880s as there was never enough revenue to keep up with the needed repairs.

**FIGURE B.2  
TOLL RATES ON THE ROCKVILLE PIKE, 1820**

ITEM	COST
Per score (20) of sheep or hogs	12 ½ cents
Per score of cattle	25 cents
Horse and rider or led horse	6 ¼ cents
Coach or stage with 2 horses & 4 wheels	25 cents
Carriage with 4 horses	37 ½ cents

Source: *Rockville: Portrait of a City*, Eileen S. McGuckian, p. 29

Toward the last years of the 19th century, the most extensive road construction in Maryland was the rebuilding of the turnpike between Rockville and Georgetown. According to an 1899 report by the Maryland Geological Survey, “no road in the county was more in need of improvement both on account of its condition and its importance as the direct road from Rockville to Washington. It has long been known as one of the worst pieces of main highway in the state.”<sup>6</sup> At that time, there were 835 miles of road in Montgomery County and 95% of them were dirt roads. The remainder were stone and most of them were toll roads.<sup>7</sup>

## THE CIVIL WAR ERA

Rockville was a crossroads and camping site for thousands of soldiers, both Union and Confederate, during the Civil War years, 1861-1865. In September 1862, 150,000 troops passed through Rockville and camped at the Fairgrounds (today the Richard Montgomery High School site). The courthouse was used as a temporary hospital for the wounded. The Pike was used heavily for troop movements and was the site of many skirmishes. Union troops scoured for food and horses

<sup>4</sup> John L. McAdam, a Scottish engineer who was largely responsible for transforming road building into a science, developed this road construction technology. The term “macadam” came to be applied to a variety of other road surfaces in later years.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Deegan Dunham, *Rockville: Its History and Its People* (1976).

<sup>6</sup> 1899 *Maryland Geological Survey*, Volume III, p. 242

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p. 241

among farms that lined the road. During the same era, fugitive slaves followed routes that paralleled the Pike as they followed the Underground Railroad to stops in the county and to freedom in the North.

## TRAINS AND TROLLEYS

The coming of the railroad and electric street cars in the late 19th century had a profound effect on the siting of summer resorts and houses in Rockville and along the Pike. Wealthy Washingtonians purchased farmland between Bethesda

### The Estate-Bordered Pike

The convenience of the railroad, the trolley, and general road improvements to the Pike around the turn of the century led to the construction of country estates. Prominent houses that once lined the Pike but that are now gone include:

The Tyler–Wheeler Funeral Home (c. 1899), was a 2 ½-story frame, vernacular late Victorian house that was part of the small “Autry Heights” subdivision that was platted c. 1890 to take advantage of the trolley line along the Pike. Only a few houses were ever built there and the residential subdivision gave way to commercial development. The house was demolished in 1959 to allow for expansion of a shopping center.

The Simmons House, at 706 Rockville Pike, was a 2 ½-story Victorian with a wide front porch and was built in 1888-1889 for Rebecca Offutt. It was converted to commercial use in the mid-20th century and served at various times as a tourist home, the Rockville Chamber of Commerce and the Rockville bureau of the Gazette newspapers. The house was considered for local historic designation in 2002, but was found to be ineligible due to extensive alterations.

11520 Rockville Pike, just north of Nicholson Lane and south of Rockville’s border, was the site of a large three-story, 14-room wood house built in 1902 for Herman Hollerith, who invented a punch card method for tabulation of the 1890 census and founded the company that later became IBM. The house was purchased in 1926 by Frank Abbo who operated the “Villa Roma Club”. It featured dinner, a 14-piece band and dancing. Entertainers included Kate Smith who performed there until the Great Depression brought it to a close and it reverted back to a residence. It then became the “Rainbow Motel” before it was demolished in 1983.

The Sprigg Poole House, 1300 Rockville Pike, was located across from Lyddane-Bradley Farm which was located on the grounds of what is now Woodmont Country Club. This was an unusually large estate type of late Victorian building of frame construction. It was sheathed in German siding and sited on a wooded, landscaped knoll above Rockville Pike along the railroad tracks. A tenant house, smaller in size but built of similar materials, sat directly on the Pike. It was once owned by Sprigg Poole, a prominent county businessman. It was demolished sometime after 1975.

and Rockville around the turn of the 20th century. Only a few that were located along the Pike in Rockville remain from this era, including the Lyddane-Bradley House and outbuildings (now part of Woodmont Country Club) and the Dawson farmhouses (on Copperstone Court), once the homesteads of working farms.

