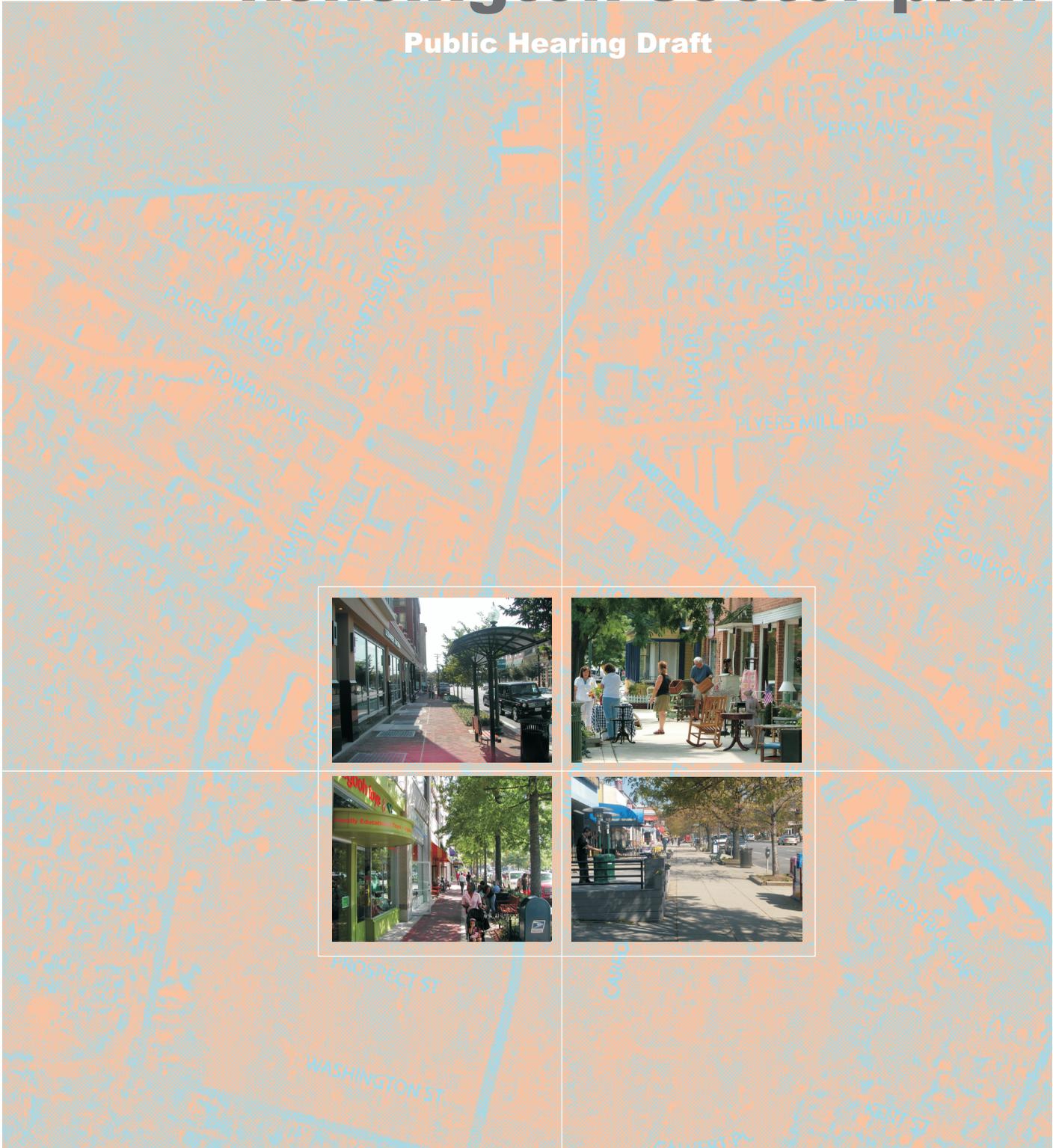


May 2009

# kensington sector plan

Public Hearing Draft



**Montgomery County Planning Department**

 **The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission**

[MontgomeryPlanning.org](http://MontgomeryPlanning.org)

May 2009



Public Hearing Draft  
**Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan**  
An Amendment to the 1978 Sector Plan for the Town of Kensington and Vicinity

Prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Department  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver spring, MD 20910

[www.montgomeryplanning.org](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org)

Public Hearing Draft

## **Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan**

An Amendment to the 1978 *Approved and Adopted Sector Plan for the Town of Kensington and Vicinity*, Montgomery County, Maryland

### ABSTRACT

This plan for the Town of Kensington and Vicinity contains the text and supporting maps for a comprehensive amendment to the 1978 *Sector Plan for the Town of Kensington and Vicinity* and the *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties*, as amended.

This Plan makes recommendations for land use, zoning, urban design, transportation, environment, and community facilities.

### SOURCE OF COPIES

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760  
Also available at [www.montgomeryplanning.org](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org)

### **The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission**

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bi-county agency created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission is charged with preparing, adopting, and amending or extending *The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties*. The Commission operates in each county through Planning Boards appointed by the county government. The Boards are responsible for all local plans, zoning amendments, subdivision regulations, and administration of parks.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission encourages the involvement and participation of individuals with disabilities, and its facilities are accessible. For assistance with special needs (e.g., large print materials, listening devices, sign language interpretation, etc.), please contact the Community Outreach and Media Relations Division, 301-495-4600 or TDD 301-495-1331.

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## Vision

To promote a mixed-use Town Center with pedestrian-friendly connections to the vibrant neighborhoods that define Kensington.

Kensington's Town Center will be a lively and active place with streets that are welcoming and comfortable for residents, workers, and visitors. It will be reachable by walking and bicycle from Kensington's neighborhoods, which can reduce vehicle miles travelled, conserve energy, and reduce carbon emissions. The Town Center will also broaden housing choices for an array of ages and incomes.

The Plan protects Kensington's stable residential neighborhoods by maintaining their residential zones and preserves the Town's historic character by recommending additional areas and sites to be evaluated for addition to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

The Plan's broad goal is to reinvigorate the Town Center while preserving Kensington's scale and historic character.



## Recommendations

### Connectivity

- Acknowledging the "commuter" status of Connecticut Avenue while creating new pathways for townspeople to move "car free" throughout the Town, enjoying a healthier, more sustainable community;

### Diversity

- Creating an active Town Center with new residential uses;
- Promoting the community's heritage through its buildings, spaces and people;

### Design

- Redefining public spaces for people and creating activity along sidewalks through smart design of buildings and the spaces around them;
- Defining new public spaces that will exemplify the unique scale and character of Kensington;

### Environment

- Promoting sustainable infill and reuse, with a goal of creating a neighborhood with the lowest feasible carbon footprint;
- Implementing effective environmental practices that will inspire future generations to become stewards of the environment.

# Assets and Challenges

## Design

Kensington offers a full range of neighborhood service and retail opportunities. Two important neighborhood shopping destinations—Safeway and the Kensington Shopping Center—sit opposite each other at Connecticut and Knowles Avenues. A third, smaller neighborhood center lies near the junction of Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard. To the east of Connecticut Avenue, along Kensington Parkway and Montgomery Avenue, there are banks, drycleaners and other businesses. On Howard Avenue west of Connecticut, there are auto repair businesses as well as plumbers, landscapers and craft workers.

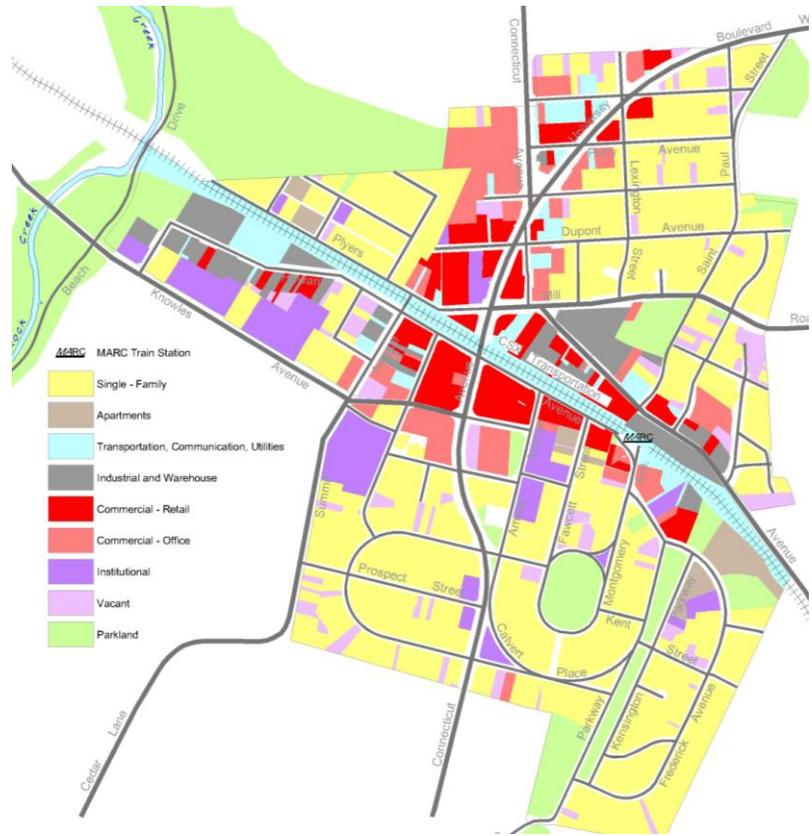


Kensington is located between the Wheaton and White Flint Metro stations. The Town is about two miles from the Wheaton Metro Station and about three miles from White Flint Metro Station.

