

PLAN FRAMEWORK

THE ELEMENTS OF RURAL CHARACTER

The Plan vision is to preserve the character of Sandy Spring/Ashton as an historic rural community. To help achieve this vision, this Plan identifies five elements of rural character which define Sandy Spring/Ashton as a unique rural community. They are: rural open space, rural traditions, rural neighborhoods, rural roads, and rural villages. The following discussion highlights how this Plan proposes continuing these characteristics while accommodating new development.

Rural Open Space

Large areas of cropland, pasture and woodland are currently a great source of pleasure to the community. However, this rural open space is being developed, changing the landscape from rural to suburban. Preserving open space that captures the rural qualities of the area is important and is a major planning concern.

To help maintain a “critical mass” of rural open space, this Plan designates key properties where 75-85 percent of the land should remain open and rural in character and designates 70-75 percent rural open space for other less critical properties. This rural open space is set aside primarily by clustering new development onto a portion of the land and leaving the rest as cropland, pastures, meadows or woodland. Rural open space is used in this Plan to:

Continue the rural landscape south of MD 108 while accommodating new residential development. This is an area where much of the remaining rural landscape still remains intact—and where the greatest development pressure is being felt. Over 200 acres of this land is envisioned as remaining open and rural in perpetuity. Cropland, pastures, and meadow should be framed by edges which capture the rural qualities of the area—such as hedgerows, woodland, or scattered homes.

Provide attractive rural entries along roads leading to Sandy Spring and Ashton village centers. Rural entries separate the village centers from the surrounding more suburban areas of Olney Town Center and Cloverly. These entries are lined with the remaining open land, homes of varied vintage and campus institutions in open settings. Preserving highly visible rural open space in these rural entries helps to maintain the character of the area.

Preserve historic settings of special features and historic resources. This Plan places special attention on protecting the physical settings of special features such as Meeting House Road, The Sandy Spring, and the Norwood and Dellabrooke homesteads. Whether officially designated historic resources or special places or treasured landscape, these places require extensive amounts of open space to preserve their rural setting.

Rural Traditions

Sandy Spring/Ashton is one of the most historic areas in Montgomery County. Early nineteenth century farms that have remained in the same families for generations. The most significant collection of buildings, sites, and farmsteads which typify Sandy Spring/Ashton's rural heritage are located south of MD 108. They include the Sandy Spring Friends Meeting House, built in 1817, and the Friends Community House. The Friends Community House, built in 1858, was the cultural and social center of Sandy Spring and continues today in that same tradition. At the end of Meeting House Road is the original spring from which Sandy Spring obtained its name. More than 200 years after settlement of the area, fresh clear water still flows. The surrounding land has been continuously farmed by the Stabler family since those early days. Other important sites include historic Woodlawn Manor, the Auburn Farm homestead, Harewood, is associated with two prominent Quaker families of the area, the Stablers and Brookes, and more recently with Dean Acheson, a cabinet member for Presidents Truman and Roosevelt.

This assemblage of historic buildings and rural setting embody the cultural, historic and rural traditions of Sandy Spring/Ashton. This is why this Plan places special emphasis on protection and preservation. A rustic trail, the Rural Legacy Trail, following an existing stream and farm road is proposed through this special area. Scenic views from the proposed trail are identified and recommended for protection.

Rural Neighborhoods

Sandy Spring and Ashton began as small village centers surrounded by farmland. Suburban residential patterns have transformed the farmland into large-lot residential development in accord with past master plan recommendations. This Plan proposes an alternative form of development for key remaining acreage in Sandy Spring/Ashton: small clusters of residences, arranged into neighborhoods, surrounded by open space. Residences would be clustered on 15-30 percent of any property and the remaining 70-85 percent of the land would remain open. Although a key benefit of clustering is to preserve rural open space, an equally important feature of clustering is to provide alternatives to large-lot development. The rural neighborhood concept proposed in this Plan requires a variety of lot sizes, includes neighborhood design guidelines, and requires an orientation of lots to central neighborhood open space. The lot sizes could range from 4,000 square feet up to lots of 10 acres or more.