The Metropolitan branch of the B&O Railroad was completed in 1873 and provided passenger train service between Washington, DC and Rockville. While it provided competition for the Pike as a means of travel, it also spurred development and business prosperity in the area by improving access to the greater metropolitan areas of Washington and Baltimore. The 16-mile trip from Rockville to Washington, DC took about 45 minutes.

Although trolleys, or street cars, were found in American cities before the Civil War, a line did not connect Washington, D.C. to Rockville until the turn of the century. The Tenallytown & Rockville Electric Railway Company opened a line from Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown to Bethesda Park, an amusement destination in Alta Vista (off Old Georgetown Road, near present-day National Institutes of Health) in 1891. The Washington & Rockville (W&R) Electric Railway Company then formed in 1897 to bring street cars as far north as Rockville. By 1900, tracks led to Courthouse Square, but the Mayor and Council of Rockville refused to permit service inside the town to begin until the W&R fulfilled its agreement to build the last section to the western limits of the town. This extension was made through Rockville on Montgomery Avenue to the Woodlawn Hotel (which later became Chestnut Lodge) in 1904.

The agreement between the town of Rockville and the W&R Railway Company lasted for 35 years. From 1900 to 1935, street cars, powered by overhead electric wire, ran on the track from Wisconsin and M Streets, N.W., in the District up Wisconsin and Old Georgetown Roads, over a steel trestle just before the cars approached Georgetown Preparatory School. From there, they continued through



**Figure B.3:** Trolley bound for Rockville. Street cars could be driven from either end. Six switching stations and side tracks allowed street cars to pass in different directions. Street cars could reach speeds up to 60 mph but traveled at 12 mph or less in populated areas. Source: Peerless Rockville



**Figure B.4:** The Halpine Store – The Halpine Store, also known as the Lenovitz General Store, was built on the Pike in 1898, taking advantage of the prime location on the trolley and railroad lines and the Pike. The proprietors, Benjamin and Anna Lenovitz, lived on the second floor. The building burned in 1923 and a new fire-resistant brick building was constructed in its place. This building, at 1600 Rockville Pike, became a Radio Shack store. Source: Peerless Rockville

dense woods at Montrose and onto the Rockville Pike, through Rockville along Montgomery Avenue, to Laird Street, and back again. Major stops along the line included Georgetown, Alta Vista, Bethesda, Montrose, Halpine, the Fairgrounds, Courthouse Square, and ending at Chestnut Lodge.

In 1929, W&R operated 24 trips a day between 6:30 a.m. and 12:30 a.m. to connect Rockville and Washington. However, the successful trolley service was eventually eclipsed by the growing popularity of the automobile and was halted in August 1935.<sup>8</sup>

## POST-WWII SUBURBANIZATION & POPULARITY OF THE AUTOMOBILE

The automobile was introduced and became hugely popular in the early 20th century. The prevalence of automobiles ushered in a new era for the Pike. In 1923, there were 16 service stations and automobile dealers in Rockville.<sup>9</sup> The Pike became a two-lane asphalt-paved road in 1925, but there were no traffic lights between Bethesda and Rockville. Rockville installed the county's first electric traffic signal in 1927 at the intersection of Commerce Lane (West Montgomery Avenue) and Washington Street.

**Figure B.5** Congressional Plaza sign on Rockville Pike. Source: *Peerless Rockville*, c. 1960

The first automobile speed limit laws were enacted in the U.S. around 1900. In 1905, the speed limit on Rockville roads was six miles per hour according to the book "Rockville: Its history and Its People."

