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appendix

# gaithersburg west master plan

The Life Sciences Center



**Montgomery County Planning Department**  
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

**MontgomeryPlanning.org**

## **Appendix**

Gaithersburg West Master Plan  
The Life Sciences Center

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## Introduction

The *Gaithersburg West Master Plan* supports transforming the Life Sciences Center (LSC) from today's isolated clusters into tomorrow's integrated, vibrant science and medical community that is connected by transit and trails and enlivened by a variety of uses. This Plan seeks to build upon the strong presence and collaborative relationships that exist among the institutions and businesses in the LSC. This Plan envisions a LSC where the physical, built environment is as dynamic and inspiring as the discoveries going on inside the labs, research centers, and universities.

Land use planning can help create the spaces and synergies that proactively generate collaboration across academic, government, and private industry sectors. The LSC is an appropriate location for future growth if it is phased with construction of major infrastructure improvements, primarily the Corridor Cities Transitway. This Plan provides the blueprint for the LSC of the 21st century to become an innovative, vibrant community that inspires advances in discovery and promotes translational science into practical applications that produce enhancements to healthcare delivery for residents and a thriving economy for the County and the region.



## Appendix 1: Background

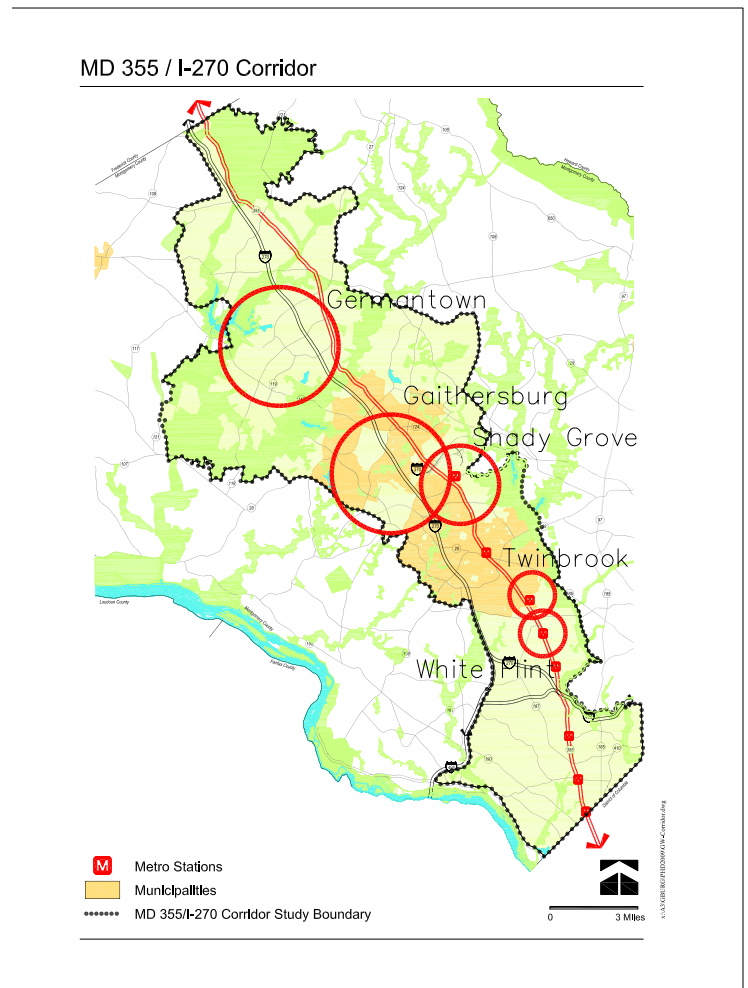
Montgomery County has a long history of comprehensive planning. The County's General Plan has been a significant planning guide for the Gaithersburg West plan area since it designated the I-270 Corridor for major economic growth. This section:

- presents a brief history of Gaithersburg West master plans
- summarizes planning policies at the State and County level that influence local master plans
- summarizes annexations, which are inter-jurisdictional matters that require coordination between the municipalities and the County
- describes the area's development as a science center.

