

## **VI. COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Community facilities such as schools, libraries, community centers, and recreation facilities are an important component of community character and livability. They help create and reinforce a sense of social cohesion—a sense of community. The Commission on the Future (1988) defined a sense of community as “a feeling of belonging to a local area and having an interest and a stake in what happens there.” This Plan recommends a full range of facilities for the communities of the White Oak Master Plan area and proposes that these facilities should be linked to neighborhoods by pedestrian and bicycle paths. Public transit should be utilized to the greatest extent possible for local recreational, cultural, and civic activities. (See Figure 28, page 65.)

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOAL**

**The community facilities goal in the White Oak Master Plan area is to strengthen the link between community facilities and the White Oak Master Plan area residents and to encourage creative approaches to providing community facilities in proximity to the neighborhoods they serve.**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

**Provide transportation improvements near public facilities to promote the use of alternative forms of transportation. Area residents rely on community facilities for needed services, and ideally, they should be located close to the neighborhoods they serve. Facilities should be accessible by transit and designed to meet the communities' needs and to encourage public use.**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Provide sidewalk connections between all public facilities and the adjoining neighborhoods. (See Sidewalk Recommendations in the Transportation Section on page 57.)
- Provide bike racks which are easily accessible, secure, and at a safe location to public services. It is important to provide facilities to encourage and attract users of other forms of travel.

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

**Look for opportunities to provide new and improved existing community resources and facilities such as libraries, post offices, public meeting spaces, elderly care facilities, child daycare facilities, and housing for special populations.**

### **LIBRARIES**

The White Oak Library, located at 11701 New Hampshire Avenue, is a major asset to the White Oak Master Plan area communities. It is well used by the communities and was expanded in 1989 with a 750-square-foot addition, improved public meeting space, and a redesigned parking lot. The library has two meeting rooms that are open to public use. The closest regional library is in Wheaton. According to Montgomery County Department of Public Libraries criteria, no new facilities will be needed in this Master Plan area in the future. The new local library in the adjoining Fairland Master Plan area may serve a segment of the White Oak Master Plan population.

## RECOMMENDATION:

- Encourage and support the expansion of the White Oak Library services to the public. Although the library is centrally located, most of its patrons must drive. In order to better serve the residents outside of walking distance, the parking lot should be expanded. Currently patrons park on the surrounding neighborhood streets. The entrance to the library is not well marked and is dangerous due to the speed and amount of traffic on New Hampshire Avenue. When the Milestone Drive properties develop, the new residential roads should be designed so that the library is accessible from the residential street. In addition, consideration should be given to providing a traffic signal at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and the new street to provide enhanced access to the library for vehicles and pedestrians.

## COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTERS

Community recreation centers provide a location for large community meetings and social gatherings, and for smaller social and programmed activities for all age groups. Community Recreation Centers should be designed to support administrative needs, sports and fitness, social activities and dance, art programs, and general community meeting space. A detailed description can be found in *The Preliminary Draft of the Department of Recreation Community Recreation Facilities Long Range Plan, 1994*.

