

Plan Summary

Plan Challenge

This Amendment to the *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* affects the Shady Grove Study Area, one of the few areas in the I-270 Corridor with a large amount of vacant land suitable for employment and residential development that is close to I-270, a Metro station, and the center of the County. (See Figure 1.1, page 2.) The *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* designates most of the area as a “Research and Development (R&D) Village” and promotes the creation of a “high quality environment not only for research and development firms, but also for offices, corporate headquarters, light manufacturing and business support services.”

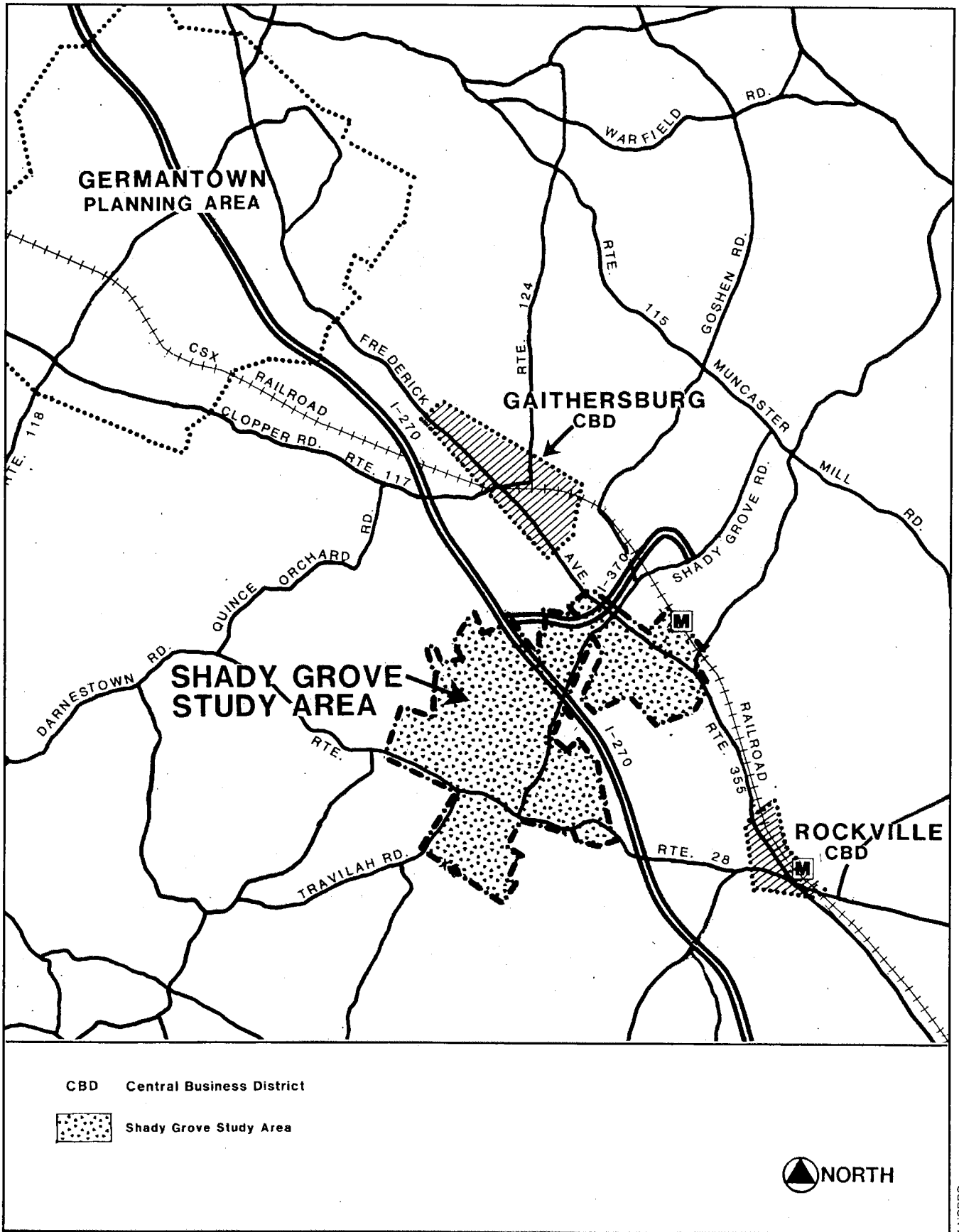
To provide, as much as possible, the opportunity for people to live and work in the same community, the Plan also encourages a mix of housing types within the R&D Village.

The 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* created the concept of an R&D Village, but recognized that further study was needed before the actual character of the R&D Village could be defined. Issues which were identified as needing further study in a subsequent Master Plan Amendment included the appropriate mix of employment and residential uses, the capacity of future roads to handle future growth, the need to modify the County’s Zoning Ordinance to accommodate the changing character of research and development firms, and the need to create a sense of place for workers and residents alike.

The challenge in this planning effort is to address these issues in a comprehensive and creative fashion and, by so doing, provide a working and living environment which contributes to the emergence of the R&D Village as a world class research and development center.

Shady Grove Study Area Location Map

Figure 1.1



Transit Concepts

The importance of transit to the future of the Shady Grove Study Area cannot be underestimated. This Plan designates three separate transitways as well as high priority regional and neighborhood bus routes. Higher intensity uses are directed to transit stops. In portions of the Study Area where lower intensity employment uses are recommended, the Plan encourages the clustering of buildings toward bus routes.

