

Master Plan Highlights

This Plan Highlights section is a summary of the key recommendations addressed in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan and provides an opportunity for the reader to preview, in a few pages, the complete document. Throughout the body of the text, Master Plan recommendations and major points are emphasized in bold text.

Purpose and Content

The purpose of this Master Plan is to establish the policy framework that will guide the future direction of Bethesda-Chevy Chase for the next 20 years. Almost as many years have passed since the last Master Plan for the area was approved and adopted, and much change has occurred both in B-CC and in the County. These changes have been carefully considered in the recommendations of this Plan. At the same time, it is equally important to attempt to anticipate future change so that the best recommendations can be made to prepare the Planning Area for the year 2010.

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase area has many desirable characteristics which are critical to the continued stability of the area and which make B-CC one of the strongest communities in the County. These include well established residential neighborhoods, a combination of open space and wooded areas, employment and shopping opportunities, and a high level of transportation service. **A major goal of this Master Plan is to perpetuate and enhance the high quality of life to which citizens of Bethesda-Chevy Chase are accustomed.**

The boundaries of this Plan include all of the Planning Area outside of the three Sector Plan areas of the Bethesda Business District, Friendship Heights, and Westbard. Since each of these has been reviewed more recently than the remainder of Bethesda-Chevy Chase, it was important to focus on the balance of the area to establish the Master Plan frame work. There are integral links among each of the Sector Plan areas and with the larger Planning Area which have been taken into consideration in preparing this document. Since the three areas were not studied in depth, this Plan assumes that the policies and recommendations contained in the Sector Plans are valid.

This is a comprehensive Master Plan, in the tradition of master plans approved by the County Council since adoption of the *General Plan*. As a comprehensive plan, it addresses the interrelated issues of the various elements affecting our communities: natural resources and environmental values, demographic changes, community needs, employment and housing development policies, public facility needs, transportation, and land use.

The key land use policy of the Plan is a reconfirmation of the existing residential character and zoning of the Planning Area. The Master Plan recommends relatively modest changes and a moderate level of development, which are intended to assure the continuation of these strong communities. The Plan also emphasizes increased transit use as the primary way to serve increased commuter traffic. The comprehensive nature of the Plan is completed by inclusion of an

Implementation Plan setting out the zoning, legislation, capital and operating programs, and supplementary actions needed to achieve the objectives of the Plan.

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan is designed to achieve the following goals:

1. Perpetuate and enhance the high quality of life which exists in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning Area.
2. Achieve a level of future employment development that is in balance with a high quality of life and the transportation capacity of the Planning Area.
3. Provide for a balanced housing supply so that persons of varying income levels, age, backgrounds, and household characteristics may find suitable housing appropriate to their needs.
4. Protect the high quality residential communities throughout the Planning Area as well as the services and environmental qualities that enhance the area.
5. Achieve a significant shift of new travel from auto to transit and other mobility alternatives.
6. Protect the natural resources and environmental qualities of the Planning Area.
7. Contribute to a strong sense of community and help reinforce community cohesion.

Extensive background material is available in other documents prepared by the Planning Department. The Appendix to the Master Plan contains background material and key parcel maps. The major support material is contained in two documents released in February 1988. The *Trends and Conditions Report* is primarily a background document. The *Issues Report* contains an extensive discussion of land use and other issues in the Planning Area.

Development Levels

The Master Plan endorses a moderate level of development for Bethesda-Chevy Chase. A moderate level of develop-

ment is in balance with the overall transportation capacity of the Planning Area. A high level of new development was considered and rejected due to potential for excessive traffic congestion. A low level of new development was considered and rejected due to excessive restriction on the expectations of property owners. The remaining Master Plan recommendations assume the moderate level of future development.

The recommended level of development achieves most of the expectations of property owners and can be reasonably accommodated within the transportation capacity of the Planning Area. Development expectations are based in great part on existing zoning for the private sector and availability of land for the public sector. Transportation facilities are assumed to be limited to moderate improvements to the existing highway system, coupled with strong efforts to increase use of public transit and other mobility alternatives. More extensive highway improvements would be excessively disruptive to local communities.

The proposed level of development can be implemented through the following recommendations:

1. Maintain the relative level of households compared to jobs to reduce the pressures on commuting into the area.
2. Share new employment development between the Sector Plans and the Federal employment centers.
3. Locate new employment and residential development in existing centers, near Metro stations.
4. Continue to recognize the importance of biomedical and medically-oriented development in the area, but place less emphasis on large-scale office projects.
5. Support existing businesses, including those that meet community retail and service needs.
6. Support increased housing density and types in Sector Plan areas and where compatible with nearby properties.