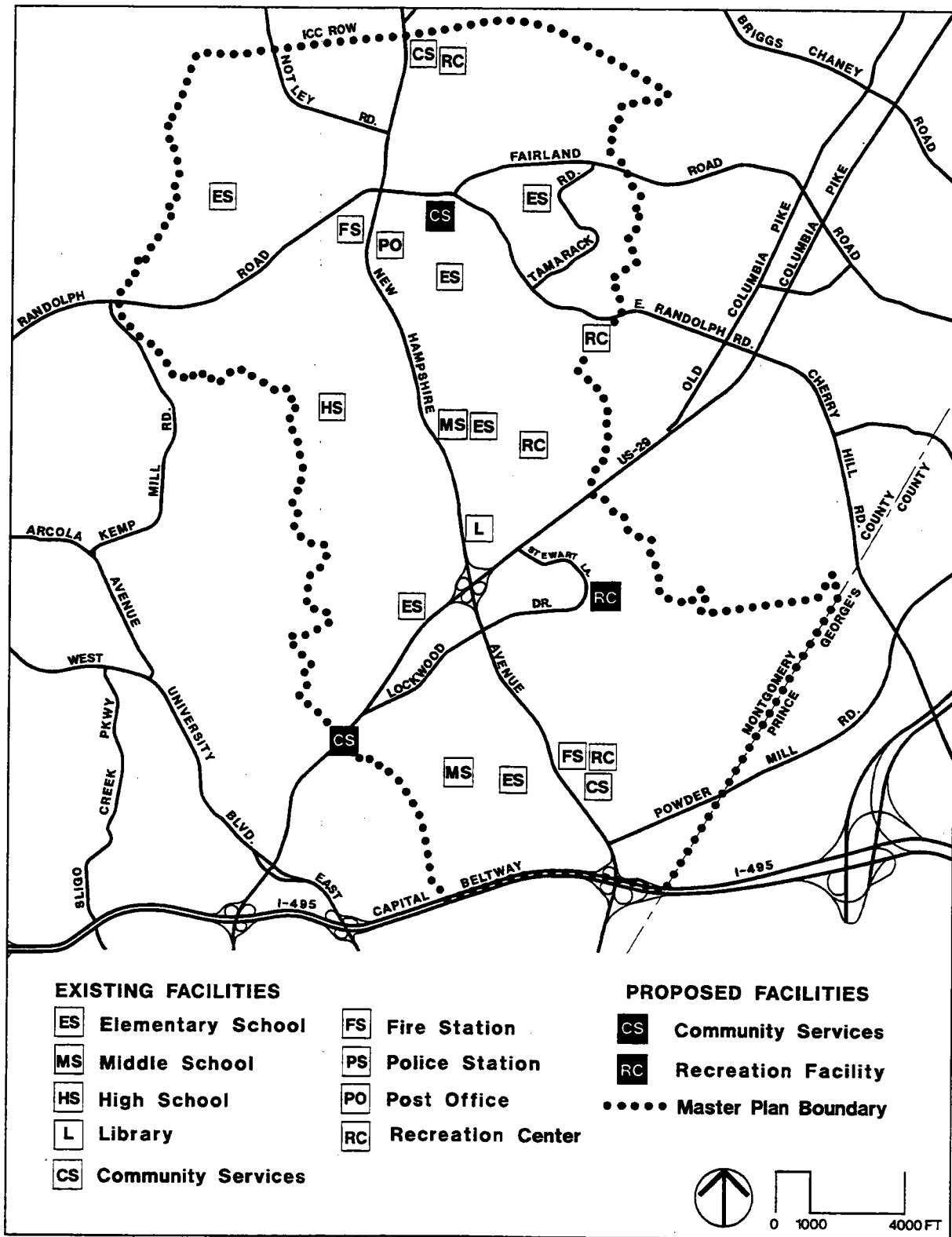
The White Oak Master Plan area has three small recreation facilities operated by the Montgomery County Parks at Colesville, Pilgrim Hill, and Hillandale. Each facility provides seating for approximately 40 persons and a small kitchen facility. These spaces are inadequate for large group activities, yearly civic association meetings, or banquets and festivals. This Plan recommends improved and new community recreation facilities that would allow maximum flexibility and be capable of adapting to changing community demographics and leisure interests. (See Figure 28, page 65.)

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide a new community recreation center in a location central to the community and, if possible, within walking distance of the higher density housing in the White Oak community. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), Department of Park and Planning should study the possibility of incorporating a community recreation center into their plans for development of the April-Stewart Lane Park. *The Preliminary Draft of the Department of Recreation Community Recreation Facilities Long Range Plan, 1994* recommends a facility for a population of 30,000. These standards indicate the need for a community recreation center in the White Oak Master Plan area in addition to the proposed East County Recreation Center.
- Evaluate the potential to expand and improve the recreation facilities at Colesville, Hillandale, and Pilgrim Hill Local Parks. Local civic and community associations have indicated that these facilities are inadequate for their functions. A study should be undertaken to identify the communities' needs and examine how they can better be met.

