

II. BACKGROUND

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MASTER PLAN AREA

The White Oak Master Plan area contains approximately 6,890 acres, roughly 10.7 square miles and is located in the eastern portion of Montgomery County, Maryland. (See Figure 6, page 3.) The population is approximately 32,000 persons. It is bordered by the Capital Beltway (I-495) to the south, the Northwest Branch to the west, the Paint Branch to the east, and the Intercounty Connector (ICC) right-of-way to the north (see Figure 7, page 7). These boundaries physically separate the White Oak Master Plan area from adjoining master plan communities.

The landmarks that are particular to this Master Plan area include: the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) buildings and dam along the Northwest Branch at US 29, the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC), the Adelphi Laboratory Center (also known as the Harry Diamond Laboratory or the Army Research Laboratory), the White Oak Library, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park, and the Colesville Post Office.

The White Oak Master Plan area generally has developed consistent with the *Master Plan for Eastern Montgomery County: Cloverly, Fairland, White Oak* (1981) recommendations. A mix of residential housing types has been constructed. The 1990 *Trip Reduction Amendment* removed the Planned Development (PD) recommendations contained in the 1981 Master Plan. (Additional information on the planning history of the White Oak Master Plan area can be found in the *White Oak Master Plan Issues Report*.) Commercial development is concentrated in the existing commercial centers and has not spread into the surrounding neighborhoods. Traffic on US 29 in the White Oak Master Plan area has generally increased due to development that has occurred in Fairland and in Howard County. (See Figure 5, page 2)

CONFORMANCE WITH THE MARYLAND PLANNING ACT OF 1992 AND THE GENERAL PLAN FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY

The seven visions of the Maryland Economic Development, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 (the Planning Act) and the 1993 *General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County* together establish state and County-wide planning objectives that must be reflected in local master plans.

The seven visions of the Planning Act, as stated in Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland, are:

1. Development is to be concentrated in suitable areas.
2. Sensitive areas are to be protected.
3. In rural areas growth is to be directed to existing population centers and resource areas are to be protected.
4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is to be considered a universal ethic.
5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is to be practiced.
6. To assure the achievement of paragraphs 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are to be streamlined.
7. Funding mechanisms are to be addressed to achieve these objectives.

In addition to the seven visions, the Planning Act requires the implementation of a sensitive areas element designed to protect environmentally impacted areas. Sensitive areas are described in the Planning Act as 100-year floodplains, streams and their buffer areas, habitats of threatened and endangered species, and steep slopes. The White Oak Master Plan supports and confirms these seven visions. The Environmental Resources

chapter complies with the sensitive areas requirement of the Planning Act and the regulatory strategies for protecting these areas.

The 1993 General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County amends the 1964 Updated General Plan for Montgomery County (approved in 1970). The General Plan Refinement provides the framework for the development of more specific area master plans, functional plans, and sector plans. It provides clear guidance regarding the general pattern of development in Montgomery County while retaining enough flexibility to respond to unforeseeable circumstances as they arise.

The General Plan refinement divides Montgomery County into four geographic components: the Urban Ring, the Corridor, the Suburban Communities, and the Wedge. Each area is defined in terms of appropriate land uses, scale, intensity, and function. The geographic components provide a vision for the future while acknowledging the modifications to the Wedges and Corridors concept that have evolved during the past three decades. In particular, they confirm two distinct sub-areas of the Wedge—an Agricultural Wedge and a Residential Wedge. They also recognize the transitional areas of generally moderate density and suburban character that have evolved as Suburban Communities between the Wedge, Corridor, and Urban Ring. The southern portion of the White Oak Master Plan area falls into the Urban Ring due to its proximity to Silver Spring, and the northern portion lies within the Suburban Communities.

In addition to defining geographic components, the General Plan Refinement provides seven goals and associated objectives and strategies that give guidance to development within those geographic components. The goals, objectives, and strategies provide a future vision for Montgomery County and establish a frame of reference for decision-making to make that vision become a reality. The seven goals relate to Land Use, Housing, Economic Activity, Transportation, Environment, Community Identity and Design, and Regionalism. The visions established in the State Planning Act generally coincide with the General Plan Refinement goals. The White Oak Master Plan fulfills these visions by proposing a continuation of the established suburban character of the area. The following discussion is keyed to the seven goals of the General Plan Refinement and also includes discussion of the White Oak Master Plan's relationship to the 1992 Planning Act.

Achieve a variety of land uses and development densities consistent with the Wedges and Corridors pattern.

