



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item # 7
2/28/08

February 21, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *gk*
Sue Edwards, Team Leader, I-270 Corridor, Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Nancy Sturgeon, *NS* Planner Coordinator, Community-Based Planning Division
Mary Beth O'Quinn, Planner Coordinator, Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Status Report on Gaithersburg West Master Plan

Introduction

On February 28, 2008, staff will brief the Planning Board on the status of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan. This staff report provides a summary of the progress, issues, and next steps in the Master Plan process.

Previous Planning Board Discussion

The last status report to the Planning Board on the Gaithersburg West Master Plan addressed the boundaries of the Plan. During the discussion of the Semi-Annual Report in October 2007, several County Council members questioned the Department's requested change in geography from one large Master Plan area to two smaller ones, updated sequentially: Gaithersburg West, followed by Gaithersburg East. The Department recommended this approach because the issues, land uses, and stages of development in the western portion of Gaithersburg are distinct and uniquely different from the eastern area. In addition, there are two ongoing regional transportation studies that affect each. The I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study includes the Corridor Cities Transitway through Gaithersburg West and the Life Sciences Center. The Midcounty Corridor Study directly impacts Gaithersburg East and Montgomery Village and Phase 1 of the Facility Plan is not scheduled for completion until mid-2010.

Former Council President Marilyn Praisner requested that the Department's rationale for the change in scope be explained in a memo to be circulated to Council members for their review and comment. Staff prepared a report and discussed this issue with the Planning Board on October 29, 2007. On November 7, 2007, a memo was transmitted to Council President Marilyn Praisner from Chairman Royce Hanson explaining the justification for the sequenced, two-plan approach. On December 7, 2007, the Acting Director received an e-mail from Marlene Michaelson stating that a majority of the Council members supported the Planning Board's recommendation to proceed with two Master Plan updates, starting with Gaithersburg West. This decision will be reflected in the upcoming Semi-Annual Report to the County Council in April 2008.

The Geography of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan

The Gaithersburg West Master Plan will update the 1990 *Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan* and portions of the 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan*. The focus of the Master Plan will be on the greater Shady Grove Life Sciences Center (LSC). Most of the areas outside of the LSC that are included in Gaithersburg West are enclaves of land that are within the County's jurisdiction but are completely surrounded by the City of Gaithersburg: the National Institute for Standards and Technology, the Washingtonian light industrial area, and the residential neighborhoods of Oakmont, Rosemont, and Washingtonian (see Attachment 1). The Plan also includes the predominately residential area east of Great Seneca Park and west of Quince Orchard Road and Longdraft Road. In addition, there is an undeveloped parcel with I-3 zoning (the McGown tract) adjacent to the City of Gaithersburg along I-270 east of Game Preserve Road.

Community Engagement

Due to the large and scattered geography of Gaithersburg West, staff is undertaking a two-pronged community outreach approach. In the enclave areas, staff does not envision significant changes to the existing zoning and established land use pattern. Staff will contact representatives of these areas to notify them of the Master Plan update, set up a meeting, and discuss any issues or concerns they may have. City of Gaithersburg staff will be invited to these meetings.

The primary focus of the Master Plan update is on the future of the Life Sciences Center and the appropriate alignment, station locations, and land uses around the Corridor Cities Transitway. Staff has been actively engaged with Johns Hopkins, a major property owner in the area, and its team of consultants. Staff has attended all of the community meetings that Johns Hopkins has scheduled.

Next month, staff will begin a series of meetings with individual property owners to discuss their ideas about the future of the LSC as well as any specific plans they may have for their properties. When the results of the transportation and environmental analysis are complete, staff will hold a community meeting to present this information. Ongoing meetings with individual property owners and stakeholders will continue as necessary. Once preliminary recommendations for the Master Plan are developed, staff will hold another community meeting to present concepts and receive feedback, ideas, and input from the stakeholders.