## CULTURAL FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Currently, there are opportunities to provide cultural, educational, and public services in County-owned buildings that are or will become available. Because of the limited available land in the White Oak Master Plan area, this Plan recommends that these buildings be used to provide needed services and resources within the communities. Provision of these services also enhances the community's sense of identity.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider reuse of the Colesville school building and the former Board of Education bus depot property (approximately two acres in size) for historic educational purposes and community meeting space. The Montgomery County Public Schools bus depot, located on East Randolph Road, has relocated to West\*Farm Industrial Park. The bus barn, originally the Smithville Colored School, is being considered for inclusion in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Any reuse of the property should include the removal of as much existing paving as possible and restoration of the site to natural conditions. This site sits at the headwaters of the Hollywood Branch, which flows into the Paint Branch. (See Historic Preservation Chapter, page 93.)
- Encourage the renovation and reuse of the WSSC building located on the Northwest Branch, downstream of Colesville Road, preferably to provide services such as community meeting space, office space for public uses, and/or environmental education because of its location next to the Northwest Branch stream valley. The WSSC building has been acquired by M-NCPPC. This site and building help to define the entrance into the White Oak Master Plan area and should be preserved and maintained as a landmark. Montgomery County Parks should pursue acquisition of the building on the northwest side of Colesville Road as well. This entire area is being considered for Historic District designation in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. (See Historic Preservation Chapter, page 92.)
- Continue to use the Colesville Elementary School building for public service uses. If space becomes available due to some of the existing uses moving to the future East County Government Center, new public services or meeting space should be considered as replacement uses.

## ELDERLY HOUSING AND SERVICES

Population projections based on Census data indicate that in the White Oak Master Plan area there will be a significant increase of persons over the age of 70 in the next 20 years. Currently, services to the elderly are limited to Holly Hall, which is a rental apartment facility for the elderly located in Hillandale that is operated by the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), and a private nursing home located on New Hampshire Avenue north of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park. This Plan encourages opportunities to provide facilities and services to this growing segment of the population.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Support the provision of adult daycare facilities.
- Encourage the location of elderly housing and elderly support services along bus routes, and near shopping and public facilities.
- Support the provision of affordable elderly housing and care facilities through the special exception process.

## DAYCARE

Currently, there are a number of child daycare facilities in the Master Plan area offering varied services from infant/toddler care to preschool and school age children. The County Department of Health and Human Services offers its services to help parents locate appropriate daycare to meet their needs. In general, parents tend to look for care facilities close to their place of employment or near easily accessible transit.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Encourage the provision of child daycare facilities at appropriate locations in the planning area.
- Encourage the co-location of child care and adult daycare facilities.

## **HOUSING AND SERVICES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

CHI (formerly known as Centers for the Handicapped) is located in the old Hillandale Elementary School building and is a unique resource and an asset to the community. It is a private non-profit organization serving Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. The staff assist children and adults with disabilities to achieve their greatest potential growth. The Center provides an array of services and programs such as vocational training; work assistance programs; counseling; educational, recreational, and residential programs; and a senior center for the developmentally disabled. Their services to the region have benefitted not only special populations but also the Hillandale community. Their meeting rooms have been made available to the community, especially to the Hillandale Citizens Association.

People who are physically or mentally handicapped can often be cared for best in a non-institutional setting such as home communities. This population generally needs various levels of supervision or assistance to function in the larger community.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- Support the provision of housing for special populations (more than eight individuals) through the special exception process. As long as parking does not create an adverse effect on adjoining neighbors, and the scale of the use is in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood, these homes should be appropriate for any residential community. Efforts should be made to avoid an over-concentration of housing for special populations in any particular neighborhood.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

An increasing concern within the communities of the White Oak Master Plan area is crime, as it is throughout the County. The White Oak Master Plan area is currently covered by the Wheaton and Silver Spring station districts. The Montgomery County Police Department's 1993 Strategic Plan's recommendations include the establishment of a satellite facility in the White Oak Master Plan area as staffing and facilities become available. In accordance with the Strategic Plan, the Police Department is developing a Facilities Master Plan which will determine the nature and location of future police facilities (satellite or other). The Police Department is also revising Police District and Police Beat boundaries and is considering placing the entire Master Plan area within one Police District if it is determined it will enhance the delivery of law enforcement services to the community. Police District and Beat boundaries are expected to change during the life of this Master Plan in response to community and crime issues.

Fire and rescue service is provided to the White Oak area from two Hillandale Volunteer Fire Department stations. Station 24 is located at 13216 New Hampshire Avenue, and Station 12 is located at 10617 New Hampshire Avenue. Both stations have had recent renovations and are expected to remain functional through the year 2005. When needed, additional fire and rescue coverage for the area is provided by the Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department, the Burtonsville Volunteer Fire Department, the Takoma Park Volunteer Fire Department, and the Wheaton Rescue Squad.