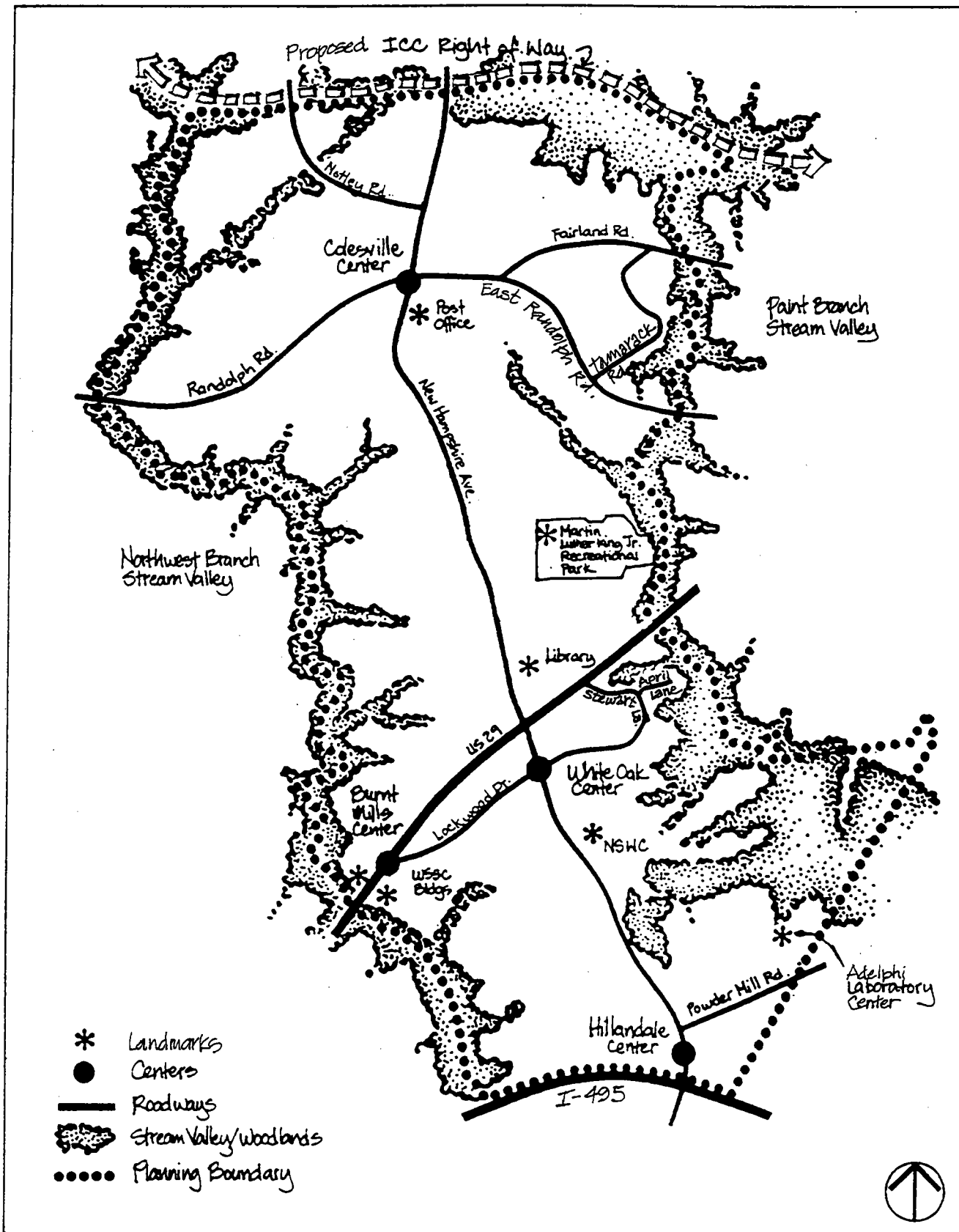
The White Oak Master Plan directly supports the Land Use Goal and Wedges and Corridors Concept by maintaining residential uses and supporting commercial uses as the most important uses in the area. Additional commercial and residential opportunities in the White Oak Master Plan area are limited, thus the Plan supports a General Plan objective to “direct the major portion of Montgomery County's future growth to the Urban Ring and I-270 Corridor.” This pattern also conforms with Vision 1 of the Maryland Planning Act—development is to be concentrated in suitable areas—and Vision 3—rural growth is to be directed to population centers and resource areas are to be protected.

Encourage and maintain a wide choice of housing types and neighborhoods for people of all incomes, ages, lifestyles, and physical capabilities at appropriate densities and locations.