The Origins of the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center

The origins of the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center are found in the 1971 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan*, which endorsed the County's proposal for a future Montgomery County Medical Center complex near Shady Grove Road west of I-270. The Medical Center was envisioned as a major employment center that would include medical research as well as a hospital and full complement of health services for the rapidly growing western portion of the County. In 1976, land was conveyed to the State for the Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICA) and the Noyes Institute. In 1980, construction began on Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, which was one of the first major developments in the area. The 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* expanded on the medical center concept, naming the area the "R&D Village," but deferred detailed recommendations to the 1990 *Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan*.

In the early 1980s, the Montgomery County government made a strategic decision to utilize public resources to enhance its competitive position to attract the biotechnology industry. With land and location as its principle benefits, and the presence of a strong federally supported scientific community, biotechnology was a natural focus for the County's economic development program. The Shady Grove Life Sciences Center (SGLCS) was created on 288 acres of publicly-owned land west of I-270. The County's land use strategy included three components – a health services core in the center, educational institutions as anchors to the north and south, and surrounding land available to attract research and development companies. Health services were clustered around the existing Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. To bring academic institutions to the area, the County donated land to Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland. A number of biotechnology firms have located in the SGLSC, including Human Genome Sciences, BioReliance, and the J. Craig Venter Institute.

The 1990 Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan

The 1990 *Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan* encompassed approximately 2,500 acres on both sides of I-270 south of I-370. The Plan included the Life Sciences Center, the Banks Farm, the Thomas Farm, the Crown Farm, Washingtonian/Rio, the Shady Grove Metro Station, and the King Farm (see Attachment 1). The 1990 Plan designated the area west of I-270 as the "R&D Village" and the area east of I-270 as the "Metro Area." In 2006, the Shady Grove Metro Station and surrounding area was the subject of an updated Plan, the *Shady Grove Sector Plan*. Due to annexations of large tracts of land, the size of the area within the County's jurisdiction has changed significantly since the 1990 Plan. The King Farm and the Thomas Farm (now called Falls Grove) were annexed into the City of Rockville. The Washingtonian/Rio area and the Crown Farm were annexed into the City of Gaithersburg. The LSC area that will be analyzed in the Master Plan update is approximately 900 acres.

The generalized land use concept in the 1990 Master Plan supported and enhanced the County's original vision for a Shady Grove Life Sciences Center. It identified research and development as the primary use for the core of the LSC around the hospital as well as the JHU/Belward site and areas just north of Key West Avenue. To provide housing near the LSC, the Plan proposed a traditional neighborhood concept that it compared to older communities in Montgomery County developed during the late 19th century. The compact, tight-knit residential fabric envisioned by the 1990 Plan is referred to today as "new urbanism."

The Plan proposed this residential neighborhood concept for most of the large vacant tracts, some which were still working farms at the time. The King Farm, the Thomas Farm, and the Crown Farm were all recommended for the mixed-use neighborhood concept with an emphasis on increased residential units to support jobs in the LSC and surrounding area. The Plan recommended that the neighborhoods have a mix of housing and retail, an interconnected street system, a diversity of housing types, street-oriented buildings, and a mix of active and passive open spaces. The King Farm and Falls Grove, now in the City of Rockville, have largely achieved the vision established by the County's 1990 Master Plan. The Crown Farm has an approved plan from the City of Gaithersburg that includes a mix of commercial, residential, retail, a public high school site, and a relocated CCT station. Construction has not begun on the property.

The 1990 Plan repeatedly emphasized the importance of transit: “As noted throughout the Plan, the land use recommendations assume the development of transit. If transit does not become a reality, the land use proposals for the area will have to be re-examined.” (page 78) The Plan recommended that the comprehensive rezoning of properties by Sectional Map Amendment (SMA) be deferred until there was evidence of a public/private commitment to the implementation of transit. (pages 4, 5, 73, 78, 81) By 1995, it was agreed that an interim transit plan would be prepared and it would satisfy the Master Plan criteria and allow the SMA to proceed. The SMA was approved in 1996, placing the newly created Life Sciences Center Zone on approximately 245 acres and the R&D Zone on the 138-acre JHU/Belward site.