## **POST OFFICE**

The Colesville Branch Post Office serves the White Oak Master Plan area and portions of other adjacent planning areas and is located at 13217 New Hampshire Avenue. This facility provides such public services as post office boxes, stamp sales, and mailing of packages. The United States Postal Service's decision to relocate carrier operations to a new facility in Fairland permits substantial improvements to parking and public access to this post office. Those improvements are being implemented.

## **SCHOOLS**

Public schools are an essential component of community life and identity, and provide not only educational but recreational services to the community as well. The need for new schools is determined by the Board of Education based on both the capacity of existing schools and the projected increase in student enrollment. The Board of Education at times modifies service areas to balance enrollment with facility space.

The White Oak Master Plan area is mainly in the Springbrook High School Cluster. Springbrook High School reopened in 1994, after a complete modernization, including a 22-room addition. It is a prototype high school for Global Access (computer technology). There are two middle schools: White Oak and Francis Scott Key. White Oak reopened in September 1994 after a complete modernization. Key completed a renovation in 1993. A portion of the residents in the Tamarack area attend Briggs Chaney Middle School (Paint Branch Cluster). There are six active elementary schools in the Master Plan area: Burnt Mills, Cannon Road, Cresthaven, Jackson Road, Westover, and Page (Paint Branch Cluster). Burnt Mills and Cresthaven currently have relocatable classrooms on site. Jackson Road reopened in September 1995 after a complete modernization, including a gymnasium and additions. Private daycare is provided at all elementary schools except Cannon Road. The Doral area (Randolph Road and Hawkesbury Lane) is served by Glenallan Elementary School (Kennedy Cluster).

In May 1995 the County Council voted not to fund the construction of a new elementary school in the Sherwood Cluster; however, the Council provided funding in FY 97 for the exploration of Sherwood elementary space solutions, including the possibilities of either a new facility or boundary changes. All elementary school boundaries in Sherwood Cluster, Springbrook Cluster, and Paint Branch Cluster are being reevaluated for implementation in September 1997, which may also impact elementary school boundaries in Springbrook Cluster and Paint Branch Cluster.

A new high school is planned to open in fall 1998 in the northeast area of the County on Norwood Road at Johnson Road (Cloverly Master Plan area). This will change Springbrook Cluster, Paint Branch Cluster, and Sherwood Cluster boundaries and may reassign elementary and/or middle schools. An alternative boundary plan is being finalized for this area which will also impact high school assignments.

All public school improvements are programmed through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and the Approved Plan for Educational Facilities. The timing of additions and modernizations is evaluated annually in these documents. Due to shortages of capital funds, the Board of Education may adjust boundaries to make the best use of available space.

## **PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES**

Public parkland and recreation facilities play an important role in the well-being of the community. The stream valley parks enhance the quality of life for White Oak Master Plan area residents by providing visual relief from the built environment and an opportunity to experience nature within a largely developed area. In addition, the open space provides wildlife habitat, improves air quality, and protects water quality.

The streams in the White Oak Master Plan area have both broad gently flowing reaches and narrow valleys with extremely steep, rocky slopes. High quality forests and rich archeological and historical resources are associated with the stream valleys, particularly at the confluences. The fall line, which marks the transition from the Piedmont's crystalline rock and the coastal plain's sedimentary rock, roughly follows US 29. This is characterized by abrupt elevation drops along the stream valleys, causing water cascades.