Commercial development on Rockville Pike was contested even in the 1920s. According to a *Washington Post* article in September 25, 1929, residents along the Pike opposed industrial encroachment on what they claimed was "the most beautiful pike in the country" when Congressional Airport applied for a rezoning of 300 feet of street frontage at Halpine from residential to commercial. According to the *Post*, "The action of the commissioners in refusing the plea of the aviation field is construed as indicating that the demand of the residents that the Pike be kept free from commercial enterprises so that it might develop as a beautiful residential area is concurred in by the commissioners and to indicate that no such encroachment will be permitted."<sup>10</sup>

Despite the opposition to commercial development, the Pike changed with the emergence of auto-friendly development such as gas stations, car dealerships, tourist cabins, restaurants, and produce stands, though the character remained primarily agricultural through the 1930s. The number of cars owned by Montgomery County residents doubled between 1928 and 1938, totaling 23,600 in 1938.

<sup>8</sup> William J. Ellenberger, "History of the Street Car Lines in Montgomery County", *The Montgomery County Story*, Vol. 17, No. 2 May 1974

<sup>9</sup> *Fitzgerald's Rockville: A guide to Rockville, Maryland in the 1920s*, Eileen McGuckian and Lisa A. Greenhouse, 1996, p.9

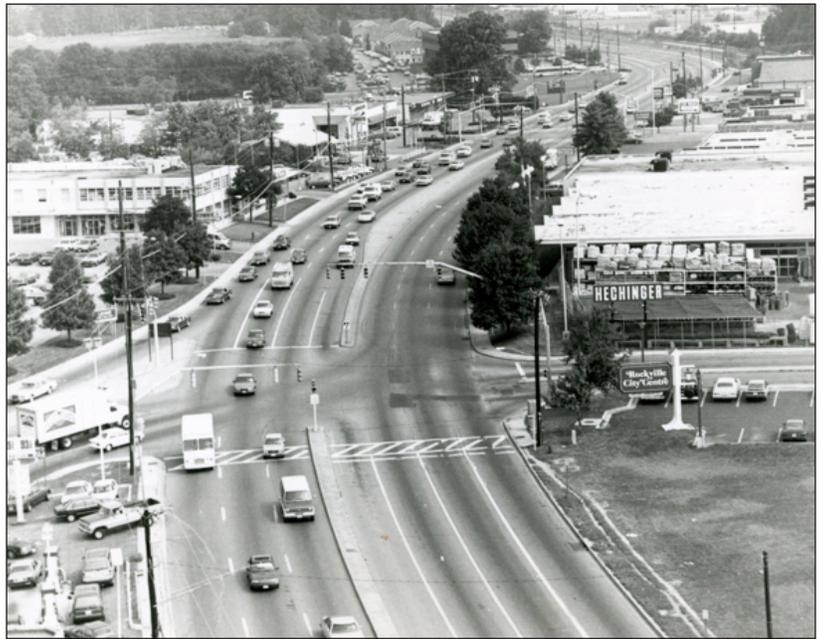
<sup>10</sup> *The Washington Post*, "Rezoning Refused on Rockville Pike", September 25, 1929

Rockville's business center ran east to west from the Rockville Pike through town to Washington Street. The business district, anchored by East Montgomery Avenue, contained a variety of businesses, homes, and places of worship. Properties owned by blacks were segregated from white-owned establishments and segregated along Middle Lane and Washington Street. Montgomery County government facilities and offices associated with public business dominated the center of town.

Automobiles clogged the narrow streets and parking, though permitted on most streets and behind many commercial buildings, was inadequate by the 1930s. Rockville Pike was widened to four lanes in 1953-55 to relieve the increasing congestion and a bypass was created to separate through traffic from vehicles with a Rockville destination. Rockville Pike no longer jogged west onto Montgomery Avenue, past the courthouse, and north onto Washington Street. Instead, a new 1.4 mile roadway, starting at St. Mary's Church, ran parallel to the railroad tracks northward to bypass the center of town. The bypass opened in 1951 and was named Hungerford Drive a year later. It was successful in diverting traffic away from Rockville's traditional business district on the main street, yet downtown parking remained a significant problem. Cutting off the old main street, the lack of downtown parking, and the emergence of new shopping centers elsewhere in town led to the demise of the town center and the decision to undertake a federal urban renewal program. Forty-six acres in the town center were bought, old and new buildings were demolished, and street patterns were changed. In their place rose the residential Americana Centre, more county buildings, high-rise offices, and Rockville Mall which included a parking garage.