Johns Hopkins University Properties

The Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Montgomery County Campus is located on a 35-acre site at Key West Avenue and Medical Center Drive. The campus is approximately 25 percent complete. In 1989, JHU purchased the 138-acre Belward site from Mrs. Banks and received Preliminary Plan approval in 1996 for 1.8 million square feet of development. Approximately 31 of the original 138 acres were sold and developed. The remaining 107-acre Belward site has about 1.4 million square feet of approved development capacity under the R&D Zone.

Mrs. Banks was given a life estate and remained on the property until 2005 at which time JHU began re-evaluating their plans for Belward. JHU was encouraged by County leadership to pursue a world class vision for Belward and began researching global competition in science and technology. JHU concluded that its approved development plan for Belward was outmoded and endeavored to create a more dynamic concept for Belward and the broader Life Sciences Center. JHU hired a team of consultants to help frame its “Vision 2030 for the Shady Grove Sector” and has met with the Planning Department, County agencies and government officials, LSC property owners, and area residents. JHU held a community workshop on February 7-9 and several post-workshop meetings are planned, including a community forum on design principles held on February 21.

Johns Hopkins “Vision 2030 for the Shady Grove Sector” proposes a substantial increase in density on the Belward site and a relocation of the CCT stop from Great Seneca Highway into the property. The Vision 2030 Plan also proposes substantial redevelopment throughout the LSC, including introducing housing and increasing commercial development. The Hopkins team has initiated meetings with LSC property owners to share their ideas for the future of the area.

The Life Sciences Center in 2008

During the past 18 years since the 1990 Master Plan was approved, many of the original ideas for the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center have been realized. At the heart of the I-270 Corridor, the Life Sciences Center is the County’s premier location for and has the largest concentration of advanced technology and biotechnology companies. The two academic institutions in the LSC have increased its prominence and vastly expanded opportunities for collaboration. The University of Maryland’s Shady Grove campus includes the Center for Advanced Research in Biotechnology (CARB), a state-of-the art teaching, learning and research environment. The Johns Hopkins University Montgomery County Campus features an Integrated Imaging Center that provides a variety of advanced and specialized light and fluorescence microscopic facilities

and services that are available to the greater Washington research and scientific community. Shady Grove Adventist Hospital has expanded its facilities, providing the broader community with a full range of health care services. A number of biotechnology companies have located here and several have expanded their facilities.

The vision statement from the 1990 *Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan* was written to describe the area in the year 2010:

The Shady Grove “R&D Village” has evolved into a world-class biotech and high tech research area. The presence of two major universities, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland, has helped attract firms interested in basic and applied research. Strong transit linkages between the universities, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the National Institutes of Health make the R&D Village an integral part of the large Montgomery County research community...clustering higher density residential and employment uses along designated transitways has promoted transit ridership, reducing the dependency on the automobile. The “employment neighborhoods”... offer an attractive alternative to more typical single use, auto dependent, office parks. Unlike many large R&D parks, the R&D Village is an active place after work hours.

This vision has been partially, but certainly not fully, realized. The implementation of the transit recommendations in the 1990 Plan is clearly the major missing component. “R&D Village” does not aptly describe today’s LSC. The majority of the LSC has been built to typical suburban standards, with clusters of single-use employment, surface parking lots, and major highways. Because the zoning for most of the land in the greater LSC specifically excludes residential development, creating a mixed use environment that brings housing and retail closer to employment clusters has not happened.

The Life Sciences Center in 2030

The primary focus of the Master Plan update is on the future of the Life Sciences Center and the appropriate alignment and station locations for the Corridor Cities Transitway through this area. Staff is analyzing the Vision 2030 Plan that JHU has brought forward. The ideas are grounded in sound planning principles of smart growth, new urbanism, transit, and phased development. Staff shares the overall vision of transforming the LSC of today into a lively, dynamic, mixed-use center whose physical form is as inspiring and state-of-the-art as the discoveries that will be going on inside the buildings. Again, the 1990 Master Plan envisioned the LSC “as a major R&D Center with a strong emphasis on transit serviceability...that is a good place to work...that is a good place to live...with a special cultural and recreational environment..for people of different ages and different income levels.”