### The General Plan

In 1964, the County's first General Plan, "...On Wedges and Corridors," *A General Plan for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties*, recognized the District of Columbia as the region's geographic, economic, and cultural center and that the region depended on a healthy core. The General Plan originally envisioned six growth corridors radiating out from Washington, D.C. like spokes of a wheel that were separated by green wedges of open space, farmland, and lower density residential uses. Along the I-270 Corridor, the General Plan envisioned a series of Corridor Cities—Rockville, Gaithersburg, Germantown, and Clarksburg—that were linked with each other and Washington, D.C. via the Metrorail Red Line. The Corridor Cities were to have intensively developed downtowns located about four miles apart, with high rise buildings containing housing, offices, and a variety of shopping and cultural amenities. A ring of residential communities consisting of a variety of housing types and local shopping, recreational, and educational facilities were to surround the downtowns. Each of the Corridor Cities was planned to support a population of up to 100,000 people.

Montgomery County and Prince George's County were the only jurisdictions in the area to officially adopt the Wedges and Corridors concept to guide their development. Montgomery County contains the entire I-270 Corridor (hereinafter referred to as the "Corridor") while the I-95 Corridor is located to the east in Prince George's County. In addition to the corridors, the General Plan identified the developed areas of lower Montgomery County nearest Washington, D.C. as the "urban ring." The urban ring and the corridors were envisioned as appropriate locations for intense, compact, transit-serviceable growth and development while the wedges protected natural resources and agricultural lands and provided respite and recreational opportunities.



The 1993 *General Plan Refinement* reaffirmed the vision and concepts and identified the I-270 Corridor as the County's major radial transportation spine, along which much of its housing and employment growth has occurred during the past two decades. The General Plan Refinement stated: "This Corridor is a significant employment resource for the County and region, representing both the County's and State's economic future" (page 27). The General Plan Refinement placed great importance on containing Corridor and center development; continued dispersion, or sprawl, would put further strains on the environment, transportation systems, and the Wedges and Corridors concept itself.

## **Gaithersburg Planning History**

While the County's General Plan provides overall guidance on land use and development, community master plans and sector plans provide more specific details and direction. Previous master and sector plans for the Gaithersburg area are summarized below.

The 1971 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* was undertaken to address growth issues brought about by the extension of I-270. Development pressures increased for many growth centers within the Gaithersburg area. New employment centers were established along I-270, which generated new demand for housing. The Plan expanded the Corridor City concept and envisioned a complete range of community services, employment opportunities, and a variety of housing types. The Plan encouraged the creation of the Montgomery County Medical Center at Shady Grove Road (renamed the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center). The Plan also recommended the Outer Beltway (renamed the Intercounty Connector) and proposed a Metro station at Shady Grove to serve the transportation needs of this growing area.

The 1982 *Oakmont Special Study Plan* reflected the strong desire of the community to remain low-density and residential in character, while recognizing the need for some future transportation improvements. The Oakmont Plan was prepared as a separate study and preceded the 1985 Plan because it was not dependent on transportation studies. The primary recommendation of the Oakmont Plan was to reconfirm the existing R-200 zoning, rather than the R-90 zoning that had been recommended in the 1971 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan.

The 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* focused on three study areas: Shady Grove West (which was the subject of a major master plan amendment in 1990), the Airpark, and Smokey Glen. For most of the land outside these areas, the Plan reconfirmed the recommendations of the 1971 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan.

The 1990 *Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan* recommended a shift in land use on the west side of the Shady Grove Metro Station from industrial uses to a major employment and housing center. The Plan also recommended a mixed-use, transit-oriented, walkable neighborhood for the King Farm, which was annexed into the City of Rockville. West of I-270, the Plan designated the Life Sciences Center as a "Research and Development Village." The Plan's land use recommendations assumed that transit would be implemented. To emphasize the importance of transit, the Plan stated that the Sectional Map Amendment (which implements the Plan's zoning) should be deferred until actions had been taken toward providing transit. The SMA was approved in 1996 when an interim transit plan was approved by the County Council.

