

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING APPROACH



GENERAL CONCERNS AND ISSUES

The following section is a distillation of the major concerns and issues in the Westbard area. An overall approach is recommended in a later section (see page 23) which discusses how individual design concepts address each of these issues.

The Westbard area is a complex, mixed-use activity center which presents the community with a multitude of urban problems. The problems include traffic impediments, dilapidated industrial buildings, insufficient parking, noise, visual clutter, and a host of other shortcomings. However, in order to focus attention on the most serious of these planning concerns, the following is a statement of those issues believed to have the most serious effect upon the well-being of the Westbard area and the surrounding residential communities and which can be satisfactorily resolved (see Major Issues map, Figure 4, page 15).

1. Growth in Through Traffic

Estimates prepared by the Transportation Planning staff indicate that something on the order of 200 additional peak-hour trips would pass through the River/Ridgefield Road intersection and about 300 such trips could adversely affect the River Road/Little Falls Parkway intersection over the next ten years. The foregoing assumes full Metrorail operation and a high level of Metrobus and Ride-on bus service. In general, the entire corridor is congested, particularly during peak traffic hours, largely due to commuter traffic passing through the area.

The Transportation chapter reveals that the approach roadways do have ample capacity and can handle

the anticipated volumes noted above. However, the two River Road intersections within Westbard are operating at a level of congestion that is undesirable. Therefore, in order to accommodate additional internal development, some policy for dealing with through traffic should be devised.

2. Intersection Overloads

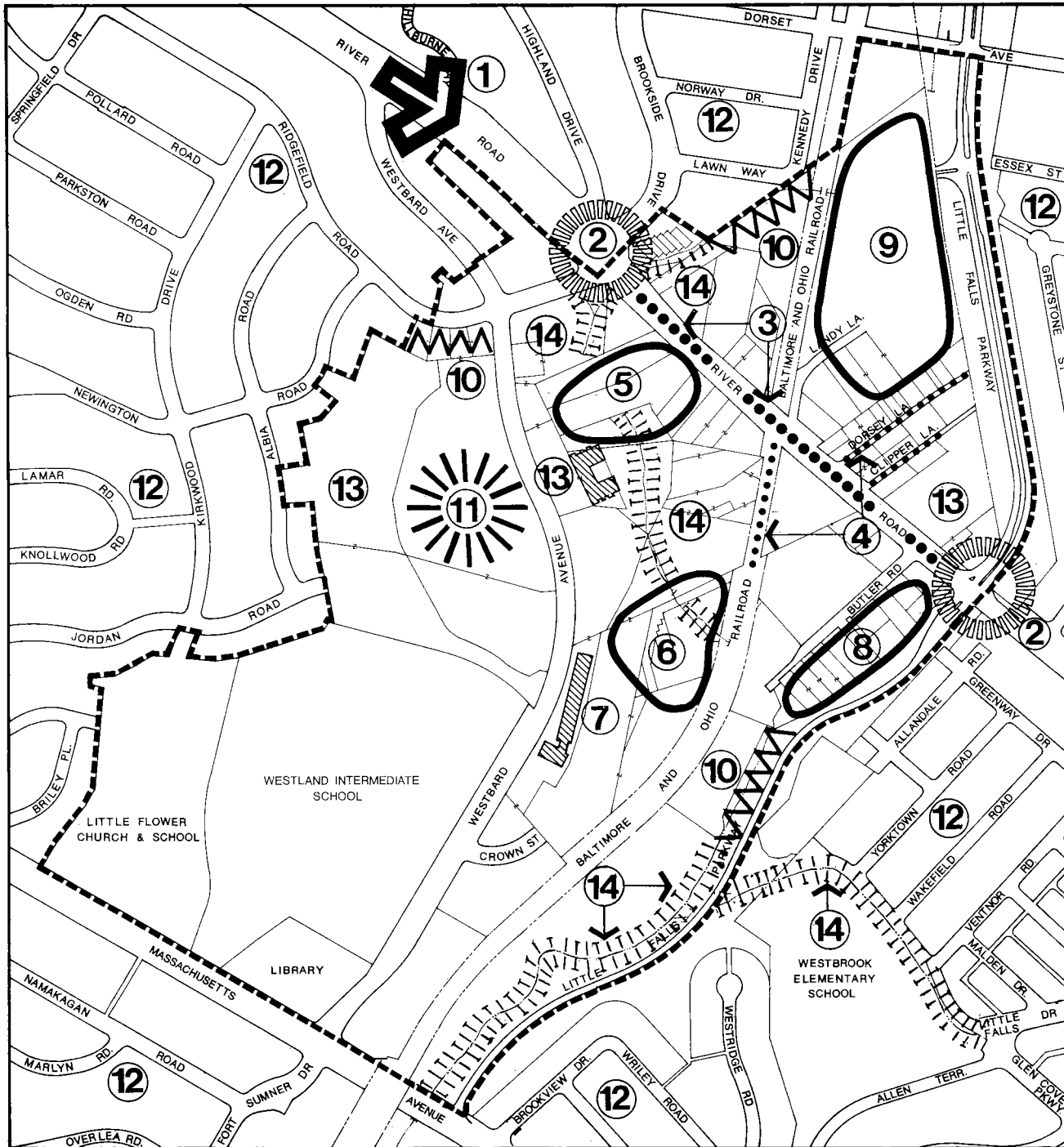
As noted in the Transportation chapter, the River Road intersections at Ridgefield Road and Little Falls Parkway are operating at high levels of congestion. These result in inconvenience and delay not only to the automobile commuters, but also to employees and patrons of businesses in the Westbard sector as well as residents of adjoining neighborhoods who must use River Road and/or Little Falls Parkway.