Land Use and Zoning

Areawide Recommendations

The major goal of the Master Plan is to protect the high quality of life, the residential character, and the natural environment throughout the area. A related objective is to reconfirm the zoning for the extensive single-family detached residential areas. These goals and objectives can be achieved, in part, by balancing the level of new development with existing and potential transportation capacity. It has been necessary to review all of the land uses and zoning designations throughout the Planning Area.

This Plan recognizes that land use and community change can be affected by areawide concerns. **Thus the Plan makes the following recommendations which apply to the Planning Area at-large:**

1. Reconfirm the existing single-family land use and zoning (R-60, R-90, and R-200) as appropriate for the major portion of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning Area. Recommend single-family attached (townhouse) use on some larger sites in the Planning Area.
2. Endorse the maintenance and enhancement of residential communities through a program of Green Corridors along major highways.
3. Provide guidelines for locating special exceptions that discourage concentrations of office-related special exceptions but support those related to child, elder, and health services, and other community-serving needs.
4. Encourage the continuation of the current country club uses. For country clubs, as well as private schools and institutional uses, endorse housing as the primary future alternative use if these parcels are ever redeveloped.
5. Preserve and protect sensitive environmental areas.

Community Recommendations

Several portions of the Planning Area received detailed and focused consideration because of the need to resolve the many complex issues in these areas. The major recommendations of these areas are highlighted below.

In Chevy Chase Lake, the Plan seeks to maintain a moderate scale, community-oriented, mixed use development. Major recommendations include:

1. Recommend residential land uses which protect wooded properties through cluster development, attempt to achieve housing objectives by use of transferable development rights, and establish an open space and pathway system.
2. Enhance the existing community retail center by encouraging amenities such as a public use spaces. Amenities are identified in a statement of design guidelines.

It is important to note that these recommendations are independent of any possible use of transit on the Georgetown Branch.

Along Old Georgetown Road and in the adjacent communities, the Plan seeks to retain the residential character and discourage certain types of special exception approvals. Major recommendations include:

1. Discourage approval of additional special exceptions except those that are community-serving, which includes child day care, elderly care and housing, group homes, accessory apartments, home occupations, and hospice care. This recommendation is due to the cumulative effect of existing extensive special exception activity within that area.
2. Apply design and landscaping guidelines in review of special exception petitions to maintain and encourage a quality appearance and residential character along the corridor.

In the Palisades, the Plan endorses protection of the environment, character, and cultural resources of the area. Major recommendations include:

1. Recommend downzoning a major portion of the Palisades from R-60 to R-90 to protect the environment and character of the area. This downzoning is recommended only if a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance clarifying Non-conforming Uses is adopted.
2. Use other protection measures, such as applying the steep slope guidelines at the time of subdivision, clustering development on specific parcels, designating MacArthur Boulevard as a Maryland Scenic Route, maintaining Federal property in this area as open space, and supporting the use of Glen Echo Park as a cultural resource.
3. Enhance the Little Falls Mall by seeking amenities such as a public use space. Amenities are identified in the design guidelines for future expansion. Confirm C-1 zoning on a number of sites to continue community-serving retail and service uses.

Sector Plan and Federal Facility Recommendations

This Plan reaffirms the policies and roles of the Sector Plan areas. Each Sector Plan seeks to concentrate commercial and high density residential development in limited areas, to limit development to traffic capacity constraints, and to protect adjacent residential areas. The Master Plan does not change the land use or transportation recommendations within the Sector Plan boundaries. However, the Master Plan reviews the zoning adjacent to each Sector Plan Area and determines the appropriate land use and zoning for those areas. In almost all cases, the existing single-family zoning and other existing zoning is reconfirmed.

The Plan establishes a development framework for Federal employment centers and seeks their cooperation with those policies that limit the growth of traffic. Recommendations include:

1. Recognize the importance of biomedical and medically-oriented employment in Bethesda-Chevy Chase.
2. Consider future expansion of jobs or parking only if effective ridesharing and transit incentive programs are provided.
3. Provide stronger coordination with Federal facilities, as part of the mandatory referral process.
4. Provide careful design review of construction projects to assess the visual impact on adjacent neighborhoods.

Transportation

The Transportation Plan assumes that increasing use of transit services and somewhat limiting the construction of new highways are ways to maintain the quality of life in the Planning Area. Peak hour traffic volumes may increase at a slower rate than daily highway volumes. Growth in daily volumes is due both to regional growth in through traffic and local traffic growth associated with the moderate level of development endorsed by this Plan. In a developed area, such as Bethesda-Chevy Chase, traffic growth cannot be easily served by highway expansion without causing serious impacts on adjacent residential properties.