Kensington’s commercial center depends on the automobile. It offers surface parking away from streets and some areas have no sidewalks, so that shoppers often drive from shop to shop along the same street. The scale of the auto centered commercial center is in conflict with the more intimate scale of the historic neighborhoods.

## Connectivity

Kensington is located at a critical bottleneck in the area's road network. An informal, but important east-west road system crosses Connecticut Avenue, a vital north-south artery, in the center of town. The east-west network includes University Boulevard, Plyers Mill Road, Metropolitan, Knowles and Strathmore Avenues. The east-west crossing requires travelers to use Connecticut Avenue between Plyers Mill Road and Knowles Avenue to complete their east- or westbound journey. For this short segment, east-west travelers and north-south travelers must use the same roadway.



Street grids in Kensington's neighborhoods generally provide good pedestrian access and circulation. Many, but not all streets have sidewalks, and there are paths and trails connecting the neighborhoods to parkland east and west of Kensington.

Connecticut Avenue and the CSX rail right-of-way pose significant barriers to pedestrian and bicyclist movement through the Plan area. There are only three pedestrian connections across the tracks separating the north and south sections of the Town—Summit Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, and the at-grade track crossing at Kensington Station. The first two are barely adequate; the track crossing is inconvenient and inhospitable. The nearest crossings outside the Plan area are Beach Drive and the Rock Creek Trail, almost a half-mile to the west of Summit Avenue, and Stoneybrook Drive, about two-thirds of a mile to the east.

# Diversity

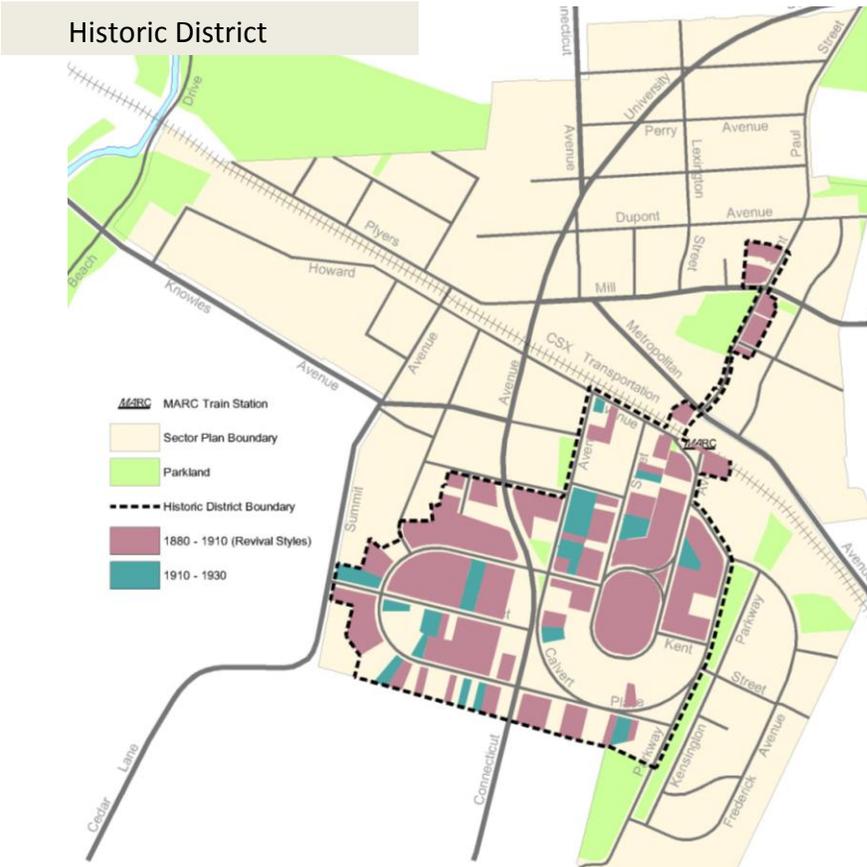
Kensington provides housing for a full range of ages and incomes, from small apartments near Antique Row to stately single-family houses in the historic district to housing targeted to older residents.

The Kensington Historic District, designated in 1986, is one of the largest districts in the County with about 180 buildings. A Kensington Historic District is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places (1980). The Historic Preservation Commission reviews proposed exterior changes for structures in the district and has developed guidelines for new construction within the existing district.

There are 834 single-family houses in the Plan area, 78 percent of the total number of units. Twenty-two percent, 235 units, are multifamily.

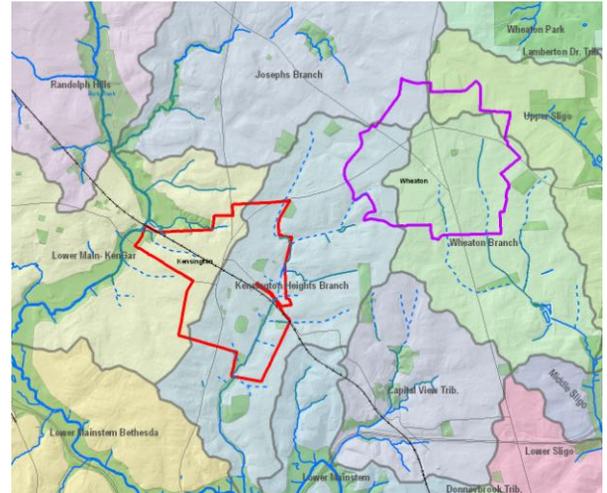
A key Plan objective is to introduce housing into Kensington’s Town Center, which will increase the inventory of multifamily housing in the Plan area and increase the range of housing choices for County residents

Kensington is also home to a number of antiques and furnishings businesses that attract shoppers from all of metropolitan Washington. On Howard Avenue east of Connecticut Avenue is historic Antique Row. Other antique retailers have located among the warehouses and services on West Howard.



## Environment

The Plan area straddles two subwatersheds of Rock Creek: Kensington Heights and Lower Main Ken-Gar. Beginning in Wheaton, the Kensington Heights watershed flows into a stream the town residents call Silver Creek. The Lower Main Ken-Gar subwatershed partially drains into two drainage swales and a small tributary that flows west into the mainstem of Rock Creek

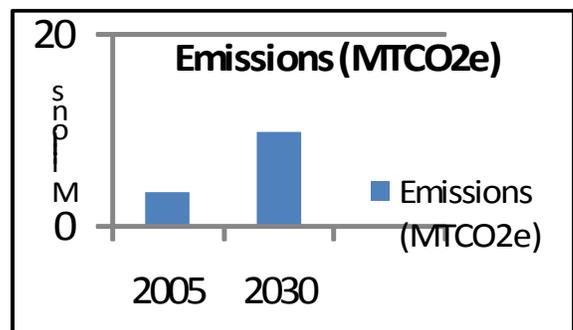


The 2003 Countywide Stream Protection Strategy determined that Silver Creek has poor water quality and stream conditions. The natural stream bed was previously converted to a concrete channel or piped underground in order to transport stormwater swiftly. During large storm events the culvert at Oberon Street exceeds its capacity, flooding properties in the neighborhood.

Kensington’s residential communities have an impervious cover of 30 percent, while the commercial core has 80 percent impervious cover. This high impervious cover contributes to poor water quality. In addition, Kensington was developed prior to stormwater management requirements that would otherwise curb stream degradation, diminished water quality, and periodic flooding.

Approximately 24 percent of the Plan area is covered with tree canopy. The majority of canopy is from street trees and landscaping on private lots with the exception of about three acres of forested parkland. Residential neighborhoods contribute approximately 21 percent of the canopy in the Plan area. Two percent of the canopy area is within commercial and industrial areas. Lack of tree cover, in combination with the intensive impervious levels, contributes to the poor water quality found in the streams within the Plan area, increased ambient air temperatures, higher energy consumption and diminished visual appeal.

County law requires all master plans to include greenhouse gas emissions evaluations. A carbon analysis for Kensington factored in existing and projected embodied energy, transportation energy, and building energy. The results show that carbon dioxide output will nearly triple unless fossil fuel consumption is reduced.



## Area Wide Recommendations

### Diversity

The challenge in Kensington is to build on the community’s assets—its rich history, cohesive neighborhoods, and human scale—to create an active and vibrant Town Center that is connected those neighborhoods. Mixing commercial, office, and residential uses can achieve this vision.