Choosing to make no improvements might deter new traffic from entering the Westbard area. Such new traffic may choose to use other routes, resulting in longer trips. The pressure to use local streets would also increase.

Some increased delay would result in and aggravate air pollution hot spots. Idling engines of cars which must wait through several traffic light cycles are a source of carbon monoxide (CO) emissions, particularly during the winter months when engines are cold. Improving the intersections to allow freer movement of traffic would have a beneficial effect on air quality by reducing the CO emissions.

3. Uncontrolled Left Turns

Some of the congestion along River Road can be attributed to the presence of numerous entrances and driveways on individual properties, which are entered by cars and trucks making left turns from opposite sides of the road. River Road is striped with a left-turn lane through the Westbard area so that there is a haven for



MAJOR ISSUES

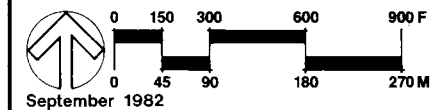
----- Sector Plan Boundary

- ① Growth in Through Traffic
(See page 23)
- ② Intersection Overloads
(See page 25)
- ③ Left Turn Across Traffic
(See page 25)
- ④ Substandard Streets
(See page 25)
- ⑤ Uncertainty of Use
(See page 26)
- ⑥ Substandard Industry
(See page 26)
- ⑦ High Level of Occupancy
(See page 27)
- ⑧ Inefficient, Mixed Use
(See page 27)
- ⑨ Redevelopment Potential
(See page 28)
- ⑩ Need for Buffer
(See page 28)
- ⑪ Retail Market Pressures
(See page 29)
- ⑫ Neighborhood Protection
(See page 29)
- ⑬ Inappropriate Zones
(See page 29)
- ⑭ Stream Protection
(See page 30)

Figure 4

WESTBARD SECTOR PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland



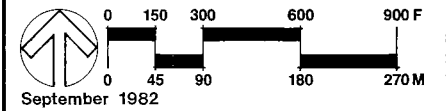
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PROPERTIES MOST LIKELY TO REDEVELOP

----- Sector Plan Boundary

Figure 5
WESTBARD SECTOR PLAN
 Montgomery County, Maryland

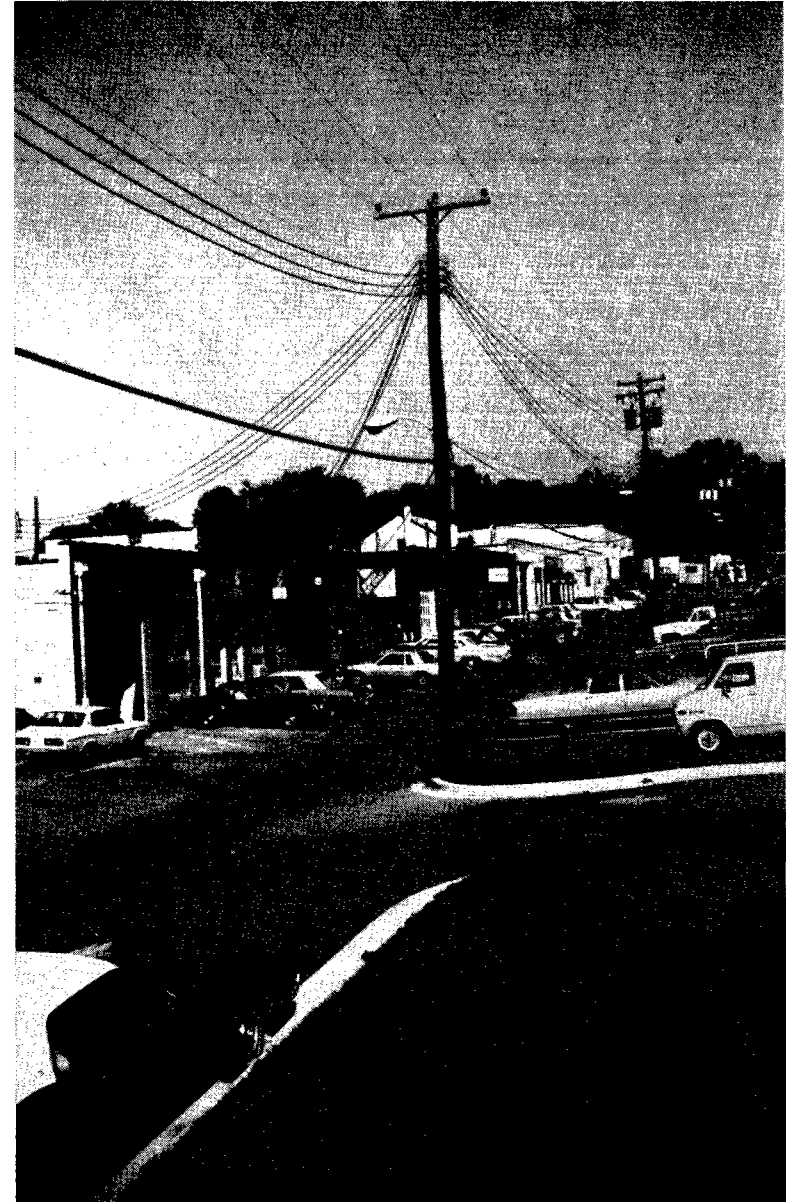


vehicles waiting to make the left turn, thereby minimizing the friction caused by such movements. However, problems do occur where cars are queued to make left turns at the main intersections. The left-turn lane was created from the inside lane on the west of the centerline. Therefore, when the west curb lane is obstructed by a vehicle, there is only one inbound moving lane available. Another consequence of the way in which the road operates is the difficulty faced by pedestrians seeking to negotiate a crossing.