The White Oak Master Plan area offers a wide choice of housing, including single-family detached and attached housing units, multi-family units, and housing for the elderly. Protection of these existing residential communities is the main housing objective of the Plan and is also in accordance with the General Plan objective to “maintain and enhance the quality of housing and neighborhoods.” Despite projections for significant population growth in the County, the White Oak Master Plan does not anticipate or plan for great increases in housing units, thereby channeling higher density housing development to the Urban Ring and I-270 Corridor.

WHITE OAK MASTER PLAN BOUNDARIES & LANDMARKS

FIGURE 7



Promote a healthy economy, including a broad range of business, service, and employment opportunities at appropriate locations.

The White Oak Master Plan seeks to retain the existing employment centers in the Master Plan area and recognizes that the Master Plan area is not an appropriate location for increases in employment-related activities beyond its existing activity centers. The Plan does not seek an expansion of employment opportunities in the area, thereby allowing the major portion of economic activity to be directed to the Urban Ring and I-270 Corridor. Improved connections between commercial centers and residential areas are promoted in the Plan, as envisioned by the General Plan Refinement. These recommendations are in accord with Vision 6 of the State Planning Act--economic growth is encouraged in existing areas of development.

Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that serves the environmental, economic, social, and land use needs of the County and provides a framework for development.

The White Oak Master Plan supports many of the General Plan Transportation principles, including an improved transit system, bikeway system, and movement of through traffic away from local streets. The Plan also assumes the construction of a roadway or transitway along the ICC right-of-way, thereby supporting a General Plan strategy to "give priority to improving east-west travel." In addition, the US 29 Policy to support a transitway from the Howard County Line to Silver Spring is consistent with another strategy, "give priority to establishing exclusive travelways for transit and high-occupancy vehicles serving the Urban Ring and Corridor."

Conserve and protect natural resources to provide a healthy and beautiful environment for present and future generations. Manage the impacts of human activity on our natural resources in a balanced manner to sustain human, plant, and animal life.

Stream quality, wetland, forest cover, and floodplain protection are all environmental issues addressed by both the White Oak Master Plan and the General Plan Refinement. This Plan pays particular attention to limiting further degradation of stream quality. It calls for the acquisition of the headwaters of the Good Hope Tributary of the Paint Branch and encourages retrofit projects to improve stream valley protection. This Plan's commitment to reduce single-occupancy automobile travel will help to improve air quality and to reduce energy consumption. The Environmental Resource chapter identifies sensitive areas to be protected in compliance with Vision 2 of the Maryland Planning Act. This chapter is an indication of the County's stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and watershed (Vision 4). The Plan's efforts for resource conservation comply with Vision 5 of the Planning Act.

Provide for attractive land uses that encourage opportunity for social interaction and promote community identity.

The advancement of social interaction and community identity is a major issue in the White Oak Master Plan. Many of the General Plan goals, objectives, and strategies aimed at improving community identity are employed in this Plan. Design improvements to increase the connectivity between residential neighborhoods and commercial areas are proposed. This Plan also provides guidance for special exception land uses to ensure compatibility with existing development and proposes the retention of publicly-owned sites for future community facilities to increase community identity.

Promote regional cooperation and solutions of mutual concern to Montgomery County, its internal municipalities, and neighbors.

This Plan's commitment to achieve Clean Air Act standards and protect water quality and quantity conform to the General Plan Refinement's strategy to "attain and maintain regional standards for matters of regional significance."

RATIONALE FOR CHOSEN PRIORITIES

The General Plan Refinement recognizes that there will be conflicts between its goals, objectives, and strategies and notes that "it is only within the master plan context, where decisions about individual parcels of land are made that any reasonable prioritization of competing goals and objectives can be made." Therefore, a discussion regarding this Master Plan's priorities is appropriate.

This Master Plan makes protection of environmental features a priority. This Plan also recognizes the General Plan Refinement transportation objective of improving east-west transportation, as well as the environmental sensitivity of the Paint Branch, and leaves the issues involving the Intercounty Connector to the study currently being conducted by a partnership among M-NCPPC, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, and the Maryland State Highway Administration.

THE COMMUNITIES OF THE WHITE OAK MASTER PLAN

The White Oak Master Plan area is made up of many communities that are, for the most part, suburban residential in nature. The boundaries of these communities are indeterminate; they flow into each other and some inter-connect. Each community retains some individuality, yet they all share common amenities: shopping areas, schools, parks. For the purposes of this Master Plan, three generalized areas encompassing the various communities have been determined to simplify the analysis of the Master Plan area. These areas are based upon centralized neighborhood shopping and services. The areas are referred to as the communities of Colesville, White Oak, and Hillandale (see Figure 1, page xiii).