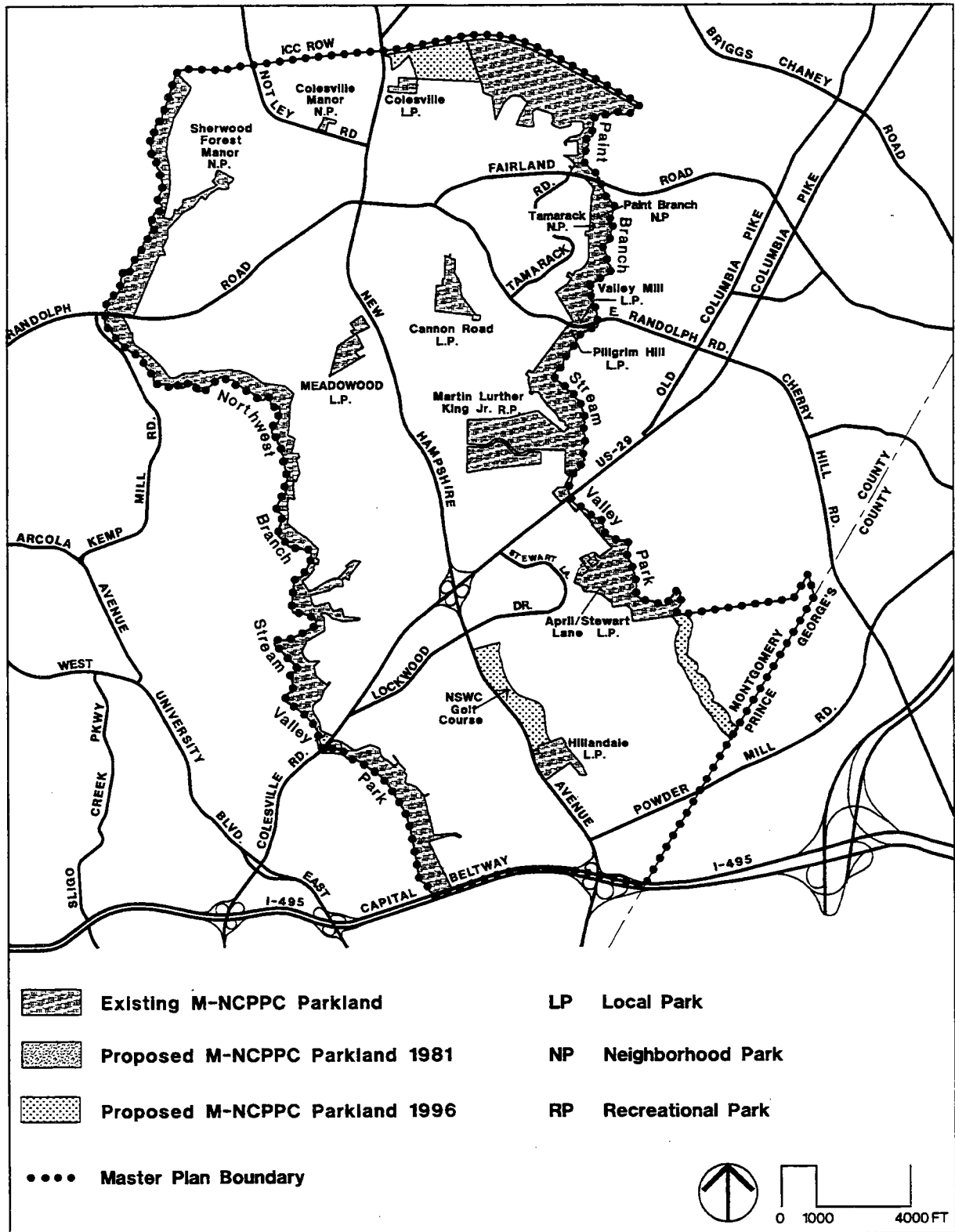
The White Oak Master Plan area has approximately 830 acres in parkland. The majority of this land is located within the stream valley parks of the Paint Branch and the Northwest Branch. There are seven existing or proposed local parks in the White Oak Planning Area: April-Stewart Lane, Valley Mill, Pilgrim Hill, Meadowood, Hillandale, Colesville, and Cannon Road. There are four neighborhood parks: Colesville Manor, Paint Branch, Sherwood Forest Manor (and Sherwood Forest Neighborhood Conservation area), and Tamarack. (See Figure 29, page 70.) The Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park serves the region with ballfields and an indoor swim facility. The closest Regional Park is Wheaton.