4. Substandard Streets

With the exception of Landy Lane, which is maintained by the County, all of the interior streets are private. They are dead-end roads with narrow, substandard traveled ways. These streets were developed a number of years ago before road and subdivision standards were established. A number of properties are reachable only by such private streets or easements. This can be a nuisance to many establishments, particularly when tractor-trailers are not able to turn around, which is the case for Dorsey and Clipper Lanes. The question here might be whether this condition is more than a private irritation or whether there is a public interest involved. Butler Road serves more businesses and generates more traffic than other local streets.

Greater yet is the problem of access south of River Road to WDCA (TV Channel 20 broadcast studios), the C&P Telephone Company, and the other uses along a rutted, unpaved private road parallel to the railroad. The scale of activity here might justify a County improvement parallel to the railroad right-of-way. North of River Road a number of enterprises are also next to the railroad. Landy Lane serves several of these east of the railroad; others use a private easement west of the tracks. Construction of a single





roadway here would control traffic movements more effectively.

5. Uncertainty of Use

Some of the commercial properties along River Road, particularly on the south side, are presently underutilized. While the present zoning pattern on certain properties would inhibit full commercial redevelopment, some portions of such properties are in the Heavy Industrial (I-2) Zone. The uncertainties posed by these properties need to be resolved through appropriate rezoning.

6. Substandard Industrial Area

This is the area composed of contractors' yards, auto body repair and salvage businesses. Many of the buildings are substandard, lots are too small, parking is insufficient,

access is difficult, and the entire area is untidy and unsightly.

7. Over-Occupancy

The Westwood Building on Westbard Avenue contains 315,000 square feet of gross floor area, providing space for 1,850 employees of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The occupancy rate (5.9 employees per 1,000 square feet) is somewhat higher than for a normal office building. Additional offices are located in the nearby Westwood Towers. Westwood Towers was built as a combination office and apartment building, but over the years some of the apartments have been leased for office occupancy. These buildings add to the peak-hour traffic problems in the area. Although the parking lots meet the present standards of the Zoning Ordinance, the lots are frequently filled, due to the higher than normal occupancy level of the buildings.

8. Mixed and Inefficient Use

The Butler Road establishments range from a carry-out food shop on River Road to a pest control shop on Butler Street. The present use make inefficient use of their sites, parking is in short supply, and the area is somewhat unsightly. The question here is whether the properties should be assembled and upgraded to some other acceptable use.

The existing land uses and buildings are a helter-skelter complex of disjointed elements. The juxtaposition of industrial, warehousing, residential and retail uses is eclectic and disorganized. (See the Existing Land Use map.) Many of the uses and densities would not be permitted today under current regulations regarding height, parking standards, subdivision regulations, density, and setback requirements. Prior rezonings seem to have occurred without due regard for compatibility with neighboring uses. Problems have arisen because of loosely drawn zoning regulations and standards that prevailed until recently. Thus, several high-density office buildings generate high employment concentrations and impinge upon limited parking and street capacity.

Many parcels provide the required parking for development on other parcels. Their redevelopment may affect the functioning and legal status of the existing buildings they now serve.

The visual clutter and lack of amenities represents another major area of concern. Extensive areas of paved parking are poorly screened. Many of the industrial and commercial structures also detract from the appearance of the Westbard community. The number of signs competing for attention along River Road, utility poles and wires and the paucity of landscaping, combine to create visual "noise."

9. Redevelopment Potential

Parcels were examined as to their potential for redevelopment. Redevelopment of some properties is expected because they are underutilized, have deteriorating structures, or have buildings that have outlived their economic or functional utility. Vacant redevelopable tracts and properties which could be assembled are also considered buildable. Those properties which appear to be economically redevelopable within the near future are identified on the map entitled "Parcels Most Likely to Redevelop."

Newer structures and existing large buildings are assumed to be permanent. Some changes in use and occupancy could occur at this time, particularly on parcels which have residential development on commercially zoned land. Those structures that are expected to remain permanent features of the area include the Westwood Building, 4501 Westbard Avenue, Kenwood Place, the Kenwood, Kenwood Professional Building, Kenwood House, Westwood Retirement Center, Westwood Shopping Center and several other office and retail buildings.

At present, there are several impediments to redevelopment in the area. The extent of commercial and industrial zoning now inhibits more desirable uses. The land areas bisected by the railroad right-of-way have limited potential for change due to their peculiar shape and lack of access other than via the existing easements parallel to the railroad tracks.

The declivity which carries Willett Branch stream through the heart of the commercial and industrial land prevents the unification and interconnection of properties. It has been partly enclosed in a culvert but most of it remains as an open, physical bisector of the area. Because of the depth and steepness of the banks, it cannot

be recaptured and improved as a natural feature.

The 11-acre Abensohn site was, until recently, the national headquarters of the Marriott Corporation. The former offices and storage buildings are, in part, leased to various short-term tenants. The expectation is that the present owner will demolish all or most of the present buildings and redevelop the entire tract. The present zoning is Heavy Industrial (I-2) which probably minimizes the return on investment which the owners realize. Of concern to the general public, are the highly inappropriate uses allowed in the I-2 Zone. The site is rather visible from both the Kenwood and the Somerset communities. The south part of the tract abuts existing sound, light-industrial, laboratory and storage buildings. Therefore, any reuse of the site should present an attractive appearance to the surrounding areas yet be able to fit in with the older, functioning light-industrial area.