The communities of the White Oak Master Plan area are connected by the major through roads: US 29, New Hampshire Avenue, and Randolph Road. The neighborhoods that make up these communities are served by a network of residential streets branching from the major through roads. There are a limited number of street connections between neighborhoods and between through roads.

The Colesville Community defines the northern portion of the White Oak Master Plan area. At its center is the major intersection of Randolph Road and New Hampshire Avenue where the majority of the commercial businesses are located. Daily shopping, and services such as the post office, banks, and business offices are located here. The Hillandale Fire Station # 24 is located across from the post office on New Hampshire Avenue. The neighborhood-serving strip shopping center of Meadowood is located in the southern portion of this area adjoining the Meadowood Local Park. Also located at the southern border is the Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park, which provides much of the recreational services to the entire White Oak Master Plan area. In the northern portion of this community, what used to be the Colesville Elementary School, and is still referred to as such, houses a number of public services available to the community and region. Next to the Colesville Elementary School is the Colesville Local Park, where a small recreation center is located. There is also a recreation center located at Pilgrim Hill Local Park in the Paint Branch Stream Valley Park. Across from Pilgrim Hill Park is the Valley Mill Local Park. Cannon Road Local Park is located next to Cannon Road Elementary School. There are also four small neighborhood parks, one located above the WSSC underground water storage facility on Notley Road, one near Westover Elementary School, and two in the Paint Branch Stream Valley Park off of Collingwood Terrace in Tamarack. There is pedestrian access to the stream valley parks from many of the residential neighborhoods.

The residential areas in Colesville are mostly low-density, single-family detached residential in nature with a scattering of townhouses tucked throughout. Located to the south, the unique community of Hollywood, made up of quaint bungalow style cottages, adds to the variety and character of this area.

The White Oak Community is the largest of the three areas, overlapping the Colesville area around Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park and merging into the Hillandale area in the vicinity of the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC). At the area's center is the intersection of US 29 and New Hampshire Avenue. There is a large commercial area providing some regional shopping (Sears Roebuck and Co. department store), as well as neighborhood shopping and services, located to the south of US 29, surrounding the intersection of Lockwood Drive and New Hampshire Avenue. A concentration of garden and high rise apartments is located to the east and west of the commercial area. Two large undeveloped tracts of land are situated in this community. They are the Milestone Drive properties, located in the northeast quadrant of US 29 and New Hampshire Avenue, and the Dow Jones Inc. property, located in the southeast quadrant.

Straddling US 29, at the border with the Four Corners Master Plan area, is the Burnt Mills commercial area. This part of the White Oak community is made up mostly of office uses with limited commercial retail uses on the down stream side of US 29. The residential areas within the White Oak community are diverse in age and nature. High-rise and garden apartments, townhouses, and low- and moderate-density, single-family detached residential neighborhoods all exist within this area. The highly congested US 29 poses a physical barrier bisecting the White Oak Community. The neighborhoods adjoining the major thoroughfares are very pleasant and attractive. The White Oak Library is located in the northeast quadrant of the US 29/New Hampshire Avenue interchange.

The Hillandale Community centers on the intersection of Powder Mill Road and New Hampshire Avenue and extends along Elton Road. The AFL-CIO Center for Labor Studies (also known as the George Meany Center) is located at the southern border (I-495) next to the Holly Hall Apartments for Senior Citizens. The Center for the Handicapped is located north of the Hillandale commercial area on New Hampshire Avenue next to the Hillandale Local Park. The Hillandale Local Park has a recreation center located behind the Hillandale Fire Station #12. This recreation center is one of the few facilities available to the citizens for community meetings within the Master Plan area. In general, access to the Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park is very difficult from this community because of the steep slopes.

The residential neighborhoods are single-family detached in nature and are very stable. There is a strong sense of community within these neighborhoods and a long history of citizen participation in protecting their community through the work of citizens associations and groups. There is, however, the start of change of character along New Hampshire Avenue and Powder Mill Road as the number of special exception uses increases and replaces single-family residences. Vacant land is limited to individual lots scattered throughout the residential areas.

The majority of the land in the White Oak Master Plan area is devoted to single-family detached residential use; however, there are garden apartments in the areas of April-Stewart Lanes, Lockwood Drive, and Old Columbia Pike. Some townhouse development is scattered within the single-family detached neighborhoods (see Figure 10, page 19)

Table 1

WHITE OAK HIGHLIGHTS

Committed Land	4,836 Acres
Undeveloped Land	317 Acres
Parks, Cultural, Recreation, Open Space Land	833 Acres
Master Plan Land Area	5,986 Acres
(Does not include rights-of-way)	
Population	31,900 Persons

Source: Land use data from the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation Parcel File, June 1992. Population data from 1990 U.S. Census.