The Pike accommodated 16,650 automobiles per day in 1958.<sup>11</sup> The Washington National Pike Interstate was built that year and later renamed I-270, taking some of the through traffic that the Pike had served. In 1974-75, the Pike was widened again, to six lanes. Between 1975 and 1986, the Pike continued to attract many more shoppers than the town center and approximately 1.8 million square feet of new retail, office, and hotel development was added along the Pike.

Several nightclubs, some with neon signs, sprang up along the Pike in the booming 1950s and 1960s. Some residents saw these as eyesores and City Council-



**Figure B.6:** Rockville Pike, just north of the plan study area, at the intersection of Washington Street and the Pike. Photo taken from the top of the GE building in 1988. Source: Peerless Rockville

Parking was a strip shopping center's greatest attraction in the 1950s and 1960s. According to a 1997 article in *The Washington Post* reflecting on the Pike's history, mid-century strip center owners displayed parking "like a grocer fills windows with fruits and vegetables."

<sup>11</sup> *Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan*, April 1989, p. 3. Traffic count in front of Congressional Plaza.

*Watergate  
Fame: During  
the Senate  
Watergate  
hearings,  
conspirator  
James McCord  
said he received  
his orders to  
burglarize the  
Democratic  
National  
Committee  
Headquarters at  
a phone booth  
outside the Blue  
Fountain Inn on  
Rt. 355, about  
1.5 miles north  
of the Rockville  
depot.*

man Edward Mack called for “Operation De-Uglification” in 1966 to curtail the movement.

The “Car Culture” also brought the area’s first McDonald’s restaurant, complete with golden arches, to the Pike in the mid-1960s.<sup>12</sup> A McDonald’s restaurant is still in the same location at 1390 Rockville Pike but its appearance has changed with the times. Dixie Cream Donuts (later Montgomery Donuts and now a Subway) at 1402 Rockville Pike is another example of small, mid-20th century commercial development along the Pike.

Congressional Airport became Congressional Plaza Shopping Center when its land value increased to a point that made redevelopment financially appealing in the late 1950s. This is a prime example of the evolving importance of automobile-oriented retail along the Pike in the mid-20th century.

Automobile-oriented shopping centers and their expansive parking lots continued to proliferate. A 1997 article in The Washington Post noted that “Humans fit comfortably in this environment only when sealed within their cars. Once drivers become pedestrians, they are vulnerable and out of place, as lost and endangered as someone trying to cross a busy airport tarmac.”<sup>13</sup>

## **BUS AND RAPID RAIL SERVICE**

Bus service had begun in 1924 and, together with private automobiles, replaced the trolleys. The Blue Ridge Transportation Company provided bus service for Rockville and Montgomery County from 1924 through 1955. In 1955, DC Transit Systems acquired the assets of the former Capital Traction Company including street car and bus service. DC transit eliminated the last streetcar service in 1962 but continued to provide transit bus service in the District of Columbia and Montgomery County, including Rockville, until 1973 when it was, in turn, acquired by the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA). Metrorail Red Line service to Rockville began in 1984.

WMATA’s Metrobus service was augmented by Montgomery County’s Ride-On bus service starting in 1979. The Rockville and Twinbrook Metrorail stations began service on December 15, 1984. MARC, Maryland’s Rail Commuter service, began serving Rockville in 1984 with its Brunswick line. From Rockville, MARC provides service to Union Station in Washington D.C. (southbound) and to Frederick and Martinsburg, WV (northbound), as well as intermediate points. With these public transit improvements, free-standing office buildings and mixed-use development began to join the automobile-oriented strip retail centers along the Pike.

<sup>12</sup> An attorney representing McDonald’s requested an interpretation of the City’s sign regulations as they pertained to the illumination of the restaurant’s trademark golden arches; however, the City did not grant an exception to the regulations. Rockville Mayor and Council minutes, December 8, 1959.

<sup>13</sup> The Washington Post, “Taking a Peak at the Pike,” December 26, 1997

### Congressional Airport

In operation 1929-1958, this airport was the only private airfield in Montgomery County as well as one of the first and busiest private flying fields in the Washington area. In 1928, 275 acres of farmland (previously the Wagner Farm) were leased to the Congressional School of Aeronautics and private airport. In 1929, the lease was converted to a sale and the land was deeded to Arthur Hyde, President of Congressional Airport for \$30,000. There were about 65 aircraft at Congressional at any given time, many of which were privately owned. Pilots had to fly over the high tension wires along the Pike to land on the single grass landing strip.