A 1996 amendment to the 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* and the 1990 *Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan* designated the alignment of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) to connect the Shady Grove Metro Station with the Life Sciences Center to the west and to stops further north along the I-270 Corridor. The amendment also deleted a proposed transitway spur of the CCT through the Life Sciences Center as well as a southern transitway from Great Seneca Highway toward I-270.

## **Planning Policies**

Master plans and sector plans must balance local land use issues with broader State and County policies. Following is an overview of significant State and County policies that affect land use planning in Montgomery County.

The 1992 Maryland Planning Act defined seven visions that are embraced and affirmed by this Plan: 1) development is concentrated in suitable areas, 2) sensitive areas are protected, 3) in rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resources are protected, 4) stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic, 5) resource conservation is practiced, including a reduction in resource consumption, 6) economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined to assure the achievement of one through five above, and 7) funding mechanisms are addressed to achieve these visions.

The 1997 Maryland Smart Growth Act supports growth in appropriate areas and limits development in agricultural and other resource areas by limiting State resources to existing communities and not subsidizing infrastructure in other areas. The Act encourages development principles designed to maximize existing infrastructure and focus investments in new infrastructure, including communities that are walkable and transit accessible. The policy's Priority Funding Areas concept includes criteria for counties to designate additional funding areas.

The 1993 Montgomery County *General Plan Refinement* updated the goals and objectives of the 1964 General Plan. As discussed above, the General Plan affirmed the Wedges and Corridors concept as a framework for development in the County. The Plan divides Montgomery County into four geographic components: the Urban Ring, the Corridor, the Suburban Communities, and the Wedge. Each component is defined in terms of appropriate land uses, scale, intensity, and function.

The 1998 *Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan* explores future demand for recreational facilities within the County's 34,000-acre park system and determines which natural and historic areas should be preserved as open space.

The 1998 *Countywide Park Trails Plan* is a blueprint for creating a system of interconnected hard and natural surface trails in parkland.

The 1998 *Countywide Stream Protection Strategy* is a comprehensive review of stream quality and habitat that helps public agencies identify and provide funding for specific watershed-based resource protection initiatives.

The County's 2001 *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan* supports protection of natural and cultural resources through public acquisition and easements for properties that otherwise would not be protected through standard regulatory controls. The Plan identifies known resources and also defines a process for selecting sites, setting spending priorities, implementing the program and measuring its progress.

The County Council's 2002 *Transportation Policy Report* recommended a vision and principles for future land use and transportation plans and described a recommended transportation network that will be reflected through the Master Plan of Highways and appropriate master plans. It also included an alternate Land Use Plan that improved the jobs and housing balance throughout Montgomery County to increase opportunities to live near employment centers.