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

**Provide recreational facilities for existing and future community needs.**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Provide an outdoor swim facility for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park. The 1981 Eastern Montgomery County Master Plan recommended an outdoor swimming facility for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park. This facility was carried as a CIP item until FY 92, at which time it was dropped. An outdoor swim facility is still needed in the region and this item should be revisited within the life of this Master Plan.
- Support environmentally sensitive development of the April-Stewart Lane Local Park. Recreation facilities are needed in the densely developed April Lane, Stewart Lane, and Lockwood Drive area because few open spaces exist for the many residents. This park is programmed to be built in the *Long Range Planning Guide for Parkland Acquisition and Development*. The proposed park should include a large picnic-playground area, trails, multiuse court, and a ballfield-playfield.
- Pursue acquisition of the WSSC building and property on the upstream side of the Northwest Branch on US 29. The twin building, located on the downstream side of the Northwest Branch, has already been acquired by M-NCPPC. These sites are located at trail heads into the Northwest Branch stream valley and could provide parking opportunities within existing paved areas for trail users on both sides of US 29. All unnecessary pavement (imperviousness areas) should be removed and restored to a natural state. The buildings help to define the entrance into the White Oak Master Plan area and should be preserved and maintained as landmarks. Safe pedestrian crossing of US 29 in this area will become more significant as trail use increases to ensure trail continuity.
- Pursue transfer of the front buffer of the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) which includes the existing golf course, club house, picnic area, athletic field, and sufficient land for the development of a driving range to Montgomery County Parks as part of the federal reuse process. The front buffer golf course provides an attractive setting along New Hampshire Avenue and is ideally located to provide recreational services to the surrounding communities and region. Outdoor recreation facilities beyond the golf course, including areas appropriate for addition to the Paint Branch Stream Valley Park, should be pursued if found to be compatible with the future plans of the General Services Administration (GSA). Montgomery County Parks should assist GSA in providing recreational resources on their site for their employees and the surrounding communities, if possible.





## **Stream Valley Trails**

This Plan makes recommendations to improve and extend the existing trail network in the White Oak Master Plan area. This trail network exists within the parkland corridors and connects the adjoining communities and other circulation networks (streets, sidewalks, bikeways) to each other. (See Figure 30, page 73.) Types of trails discussed in this section are paved and unpaved. Designated users allowed on each trail will be determined through detailed study by the Montgomery County Parks staff with involvement of the surrounding neighborhood, community, and potential trail users. In addition, specific trail surfaces will be determined through the evaluation of pertinent factors that affect the sensitive stream valley environment, as well as, future maintenance needs including potential types of use. Table 6 on page 72 summarizes the sections of trail described in this Plan.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

**Enhance the Paint Branch and Northwest Branch Stream Valley Parks trail system to provide better access and connection to the adjoining communities and neighborhoods.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Extend Paint Branch trail from Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park to Old Columbia Pike. This path connection would greatly benefit the regional hiking and bikeway network because it allows passage underneath US 29, which otherwise forms a barrier to recreational bicycle and pedestrian travel. The best location for this path appears to be on the east side of the stream (Fairland Master Plan area), with a new bridge crossing at the existing southern end of the Paint Branch trail. This path may be difficult to build for resource protection reasons. Issues to be taken into consideration in designing this trail include sensitivity of the Paint Branch, wetlands, steep slopes, and an historic mill site near Old Columbia Pike. Trail surfacing and alignment will be determined through detailed environmental and design studies.
- Extend Paint Branch trail north of Fairland Road to the ICC right of way. Provide appropriate connections to adjoining streets and communities. Preliminary field surveys indicate that the east side of the stream would be the best location for the trail (Fairland Master Plan area). The trail alignment and surfacing will be determined through detailed environmental and design studies.
- Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle Paint Branch trail crossings at Randolph Road and Fairland Road at Paint Branch. The DPW&T is currently working on the design to realign the access points to the Valley Mill and Pilgrim Hill parks. The design will show the driveways to both parks realigned to provide a more normal intersection. In addition, the DPW&T is preparing engineering plans that incorporate a bike/pedestrian underpass that will provide for a continuous trail along the Paint Branch stream valley. If the Paint Branch trail is to realize its potential as a regional link in the recreational hiking and bikeway network, the provision of safe crossings at major roads is needed.
- Potential construction of a paved trail within the Northwest Branch Park from Randolph Road to the ICC right of way is currently under study. (This proposed trail extends to Bonifant Road in the Cloverly Master Plan.) An environmental feasibility study has concluded that this area will support a new paved trail, as well as the existing unpaved trail. The trails are proposed on the east side of the stream valley from Randolph Road north to a stream crossing near Vierling Drive (where the gas pipeline crosses the stream), then would continue north on the west side of the stream.