10. Need to Improve Buffers

For the most part, the uses and improvements in the areas around the perimeter of the Westbard sector do make effective transitions between the industrial/commercial areas and the surrounding single-family neighborhoods. In addition to the concerns noted above under "Redevelopment Potential," there are, however, several areas which appear to be issues. One is the BETCO concrete block plant which intrudes upon the Willett Branch stream and presents an unsightly appearance along Little Falls Parkway.

Another "window" around the edge is the landscaped area on Ridgefield Road just to the north of the Westwood Shopping Center. Should this privately-owned tract be converted to some other use (such as single-family residences for which it is zoned), the new development would immediately abut the shopping center parking lot.

A possible third area of concern is the boundary between the Microbiological Laboratory and the adjacent houses in Kenwood fronting on Brookside Drive and Lawn Way. The channelized Willett Branch forms the separation between the two uses. That separation should probably be strengthened to diminish any unsightliness at the rear of the industries.

11. Growth in Retail Market

Residents in the vicinity of the Westbard area are reasonably well served, not only by the Westwood Shopping Center but by other convenience shopping outlets such as the Arlington/Bradley commercial area, and in Friendship Heights and Bethesda. However, the network of shopping facilities to the north and west is more limited. The next nearest neighborhood center is at Potomac Village at River and Falls Roads, nine miles to the northwest.

Some of the shopping needs of the intervening growth area in Potomac-Cabin John and West Bethesda doubtless can be met by the neighborhood shopping centers at Georgetown Square/Wildwood and the Cabin John Center on Seven Locks Road and Tuckerman Lane. With no new shopping outlets, the new population growth is certain to exert an additional retail market force in the Westbard area.

Already, a new retail/office building is being built on the former parking lot on Ridgefield Road between Westbard Avenue and River Road. A particular concern is the fact that allowable development under the available commercial zones is more intense than would be suitable. The C-2 (General Commercial) and the C-3 (Highway Commercial) Zones each allow development up to a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.5. The C-1 Zone does not have an FAR limit--the height and setback are the limiting dimensions.

Commercial zoning is the most logical choice for

the properties along River Road. The dilemma is that none of the existing zones is sufficiently limited in scale so as to prevent development, which cannot be accommodated by facilities proposed for the area. Because of this, the County Council has adopted a new Limited Commercial (C-4) Zone.

12. Neighborhood Protection

Parks and institutional uses are important stabilizing features protecting against expansion of the commercial/industrial activities toward surrounding high-quality neighborhoods. Neighborhood preservation must be a foremost consideration in the Sector Plan.

Apart from ensuring that the uses at the perimeter of the Westbard sector are compatible, there are other concerns about adverse influences in the adjoining areas. One is a matter of cut-through traffic. Another is the possibility of overflow parking by employees in the area. A third concern is that of noise emanating from the commercial/industrial area. Finally, the lack of pedestrian walkways to and from shopping areas, office buildings and apartments poses both hazards and inconveniences.

13. Inappropriate Zones

Over the years, since the early development of Westbard, the provisions in the Zoning Ordinance have changed significantly. Thus, many buildings that did conform with the Zoning Ordinance at the time they were built are no longer in conformance. Examples are the Kenwood Condominiums and the Westwood Towers and Building, plus the various light industry uses located in the Heavy Industrial (I-2) Zone.

14. Environmental Protection

An Environmental Analysis, contained as Appendix

A, details the nature of pollution in Willett Branch and Little Falls Branch. Failing sanitary sewer lines in upstream urban areas account for some of the problem. Stormwater runoff carries many urban wastes into the streams: petroleum products, fertilizers, pesticides, road salt, animal wastes, litter, and other matter. Excavation and grading for new development could result in sediment runoff from erosive soils, unless controlled.

Pollution of Willett Branch is apparent from the presence of white foam, discoloration of the water and the bad odor emanating from the stream. Little Falls Branch, which drains from Friendship Heights, has been classified as a "dead stream." Other intrusions include construction materials and cinder block rubble along the stream banks.

Several other kinds of pollution afflict the Westbard area. Noise emanating from heavily traveled arterials and local industries is a source of annoyance and discomfort to area residents and businessmen. Noise levels are often sufficiently high that they interfere with normal work and conversation. Ambient air quality in Westbard, as with other lower County areas, includes significant amounts of hydrocarbons and photo-chemical oxidants, much of which is produced elsewhere in the Metropolitan area. Heavy traffic volumes may produce excessive carbon monoxide concentrations at the major intersections. Some of the industrial uses in Westbard may also contribute to local air pollution.

GOALS AND GUIDELINES

Residential - The character of the surrounding single-family residential development should be preserved and enhanced by appropriate buffers and traffic controls and/or installations. Multi-family residential structures in Westbard should be protected and the quality of life for residents improved. Additional multi-family residential development within the Sector Plan boundary is accept-

able wherever little or no conflict with commercial and industrial uses would be expected.

Commercial - In view of the fact that all areas surrounding Westbard are committed to stable single-family or townhouse uses, parkland, schools, or churches, there should be no further expansion of the activity center nor any merging with the Friendship Heights, Bradley Boulevard, or Bethesda commercial districts. Local commercial services in Westbard should be preserved and improved to increase their attractiveness as well as their convenience and accessibility to the public.

Industrial - The proximity of existing industrial uses to residences implies that there will continue to be some unavoidable conflict between them. The importance of these goods and services to the proper functioning and welfare of the community must be weighed against the appropriateness of their location in a residential area.