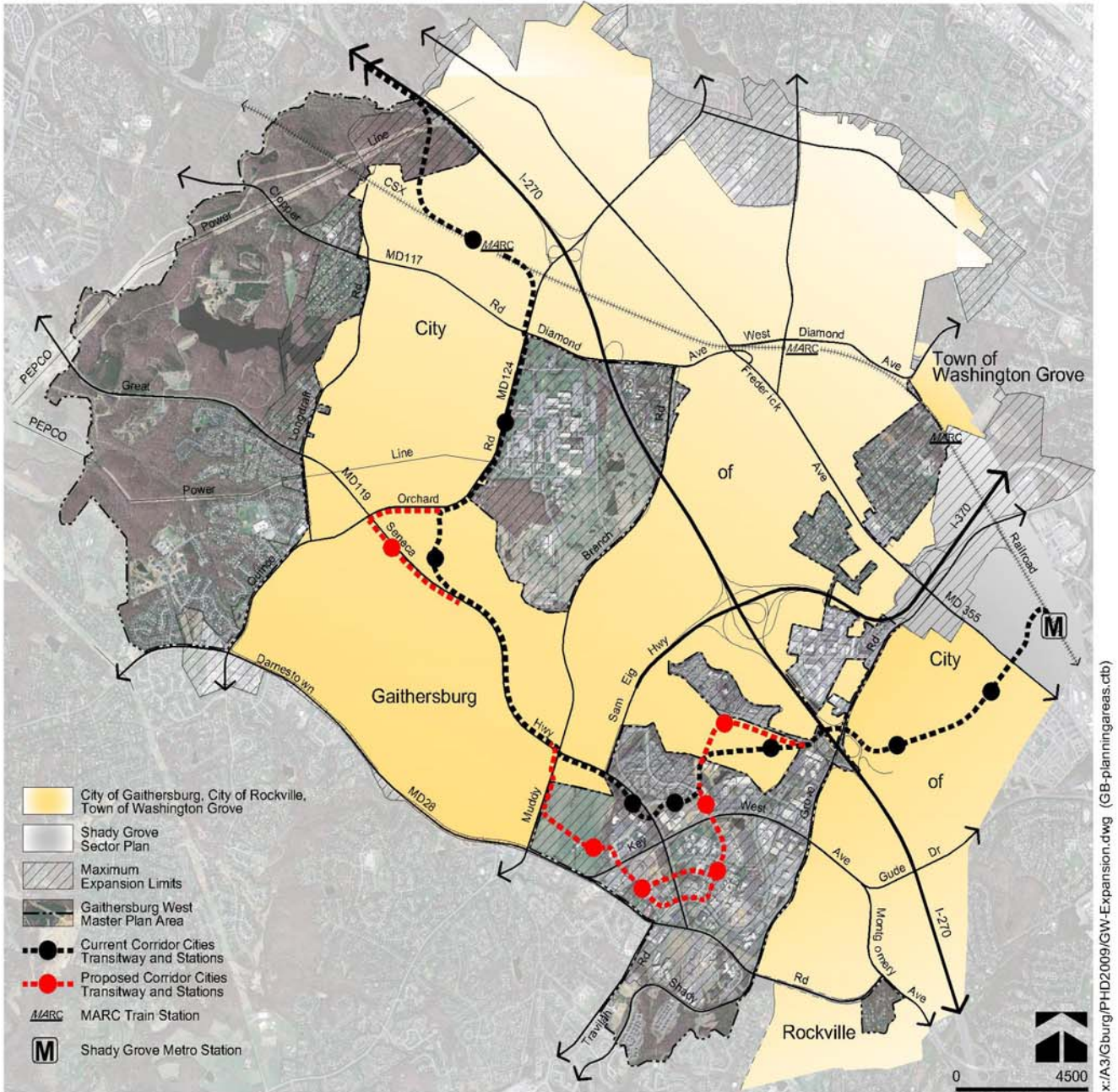
The County Council's 2003 *Action Plan for Affordable Housing* recommends using underdeveloped land near Metro stations for housing and encourages a full range of housing types to meet the diverse needs in the County.

## **Annexations**

The cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville, which are adjacent to the Life Sciences Center, are directly affected by the Plan's recommendations. Two large, undeveloped parcels in Gaithersburg West are adjacent to the City of Gaithersburg—the JHU Belward Campus and the Metropolitan Grove/McGown property—and are within the City's maximum expansion limits. Maximum expansion limits (MEL) have been established by the municipalities as a guide to set a geographical boundary for potential future annexations of County land into the cities to allow for growth. Only land within the MEL can be considered for annexation and municipalities may only annex land that adjoins its boundaries.



# City of Gaithersburg Maximum Expansion Limits



A municipality may initiate annexations or property owners may petition a municipality to annex unincorporated territory. A valid petition requesting annexation does not compel its enactment. The municipal governing body alone is authorized to introduce and approve an annexation resolution. Annexations occur for a number of reasons, but the most obvious is economics. The City benefits because of the increased tax revenue. Property owners may benefit from increased flexibility in the potential development of a parcel, an enhanced identity, or improved services.

