

# Introduction

## A. Overview of the Planning Process

The term “master plan area” is used to define the area covered by an individual master plan. A “sector plan area” is a subset of a master plan area, i.e., it covers only a portion of the master plan area. Typically, sector plans are done for central business districts or transit station impact areas. Sector plan area boundaries are established to respond to common issues, natural boundaries, community affiliation, or other characteristics. Sector plan areas often differ from other geographic boundaries used in Montgomery County such as “policy areas” that have been established by the County Council for other purposes.

**The Forest Glen Sector Plan area contains approximately 400 acres exclusive of public rights-of-way. It is generally bordered by Gardiner Avenue and a small, unnamed tributary of Rock Creek on the west; Dexter Avenue, Medical Park Drive, and Everest Street on the north; Sligo Creek Park on the east; and the Capital Beltway (I-495) on the south. (See Figure 1, page 2.)**

Appointment of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is the first step in the master/sector plan process. The CAC for the Forest Glen Sector Plan was appointed by the Montgomery County Planning Board in October 1993. CACs comprise individuals who represent residents, neighborhood associations, civic groups, businesses, landowners, developers, and other special interests. CAC members help identify important planning issues and areas of concern in the community. They have the responsibility to represent their constituencies, bring their concerns to the table for discussion, and keep them informed of the sector plan’s progress and proposals.

The Planning Department staff worked with the CAC to help frame the issues, provide technical information and research data, and assist with the preparation of this and future documents. The community’s concerns, as expressed through the CAC members, became the foundation for the May, 1994 Issues Report for the *Forest Glen Transit Impact Area and Vicinity Sector Plan*. (See Figure 2 for an overview of the Master Plan Development Process. This process is the same for sector plans.)



The next step in the master/sector plan process is the development of the Staff Draft Plan. The Staff Draft Plan, like the Issues Report, is designed to be a cooperative effort between the CAC and the Planning Department staff, although the Planning staff is ultimately responsible for the content of this draft. The Staff Draft Plan examines the concerns raised in the Issues Report and presents alternative courses of action through specific recommendations. It provides a vision for the sector plan area and a “road map” for its achievement.

The Staff Draft Plan is presented to the Planning Board by the Planning Department staff with the CAC present for comment. The Planning Board’s review of the document generally focuses on whether the draft is ready to be the subject of a public hearing. The Planning Board makes whatever modifications it deems necessary and a Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan is prepared. The Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan is a formal proposal to amend an adopted master or sector plan. A public hearing is then held by the Planning Board for the purpose of receiving testimony on the Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan.

After the public hearing is held, the Planning Board holds open worksessions to review testimony and revise the Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan. The number of worksessions varies with the degree of complexity and consensus on the issues. During this time, the Planning Board discusses the sector plan recommendations on specific issues. A joint review with the Executive staff regarding the fiscal impacts of the proposed plan also takes place during the worksessions. Once the worksessions are completed, the Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan is amended by the Planning Board and republished as the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan. It is then transmitted to the County Council and the County Executive.

The County Executive has 60 days to comment on the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan and prepare a fiscal impact

analysis for the County Council. After the County Council receives the Executive’s comments and fiscal analysis, a public hearing is held. Similar to the Planning Board, open worksessions are conducted to review the testimony from the public hearing and revise the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan. After the worksessions are complete, the County Council adopts a resolution approving the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan, as revised.

Once approved by the County Council, the sector plan is formally adopted by the full Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (the Montgomery and Prince George’s County Planning Boards). Following the approval and adoption process, the Planning Department staff assumes responsibility for publishing an approved and adopted sector plan, formally filing it with the Clerk of the Circuit Court, and making it available to the public. The Planning Department staff is typically instructed to prepare a sectional zoning map amendment for the area. A sectional map amendment is a comprehensive rezoning of the sector plan area to implement the zoning recommendations of the sector plan.

## B. Planning History

### 1964 General Plan and 1969 General Plan Refinement

In 1964, a bi-County plan for Montgomery County and Prince George’s County was adopted, *The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties*. The General Plan was updated in 1969 with more specific goals and guidelines for the wedges and corridors concept in Montgomery County. For more than two decades, the

# Master Plan Process

Figure 2

Planning Board submits, and County Council approves:

## **Annual Work Program**

Park and Planning staff initiates community participation and prepares:

## **Issues Report**

Park and Planning staff reviews Issues Report with Planning Board and then prepares:

## **Staff Draft Plan**

Planning Board reviews Staff Draft and, with modifications as necessary, approves plan as suitable for public hearing:

## **Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan**

Planning Board reviews public hearing testimony, receives County Executive comments at Board worksessions, and adjusts Public Hearing Draft to become:

## **Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan**

County Executive reviews Planning Board Draft and forwards fiscal impact analysis and comments to County Council.