While staff supports the vision, the appropriate overall density must be supported by the existing and planned transportation network, which assumes the Corridor Cities Transitway. Staff is also cognizant of the considerable challenges of creating a desirable and sustainable residential community from an existing built form that is essentially a suburban office park model. Transforming the existing LSC will require a high degree of cooperation from property owners.

Staff has been developing land use alternatives that will be tested in the transportation model. The alternatives have varying levels of density and development that are tested to determine the impacts on the road network and the environment. This modeling begins the week of February 27. Staff will also be analyzing school capacity and community facilities and assessing the open space network, trails, and bikeways to enhance existing connections and provide better connectivity. While the alternatives (outlined below) show specific densities, the overall land use concepts are a work in progress and will be refined over the next few months. The Alternatives are shown on Attachments 1-3.

Alternative 1

- LSC Density at 1.0 FAR
- Introduce Housing in LSC
- Belward Density at 1.0 FAR
- CCT station moved to Belward
- PSTA remains at current location

Alternative 2

- LSC Density at 1.5 FAR
- Introduce Housing in LSC
- Two CCT stations in LSC
- Belward Density at 1.25 FAR
- CCT station moved to Belward
- PSTA relocated; medium density housing and retail

Alternative 3

- LSC Density at 1.0 FAR
- Introduce Housing in LSC
- CCT station moved into LSC
- Belward Density at 1.5 FAR
- CCT station moved to Belward
- PSTA relocated; high density housing and retail

Next Steps

This Plan is on schedule for transmittal to the County Council by the end of 2008. Staff anticipates two additional opportunities for Planning Board guidance over the next several months: (1) at the completion of the capacity analysis for transportation, environment, and schools (May 2008) and (2) presentation of preliminary land use and zoning recommendations (July 2008). Staff anticipates preparation and distribution of the Public Hearing Draft in September with a public hearing scheduled for September or October. Planning Board worksessions would be held during October and November 2008.

In addition to public sessions with the Planning Board, staff will hold community meetings in May-June to discuss the results of the capacity analysis. Staff will also coordinate with the cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg through regularly scheduled coordination meetings for the I-270/MD 355 study and other meetings as needed.