The annotated Code of Maryland, Article 23A, Section 19, prescribes procedures for enlarging municipal boundaries in Maryland. The Code requires that municipalities produce a Municipal Growth Plan delineating the MEL. Municipalities may annex unincorporated land contiguous and adjoining the municipal boundaries if it is within the adopted MEL, but may not annex land within another municipality. An annexation cannot create an unincorporated enclave within the town or city that is surrounded on all sides by property within the municipality. According to state law, the Montgomery County Council must consent to any annexation where the land is placed by the City in a zone that allows a substantially different land use than that recommended by the current County master plan covering the property. The City may not place new zoning on annexed land that permits substantially different land uses from those specified in the County's zone for a period of five years after annexation, unless it has the consent of the Montgomery County Council.

In 1992, the City of Gaithersburg, the City of Rockville, and Montgomery County entered into a joint Memorandum of Understanding that established guidelines for land use and required community facilities, as well as the agreement by the jurisdictions to work cooperatively to develop procedural guidelines for annexation agreements that include staging components. The memorandum states "...it is essential that all jurisdictions support well-managed economic development and housing initiatives which will be mutually advantageous to all parties, and agree to the goals and principles of the General Plan."

Over the years, the City of Gaithersburg has envisioned a series of annexations that would create corporate limits following logically defined boundaries such as roads and highways, rather than private property lines. Since 1985, the City undertook a fairly aggressive annexation program that added over 1,100 acres to the municipality. Some of the larger annexed properties included IBM, the Washingtonian Center, Asbury Methodist Village, and National Geographic. The City of Gaithersburg currently covers 6,409 acres, or 10 square miles. The City's goal of logical and clear boundaries may never come to fruition since many of the areas that would have to be annexed to create well-defined corporate limits are developed with existing and established uses that do not offer the potential for substantially increasing city tax revenues.

A number of annexations have significantly altered boundaries adjacent to the municipalities. The following properties have been annexed into the City of Gaithersburg since the 1985 Master Plan: the Washingtonian Center, IBM, National Geographic Society, National Partnership, Washingtonian Industrial Park, Bechtel, Asbury Methodist Village, Teunis, Summit Hall Turf Farm, the Kramer property, the Carpenter property, and the Crown Farm. In addition, the Thomas Farm/Fallsgrove and King Farm were annexed into the City of Rockville. Several areas that were part of the 1985 and 1990 master plans are now covered by other plans, including the Shady Grove Metro Station area, which is the subject of the 2006 *Shady Grove Sector Plan*.

### **Gaithersburg: The Science Capital of the United States**

Gaithersburg was primarily a farming community until the middle of the 20th century. With the opening of I-270 (originally 70S) in the 1950s, the mid-County landscape began to transform from agrarian to residential and business development. At the same time, during the Cold War years, the federal government began to look to surrounding suburban bedroom communities to find locations for agency expansions, based on concerns over nuclear attacks in the heart of Washington, D.C. Abundant land, easily accessible by I-270, made Gaithersburg an attractive location.

In 1957, the federal government purchased two farms adjacent to I-270 for the headquarters of the National Bureau of Standards, now known as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). When NIST opened in 1966, the City's Town Administrator, William Vose, predicted that Gaithersburg would become known as "The Science Capital of the United States." For many years, NIST was the largest employer in Gaithersburg. Other major corporations soon began to locate in the area, including IBM, National Geographic, and the Communication Satellite Corporation. To support the employment, housing developments and shopping centers, as well as schools and other services were built.

The origins of the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center are found in the 1971 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan, which proposed a medical center complex near Shady Grove Road west of I-270. The medical center complex was intended to provide a variety of public and private institutional uses, including a teaching hospital, medical research facility, and a full complement of health services for the rapidly growing western suburbs. In 1979, Shady Grove Adventist Hospital opened among rolling pastures and farm fields. In 1976, land northwest of the hospital was conveyed to the State for the Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICA) and the Noyes Institute.

In the early 1980s, Montgomery County government made a strategic decision to use 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. Created on nearly 300 acres of publicly-owned land, the LSC included three components—medical services in the center, educational institutions to the north and south, and surrounding land available to attract research and development companies. Medical services were clustered around Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. To bring academic institutions to the area, the County donated 35 acres north of the hospital to Johns Hopkins University (JHU-MCC) and 50 acres south of Darnestown Road to the University of Maryland (for the Universities at Shady Grove, USG).