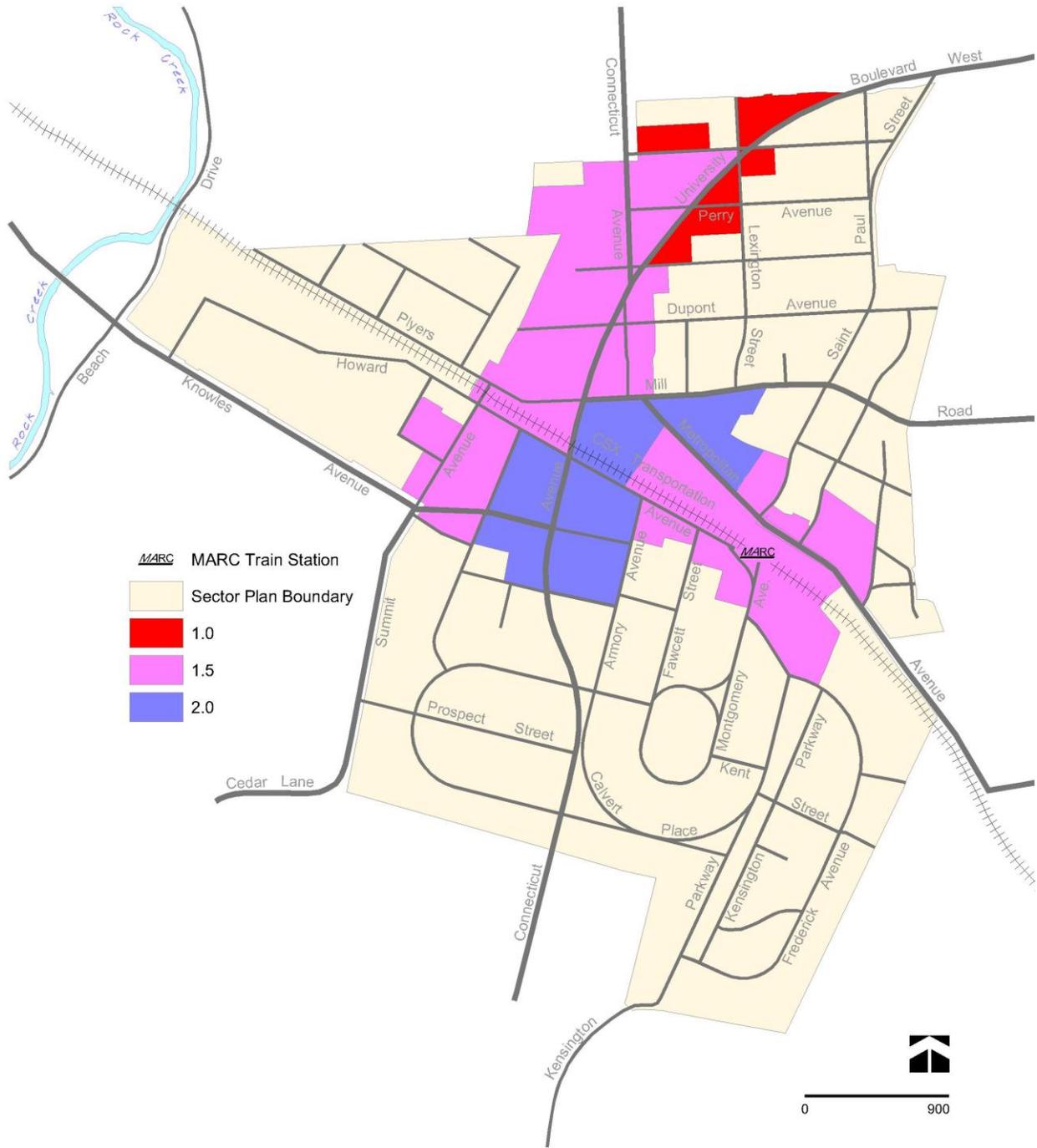
More housing in the Town Center will mean livelier and more active streets that are attractive for residents, shoppers and visitors. It will increase the diversity of housing choices as well. The Plan proposes modest increases in density in the exclusively commercial center of Kensington to encourage mixing of uses while continuing to allow the range of retail and commercial uses now available.



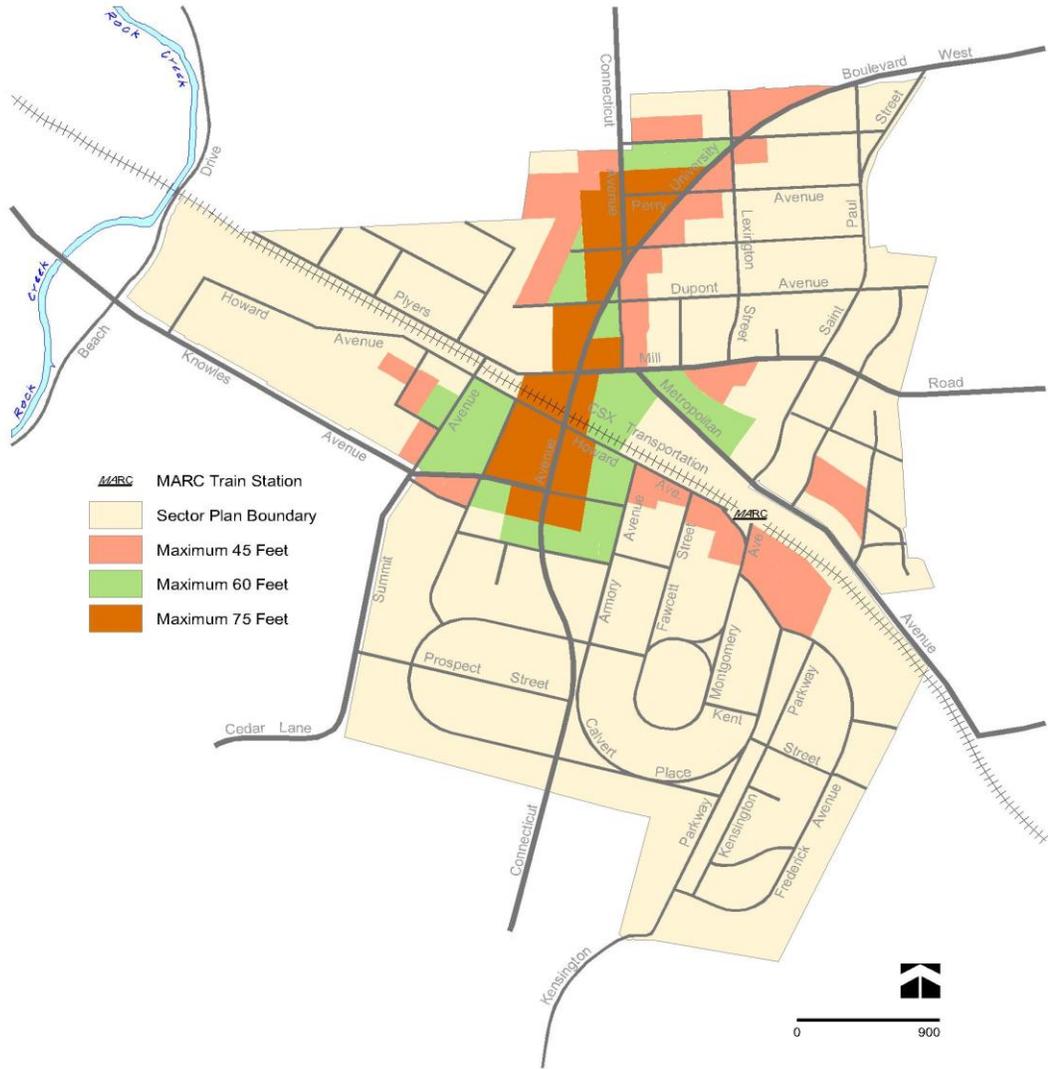
Protect existing residential and historic areas of Kensington. Maintain the R-60 Zone for the residential properties outside the Plan’s area identified redevelopment areas.

This Plan proposes a new Commercial Residential (CR) use district for the Town Center. (A fuller description may be found in the Implementation Section.) The new district will allow commercial and residential uses to be mixed at varying densities that will be determined by individual property developers. This Plan will make three recommendations for properties and areas under study: total FAR; non-residential and residential FAR and; building height.

# Proposed FAR



# Proposed Building Heights



## Connectivity

The Plan's recommendations for better connections for Kensington will give pedestrians a priority, especially in the Town Center. Physical and operational improvements can easily accommodate current traffic flows while giving residents the ability to move safely and efficiently through Kensington. The Plan's makes these recommendations:

- Reduce the target speed of Connecticut Avenue in Kensington to 30 miles per hour to enhance pedestrian comfort and safety;
- Encourage pedestrian-centered urban design by using narrower urban road sections from the County's context-sensitive design standards;
- Refrain from widening roadway intersections to accommodate through-vehicle traffic;
- Confirm the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* for signed, shared roadways on routes in the Plan area;
- Upgrade lighting along major highways, arterials, business district streets and connections to residential areas to provide adequate lighting for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Provide extensive markings for pedestrian crosswalks, clearly identifying the "pedestrian zone;"
- Provide storage lockers and racks at appropriate locations, specifically within the Town Center and near the train station;
- Lead pedestrians to the important places in Kensington with clear signs.

## Environment

This Plan proposes to protect and enhance the environment by:

- reducing the amount of hard surfaces that prevents the absorption of rainwater;
- reducing the amount of carbon emissions, both in buildings and vehicles;
- encouraging the practice of sustainable building.

Implementing these objectives can not only enhance Kensington's green factor, but can provide leadership to other communities.