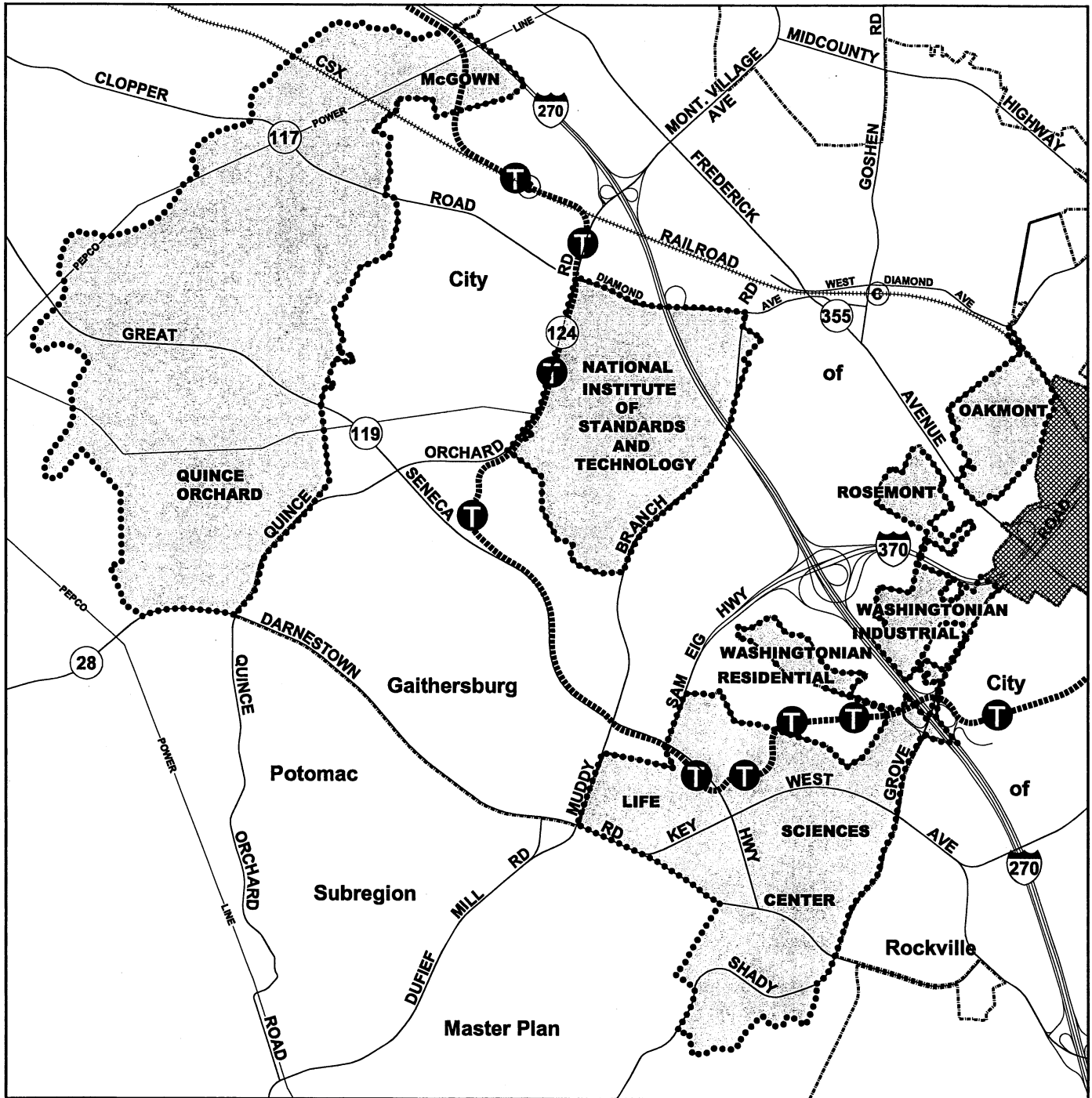
This Plan will also include a fiscal impact analysis covering: (1) Estimates of the amount of development expected with the plan, (2) Estimates of the revenue that will be generated by this development, (3) Estimates of the cost of infrastructure in the plan, and (4) Comparison of the revenue that will be generated with the revenue stream that is needed to pay for the planned infrastructure. The Research and Technology Center will be preparing this analysis after the preliminary recommendations have been developed.

As the plan proceeds, strong environmental; transportation; and density modeling will be an important factor in shaping recommendations.

