

III. PLAN FRAMEWORK

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Creating a vision for the White Oak Master Plan area in the next 20 years means building on the identity of the individual communities that make up the area. It also involves ensuring that the White Oak Master Plan area remains an enjoyable place to live by setting realistic goals and implementing sound planning principles.

The vision for the White Oak Master Plan accentuates the positive attributes of each community in the Master Plan area and encourages a shared ideal of neighborhood and community. This Master Plan envisions the area remaining residential in nature. In-fill development will follow the established residential pattern. Redevelopment within the commercial centers will enhance the character of the communities, and the character and density of the neighborhoods will not appreciably change. A variety of housing stock will serve residents of all ages and incomes. Higher density residential development will be located around commercial centers and provide convenient access to shopping and transit. Adequate recreational facilities will serve the entire Master Plan area.

Commercial areas encourage and provide opportunities for residents of the White Oak Master Plan area's communities to come together and interact. This Plan envisions the commercial centers of the White Oak Master Plan area as multi-purpose centers that provide daily services (dry cleaning, banking, grocery shopping, etc.) as well as movies, restaurants, playgrounds, and cultural activities for residents of all ages. The commercial centers of the future are attractive, pedestrian friendly, and accessible by many different means of transportation.

Natural resource protection continues to be a major goal in the Northwest Branch and Paint Branch stream valleys. These two stream valleys are part of the regional park network and have a strong positive influence on the character and quality of the neighboring communities. This Plan envisions enhanced water and habitat quality in both stream valleys and a healthy biological environment for the enjoyment of the public and wildlife. Within the stream valley parks there will be a network of carefully planned trails that are designed to protect the environmentally sensitive stream valleys and tie together the residential communities.

CONCEPT - LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

The existing residential character of the communities of the White Oak Master Plan area is very desirable. The neighborhoods are stable and pleasant with streets lined with mature trees and attractive houses. Residents enjoy the quiet and safe character of their neighborhoods. They want to maintain their quality of life and they know that it will be diminished if future development of the surrounding region is not anticipated. They also know that the character of the Master Plan area is what makes their communities livable and therefore desirable.

To ensure that these communities remain livable, this Plan identifies elements within the existing communities that can be strengthened and enhanced to fulfill the vision of the future and build upon the communities' sense of place. It will take the active participation of the community, as well as the local government, to realize this goal.

This Master Plan addresses enhancing the sense of place on two levels. At the community level, the White Oak Master Plan area is made up of three communities: Colesville, White Oak, and Hillandale. In the context of these communities, the commercial center has the potential to become the major element of community identity. Its function as a focal point for community interaction is important. These centers are ideal for centralized services and shopping; however, they must be "user friendly." Their location at major intersections

poses a problem in that it places the local resident, who generally must drive to local shopping and services, in competition with through vehicular movement. Those who could walk to shopping and services find the pedestrian environment along these major streets to be intimidating. Street character is not only important in encouraging pedestrian activity, but also an important element of community identity.

In a regional context, sense of place is addressed through common elements that tie the communities together. Some of these elements are public/private facilities and services such as the post office, library, local parks, schools, churches, and swim facilities. Other elements, such as federal facilities and other areas of employment, are important to the White Oak Master Plan area and the County. They influence community character at a local level and are a part of the County-wide economic base. This Plan identifies the need for additional facilities and services to more adequately address the communities' needs.

A strong circulation network is also important to the regional identity and sense of place. Currently, the road and sidewalk network is inadequate, and residents must use their cars for short trips. There is a lack of interconnected sidewalks, particularly on primary residential streets and major arteries throughout the Master Plan area. There are also limited road connections between major portions of the Master Plan area and adjoining master plan areas. This Plan looks to improve local circulation for vehicles and pedestrians.