### Stormwater Management

- Evaluate a stormwater fee program in the Town or consider joining the County's program to fund water quality improvements throughout the Plan area;
- Incorporate open section roadway swales rather than conventional curbs where allowed by design standards. Where curbs are deemed necessary to protect the roadway edge, allow perforated curbs that direct runoff to flow into swales for stormwater treatment;
- Permit permeable paving for roads, road shoulders, parking lots, and parking lanes;
- Encourage sidewalk design and construction that disconnects runoff from conventional storm drain systems;
- Reduce the amount of hard surfaces areas to maximize infiltration of stormwater and reduce runoff;
- Encourage Kensington residents and property owners to participate in local and State programs for on-site stormwater treatments such as rain gardens, cisterns, and green roofs;
- Collaborate with the Montgomery County Department of Environment Protection and Department of Permitting Services and the Town of Kensington on a comprehensive study that identifies ways to eliminate flooding at the culvert under Oberon Street;
- Conduct a feasibility study for removing the concrete stream channel in Silver Creek, replacing it with a natural streambed substrate and buffer;
- Initiate Town, County or State pilot projects in the areas listed to provide innovative, aesthetic, and planted low impact development (LID) stormwater treatments;(bioretention) within the road right-of-way to meet new County design standards to accommodate a percentage of stormwater runoff within the right-of-way. The objectives are to reduce the volume and improve the water quality of runoff to Silver and Rock Creeks, provide tree canopy cover in the road medians, enhance the streetscape, provide safe and attractive respite areas, and improve community livability.
  - Metropolitan Avenue between Plyers Mill Road and Lexington Avenue
  - Howard Avenue between Summit Avenue and Rock Creek Park
  - Plyers Mill Road between Metropolitan and Lexington Avenues
  - Kensington Parkway near intersection of Metropolitan and Lexington Avenues
  - Intersection of University Boulevard and Connecticut Avenue

Although many of the recommendations can be applied effectively during the redevelopment process, there are many federal, State, and local models, incentives, and programs that encourage a more sustainable lifestyle through neighborhood participation in decreasing carbon emissions, promoting energy generation and conservation, reducing and treating stormwater.

### **Carbon Reduction**

- Create incentives for building to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold standards including the installation of on site energy production through geothermal and solar panels and encourage design advantages such as solar orientation;
- Educate property owners on the advantages of high efficiency HVAC systems in reducing carbon emissions;
- Encourage community and homeowner involvement in reducing energy consumption through the promotion of existing federal, State, and local programs for energy audits, retrofits, upgrades, insulation, and alternative energy applications;
- Encourage residents to use local products and services to reduce their carbon footprint;
- Expand the use of alternative transportation modes such as public transit, carpooling, car-sharing, bicycling, and walking to reduce carbon emissions;
- Incentivize green roofs and encourage the use of reflective (albedo) paving and roofing materials to reduce local heat island effects and building temperatures;
- Encourage collaborative efforts among public and private landowners to remove invasive species and plant native herbaceous, shrub, and canopy trees along the Silver Creek Stream valley;
- In Kensington Park, owned by the Town of Kensington, consider using a kiosk or other public information to educate citizens on sustainable design features;
- Encourage collaborative efforts among public and private landowners to allow community gardens in a variety of neighborhoods;
- Establish green corridors to connect parks, stream valleys, and trails with neighborhoods and destinations such as public facilities, civic places, shopping districts and institutions;
- Increase tree canopy cover along streets and within medians, within existing neighborhoods, commercial areas, and on parkland;
- Encourage the installation of vegetative layering through tree preservation and planting, green roofs, vegetated walls, and planted bioinfiltration during redevelopment;
- Encourage use of captured stormwater for watering landscapes and promoting groundwater recharge;

Encourage the reuse of existing structures for property undergoing redevelopment by:

- re-using building elements/assemblies and other components
- applying deconstruction practices
- reducing construction waste.

## Design

Scale is a fundamental tenet of urban design and defines how people think about the spaces they move through and how people perceive the built environment. The neighborhoods of Kensington and its Antique Row illustrate the Town's scale. Scale is a function of many factors:

- street width
- height
- mass or size of a structure
- setbacks
- separation distances.

This Plan's design principles, defined through zoning and urban design guidelines, can help shape and blend Kensington into a walkable and livable community.



### Urban Design

Streets should be safe pedestrian-oriented environments that create an animated community life along the sidewalks to encourage high levels of pedestrian activity.

- Orient buildings to the sidewalk with display windows and entrances;
- Encourage pedestrian-level ornamentation, signage, and architectural details;
- Minimize curb cuts to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles;
- Provide pedestrian scale lighting that illuminates the sidewalk;
- Provide street trees and furniture to improve aesthetics and functionality for pedestrians;

- Provide street lighting to improve safety and security along Major Highways, Arterials and Business District streets. Areas of high pedestrian activity or primary pedestrian routes should have pedestrian-scale lighting to illuminate the sidewalk;
- Minimize conflicts with motorists, transit buses, and pedestrians through low target speeds for vehicles, access management and reduced curb cuts;
- Provide adequate parking for proposed land uses while using strategies to reduce demand, consolidate supply, and use space efficiently. Minimize the visual impact of parked cars and encourage on street parking;
- Provide a pedestrian path along the southern boundary of the Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission headquarters on Summit Avenue to improve pedestrian connectivity.



## Historic Preservation

- Adopt pedestrian oriented design guidelines for Connecticut Avenue including crosswalks, median strip and street trees to mitigate the adverse traffic impacts of Connecticut Avenue, which bisects the historic district.
- For infill and redevelopment of properties located directly opposite historic district resources, including Warner Street and Armory Avenue, consider compatibility of scale, massing, and setback.
- Re-evaluate the boundaries of the Kensington Historic District and amend as appropriate, paying particular attention to reconciling discrepancies between National Register and local designations, including properties on Detrick Avenue.
- Assess the historic district boundary north of the railroad tracks and expand as appropriate.
- Several historic district properties have preservation easements that protect the open space that characterizes this garden suburb; support donation of additional preservation easements for privately owned open space.

The following potential historic resources merit evaluation for designation on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*:

- North Kensington: This residential district is north of Plyers Mill Road and west of St. Paul Street. The area has a rich variety of Victorian and period revival houses dating primarily from the 1890s-1940s.
- Kensington Estates: West of Summit Avenue, this residential neighborhood includes small scale houses built largely in the post World War II era.
- Ken-Gar: Bounded by Plyers Mill Road and Rock Creek Park, Ken-Gar is a historically African-American community and includes community buildings and residences dating from the early 1900s.

Potential individual sites to be evaluated:

- Kensington Cabin, 10000 Kensington Parkway: This log cabin was constructed 1933-34 using funding from a New Deal program and from M-NCPPC. The rustic structure is representative of early recreation buildings in the first stream valley parks, including Rock Creek, Sligo Creek, and Cabin John.
- Kensington Fire Station, 10620 Connecticut Avenue: Built in 1947, this Colonial Revival structure houses the Kensington Volunteer Fire Department, organized in 1922. When constructed the building was the largest fire station in Maryland. It exemplifies the growth of the Kensington community in the post World War II era.
- Ken-Gar Rosenwald School, 4111 Plyers Mill Road: One of only eight surviving Rosenwald Schools in the County, the Ken-Gar School was built in 1927-28. The Julius Rosenwald Fund sponsored construction of elementary schools for African-American children in the south. The building exemplifies the challenges in the black community to obtain a good education in the era of segregation. The building was later converted for use as a community center.

## Parks

Kensington is well-served by parks within its boundaries, including seven Town Parks and four Montgomery County Parks. This Plan recommends preserving the existing County parks in the Sector Plan: Kensington Cabin Local Park, Warner Circle Special Park, Edith Throckmorton Neighborhood Park, and Kensington Parkway Stream Valley Park.



- Rehabilitate the Warner Circle historic buildings for public use and the historic landscaped grounds on the Warner Circle property for use as an important public open space within the Kensington Historic District;
- Rehabilitate Kensington Cabin to recognize its historic significance;
- Examine the existing Edith Throckmorton Neighborhood Park for future renovation.

