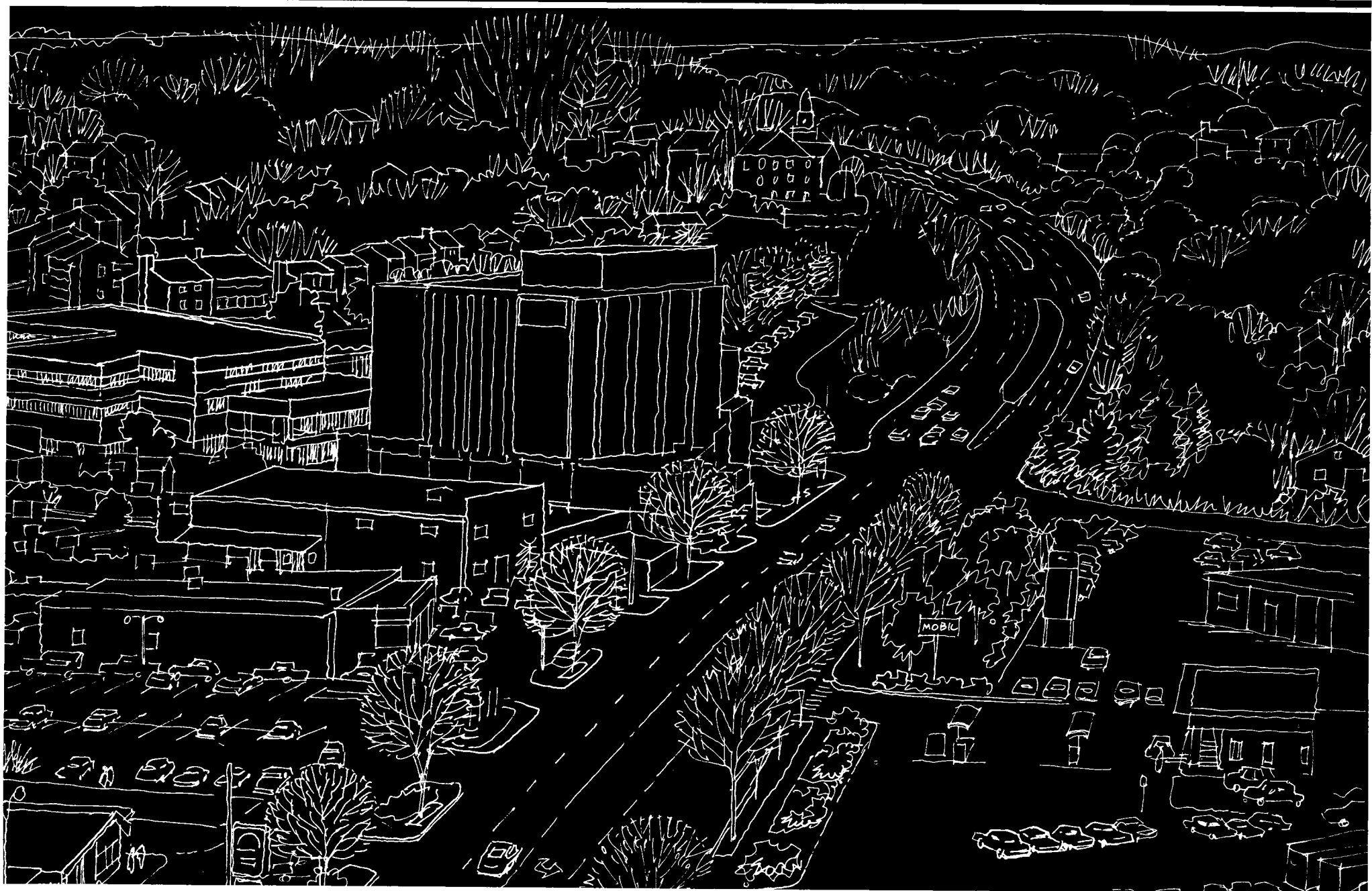


# AREA PROFILE



## INTRODUCTION

Montgomery County guides its growth through a comprehensive land use planning program to assure orderly, efficient, safe and effective use of the land. Planning should balance growth in harmony with environmental, transportation, housing, and development policies.

The Westbard Sector Plan recommendations are based on an analysis of existing conditions, a review of many different land use and transportation options, a careful look at surrounding uses, and a projection of probable future conditions in the area covered by this Plan.

The Westbard Sector Plan is an amendment to the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan, adopted October 1970, as well as to the General Plan for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District and the Master Plan of the Highways within Montgomery County.

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan recommended that the Westbard area be separated from the Friendship Heights and Bethesda CBD Plans. It also recommended removing heavy-industrial zoning and adding a substantial amount of office development. That plan was not implemented by a comprehensive zoning map amendment.

In recent years, traffic conditions have worsened and the redevelopment of several large parcels is now possible. Westbard contains a variety of land uses and is surrounded by residential and institutional uses, making the compatibility of future changes a matter of concern. The unusual topography and resulting difficulty of development, the lack of adequate access and internal circulation, and the juxtaposition of extremely

varied land uses require a careful examination of this area as we plan its role in the future of this part of Montgomery County.