Additional transportation service in B-CC should be based primarily on an expanded and vigorous program of transit and other mobility services. Use of such services is necessary because of the difficulty of expanding the capacity of many B-CC highways and due to the need to accommodate increases in both through traffic and a moderate level of development in B-CC. **To improve transit and mobility services, this Plan recommends:**

1. Increase the level of feeder bus services, particularly in the eastern half of B-CC.
2. Provide park-and-ride lots for about 750 vehicles near the periphery of the Planning Area.
3. Provide comprehensive rideshare programs, serving both employment and residential centers.
4. Require new development to participate in traffic reduction programs.

5. Endorse completing an expanded system of pedestrian paths and bikeways to link residential areas with public facilities, commercial areas, and transit services.

The Master Plan amends the existing classification of highways in B-CC. The arterial classification is assigned to parts of Bradley Boulevard and Goldsboro Road, as well as all of MacArthur Boulevard.

The recommendation of this Plan is that a moderate level of highway improvements be endorsed for implementation during the life of the Plan. Such a program may allow for continued highway congestion in some locations, but such congestion may also lead to higher use of transit and other mobility services. **Moderate highway system recommendations include:**

1. Complete programmed highway improvements.
2. Endorse projects needed to ensure the safety of highway users and pedestrians.
3. Endorse redesign of intersections operating at high levels of congestion.
4. Require new development to participate in construction of improvements needed to reduce congestion levels on local area highways and intersections.
5. Endorse reduction of through traffic on secondary residential streets and, where possible, on primary streets.

The recommended development level should result in an acceptable average Level of Service on area highways. The standard of acceptable congestion for the Planning Area is to continue at the average Level of Service D/E standard. The analysis indicates the following patterns of localized congestion:

1. The eastern and northern parts of the Planning Area may be more congested than the western or southern portions of the area.
2. The north-to-south radial highways may be more congested than the east-to-west highways.

Environmental Resources

A goal of this Plan is to protect the natural resources and environmental qualities which are important to the quality of life for Bethesda-Chevy Chase. Steeply sloped and heavily wooded areas are distinctive features of the Palisades area and portions of the Chevy Chase area. Throughout B-CC, residential areas are heavily wooded. Environmental concerns within the area include loss of mature woodlands, stream quality, and highway noise.

Recommendations to protect the natural resources of B-CC include:

1. Preserve wetlands, steeply-sloping areas and, where possible, extensively wooded areas.
2. Reduce flooding problems with upgrading of storm drainage and culvert sizes and provide regional stormwater management facilities.
3. Re-establish a stream quality monitoring program and continue monitoring of old sewer lines.
4. Improve stream channels that are subject to severe erosion problems.
5. Provide noise mitigation measures for residences abutting I-495 and new residential projects along major highways.
6. Locate higher-density development near transit stations and use ridesharing programs to aid in lowering automobile-related air pollutants.
7. Design any new sewer or water lines to fully protect parkland areas.

Community Facilities and Needs

The Master Plan supports measures to help create a sense of community and to reinforce community cohesion. The Commission on the Future (1988) defined a sense of commu-

nity as "a feeling of belonging to a local area and having an interest and a stake in what happens there."

This Master Plan addresses a broad range of ways that residents and businesses view their community. The high quality of life in Bethesda-Chevy Chase derives from fine residential areas, employment and shopping opportunities, a high level of transportation service, and a combination of woodlands and open spaces throughout the area. A sense of community also occurs at a more local level, with much of the area being organized into special taxing districts, municipalities, or very active community associations. This section specifically addresses people needs, public facilities, and retail needs.

This section addresses changing public facility needs of the B-CC area, as summarized in the following recommendations:

1. Use closed schools as flexible resources to meet a variety of community needs. Also, after hours, open schools are used for recreation, civic, and educational purposes.
2. Allow communities to adopt local green spaces where they are willing to maintain such properties.

The way we meet the special needs of the elderly and for child day care also relates to our sense of a community that

cares about its residents. **Recommendations for meeting elderly and child care needs include:**

1. Support additional daytime senior centers and home improvement assistance to the elderly.
2. Support provision of both residential and employment based child care services.

The Plan supports provision of community and neighborhood retail services and encourages the renovation of community-scale shopping areas to include public use spaces, better pedestrian access, and improved design guidelines.

Historic Resources

Numerous historic resources exist in Bethesda-Chevy Chase, including several which are on the National Register of Historic Places. There are 12 sites currently on the County's *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, 19 additional sites designated as part of the planning effort, and 9 removed from the *Locational Atlas*. Additional resources may be recommended for evaluation for potential historic designation in the future.