## Open Space System

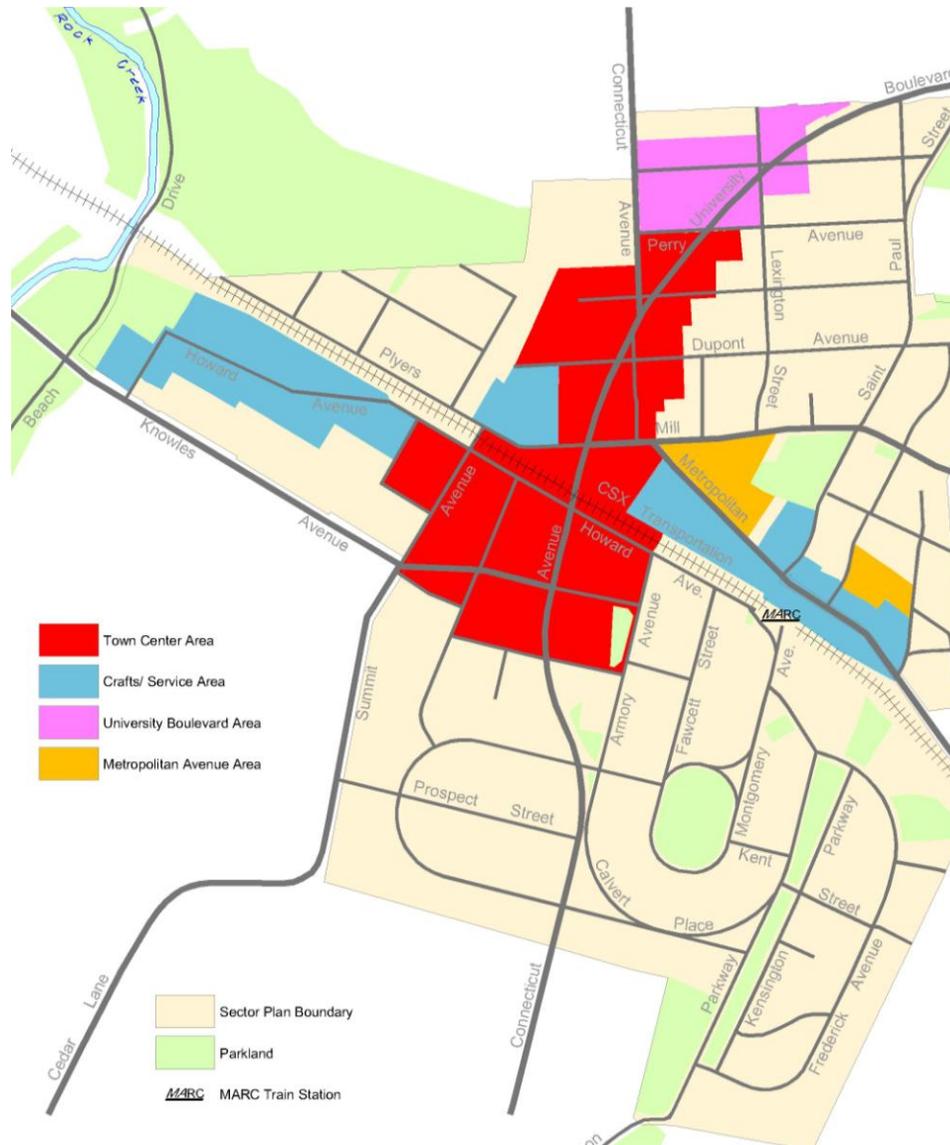
- Preserve existing designated open space in the Sector Plan area.
- Enhance connectivity with pedestrian priority streets, bikeways and trails.
- With the redevelopment of properties in the Town Center, create additional open space for social interaction.

Although the Plan does not recommend acquiring land for additional open space, it identifies sites for additional open space to be created during redevelopment:

- An open space should be provided with the redevelopment of the concrete plant.
- Redevelopment of the Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission property along Summit Avenue should include informal play and exercise space.
- Unused green space behind the library parking on Knowles Avenue should be considered for use as public space and stormwater treatment.

## Potential Redevelopment Areas

This Plan makes recommendations for four distinct areas that make up the Kensington community—the Town Center, the Crafts/Services area, Metropolitan Avenue, and the Connecticut/University commercial area. Recommendations for individual properties outside these areas follow as well.



# Town Center

Kensington’s business district is now exclusively commercial, with properties in the Neighborhood Commercial (C-1), General Commercial (C-2), Commercial Transition (C-T), Commercial Office (C-O) and Commercial Office --Moderate (O-M) zones. The auto-oriented retail centers largely consist of one- and two-story structures, with adjacent surface parking. There are scattered four-to-six story office buildings with adjacent surface parking in the business area as well. Floor area ratios (FARs) are relatively low, with most buildings having FARs in the vicinity of 0.5.



The Town Center is envisioned as a walkable attractive place with local convenience retail, housing, dining and entertainment, offices, and neighborhood services in a compact development pattern of five- to six-story buildings along Connecticut Avenue. Properties that do not mix uses would have street activating retail and services in one- or two-story buildings. Buildings along Town Center streets should be set back 15 to 25 feet from the curb to provide adequate space for sidewalks separated from traffic by a green panel or trees.

This Plan recommends taller buildings in the “core” of the Town Center --Connecticut Avenue, Knowles Avenue and Plyers Mill Road. Buildings at the edges of the Town Center are recommended for less height, to ensure gradual transitions of building to the adjoining residential neighborhoods.

A new CR use district, currently under development, will enable mixing of uses at a range of allowable floor area ratios. This Plan recommends FARs of 2.0 for the Burka and Huggins properties, discussed below, and FARs of 1.5 for other properties in the Town Center.

**Concept:** Enhance Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard to provide better safety and function for all modes of transportation. The development of these boulevards should recognize that streets are a component of the open space system.



The Plan makes these recommendations:

- Separate pedestrians from moving traffic with buffers, as shown in the urban road cross section from the County's context-sensitive design standards;
- Provide landscape improvements including street trees and green medians that enhance the appearance and contribute to stormwater management;
- Develop medians without conventional curbs to allow water to flow into bioswales for treatment (see environment recommendations);
- Provide pedestrian refuges in medians at intersections to shorten crosswalk distances;
- Pursue further study of the intersection of Connecticut Avenue, University Boulevard and the proposed Summit Avenue extension to ensure comfortable crossing for pedestrians;
- Provide an informal gathering space with high visibility along the corridor.

**Concept:** Develop Howard Avenue as a continuous pedestrian street that generates an active street life achieved through the mix and intensity of land uses, as well as high quality site and architectural design.

- Introduce sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities west of Connecticut Avenue to provide a safe, comfortable experience for non-vehicular users;
- Develop the blocks along Howard Avenue between Warfield Street and Connecticut Avenue with mixed uses at higher densities and encourage residential uses on upper floors;
- Provide safe and comfortable crossing for pedestrians at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Howard Avenue. Support signal warrant study for SHA and/or circulation study;
- Promote public amenities near the train station;
- Evaluate potential for shared uses, including parking, should SHA's West Howard Avenue property redevelop.



## Connectivity

- Designate Howard Avenue, Concord Street, Dupont Avenue, Plyers Mill Road west of Connecticut Avenue as Business District streets with 70-foot rights-of-way;
- Designate Howard Avenue east of Connecticut Avenue, Summit Avenue from Howard Avenue to Knowles Avenue and Kensington Parkway from Howard Avenue to Frederick Avenue as Business District Streets with 70-foot rights-of-way;
- Pursue with CSX a potential pedestrian underpass at the train station. A 12-foot-wide underpass located to the east of the existing at-grade crossing, in line with Wheatley Street, is appropriate.

## Individual Properties

### Burka Property

The approximately three-acre Burka property, currently zoned C-2, has significant redevelopment potential. Development on this site should provide street-level shops along Connecticut, Knowles and Howard Avenues, with residential and/or office above. A significant public open space at the corner of Connecticut and Knowles avenues would be an appropriate complement to the existing open space at the southeast corner of that intersection. Additional public use space in the form of widened sidewalks that can accommodate café seating is appropriate on Knowles and Howard Avenues. A public private partnership development to create a public parking component on this site should be explored at the time of redevelopment.



A hypothetical mixed-use development on this property, with 20 percent commercial space and 80 percent residential space, would total 55,000 square feet of commercial space and 200 units.

### Huggins Property

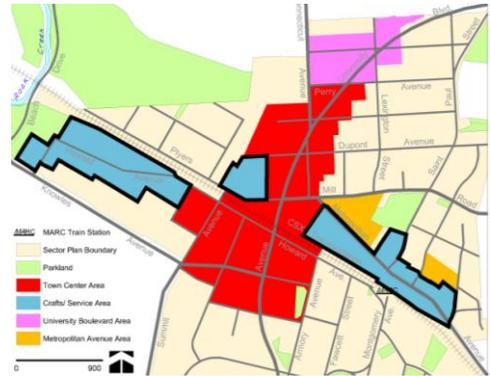
The one-acre Huggins property, currently zoned C-2, may also support mixed-use development. Any development should include street-level shops on Connecticut Avenue and Plyers Mill Road. Parking facilities for this property should be to the rear, with access from Plyers Mill Road. Joint development of this property and the adjoining properties for a single mixed-use development would be desirable.



A hypothetical mixed-use development on this property, with 20 percent commercial space and 80 percent residential space, would total 18,500 square feet of commercial space and 67 units.

## Crafts/Services District

The Crafts/Services area includes the West Howard Antiques District and service industrial activities on the south side of Metropolitan Avenue. Many businesses in this area provide essential services to the area residents. Others, notably the antique shops, have a regional customer base.



The existing zones do not wholly reflect the mix of light industrial, service retail and specialty retail activities in this district. The West Howard Avenue area is now in the Light Industrial (I-1) Zone, while the portion of the district on Metropolitan Avenue is in the C-2 Zone. Many buildings have a single floor of work space, although some may be the equivalent of two stories tall.

This Plan proposes to preserve this district. Aesthetic and environmental improvements will enhance the area’s look and function without compromising its eclectic nature. Should a new use district similar to the CR district be developed, this area would be suitable. The portion of this district on the south side of Metropolitan Avenue is recommended for the CR use district, with FARs of 1.5.

The district’s property pattern, which includes deep lots that support businesses along West Howard Avenue as well as to the rear of the lots, requires deeper setbacks—35 feet maximum from curb to building front—that will allow parking where needed. This Plan also recommends required front windows or transparent loading doors and direct entrances from the street to increase pedestrian activity on the street.

The State Highway Administration property on West Howard Avenue is suitable for additional public parking.



### **Connectivity**

- Extend Summit Avenue as a Business District Street with a 60-foot right-of-way and two travel lanes from Plyers Mill Road to Connecticut Avenue, via Farragut Avenue.
- Classify Metropolitan Avenue as a Business District Street with a 70-foot right-of-way from Kensington Parkway to Plyers Mill Road and two travel lanes. Allow on-street parking on Metropolitan Avenue.