Industrial uses should be buffered to prevent or limit adverse impacts on surrounding uses. Where new development is proposed, maximum use should be made of the natural environment, such as terrain and flora, to prevent the intrusion of industrial uses and to avoid mutual conflicts.

Existing industrial uses, which are suppliers of necessary goods and services to this lower County area, should be protected to minimize costs of distribution and to avoid lengthy travel from elsewhere. For example, a fuel oil distributor serves numerous customers in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area and consumes fewer vehicle-miles of travel because of the location of the oil storage tanks in the Westbard area. Auto repair, furniture storage, service and distribution facilities are examples of other industrial uses able to serve this

lower County area because of their convenient locations in Westbard. However, areas devoted to heavy-industrial purposes should be stabilized or decreased. To the maximum extent possible, their adverse impacts on surrounding neighborhoods should be diminished. Should redevelopment occur, conversion to more compatible uses should be considered.

Much of the present heavy-industrial zoned area should be reclassified to the light-industrial category (I-1). However, because the Westbard area is not suitable for large employment centers, the redevelopment of both I-1 and C-O zoned properties should be limited to the standard method of development which allows building heights no greater than three stories.

Transportation - The walkway, roadway, and traffic management systems should provide for improved access to commercial and industrial parcels with a minimum of conflict and delay. Substandard existing roadways should be improved wherever possible to smooth the flow of two-way traffic. New roadways may be needed to enhance access to certain properties.

The B&O Railroad right-of-way should be considered as a means of access from River Road to interior properties as an alternative to existing substandard roadways. If the use of the B&O Railroad right-of-way proves to be impractical or insufficient, then some or all of the right-of-way for a roadway should be obtained from adjoining landowners.

The Man-Made Environment - The appearance of the area as a whole and the inter-relationship among buildings should be improved. Suitable buffers between incompatible uses should be planned. Pedestrian amenities should be planned, particularly separation between pedestrians and vehicles, as well as mini-parks, plazas, protected

walkways, and planted areas.

The Natural Environment - Redevelopment should not result in any increased storm runoff, water, air or noise pollution in excess of that noise presently generated. To the extent that impacts can be measured and controlled, redevelopment should result in improvement to the environment. Runoff to Willett Branch should be reduced, if possible, and the stream could be protected by walling, fencing or closing-in at certain locations to reduce the amount of trash and litter reaching the stream. However, no stream enclosure should be permitted if it results in increasing upstream flooding or an excessive increase of downstream water velocity. Where an open channel remains, a suitable vegetative buffer should be established within the 100-year floodplain and on adjacent slopes steeper than a 15 percent gradient. Under County subdivision practices, buildings must be at least 25 feet from the 100 year floodplain.

DESIGN CONCEPT

This section outlines general proposals for dealing with the issues identified in the preceding section. These concepts are a distillation of more expansive discussions contained in the Land Use and Transportation chapters.

The design concepts are intended to treat only the more important issues and problems of the Westbard area. For certain problems, the plan makes no recommendations if logical and corrective actions are not feasible. Such conclusions are reached whenever the public benefits are not justified by the costs, where private interests are the sole beneficiaries, or where there are practical, physical, or social impediments to a solution. The essence of the planning process is to achieve those improvements which have clear and

substantial benefits to the general public, are cost-effective, and for which there is, or can be, legal authority. At the same time, the process recognizes that not all problems or irritations of urban living can be eradicated through government action.

The following, therefore, are suggested approaches toward addressing each of the main points identified under the issues section. They are graphically illustrated on the accompanying Design Concepts Map. (Figure 6 , page 24).