Transit is such an essential element of this Plan that it forms the basis for the land use and zoning recommendations. For this reason, a strong public/private commitment to the Plan's transit proposals must occur. In the absence of such a commitment, the Plan's land use proposals will have to be re-examined.

Plan Highlights

This Plan manages and directs the dynamic growth potential of the Shady Grove Study Area. The Study Area's remaining supply of vacant and uncommitted land provides an important resource in meeting several community and County-wide objectives. These objectives include:

- providing employment opportunities for a variety of businesses and enterprises;
- providing a sense of community identity for both existing and future residents;
- increasing the County's total housing stock and concurrently providing an appropriate mix of affordable housing;
- providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation system;
- providing receiving areas for Transferable Development Rights (TDRs) to implement the County's Agricultural Preservation Program;
- encouraging the preservation of historic resources;
- providing facilities such as schools, parks, and recreation facilities on a timely and adequate basis; and
- encouraging the preservation of natural resources.

The Plan recommends that the Shady Grove Study Area continue to be designated as a major employment and housing center due to its strategic location in the I-270 Corridor.

Land Use and Design Concepts

This Plan strongly endorses traditional neighborhood concepts. Housing, employment, services, retail uses, and public spaces are integrated at the neighborhood level and tied together by transitways (for rail or bus), streets, bikeways, and sidewalks. These concepts are evident in older communities in Montgomery County which were developed during the late nineteenth century up to World War II.

This Plan:

- expands the R&D Village concept proposed in the 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* to include the Banks and Thomas Farms;
- proposes higher intensity uses at designated transit stops;
- encourages a mix of employment uses and densities;
- designates approximately 750 acres for primarily R&D uses in the vicinity of the Life Sciences Center;
- provides for a broad mix of residential units, including affordable housing;
- creates identifiable neighborhoods with a mix of residential and employment uses;
- enhances transit serviceability by orienting higher intensity development to designated busways and/or transit ways;
- provides a comprehensive park and open space system;
- recommends that historic sites be integrated into future development;
- supports a strong educational presence in the R&D Village;
- proposes an executive conference center site on the Traville property;
- proposes that a number of retail centers be developed to support the neighborhood concept on the Traville property and the Crown, King, and Thomas Farms;
- provides criteria for the designation of a heliport in the Study Area; and
- designates Key West Avenue as an R&D employment corridor.

Zoning Plan**This Plan:**

- proposes the use of floating zones as a means of achieving the Plan's land use and design objectives;
- recommends the coordinated planning and design of large parcels in accord with the neighborhood concept advocated in the Plan;
- defers comprehensive rezoning of properties by Sectional Map Amendment until there is evidence of a public/private commitment to implementation of transit;
- suggests the need for a new zone which will allow better implementation of the mixed use neighborhood concept in the Plan;
- eliminates the very detailed staging approach contained in the 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan*; and
- recognizes the Annual Growth Policy as an effective mid-range staging mechanism.

Transportation and Mobility Plan

This Plan:

- recommends the location of three exclusive transitways through the Study Area to implement the Plan's land use recommendations;
- designates high-priority regional bus routes;
- designates neighborhood bus "loops" in the King Farm, R&D Village, and between the Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland, and proposed conference area;
- recommends that buildings should be clustered and located closer to sidewalks to enhance transit serviceability along all roadways in the Study Area (except for major roadways, such as Sam Eig Highway);
- proposes several changes to the road network shown in the 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan*, including several new roadway extensions and additions;
- recommends guidelines for subdivision and site plan applications to implement the neighborhood concept and transit-serviceable site design;
- recommends four intersections for future grade separations or equivalent at-grade solution;
- establishes criteria to site a public use heliport or vertiport within the Study Area;
- identifies potential High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes for Great Seneca Highway;
- proposes that two Park-and-Ride lots be located on the Banks Farm and Traville Property;
- recommends that pathways and sidewalk systems link residential areas, employment centers, and community facilities; and
- includes the findings of an areawide transportation analysis of the Land Use Plan.

Community Facilities

This Plan:

- encourages developers of office and commercial projects to provide neighborhood and civic open space for employees and customers;
- encourages developers to provide pedestrian-oriented private recreation facilities within individual neighborhoods;
- designates conservation areas which include stream valley parks and private open space areas;
- proposes that four public schools (three elementary and one middle school) are needed to serve the projected public school age population of the Study Area;

- recommends the provision of child day care facilities and housing for the elderly at appropriate locations in the Study Area; and
- recommends that, when appropriate, day care centers be considered as an amenity associated with applications for optional zones (such as MXPB and PD).

Environment

This Plan:

- recommends that a reforestation plan to re-establish a natural stream valley in all conservation areas currently devoid of significant mature vegetation accompany development plans for individual properties;
- proposes that noise guidelines, prevention, or mitigation of noise impacts should be a major consideration throughout the land use planning and development approval processes;
- recommends that, at the time of preliminary plan review, detailed studies by a soils engineer be required to assess through field investigation the limitation of severely constraining soils, with recommendations for mitigation or avoidance; and
- designates conservation areas along stream valleys to enhance these functions. Within these conservation areas, development will be reviewed for compliance with regulatory controls and guidelines.

Implementation

This Plan:

- proposes mixed-use zones to implement the neighborhood concept;
- recommends postponing preparation and adoption of the Sectional Map Amendment to implement the Master Plan until there is evidence of a public/private commitment to implement the Plan's transit recommendations;
- recommends that those properties that are recommended for development in the near term be subject to the Annual Growth Policy (AGP) limitations; and reaffirms the 1985 *Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan* recommendations regarding interjurisdictional issues.