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Attachments

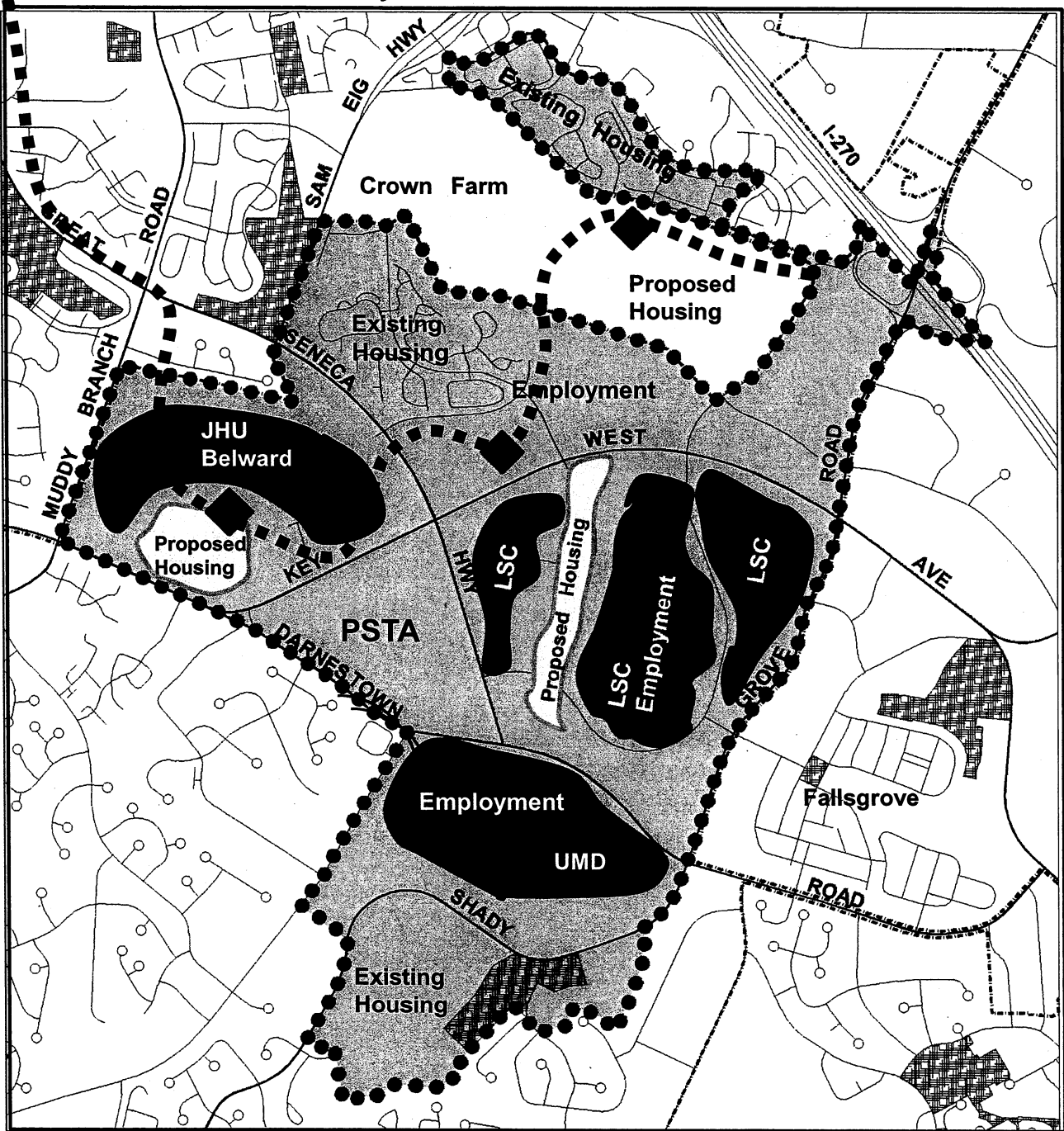
- Attachment 1: Gaithersburg West Master Plan
- Attachment 2: Alternative 1
- Attachment 3: Alternative 2
- Attachment 4: Alternative 3







-  Gaithersburg West Master Plan Boundaries
-  Shady Grove Sector Plan Boundary
-  City of Gaithersburg, City of Rockville, Town of Washington Grove
-  Parkland and Open Space
-  Proposed Corridor Cities Transitway and Stations
-  MARC Commuter Rail Stations