Aviation became popularized in the time period between World War I and World War II and this period became known as the “Golden Age of Aviation”. In August 1942, all civilian airports in the Eastern Vital Defense Zone were closed by order of the First Fighter Command. Flying was halted for three years during the War. A brief post-war flying boom collapsed in the early 1950s. Warehouses were built and leased out to earn revenue and flying became an incidental activity at the site. The flying school closed for good in 1951. The Congressional Roller Skating Rink opened in one of the aircraft hangars in 1957 and was very popular but it was demolished in 1984 to make room for a new hotel and restaurant. The Womack Building (131 Congressional Lane) is the only remaining remnant of the airport.

**Congressional Plaza** was built on the airport site by Arthur Hyde in 1958 in response to the population and housing boom in Rockville and the increasing retail value of the land following World War II. It was one of the first retail developments of its size and kind in Montgomery County. A similar shopping center in Silver Spring was the first in the county, built in 1939 and Wheaton Plaza opened in 1960, or at about the same time as Congressional. These are among the first regional shopping centers constructed outside of urban town centers. However, Congressional was the first alternative to traditional downtown shopping in Rockville. The shopping center was originally conceived as a 30-acre site on the west side of Rockville Pike south of Woodmont Country Club and was to be named Congressional Shopping City. The City of Rockville only approved the central 20 acres for retail development in 1956. It became known instead as Congressional Plaza and was anchored by J.C. Penney (Rockville’s first national chain clothing store), Giant Food and S.S. Kresge Company.

The shopping center was designed as a one-story strip of shops in an “L” shape with approximately 35 stores. Anchor stores were accentuated by being slightly taller. The exteriors were comprised of brick with fieldstone facing and plate glass display windows and flat roofs with deep overhangs. The buildings were set far back from the Pike with a vast expanse of surface parking separating them from the Pike. There have been alterations and additions over the years and new clusters of buildings have been added to the north and south of the original center.

Parking and signage were immediate problems for the shopping center. The parking spaces and access lanes were too narrow to accommodate the average 1950s 7.5-foot wide car and had to be re-designed, resulting in fewer spaces. Initially, signage also did not meet City regulations.

*Big Box Retail: Rockville gained national attention in 2000 when it enacted limitations on the sizes of individual retail stores following the construction of “big box” retailers Marlo Furniture and Best Buy on the Pike in the mid- and late 1990s.*



*Figure B7: Aerial view of Metrorail construction adjacent to the Pike, November 1979.  
Source: Peerless Rockville*

## THE ROCKVILLE PIKE CORRIDOR NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN, 1989

By the mid-1980s, downzoning was viewed as the solution to traffic congestion and commercial overdevelopment of the Pike. A Rockville Pike Advisory Committee (RPAC) was formed to continue the work of the Economics Amenities Committee (that had been established by the Mayor and Council in 1982 to examine the function and appearance of the Pike) and a temporary building moratorium went

into effect in 1984 to temporarily reduce pressures for intense office development along the Pike following the opening of the Metrorail red line stations in Rockville. The Committee presented a series of recommendations to the Mayor and Council in 1985, including a reduction in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and the creation of an optional method of development that would provide performance standards for increased density in mixed-use projects.

The RPAC also recommended a comprehensive plan for the corridor that would focus on urban design and transportation system management strategies. The Planning Department issued a draft plan based on the recommendations of the RPAC in January 1987. The plan was revised at the direction of the Planning Commission and the Mayor and Council and the final plan was adopted by the Mayor and Council in April 1989 as the Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan. This Plan has provided the guidelines for development and design of the Rockville Pike Corridor for the past 20 years. In 2007, the City determined that an update to the Plan was needed and initiated Rockville's Pike: Envision a Great Place.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

At this time, the Rockville Pike Plan Area does not contain any locally designated historic sites or any sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Following current City policy, any building or site that is nominated for historic preservation, or proposed for demolition, would require further evaluation to determine its level of significance and whether or not it meets the City's criteria for historic designation.

More information on historic preservation in Rockville may be obtained from the City's Historic Preservation Office or the City's website.