POPULATION CHARACTER

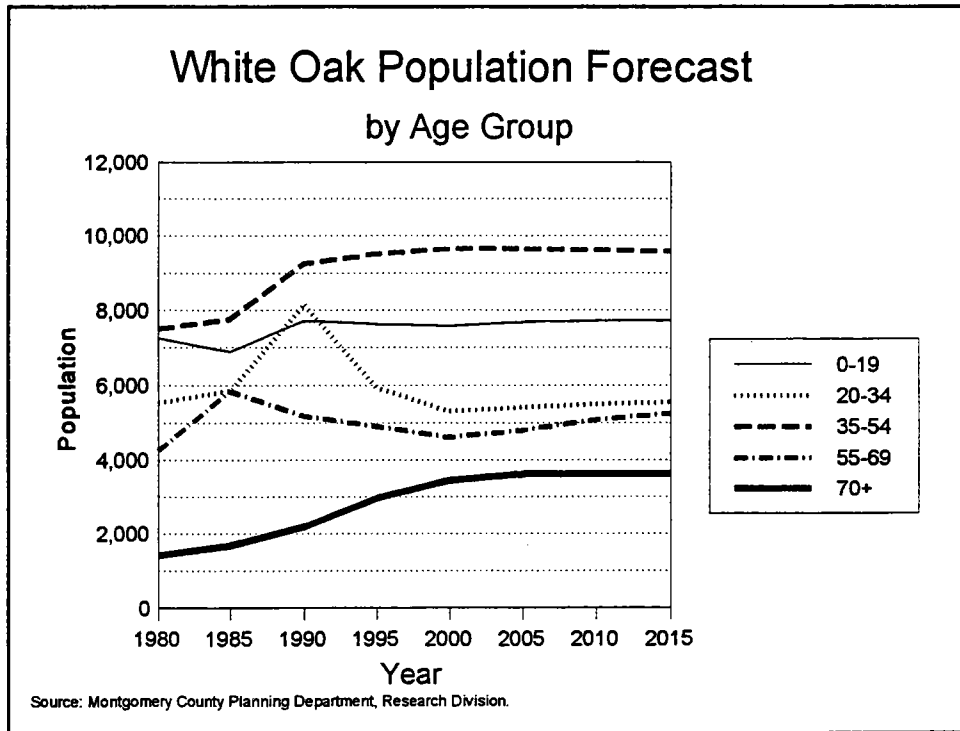
According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the typical White Oak Master Plan area household is a dual income, college educated, married couple between the ages of 25 and 45 with at least one child. They own a detached single-family home that was purchased prior to 1985. At \$56,500, the average household income is slightly higher than the County's.

A majority of the residents of the Master Plan area work outside the County and commute to work alone. Dual income families often need ready access to automobiles to run errands before and after work or to pick up children from school and daycare. This lifestyle means that these families usually are not able to carpool or take advantage of the public transportation system.

The population of the White Oak Master Plan area is more racially diverse than County-wide. Detailed demographic information for the White Oak Master Plan area can be found in *Eastern Montgomery County Population and Housing Profiles* developed by Montgomery County Planning, Research and Information Systems Division. The document was published in April 1993 and was based on the 1990 Census.

Current population projections based on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Round 5.1 Cooperative Intermediate Forecast indicate that the population of the White Oak Master Plan area will be stable and may slightly decrease by the year 2010. There will be a slight increase of school aged children and a sizable increase of persons over the age of 70. This may mean a future need for facilities such as elder care, housing for independent senior citizens, retirement homes, and nursing homes.

FIGURE 8



EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

There are approximately 9,500 jobs in the White Oak Master Plan area. The types of jobs range from office, retail, and industrial to home occupations. The employment forecast anticipated that there would be an influx of approximately 3,000 jobs to the federal facilities of Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) and the Adelphi Laboratory Center by 1999. However, the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) will close the Naval Surface Warfare Center, which would eliminate approximately 1,200 existing jobs. The future of this site is discussed in the Land Use and Zoning chapter.

A recent study of vacant office space in the vicinity of the federal facilities indicates that there is over a half-million square feet of available office space in the nearby areas of Silver Spring, Fairland, and Calverton, as well as approximately 54,000 square feet of vacant space in the White Oak Master Plan area. In addition, there is over one million square feet of unbuilt but approved office space in Fairland that could be built if market conditions dictate.

The analysis of existing neighborhood retail space in the White Oak Master Plan area indicates that the amount of neighborhood retail space closely matches the amount supportable by area residents. The study did not specify the type of neighborhood retailers supported by the market, but rather the total amount of neighborhood retail space supportable.