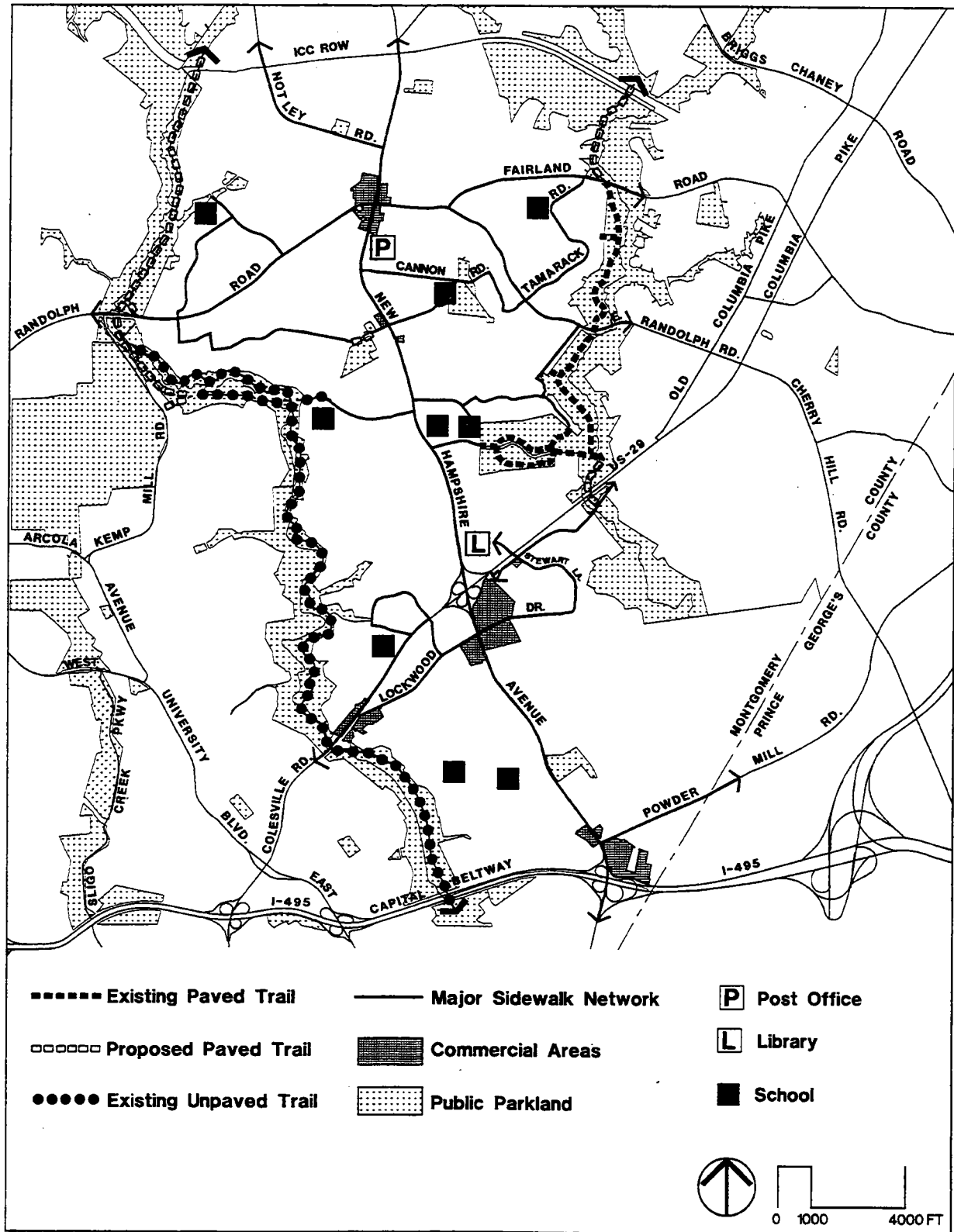
Table 6

SUMMARY OF STREAM VALLEY TRAILS

Park and location	Type of trail	Status/Comments
<b>Paint Branch Stream Valley Park</b>		
A. Old Columbia Pike to Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park	paved	proposed,* bridge required
B. Jackson Road to Fairland Road	paved	completed
C. Fairland Road to ICC Right-of-Way	paved	proposed*
<b>Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park</b>		
A. I-495 to US 29, east side	unpaved	existing, no improvements proposed
B. US 29 to Kemp Mill Road, east side	unpaved	existing, some improvements may be required
C. US 29 to Kemp Mill Road, west side	unpaved	environmental improvements recommended
D. Kemp Mill Road to Old Randolph Road, west side	paved	currently under study*
E. Old Randolph Road, west side to Randolph Road underpass, east side	boardwalk	proposed due to environmental constraints
F. Randolph Road to Bonifant Road, east side	paved and unpaved (2 separate trails)	currently under study*
* Proposal tentative, final determination to be made following environmental review and community input.		

