

tions that are convenient for both jobs, f) a decrease in volunteerism, and g) an increase in day care providers. The need for day care service is particularly evident. Currently, there are 283 licensed group child care facilities and 1,500 licensed home day care providers. An additional but unknown number of day care providers are unlicensed.

For families with two workers, as well as single parent families, the amount of time available for volunteer activities is reduced by the time spent on work, children, chauffeuring, housework, and social activities. Furthermore, neighborhoods no longer benefit from the sense of community that results from the interaction of family members at home during the day.

* The median Montgomery County household in 1987 had occupied their current house for 5 years, down from 6.1 years in 1974. According to Montgomery County Census Update Surveys, residents in single family houses tend to move less often than those in multi-family units (7 years versus 3 years in 1987). Homeowners also move less often than renters (8 years versus 2 years in 1987). The mobility of Montgomery County residents can make the establishment of community ties difficult.

II. WHERE WE GATHER AND INTERACT

Not only do the residents and workers of Montgomery County have different lifestyles than twenty years ago, but the places where we gather and interact have also changed. As discussed in the previous section, the way that Montgomery County residents live has changed. These changes have created the need for new services and limit the residents' ability to participate in community activities. This section describes some of the places where residents gather and interact and how these influence community identity. (The governmental actions that affect the pattern of private development and the location of public facilities will be discussed in Section III.)

The number of demands on an individual's or a family's time have long appeared to be endless but today they are increasingly dispersed. Typically, this hectic pace is characterized by a large number of activities spread over long distances. A family with school-aged children can easily find their evenings and weekends filled with shuttling children between practices, libraries, and friends. Families and individuals also combine home life with meetings, shopping and social activities, and work. Large numbers of activities, combined with personal mobility, result in residents using a wide range of "centers," both in location and type. This dispersed lifestyle often makes it difficult to establish a sense of community. This section discusses some of the centers of activities and organizations that influence our community life.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTERS

* County government centers are the sites of a wide array of community service functions. Montgomery County operates five government centers to concentrate government services in different parts of the County. The government centers are located in Silver Spring (2), Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Wheaton, and Germantown. Services vary by location and include satellite locations for the Health Department, Addiction, Victim/Mental Health Services Department, community psychiatric services, legal services, and social services. The community oriented services provided at government centers causes them to become community activity centers for different groups in the community.

SCHOOLS

* Schools are the sites of a wide array of community service functions. They are not only places for children to learn, but also to get to know their neighbors and to participate in clubs and sports, and for parents to attend PTA meetings and back-to-school nights. Eighty percent of County elementary schools have on-site day care providers, there are special after-school programs for latch-key children in grades 3-8, County and

city recreation departments hold many of their classes in schools after hours, private ethnic and cultural schools rent entire school buildings on weekends, and religious organizations also rent space to hold services in school cafeterias and auditoriums.

The YMCA, government, and colleges also hold classes in schools, and youth organizations like Scouts, Campfire Girls, and 4-H clubs use schools for meetings and activities. Other activities are community meetings and events, and ball fields and gyms for use by individual groups and leagues. Schools are also used for informal recreation: strolling across the grounds, swinging on the playground equipment, playing basketball on the courts, and riding bikes around the parking lot.

When all of these activities are combined on one site, a school can serve as an important community focal point for a number of different groups in the community, thereby providing an element of community identity. Schools also can serve as landmarks within communities.

Elementary schools were often used as organizing elements for neighborhoods. The 1969 Plan encouraged the County to "design schools to function as neighborhood and community multi-use centers, serving the community's social, cultural, vocational and recreational as well as educational needs."

The use of larger elementary schools of about 640 students in recent years as compared with 450 students in 1970, combined with fewer children per family, requires more households per school and makes it more difficult to develop and maintain a sense of community focused around an elementary school. However, larger schools allow for a wider variety of activities, both during and after school; in essence, providing a focal point for several communities.

Montgomery County Public Schools statistics show that there are approximately 30 entries and withdrawals annually for every 100 students

in the school system. This mobility is due mostly to families moving during the school year and can make the establishment of close ties difficult for both students and parents.

*** The County has 63 closed schools, some of which have been reopened and some are now being used for community-oriented services.** Countywide school enrollments declined in parts of the 70's and 80's. This decline resulted in school closures and redistricting. The controversies associated with the closing of a school indicate their value to the community. The controversies surrounding school redistricting actions are another example of the level of attachment that communities have with schools. Perceived educational implications are, of course, part of the source of these controversies.

One high school is now used as a "holding" school, a temporary home for the students and staff of another school that is being modernized. Another high school is in use as a middle school. Five of the elementary and middle/intermediate/junior high schools are also holding schools. The school board is using other closed schools as administrative offices, a special education center, an alternative education center, and a special learning center.