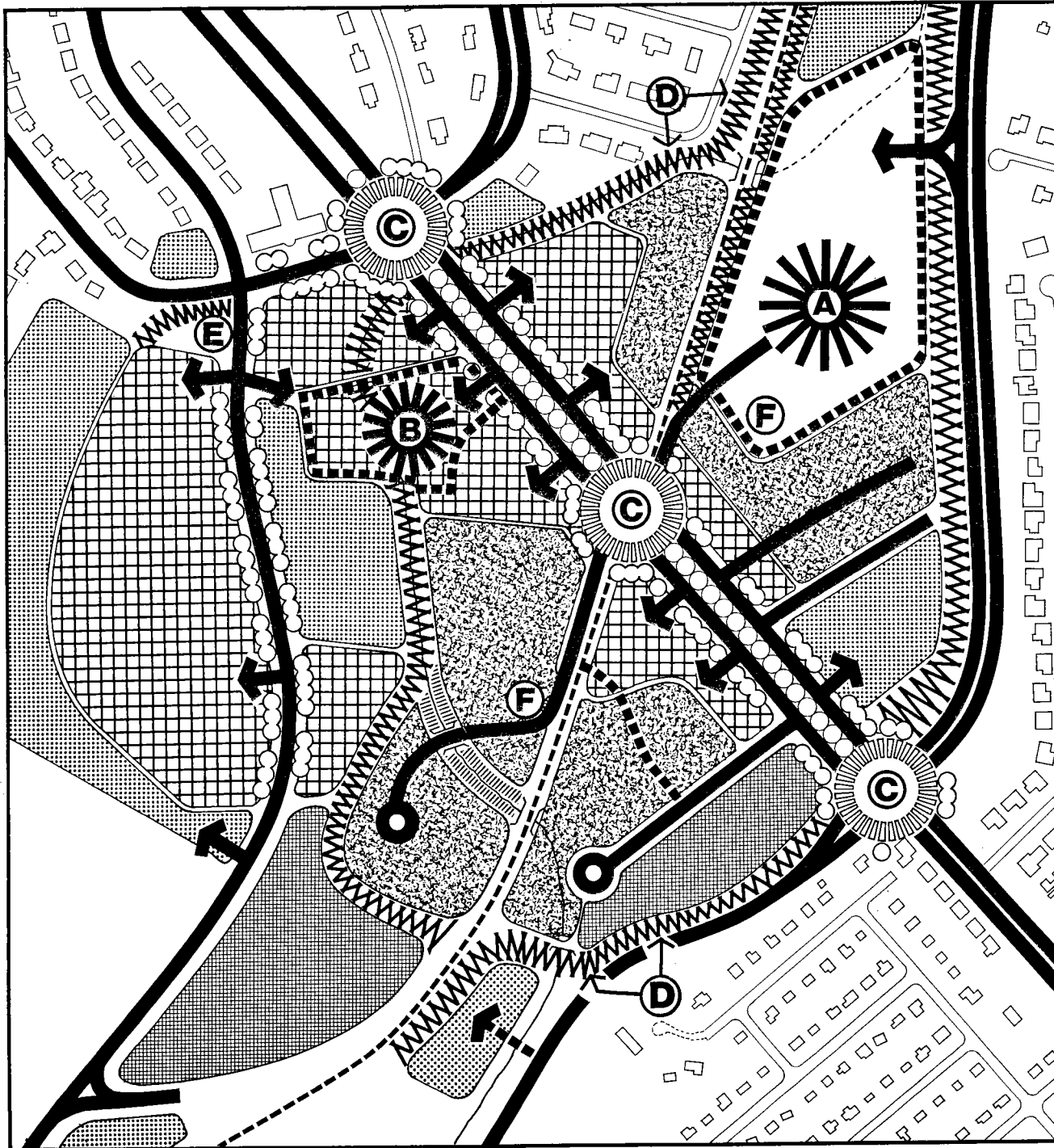
1. Growth in Through Traffic

Part of the problem is that the four-lane divided section of River Road, which extends from the Capital Beltway, meets its first major obstruction at Westbard. The capacity for high volumes of traffic is suddenly throttled down when it meets the two main intersections in Westbard each of which has large volumes of cross-traffic; the raised median disappears at this point and the roadway narrows.

The Westbard Sector Plan recognizes that planned development in the West Bethesda and Potomac areas will result in an increase in through traffic on River Road. The Plan makes some reasonable accommodation to through traffic so as to ease the situation both for externally and internally originating traffic.

Several of the residential communities, with the cooperation of State and County transportation agencies, have attempted to curtail cut-through commuter traffic in the neighborhoods by various traffic control measures. The obvious effect is the diversion of such trips back to the major roadways. Therefore, if the traffic diversion efforts as a whole are to succeed, some reasonable accommodation must be made for such trips on the main roads.

The concept of the Sector Plan to provide some limited additional capacity on River Road in order to



DESIGN CONCEPT













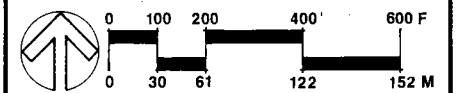
-  Multi-Family Residential
-  Commercial / Retail
-  Office
-  Industrial
-  **A** Mixed Use Planned Development
-  **B** Major Commercial/Retail Development
-  **C** Urban Boulevard and Gateways Concept
-  Street Trees and Sidewalk Amenities
-  **D** Stream Protection and Buffering Program
-  Landscaping and Screening
-  Stream Protection and/or Enclosure
-  **E** Urban Park
-  **F** Improved Roadways

Figure 6
WESTBARD SECTOR PLAN
 Montgomery County, Maryland



September 1982

accommodate through trips more effectively. The specific means for doing so are presented in the following two items dealing with intersection treatment and midblock left turns.

2. Intersection Overloads

A principal method for improving traffic capacity on River Road would be to ease conditions at the intersections with Ridgefield Road and the Little Falls Parkway. As discussed in the Transportation chapter, a number of alternatives are presented for the improvement of River Road. The recommendation is essentially to retain the present pavement width on River Road through the Westbard area. Intersection improvements should provide sufficient traffic capacity to improve operations and levels of service and to minimize the impact of additional development.

3. Left Turns Across Traffic

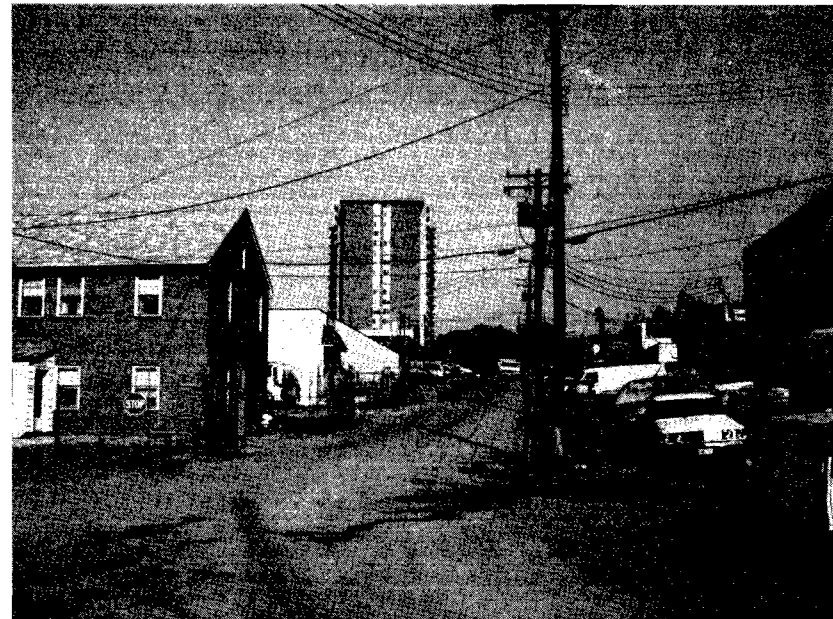
The choices for dealing with this issue are also noted in the Transportation chapter. The ultimate solution would be to install a raised median and compel left turns to be accomplished by making U-turns at the designated intersections and doubling back to make direct right turns to the individual properties fronting on River Road. While this would expedite the flow of through traffic, it would be costly, require additional right-of-way, reduce the opportunity for sidewalks, and inconvenience some of the businesses.