### **Environment**

Use the Green Factor included in the proposed CR use district to offer a variety of landscaping options to provide tree planting, infiltration, energy efficiency, water conservation, stormwater treatment, and layered landscaping.

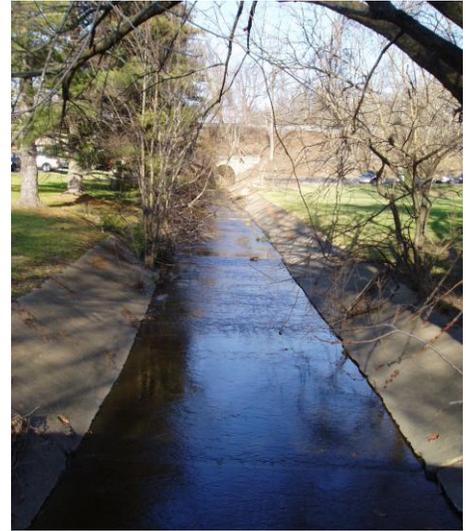
### **West Howard Avenue**

West Howard Avenue is burdened by nearly 76 percent impervious cover and it entirely lacks stormwater management. Uncontrolled stormwater cascades down the street slope from the top of West Howard Avenue to parkland at the base of the avenue. At the discharge point, runoff undercuts the forested slope and severely erodes the asphalt and stream buffer.

- Provide stormwater management through innovative low impact development (LID) quality and quantity control measures to encourage groundwater recharge. Techniques include a combination of one or more of the following: infiltration trenches, bioretention, bioswales, permeable pavement, and extended retention.
- Provide where possible onsite quantity control of roof runoff by installing French drains, cisterns, vaults, planting wells, and/or green roofs. Explore opportunities for local, State, and federal assistance for the installation of green roofs.
- Protect forest on parkland at the base of West Howard Avenue through impervious reduction techniques and pollution control measures. A stormwater management treatment facility on parkland is not recommended.
- Include tree planting in LID treatment areas where feasible.

### Silver Creek

- Collaborate with the County’s Departments of Environmental Protection and Permitting Services and the Town of Kensington to undertake a comprehensive study that will identify ways to eliminate flooding at the culvert under Oberon Street.
- Conduct a feasibility study for the removal of the concrete stream channel replacing it with a natural streambed substrate and buffer.



### Konterra Limited Partnership Property

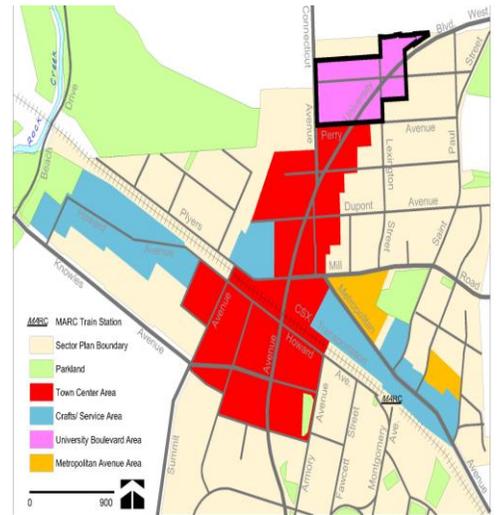
This former concrete plant should be redeveloped with a pedestrian and bicycle crossing of the railroad to increase connectivity between the two parts of the town. An open space should be provided at this location adjacent to, or with clear views of the historic train station. Concrete plant redevelopment should provide a direct and convenient pedestrian and bicyclist connection between Howard Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue. Redevelopment should include additional public and commuter parking. This Plan recommends mixed uses in the new CR district, with an FAR of 1.5.



## Connecticut Avenue/University Boulevard Area

This neighborhood commercial area is located in a triangle bounded by Connecticut Avenue, University Boulevard and Lawrence Street. It is in the C-1 and C-2 zones, and is largely made up of auto-oriented retail centers, with adjacent surface parking. Buildings are largely single story, although there are small office buildings with several floors of space. Floor area ratios are in the vicinity of 0.5 to 1.0.

This Plan proposes mixed uses in the new CR district for this area, with FARs of 1.5 in the triangle bounded by Connecticut Avenue, University Boulevard and Perry Street. Areas along Lawrence Avenue are suitable for FARs of 1.0, to provide a transition to the residential neighborhoods to the north.



## Stubbs Property

This approximately 1.2-acre property, now a neighborhood shopping center, is currently zoned C-1. This property is in single ownership and is suitable for mixed uses. Its location at the gateway to Kensington makes it suitable for additional height.

A hypothetical mixed-use development on this property, with 20 percent commercial space and 80 percent residential space, would total 18,500 square feet of commercial space and 67 units.



## Metropolitan Avenue Area

The north side of Metropolitan Avenue mixes neighborhood retail and office uses, along with service uses that have been included in the Crafts/Services District. The area is largely in the C-2 Zone, although uses include some light industrial activities. Much of the area consists of single story buildings, although topography in some areas allows some buildings to mix one- and two-story portions. Floor area ratios in this area are in the 0.5 range, although the self-storage facility at 3700 Plyers Mill Road is at the maximum 1.5 FAR.



This Plan recommends the CR use district for the north side of Metropolitan Avenue. The 3700 Plyers Mill Road LLC property, discussed below, is suitable for 2.0 FAR, although building heights will have to be varied to ensure a harmonious transition to residential neighborhoods north of Plyers Mill Road. The remainder of this area is recommended for the CR use district, with an FAR of 1.5.

The urban design concept for both sides of Metropolitan Avenue is a mixed residential and commercial thoroughfare with a distinct pedestrian orientation. While residential uses may predominate, some retail activity on the north side of the street is appropriate.

### **Connectivity**

Extend Lexington Street to Metropolitan Avenue, with a 60-foot right-of-way and a single, northbound travel lane; encourage MDSHA to investigate routing westbound traffic to Plyers Mill Road on the new street, to eliminate a northbound left movement at the Plyers Mill Road and Metropolitan Avenue intersection.

### **Environment**

Use the Green Factor included in the proposed commercial residential zone to offer a variety of landscaping options to provide tree planting, infiltration, energy efficiency, water conservation, stormwater treatment, and layered landscaping.

### **3700 Plyers Mill Road LLC Property**

This 3.6-acre property, at the intersection of Metropolitan Avenue and Plyers Mill Road in the C-2 Zone, is close to the MARC station and offers a significant opportunity for a largely residential development, should its owners decide to redevelop. Single-family attached units are appropriate along Plyers Mill Road, where they would face an existing one-family neighborhood. Multi-family units could be placed in the site's interior, with some retail uses along Metropolitan Avenue, where they would face retail and crafts/services uses across the street, and along the Plan's proposed extension of Lexington Avenue. An open space should be provided at the intersection of Metropolitan Avenue and Plyers Mill Road.

A hypothetical mixed-use development on this property, with 20 percent commercial space and 80 percent residential space, would total 47,000 square feet of commercial space and 170 units.



## Other Areas

### Ken-Gar

Ken-Gar is a historically African-American community of about one hundred homes lying north of the CSX right-of-way and west of Connecticut Avenue. The 1978 Plan included Ken-Gar to incorporate a community renewal plan created by neighborhood residents and Montgomery County government. The 1978 Plan made land use and zoning recommendations that furthered the goals of the renewal plan.



Today, Ken-Gar is a stable residential community. This Plan confirms the existing land uses and zoning. It recommends that the neighborhood be evaluated for inclusion on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and that its community center, a Rosenwald school built in the late 1920s, be evaluated as an individual resource.

### Housing Opportunities Commission Property

The Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) maintains its administrative offices in a former elementary school on Detrick Avenue. The property lies between the Town Center and the largely historic residential blocks west of Connecticut Avenue and is in the R-60 Zone. Should HOC decide to move its administrative activities, this property is suitable for other public uses, including recreation, if the County determines that there are additional recreational needs in this part of Montgomery County. Open space on the property is suitable for informal recreation and for such community-building activities as community gardens. The property should remain in a residential zone, which will allow recreational uses or, if there are no recreational needs in this area, allow residential development that is compatible with the existing residential community to the south.



## Implementation

Recommendations for the Town Center, Metropolitan Avenue and University/Connecticut districts will be implemented through use of the Commercial-Residential (CR) District, a new zoning tool that will encourage mixed-use development and will promote increased diversity of housing choice, environmentally sound buildings, active streets that connect communities and innovative design. The Crafts/Services District is suitable for the CR District or for an as-yet undeveloped district for mixed residential and light industrial uses.

The CR district establishes zones based on a total allowed floor area ratio (FAR), maximum non-residential FAR, maximum residential FAR, and maximum building height.

The district is designed to:

- Implement the goals and objectives of applicable master and sector plans;
- Provide opportunities for the redevelopment of strip malls and surface parking lots with a sustainable mix of uses;
- Reduce dependence on the automobile by providing a mix of uses, including a range of housing opportunities, mobility options, services, and amenities;
- Provide for a range of context-sensitive densities to achieve an appropriate balance of jobs to housing;
- Provide certainty with regard to maximum density and building height in each zone while allowing flexibility in site design and mix of uses; and
- Define the facilities and amenities required by private development to support the allowed optional method densities and heights.