The most common use of closed schools is private schools. About a dozen former elementary schools are now private schools. The next most common use is for day care services. Often a day care center shares a school building with other users, such as County government offices or the Parks Department. Other tenants of former schools include centers for the handicapped, senior centers, recreation centers, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, the YMCA, the Jewish Community Foundation, and a County health center. Two closed schools have been converted into housing, one for single-parent families and one for the elderly. The reuse of schools can maintain open space and recreation areas and provide increased community services.

LIBRARIES

* **Montgomery County operates 20 public libraries with an annual circulation of 7.8 million volumes in FY 91.** In addition to the traditional book lending functions, library buildings serve as community centers through combined uses, such as the senior center in Damascus, parkland in Silver Spring, and the Upcounty Government Center in Germantown. In addition, libraries rent meeting space and distribute government documents such as tax forms, bus schedules, and draft master plans. The County's Commission on the Future considered libraries as being suited to serve as magnet centers. Magnet centers were defined as centrally located facilities that offer a variety of social, educational, and recreational services. County libraries currently offer many of these services.

The Noyes Library in Kensington is jointly funded by the County and private groups. This cooperation is an example of how a community can improve community facilities to better serve their needs.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

* **Montgomery County is home to over 240 places of worship.** In addition, some religious groups rent space in schools and other buildings for services. Many places of worship also provide day care, education, and social services. Places of worship often serve as physical landmarks and centers of activity for their members and others within the community. Religious groups have expressed concern over the difficulty of acquiring land in newly developing areas.

PARKS AND RECREATION CENTERS

* **Montgomery County contains 28,000 acres of parkland, which serve a variety of purposes including community-oriented activities.** The Montgomery County Department of Parks and municipal parks departments provide athletic fields, community/recreation centers, and picnic areas for groups to use. Four conference and social centers are used for events like trade

shows, exhibitions, meetings and workshops, weddings, and parties. The Department of Parks and the Recreation Department also sponsor activities like historic tours, the annual Harvest Festival and Spring Festival, and arts and crafts shows.

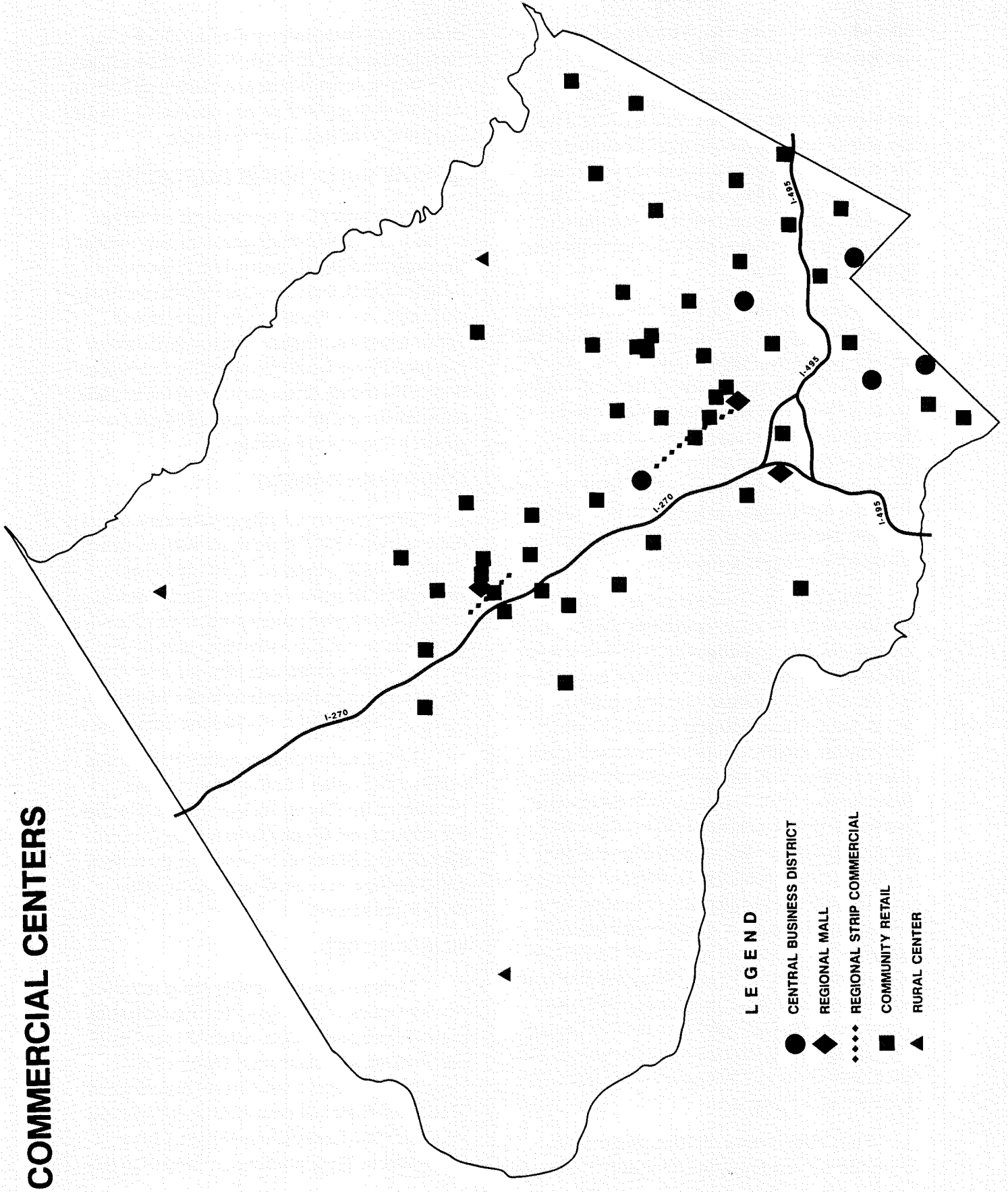
The Montgomery County Department of Recreation operates 38 community and recreational buildings that provide indoor and outdoor recreation and education opportunities. These include swimming pools, senior centers, and a theater and provide a wide array of passive and active activities for all age groups and skill levels. A variety of local and urban parks and playgrounds serve as places for individuals, families, and groups to gather, interact, and enjoy themselves. Parks, open space, community and recreation centers can serve as landmarks, and provide another element which fosters community identity and definition.