Life Science Center Vicinity: Alternative #1



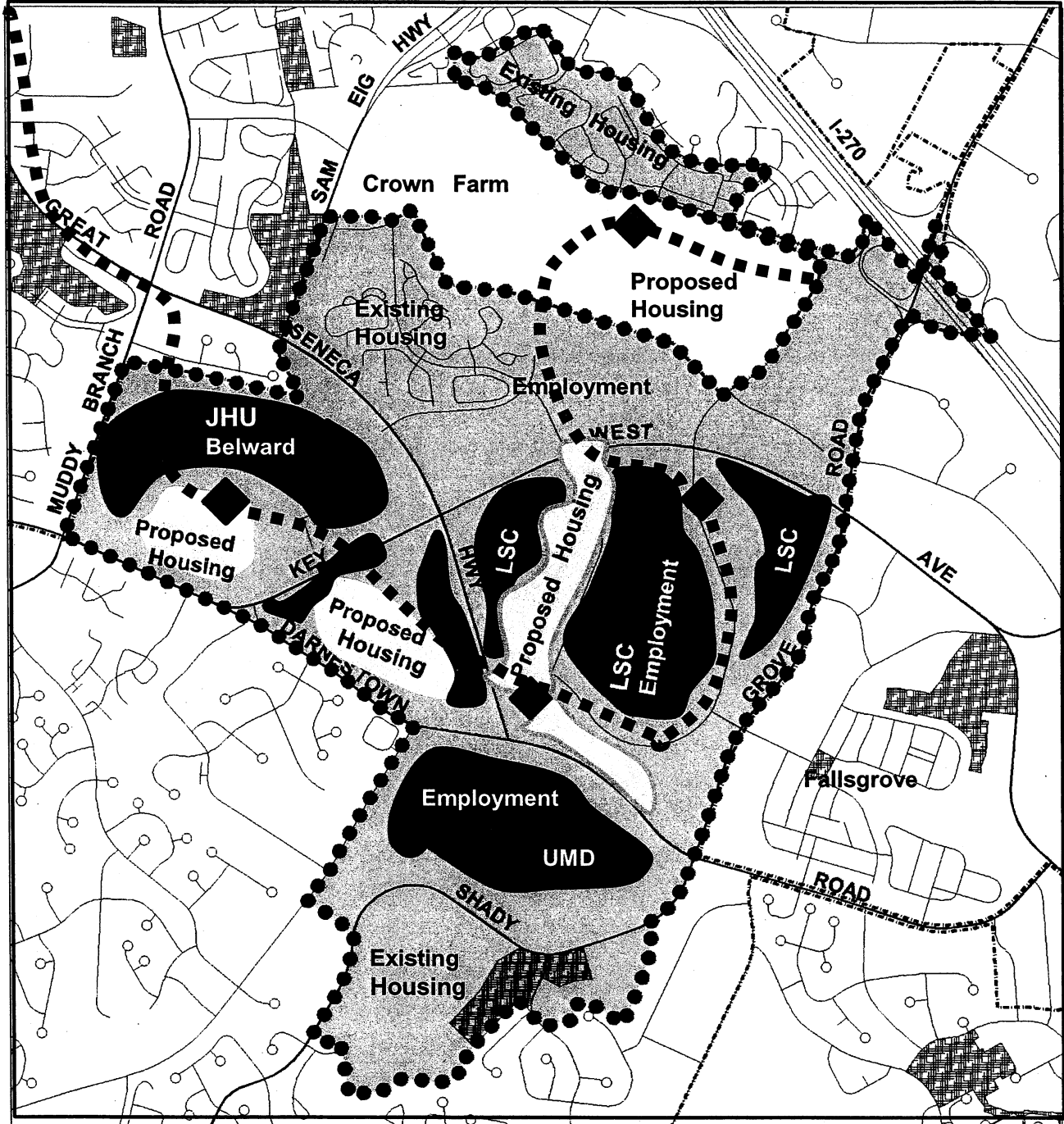
-  Life Science Center Vicinity
-  City of Gaithersburg, City of Rockville, Town of Washington Grove
-  Parkland and Open Space
-  Proposed Corridor Cities Transitway and Stations

-  Employment
-  Housing
-  CCT



Alternative #1:
LSC Density 1.0 FAR; Housing included at LSC
Belward Density 1.0 FAR
PSTA remains
CCT Station at Belward