The present traffic lanes provide for a continuous left-turn lane that allows left turns at any point. This favors the local needs at the expense of through movements as there are only two moving inbound lanes which are reduced to one whenever parking occurs on the outside lane. This condition becomes critical in the

morning peak hour. After considering the alternatives and weighing comments of citizens and businessmen, the conclusion is to favor local needs and retain the midblock left-turn lane.

4. Substandard Streets

Dorsey and Clipper Lanes and Butler Road are substandard streets which are inconvenient for the properties which they serve. However, the streets are private and deadends and therefore are not problems for the public-at-large. While they could be made to function better (e.g., widening Dorsey and Clipper Lanes and making a loop connection between them), and their intersections with River Road improved, the cost and disruption to adjoining properties in doing so would not be justified.





Because of the greater number and extent of the businesses and the significant numbers of employees and visitors along the railroad south of River Road, access to that area does have a larger public interest. It is therefore suggested that an improved roadway be developed. Such a new roadway could share the railroad right-of-way with the tracks to be located in the street pavement. The key to such a project would be the willingness of the railroad to accede to such an improvement. However, if the County were to construct and maintain a roadway, a separated right-of-way would have to be obtained from the properties fronting on the railroad.

To the north of River Road, a similar recommendation is made in order to combine entrances at a single point that could be signal controlled. A suitable intersection design could be developed using the railroad right-of-way. Alternatively, existing Landy Lane could be linked across the tracks to the industries on the west side of the railroad in order to achieve a single entry off River Road.

5. Uncertainty of Use

Most of the properties along River Road are suitable for general commercial or highway commercial use. The main fault of the existing zones is that they allow too great a density (1.5 FAR) and too broad a range of uses. Several alternative remedies were considered, as discussed in detail in the Implementation chapter. The objective is to allow new development under appropriate controls not previously available in the Zoning Ordinance so as to limit the intensity and range of uses. Accordingly, a new Limited Commercial (C-4) zone was adopted so that it could be applied as part of the comprehensive rezoning recommended by this Sector Plan.

6. Substandard Industrial Area

If this area were exposed to public view, it would be a matter of grave concern calling, perhaps, for public redevelopment action. However, it is shielded from the sight of all but the occupants of the several high-rise buildings. The advantage is that the low cost of these properties helps to keep down the prices charged to customers of the auto body and repair shops. These industrial uses are unique to the down-county area and are useful from an energy and planning perspective. The present uses may remain but because many of the uses in the present I-2 zone are objectionable, any redevelopment should be in accord with the standards of the I-2 zone. Therefore, the only suggested public involvement would be to extend an improved roadway as mentioned under "Substandard Streets" above. The Light-Industrial (I-1) zone is consistent with the present uses and is also appropriate for future development in this area.

7. Over-Occupancy

While recognizing the problem that is posed by the high level of occupancy in the Westwood Building, the regulatory powers of the County cannot provide relief. The building is leased by the General Services Administration (GSA) and is occupied by elements of the National Institutes of Health. NIH occupies other private rental facilities in the Bethesda and Silver Spring CBD's. In order to achieve operating efficiencies, NIH is now undertaking a study seeking to consolidate such elements into a single location at a transit station somewhere along the Shady Grove Metroline.

The eventual relocation of NIH from the Westwood Building and its reoccupation by private office tenants will probably result in a somewhat lower occupancy and, therefore, a reduction in the traffic problem. Although new federally-owned facilities are subject to mandatory review by the Planning Board and the National Capital Planning Commission, government rental facilities are not. To forestall other similar problems as posed by the Westwood Building, it is recommended that the National Capital Planning Act be amended to bring government-rented facilities under the review procedures.

The current mix of office and residential uses in the Westwood Towers building appears to be appropriate. In order to preserve this mix and prevent further conversion to office use, the building should be rezoned to R-10 (Multiple-family, high density residential).

8. Mixed-Use and Inefficient Use

Ultimately, the area along Butler Road should be converted to moderate-intensity office use through action of the private market. At the same time, the present establishments should not be inhibited from making



improvements and, therefore, they should not be placed in any zoning category that would result in their becoming nonconforming. Both objectives can be achieved under the recommendation here for a Light Industrial Zone (I-1); all present uses would be conforming and conversion to office use would be permitted.

9. Redevelopment Potential

The former Marriott property functioned reasonably well with respect to the surrounding areas. The uses and intensities permitted by the present I-2 Zone, however, are inappropriate. New development must be compatible with surrounding uses and existing traffic constraints.