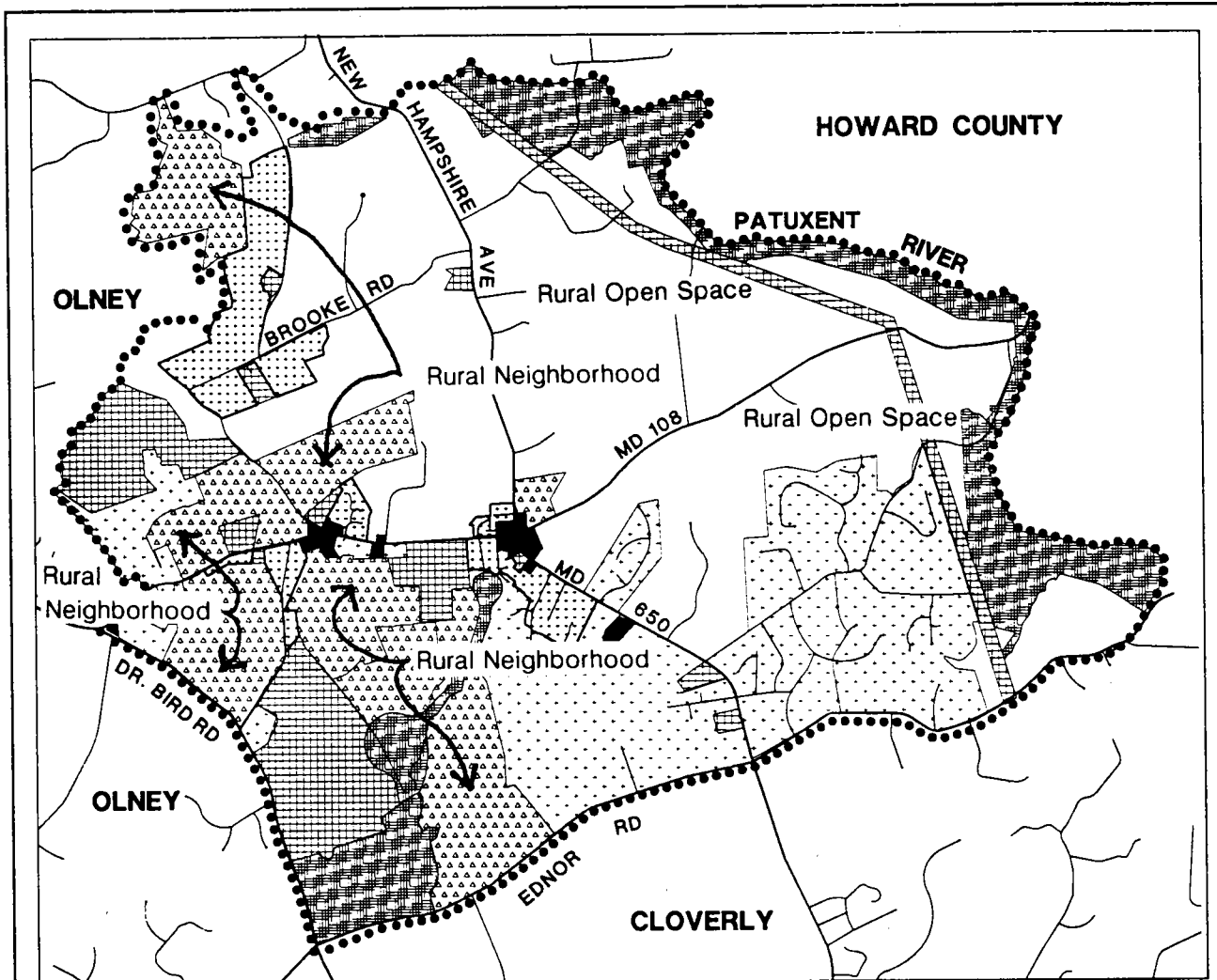
Rural Roads

Road character is particularly important in establishing the area's rural setting and differentiating Sandy Spring/Ashton from neighboring suburban communities. The design of the roadway, the relationship of buildings to the road, and the views experienced contribute to the road character.

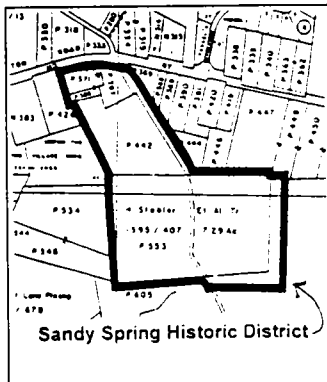
This Plan includes design guidelines for the roads of Sandy Spring/Ashton. The intent of these recommendations is to heighten the sense of arrival to this rural area and preserve the character of the roads. This Plan recommends specific designs for MD 108 and Norwood/Dr. Bird Road and the creation of a new design for neighborhood streets consistent with the rural character of the area.

ELEMENTS OF RURAL CHARACTER

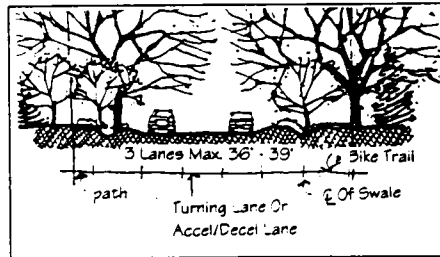
FIGURE 7



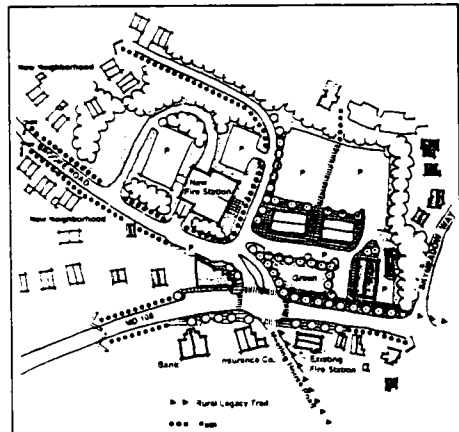
Rural Open Space & Rural Neighborhoods



Rural Traditions



Rural Roads



Rural Village

Rural Villages

Residents of Sandy Spring/Ashton are fortunate to have two village centers where they can meet one another informally while attending to the business of daily life. However, the Sandy Spring village center needs to become more inviting for the entire local community to serve successfully as a true village center. This Plan recommends a concept for the Sandy Spring village center that includes the following elements:

- Development of a new fire station as a community focal point
- Realignment of Brooke Road to improve access
- A village green concept
- Resolution of parking issues