Life Science Center Vicinity : Alternative #2



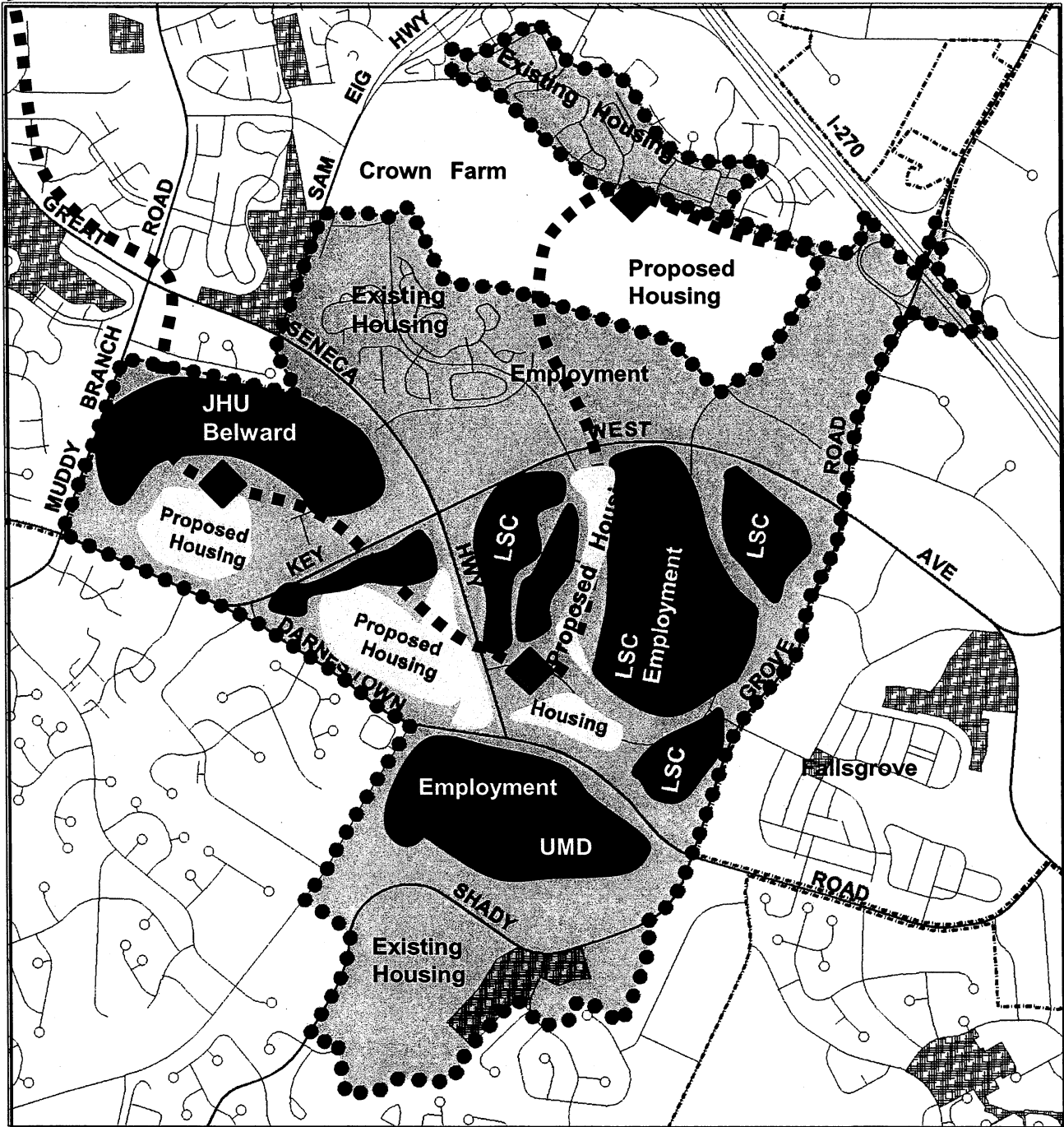
- Life Science Center Vicinity
- City of Gaithersburg, City of Rockville, Town of Washington Grove
- Parkland and Open Space
- Proposed Corridor Cities Transitway and Stations





- Employment
- Housing
- CCT






Alternative #2:
 LSC Density 1.5 FAR
 Belward Density 1.25 FAR
 Housing included at LSC
 PSTA relocated; medium density housing
 CCT Station at Belward; Two CCT Stations at LSC

Life Science Center Vicinity : Alternative #3



-  Life Science Center Vicinity
-  City of Gaithersburg, City of Rockville, Town of Washington Grove
-  Parkland and Open Space
-  Proposed Corridor Cities Transitway and Stations

-  Employment
-  Housing
-  CCT

Alternative #3
LSC Density 1.0 FAR
Belward Density 1.5 FAR
PSTA relocated; high density housing
CCT Station at Belward; CCT Station at LSC