The Plan recommends that the north end of the property be converted to multi-family use with varying building heights. The south end of the tract should serve as a transition with the adjoining light-industrial uses along Dorsey Lane. That transition could be either moderate office, laboratory or research use. The recommended approach is to authorize a Planned Development (PD) Zone which basically allows for residential use, but which also permits commercial and industrial uses whenever specified in a master plan. This would require approval of a development plan at the time of rezoning. The PD Zone is a floating zone which must be applied for by the owner.

The Plan recommends the PD-28 Zone, recognizing that the density finally approved in a development plan might be less than 28 units to the acre. In addition to a maximum of 353 residential units, the plan would allow office and/or laboratory/research facilities at the south end of the site. Convenience retail to meet the needs of the residents and employees would also be permitted. The purpose is to keep the impact of new development to approximately the same level as the former Marriott operations, with allowance for the

offsetting effects of public transit and intersection improvements.

Granting of the PD Zone should impose operating conditions on the nonresidential uses. Staggered work hours, reserved parking for carpoolers and vanpoolers, and employer-subsized transit fares are among the conditions that might be imposed with the granting of the zone. Because the PD zone is a floating zone that must be applied for by the owner, it cannot be imposed as part of a comprehensive rezoning of the area. Therefore, Commercial Office building zone (C-O) is recommended to be applied to the south part of the tract. If the C-O zoned area is developed separately without applying for the PD zone, the optional method of development of the C-O zone is not permitted by this Sector Plan because it would generate more vehicular trips than are acceptable.

The site has entrances on both Little Falls Parkway and River Road (via Landy Lane). Thus, through traffic has the opportunity to drive through the property and avoid the intersection at Little Falls Parkway and River Road. In spite of adding capacity to this intersection, through traffic can be disruptive to the site occupants. The occupants should retain the choice of entry in order to minimize length of travel and double-hauling through the intersection. Therefore, it is suggested that through travel by outsiders be inhibited by the interior design and operation of the property, while allowing for passage of emergency and service vehicles.

10. Need to Improve Buffers

The perimeter transition can be strengthened at several identified vulnerable points. The BETCO concrete block plant should be screened from view. Should the plant go out of operation, redevelopment should be limited to light industrial. Redevelopment in townhouses should be allowed, provided a separate entrance can be achieved on Little Falls Parkway.

The site on Ridgefield Road north of the Westbard Shopping Center is recommended as a possible urban park, subject to the Planning Board's financial ability to purchase, develop, and maintain. The stream bank at the rear of the Microbiological Laboratory should be fenced or landscaped to enhance the visual separation. This could be a cooperative venture between the homeowners and the industry.

11. Growth in Retail Market

The possible pressures for expanding the convenience/commercial component has been forestalled in large measure by the recommendations under "Uncertainty of Use" (see page 26) for a limited commercial zone. However, more intensive patronage of the existing Westbard Shopping Center is a strong likelihood in view of the fact that growth of neighborhood retail facilities will not keep pace with residential growth in the Potomac Valley area. The proposed limited commercial zone along River Road should protect against any major new retail establishment.

Increased patronage could aggravate the present conflicts between pedestrians and motorists along the interior roadway that flanks the west side of the Westwood Shopping Center. One solution would be to install a pedestrian island extending out from the building into the parking lot. This would allow for parcel pickup next to the building, but it would interrupt through movements, in the interest of pedestrian safety. A less costly and less effective alternate solution would be to install speed bumps in the present roadway.

12. Neighborhood Protection

As identified in the issues statement, this item deals with traffic, parking, and noise as they affect the

residential neighborhoods. The issue of cut-through commuter traffic in the Somerset and Kenwood areas has been dealt with, at least in part, by traffic controls. The Sector Plan supports the extension of such controls, provided they don't create greater problems. As suggested earlier, one way to ensure their workability is to make sure that the major roads are capable of absorbing trips that are no longer diverted through residential areas.

Spillover parking within neighborhoods does not appear to pose any major problems at the moment. Should problems arise, the use of two-hour parking limits and the creation of residential parking permit districts are available remedies.

Some noise problems are reported to affect nearby residents. The early-hour trash pickups should be disallowed by any of the contractors operating under County permit. Truck-traffic noise should be attenuated by screening and fencing whenever redevelopment occurs. New, sound-deadening asphalt pavement has been successfully used in the County and should be used for any future resurfacing projects, especially on River Road.

Pedestrian circulation should be improved and made less hazardous by providing walkways where gaps now exist. A current County program to install a sidewalk on the north side of River Road is scheduled to be started during Fiscal Year 1983. Traffic controls should be adjusted to be more convenient and safe for pedestrians, e.g., reconsideration of free right turns and walk cycles on the pedestrian signals. If intersections are improved, short medians should be installed to provide pedestrian havens.

13. Inappropriate Zones

The Zoning Plan (see Map, page 59) attempts to place existing sound development into suitable zones to minimize the problems of nonconformance and also to forestall conversion to inappropriate uses now possible

under existing zones. Examples are the Kenwood Condominium, Kenwood Place Apartments, and the Westwood Towers which are recommended to be placed in residential zones instead of the existing commercial zones. The existing high-rises exceed the densities allowed in the R-10 Zone, which is the one multi-family zone that most nearly fits that situation. A grandfather clause in the Zoning Ordinance exempts the buildings from nonconforming status, but the recommended zone will prevent unwarranted conversions to office and/or retail uses.

14. Stream Protection

The current program of rehabilitation and replacement of sanitary trunk sewers was recently completed. Pollutants carried by stormwater runoff should be reduced by the practices listed in Appendix A. Where possible, vegetative buffers should be established along open channel sections to include the 100 year floodplain and slopes of 15 percent or greater.