## **Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan Transmitted to County Council**

County Council holds public hearing and worksessions and approves, disapproves, or amends Planning Board Draft, which is forwarded to M-NCPPC to become:

## **Approved and Adopted Master Plan**

General Plan has guided the land use pattern and the transportation system in Montgomery County. Its name, "On Wedges and Corridors," comes from the regional land use pattern it recommends. The concept is based on six corridors of urban development radiating out, like spokes of a wheel, from the existing land use patterns in Washington, D.C. The corridors of development are separated by wedges of open space, farmland, and lower density residential uses. The concept has shaped the County's land use pattern by channeling growth into development and transportation corridors, with the Urban Ring in lower Montgomery County close to Washington, D.C. In 1993 the General Plan was reaffirmed through the General Plan Refinement.

### 1978 Sector Plan for the Forest Glen Impact Area

Specific guidance for the Forest Glen Sector Plan area is currently contained in the *1978 Sector Plan for the Forest Glen Transit Impact Area and Vicinity*. The 1978 Plan was adopted as a result of the planning work which had begun in 1976 on the eastern leg of the Metro red line. (See Figure 3, page 6.) A *Sector Plan for the Glenmont Transit Impact Area and Vicinity* (Glenmont is planned to be the eastern terminus of the red line) was done at the same time as the Forest Glen Plan.

The *1978 Sector Plan for the Forest Glen Transit Impact Area and Vicinity* supported the General Plan policy to channel new development "so as to protect existing communities from adverse impacts and undesirable non-residential intrusion resulting from commercial growth, the placement and operation of Metro-related facilities, and other public and private land use decisions."

The Sector Plan sought to preserve and protect Forest Glen as a stable, predominantly single-family residential community, and to reflect the recognition of the permanence of the existing residential character. It also sought to integrate Metro into the

fabric of the community, to assure neighborhood protection from intrusions of traffic, noise, commuter parking, land speculation, and redevelopment pressures, to assure the continuation of adequate access to Holy Cross Hospital, and to assure a high degree of public safety in the area. The 1978 Plan stated the following with regard to new development in Forest Glen:

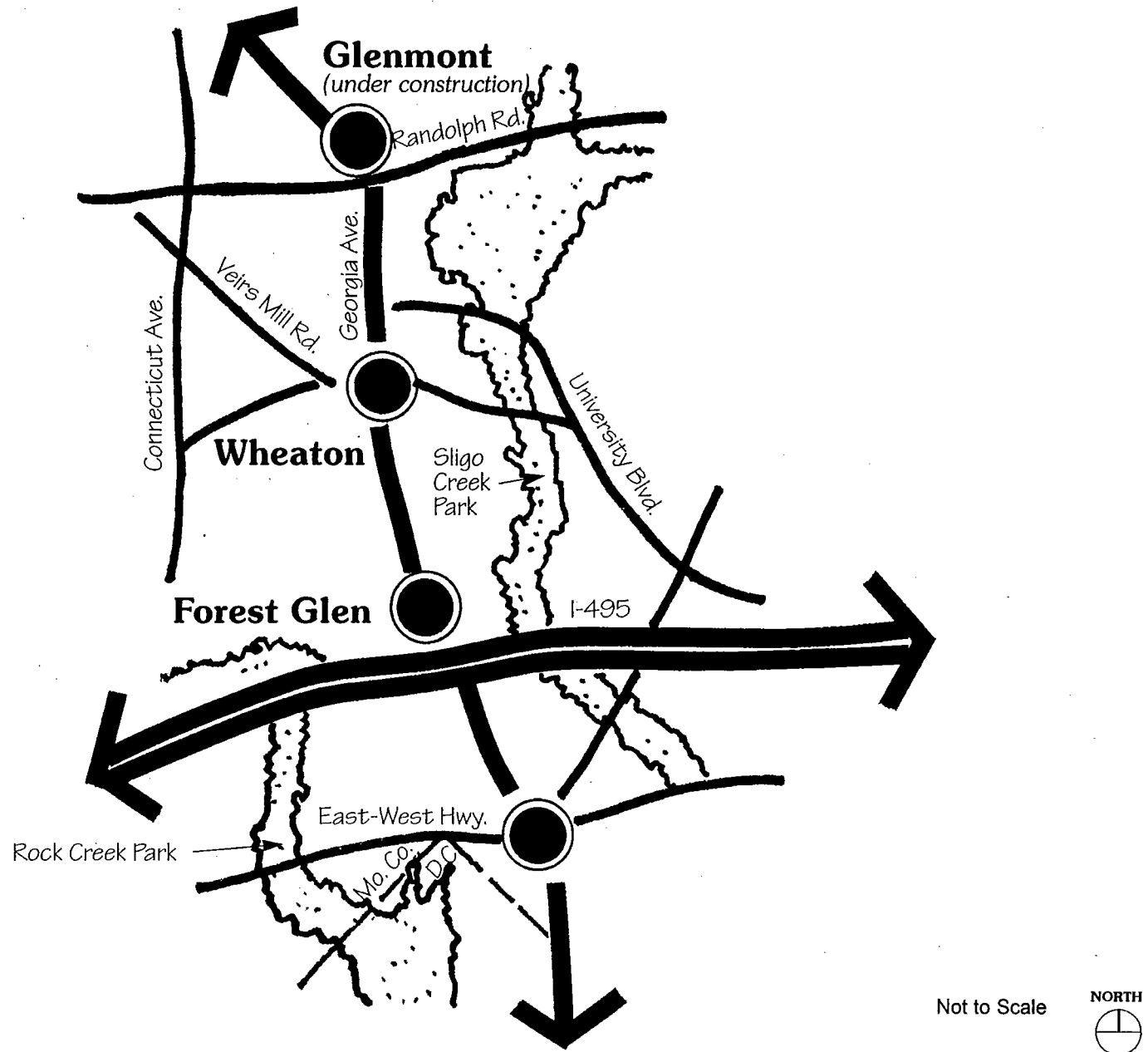
*... It appears that there is little opportunity for new development in Forest Glen. Several reasons can be cited for this, including the already extant conditions of traffic, the lack of vacant land, and the goals which seek to stabilize, preserve and protect from adverse impacts and undesirable non-residential intrusion those sound residential communities which now exist in the down-County area. Moreover, it is the stated policy of Montgomery County to channel new development in the Glenmont Corridor into Silver Spring and, to a lesser degree, into Wheaton.*