An optional method of development provides for bundles of public amenities that can be provided to earn the maximum allowable density. Projects in the four redevelopment areas proposed in this Plan can achieve additional density because of their proximity to the MARC station. Additional bonus density can be achieved by preserving local businesses, providing a range of housing types, providing additional streetscape, and incorporating community facilities into mixed-use developments.

Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) are required in all County residential development with more than 20 units.

The CR District, like the TMX and CBD Zones, requires public use space for all development, calculated at 10 percent of the site. Public use spaces may be privately owned but must be accessible to the public. The public use space should be located on site. This Plan assumes that much of the open space system will be obtained through the public use space requirement.

In addition to public use space, the CR District requires optional method projects to provide public facilities and amenities on-site, or contribute an equivalent to an off-site amenity project. In Kensington, creating open space, providing active recreation space, and reconstructing the existing public streets to accommodate pedestrians and street trees are important public facilities and amenities that benefit the entire Plan area.

The Plan is accompanied by a separate set of Urban Design Guidelines that provides detailed information on street classifications, types and functions, building form, orientation and massing, and open space.

## **Public Schools**

The Sector Plan Area is located in the Walter Johnson High School Cluster. Kensington-Parkwood Elementary School, located just outside the Sector Plan area, and North Bethesda Middle School, serve area residents. Development proposed for this plan is not expected to result in the need for additional schools.

## **Public Safety**

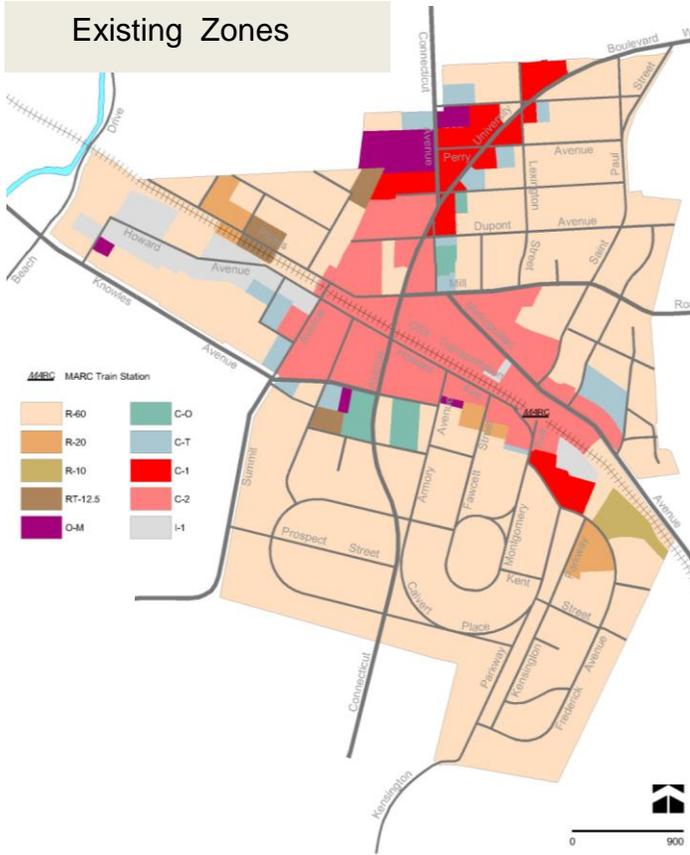
The existing and proposed development in the Plan area would be adequately served by the existing facilities. No additional facilities would be needed to accommodate the development proposed in the Plan.

## **Capital Improvements**

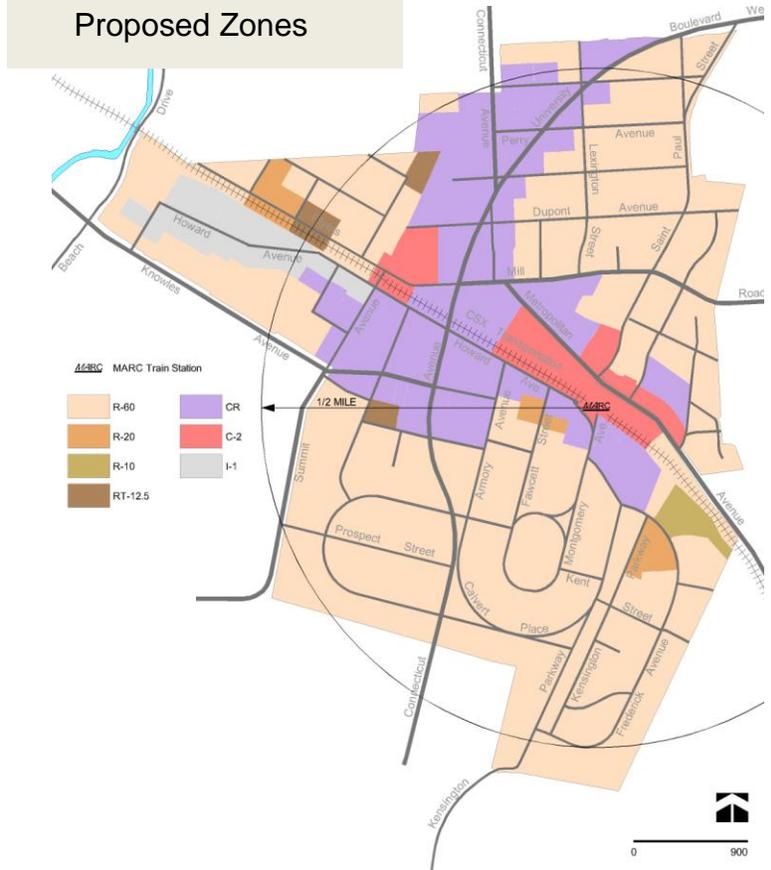
Capital Improvement Projects are necessary to implement the Plan's recommendations for new road connections and for major improvements to stormwater management systems. Innovative cooperative pilot projects for low impact stormwater management will require public funding as well. Should the Town create a parking district, additional taxes will need to be levied.

The Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs is currently exploring streetscape, building façade and stormwater management improvements for West Howard Avenue, in the Crafts/Services area. Capital Improvement Projects may be created to put the Department's recommendations and initiatives into place.