# MAJOR PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION NETWORK & DESTINATIONS

FIGURE 30



- Improve the natural surface path from Greenacres Drive to the recreational facilities in Hillandale Local Park. The steepness and narrowness of the existing footpath
- Repair existing erosion problems on soft surface paths throughout the Master Plan area through coordinated efforts between the Montgomery County Parks, local users and local residents. Many of the paths from neighborhoods into Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park are especially in need of immediate maintenance.
- Clearly designate the types of users appropriate for trails and implement other management measures necessary to prevent unnecessary environmental damage and conflicts between user groups.
- Close unofficial, duplicate parallel trails and restore vegetation.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Improve the trail network in the Northwest Branch stream valley south of Randolph Road to protect the sensitive and high quality natural resources in this area and to provide for recreational use.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Improve the Northwest Branch trail from Randolph Road to US 29 on the west side of the stream (located in the Kemp Mill-Four Corners Planning Area) by: (1) providing boardwalk from the Randolph Road underpass to Old Randolph Road. This section of the trail crosses a wetland mitigation site and should be handled with sensitivity; (2) providing a paved trail from Old Randolph Road south to Kemp Mill Road on the west side of the stream; (3) improve the existing unpaved trail from Kemp Mill Road to US 29. A key objective in determining trail surfaces in the Northwest Branch must be to preserve and enhance the wetlands and other sensitive habitats.

Upgrades to the Kemp Mill Road to US 29 section (located in the Kemp Mill-Four Corners Planning Area) should include closing unofficial, parallel trails and restoring damaged riparian and wetland habitats.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Improve and maintain a natural surface hiking trail system in the Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park that provides an accessible high quality passive recreational experience and supports resource conservation and interpretation.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Construct a natural surface path at the south end of Lacy Drive to the parking lot and ballfield area of Meadowood Local Park. Steep grades would prevent the construction of a paved path in this area without extensive regrading and tree loss. A natural footpath would provide improved access from the neighborhood into this park and reduce pedestrian travel on the portion of Lacy Drive between Eldrid and Thomas Drives where short sight distances for drivers reduce pedestrian safety. A small bridge will be necessary as part of the path construction.

## **Equestrian Trails**

### **OBJECTIVE:**

**Provide adequate trails to support the anticipated equestrian usage in the White Oak Master Plan area, providing a pleasant user experience without conflicting with other trail users or conservation objectives.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Provide equestrian access to all unpaved trails except where equestrians are specifically prohibited (e.g., playgrounds, nature centers, ballfields, high traffic pedestrian areas, highly sensitive environmental areas).
- Sign trails adequately, indicating where equestrian use is allowed. Signs should also advise other trail users that equestrians may be encountered on the trails.
- Encourage trail crossings of streets only in areas of good visibility and where there are trail crossing warning signs.
- Consider the use of underpasses for all major road crossings where feasible.

## **GREENWAYS**

Greenways are linear open spaces set aside for recreation and conservation uses. Greenways link people, communities, and the natural environment. The greenway system is not a regulatory or land acquisition program. It is a unifying approach that uses existing regulatory and/or voluntary programs to create a network of green spaces in the County and throughout the state. In eastern Montgomery County the stream valley parks form the core of the greenway system.

The greenway connectors are major pedestrian and/or bikeway connections that, although they may contain varying amounts of or no green space, are especially important to provide access to greenways. In some places the connectors cross private land where property owners have granted access, as is the case where the Trail Riders of Today (TROT) negotiated easements for public access along specific routes.

The greenways in the White Oak Master Plan are part of a larger system linked to surrounding master plan areas. The White Oak Master Plan area residents need better access to the natural areas from their neighborhoods and better connections between the parks themselves.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

**Expand recreational access between natural areas and neighborhoods while protecting and restoring stream valley habitat.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Designate the Northwest Branch and Paint Branch stream valleys and the Good Hope tributary as greenways.
- Designate as connectors between the Northwest Branch Greenway and the Paint Branch Greenway (1) Valley Brook Drive to New Hampshire Avenue to Jackson Road and into Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park and (2) the entire length of the Intercounty Connector.