SHOPPING CENTERS

* **In many areas, the local shopping center or regional mall serves as a center of community activity.** Historically, the local marketplace has often been one of the places that friends and neighbors "run into each other." This was particularly true in older areas that were served by "mom-and-pop" grocery stores. Because each store served a small area, you were likely to know many of the people that you saw, including the owners and employees of the store. Repeated encounters like these foster a sense of community.

Recent years have seen the development of larger and larger supermarkets, often in excess of 60,000 square feet of floor area. Along with the increase in the size of the store have come an increase in the number of residents in the market area, a larger geographic market area, and more employees. Although you may run into friends and neighbors, the end result is that most of the people you see when you are shopping are strangers. One of the major contradictions in the community center functions of shopping centers is

COMMERCIAL CENTERS



LEGEND

- CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
- ◆ REGIONAL MALL
- ⋯ REGIONAL STRIP COMMERCIAL
- COMMUNITY RETAIL
- ▲ RURAL CENTER

that while they bring a large number of people together, there is little social interaction.

The locations of major existing community retail centers, regional shopping areas, and malls are shown in the following map. Community retail centers were defined as a grocery store and other retail stores that total around 50,000 square feet. Rural centers are clusters of retail uses, including a major grocery store that serve the surrounding rural area.

Regional malls often serve as activity centers on a much larger scale than community retail centers. In many areas, regional malls have become the primary gathering points for residents. Also, the street life of old downtowns is often transferred into regional malls. Regional malls also may host community oriented activities. In a sense, regional malls often serve some of the functions of a town square, although on private property and enclosed, as well as informal gathering places for teenagers and elderly.

* The County's commercial revitalization program seeks to improve existing shopping centers that have traditionally served as community retail centers. The revitalization program covers various suburban shopping centers as well as Central Business Districts (CBD's). These improvements usually consist of streetscaping and improvements to business operations, including facade renovations. The program is designed to encourage private reinvestment in commercial properties. The revitalization of these centers is an important element of the public and private efforts towards the maintenance of existing retail centers. In addition, revitalization follows the General Plan's guidance to improve the appearance of the County. The following shopping centers are included in the program: Long Branch, Flower Avenue, and Dale Drive in Silver Spring; Colonial Center in Wheaton; and Damascus Center. Silver Spring and Wheaton are the two CBD's included in the program.

The County's revitalization program for Wheaton consists of streetscaping and building fa-

cade improvements along all major streets. The County's program for Silver Spring CBD consists primarily of streetscaping and putting utilities underground along Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road and some facade improvements.

III. HOW WE GOVERN OURSELVES

Montgomery County residents are represented by levels of government and government-like organizations. These levels of government include federal, State and County, but can also include city, town, special taxing districts, and homeowners associations. Our sense of community identity can be affected by governmental actions. This section discusses some of the levels of government and private organizations that contribute to community identity.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

* Montgomery County government serves a diverse area of 500 square miles with an equally diverse 757,000 residents. The County has a larger population than 6 states. The various agencies of County government provide services such as schools, police, fire, recreation, Ride-On bus service, housing assistance, libraries, and social services. Planning is provided by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

The County centralizes administration and some services while locating other services throughout the County such as schools, libraries, fire stations, and County Government Centers. These local facilities often serve as activity centers and contribute to community identity at the neighborhood level.

MUNICIPALITIES

* Living in a municipality can give residents a feeling of belonging to a recognizable place. Montgomery County has 17 municipalities: Rockville, Gaithersburg, Takoma Park, Poolesville, Chevy Chase, Chevy Chase Section Three, Kensington, Somerset, Garrett Park, Martin's Addition, Chevy Chase Village, Chevy Chase Section Five, Washington Grove, Laytons-