## DESCRIPTION

Westbard lies in the southwestern part of Montgomery County, approximately one mile from the District of Columbia boundary line. It is less than two miles from the commercial areas of Friendship Heights, Bethesda and several in the District of Columbia. Friendship Heights includes a station on the Metro Rockville Line and has been planned as a mixed use central business district (CBD) with the opportunity for a modest amount of population and commercial growth. Bethesda, also on the Metro line, is recognized as a prominent commercial retail/office complex. The Little Falls Mall is a neighborhood shopping center limited essentially to convenience establishments. All are within the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning Area.

The Westbard area is served by two major northwest to southeast highways: River Road and Massachusetts Avenue. River Road bisects the area and Massachusetts Avenue forms the southwestern boundary. Its close proximity to the other commercial centers and accessibility to Interstate 270 and the Capital Beltway by way of River Road puts Westbard in a prominent location in the region.

The Westbard area is surrounded by well-established, single-family neighborhoods. Over a period of years, the residential uses were built around the commercial/industrial area which extends along River Road and Westbard Avenue. There are several public uses which serve the residential community. These are: the Little Falls Library, the Westland Intermediate School, and the Little Falls Park; all are located in the southern part of the Sector Plan area just north of Massachusetts Avenue.

Land uses are varied in the Westbard area, with retail-commercial uses consuming the greatest land area, followed by industrial uses. Residential uses consume the least amount of land but are among the most visible; two residential high-rises dominate the River Road skyline.

The study area includes both regional and local businesses. Food, drug, hardware, liquor and dry cleaning stores, filling stations and bowling alleys serve the immediate vicinity. Other facilities such as the television studios and transmitter, caterer, auto body and repair shops, and a heating oil distributor serve a larger region.

The area has a number of nonconforming uses, i.e. structures, or uses which were lawful when established but no longer conform to the requirements of the zone because either the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance or the zoning map have changed.

The Westbard Sector Plan study area is approximately 153 acres in size, exclusive of street rights-of-way and the B&O railroad right-of-way. Of that total, about 31 acres are northeast of River Road, while the remaining 122 acres are between River Road and Massachusetts Avenue. Of the 153 acres, 56.5 acres, or 37 percent, are in public use or semi-public use: Little Falls Park, Westland Intermediate School, Little Falls Library and the Little Flower Church and School.

Table I details the uses in Westbard by square footage and percent of total. A detailed parcel-by-parcel breakdown is contained in a separate study, Westbard Development Analysis, April 1982.

In 1977, employment in Westbard was approximately 6,050 persons: 4,000 south of River Road and 2,050 north of River Road (based on Round #2 COG Cooperative Forecasts, April 1979).

Also situated within the study area are 706 residential units including 65 group home units. The 641 standard dwelling units include 71 townhouses, 168

garden apartments and 402 high-rise units. Based upon average occupancy rates, the standard dwelling units generate a population of 983 plus 65 in the group home facility, for a total residential population of 1,048.

Among the natural features in Westbard is the Willett Branch of Little Falls Branch, a stream which is partially enclosed and entirely channelized through the area. Although it is not readily apparent to the passing motorist from River Road, the stream enters a steep-sided declivity with depths to 50 feet. The terrain has been severely altered due to extensive quarrying at the railroad crossing of the stream, in part explaining the irregular topography and odd shaped parcels south of River Road.

## HISTORY

In common with many older communities, Westbard developed along a major transportation corridor. Due to the proximity of the railroad line bisecting the area, Westbard developed initially as an industrial center. In 1892, the B&O Railroad built the Metro Southern Branch (sometimes called the Georgetown Branch) from Linden in Silver Spring through Chevy Chase and Bethesda for seven miles to the District line and thence to Georgetown. The B&O annual report in 1892 states that "... the line will develop some important suburban settlements in the vicinity of Washington, D.C." The line was completed in 1910; however, it never carried any passengers--only building supplies and materials and other freight. It now delivers chemicals to the Dalecarlia water treatment plant at the District line, which is operated by the U.S. Corps of Engineers for the city of Washington, D.C., and delivers coal to a federal steam generating plant.

Major suburban residential development began in the 1920's when the Kennedy-Chamberlin Development Company created the Kenwood Country Club and constructed

expensive detached homes in the adjacent Kenwood subdivision. Residential growth continued through the 1930's and 1940's and accelerated after World War II. The garden apartments and high rise structures reflect

the building boom of the 1960's. The townhouses on Westbard Avenue are the latest addition to the residential stock in the area.

TABLE I  
EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

Use	Building Floor Area (Square Feet)	Percent of Total
Commercial	281,412	14.9
Retail	175,450	9.3
Service	67,108	3.5
Recreation	38,854	2.11
Office	594,346	31.4
Manufacturing	234,116	12.3
Communications	13,110	0.7
Residential	768,000*	40.5
Institutional	3,600	0.2
Total	1,895,584	100.0

\* 641 Dwelling Units plus 65 Group Home Units.

NB - Existing Marriott Development = 137,000 Sq. Ft. Office  
40,000 Sq. Ft. Recreation