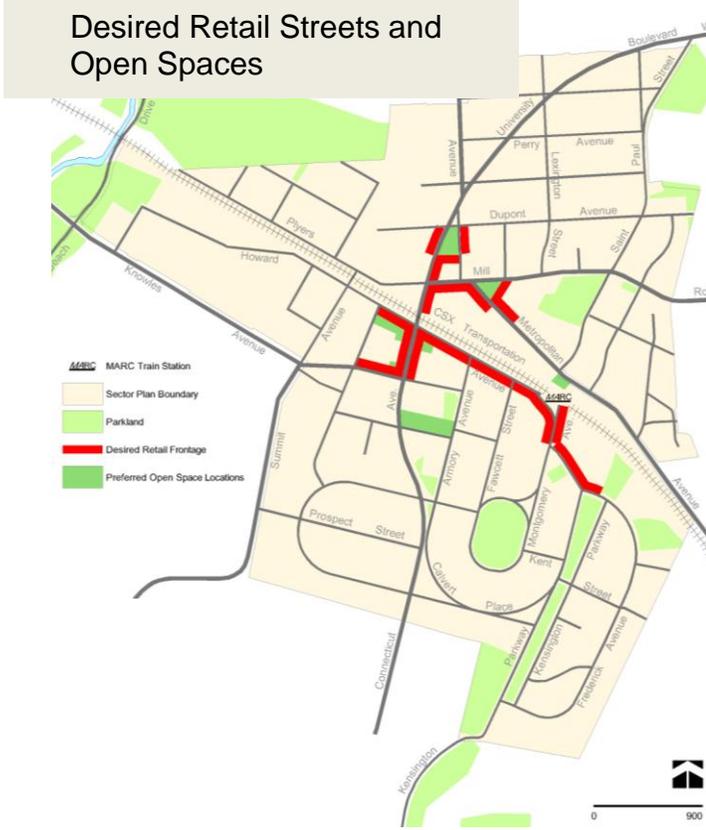
### Existing Zones



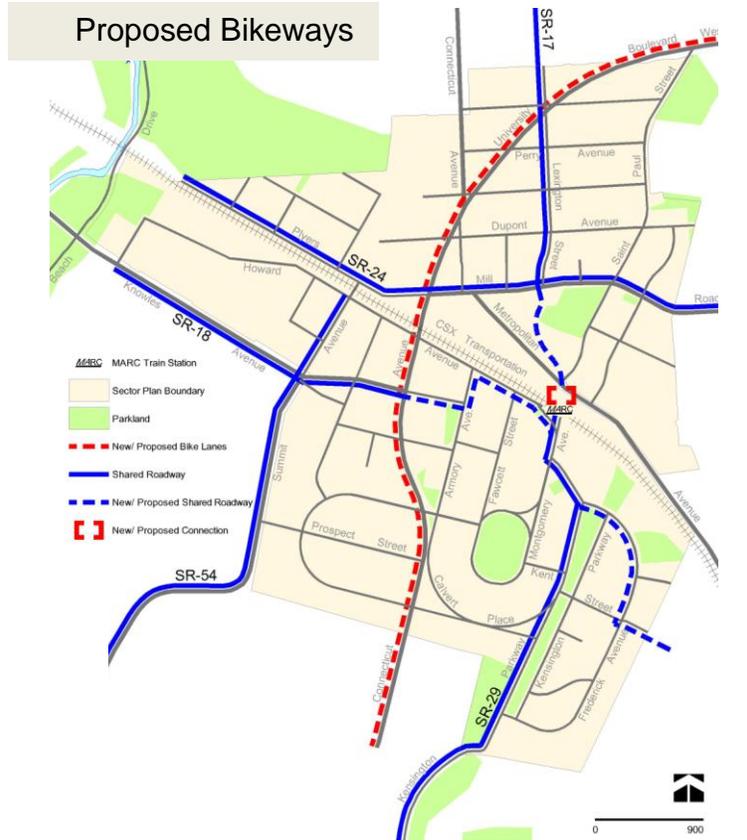
### Proposed Zones



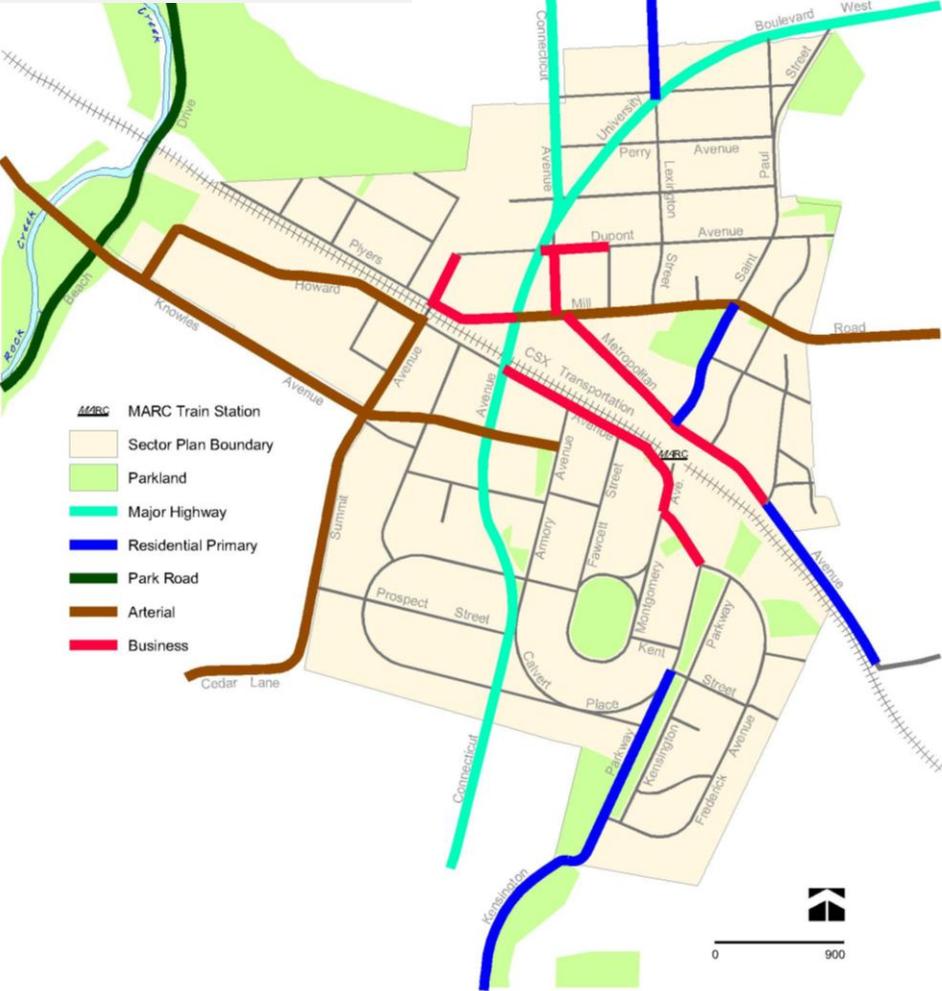
### Desired Retail Streets and Open Spaces



### Proposed Bikeways



# Highway Classifications



## Master Plan of Highways Roadway Classification Table

MPOH Road Number	Name/Route Number	Limits	ROW	Travel Lanes <sup>1</sup>	Target Speed	MC Std.
<b>Major Highways</b>						
M-7	Connecticut Avenue (MD 185)	Plan Boundary to Plan Boundary	120'	6D	30	2008.01
M-19	University Boulevard West (MD 193)	Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) to Plan Boundary	120'	6D	30	2008.01
<b>Arterials</b>						
A-62	Plyers Mill Road	Plan Boundary to Metropolitan Ave	80'	2	25	As Built
A-62	Plyers Mill Road (MD 192)	Connecticut Ave to Metropolitan Ave	100'	2	25	2004.05
A-66	Knowles Avenue (MD 547)	Summit Ave to Connecticut Ave (MD 185)	80'	2	30	2004.01
A-67	Summit Avenue	Cedar Lane to Knowles Ave	80'	2	25	2004.02
<b>Business District Streets</b>						
B-1	Plyers Mill Road	Summit Ave to Connecticut Ave (MD 185)	70'	2	25	2005.02
B-2	Summit Avenue	Knowles Ave to Plyers Mill Road	70'	2	25	2005.02
B-3	Summit Avenue	Plyers Mill to Farragut Avenue (Connecticut Ave (MD 185))	60'	2	25	2005.01
B-4	Metropolitan Avenue (MD 192)	Plyers Mill Rd to Capitol View Ave	70'	2	30	2005.02
B-5	Lexington Street Extension	Metropolitan Ave to Plyers Mill Road	60'	1 <sup>2</sup>	25	2005.01
B-6	Howard Avenue	Connecticut Ave (MD 185) to Knowles Ave	70'	2	25	2005.02
B-7	Howard Avenue	Kensington Parkway to Connecticut Ave (MD 185)	60'	2	25	2005.01
B-8	Concord Street	Plyers Mill Road to University Blvd	70'	2	25	2005.02
B-9	Dupont Avenue	Connecticut Ave to Nash Place	70'	2	25	2005.02
B-10	Kensington Parkway	Howard Avenue to Frederick Avenue	60'	2	25	2005.01
<b>Primary Residential Roads</b>						
P-1	Newport Mill Road	University Blvd to Parker Ave	70'	2	30	2003.10
P-2	Kensington Parkway	Frederick Avenue to Kent Street	60'	2	25	2005.01
P-6	Kensington Parkway	Plan Boundary to Kent Street	70'	2	30	2003.11
P-6	Saint Paul Street	Metropolitan Ave to Plyers Mill Rd	70'	2	25	As Built <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These are the number of planned through travel lanes for each segment, not including lanes for turning, parking, acceleration, deceleration, or other purposes auxiliary to through travel.

<sup>2</sup> The Lexington Avenue Extension is proposed for one way operation, northbound operation to reduce the travel lanes on Metropolitan Avenue west of this new road.

<sup>3</sup> The Saint Paul Street ROW is designated as a Historic District (see HR description).

Under Article 66B, Section 1.01 of the Maryland Annotated Code, a commission must implement certain visions through a comprehensive master plan. This Plan, which amends the Approved and Adopted General Plan, supports the visions of Article 66B, including:

- Universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment
- Extensive public participation
- Concentrated growth in existing population and business centers and strategically selected new centers
- Compact, mixed–use, walkable design
- Infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner
- A multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers
- A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes
- Economic development and natural resource–based businesses that promote employment and opportunities for all within the capacity of the State’s natural resources, public services, and public facilities
- Environmental protection of land and water resources
- Resource conservation including waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas
- Stewardship
- Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels.

A plan provides comprehensive recommendations for the use of public and private land. Each plan reflects a vision of the future that responds to the unique character of the local community within the context of a countywide perspective. Together with relevant policies, plans should be referred to by public officials and private individuals when making land use decisions.

### **The Plan Process**

The PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT PLAN is the formal proposal to amend an adopted master plan or sector plan. Its recommendations are not necessarily those of the Planning Board; it is prepared for the purpose of receiving public testimony. The Planning Board holds a public hearing and receives testimony, after which it holds public worksessions to review the testimony and revise the Public Hearing Draft Plan as appropriate. When the Planning Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Planning Board Draft Plan.

The PLANNING BOARD DRAFT PLAN is the Board's recommended Plan and reflects their revisions to the Public Hearing Draft Plan. The Regional District Act requires the Planning Board to transmit a sector plan to the County Council with copies to the County Executive who must, within sixty days, prepare and transmit a fiscal impact analysis of the Planning Board Draft Plan to the County Council. The County Executive may also forward to the County Council other comments and recommendations.

After receiving the Executive's fiscal impact analysis and comments, the County Council holds a public hearing to receive public testimony. After the hearing record is closed, the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee holds public worksessions to review the testimony and makes recommendations to the County Council. The Council holds its own worksessions, then adopts a resolution approving the Planning Board Draft Plan, as revised.

After Council approval the plan is forwarded to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for adoption. Once adopted by the Commission, the plan officially amends the master plans, functional plans, and sector plans cited in the Commission's adoption resolution.

**Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan**  
An Amendment to the 1978 *Approved and Adopted Sector Plan for the Town of  
Kensington and Vicinity*, Montgomery County, Maryland  
May 2009

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760  
[www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/housing](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/housing)