*However, it is necessary to recognize that certain conditions—especially the traffic volumes of Georgia Avenue, the size and location of Holy Cross Hospital, and the construction of the Metro station—are factors which, simply by virtue of their presence, could encourage a gradual shift in land use to higher intensity and to non-residential activities.*

In the face of anticipated pressure for redevelopment, the 1978 Sector Plan sought to identify those areas considered susceptible to development or redevelopment pressure. Such parcels include vacant or under-utilized tracts of land, large parcels held in single ownership, and parcels which confront major highways or large institutions. The 1978 Sector Plan recommended that "the predominantly low-density residential character of the Forest Glen area should be maintained. Recommendations for land use and zoning should support the retention of the existing sound and stable residential neighborhoods in Forest Glen and prevent the intrusion of disruptive

# Georgia Avenue Metro Stations

Figure 3



M-NCPPC

land uses. Any new development recommended in the Plan should be limited to vacant parcels. The Plan discourages redevelopment of properties which contain sound structures.”

## 1989 Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton

Forest Glen is one of five sector plan areas lying within the boundary of the Kensington-Wheaton Planning Area. (See Figure 4, page 8.) With one exception (a rezoning in the Town of Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan area), the sector plan areas were not examined in the 1989 *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan*.

The major points in the *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* which affect Forest Glen are summarized below.

- The *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* reflected the view that there should be a relationship between land uses within the sector plan area and those within the contiguous master plan area. The linkage of neighborhoods and commercial areas through the use of the common framework of parallel design treatment is a major objective of the *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan*. For example, similar building scale, height, and landscaping treatments can be used to assure compatibility between different land uses.
- The *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* emphasized the preservation of residential communities. For example, the *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* specifically confirmed the existing zoning of residential properties abutting major highways, with only limited exceptions.
- The *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* sought to protect residential areas from the effects of nonresidential activities located inside and outside the boundaries of the sector plan areas within Kensington-Wheaton. This policy has been implemented by making the sector plan areas large enough to

provide a buffer from the effects of commercial activity. The *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* also sought to improve the relationship between residential communities and commercial areas not located within sector plan area boundaries (e.g., the existing commercial uses along the major highways).

- One of the land use goals in the *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* was “to preserve the identity of residential areas along major highway corridors, to soften the impact of major highways on adjacent homes and to strengthen the distinction between commercial and residential uses.” An implementation technique for achieving this goal is described in the section of the *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* called “Green Corridors Policy.” In addition to creating more attractive corridors, the “Green Corridors Policy” was intended to enhance commercial stability by ameliorating the impact of these highways on residential areas. In Forest Glen, this policy should be considered for the portion of Georgia Avenue within the sector plan area.

## Maryland Planning Act of 1992

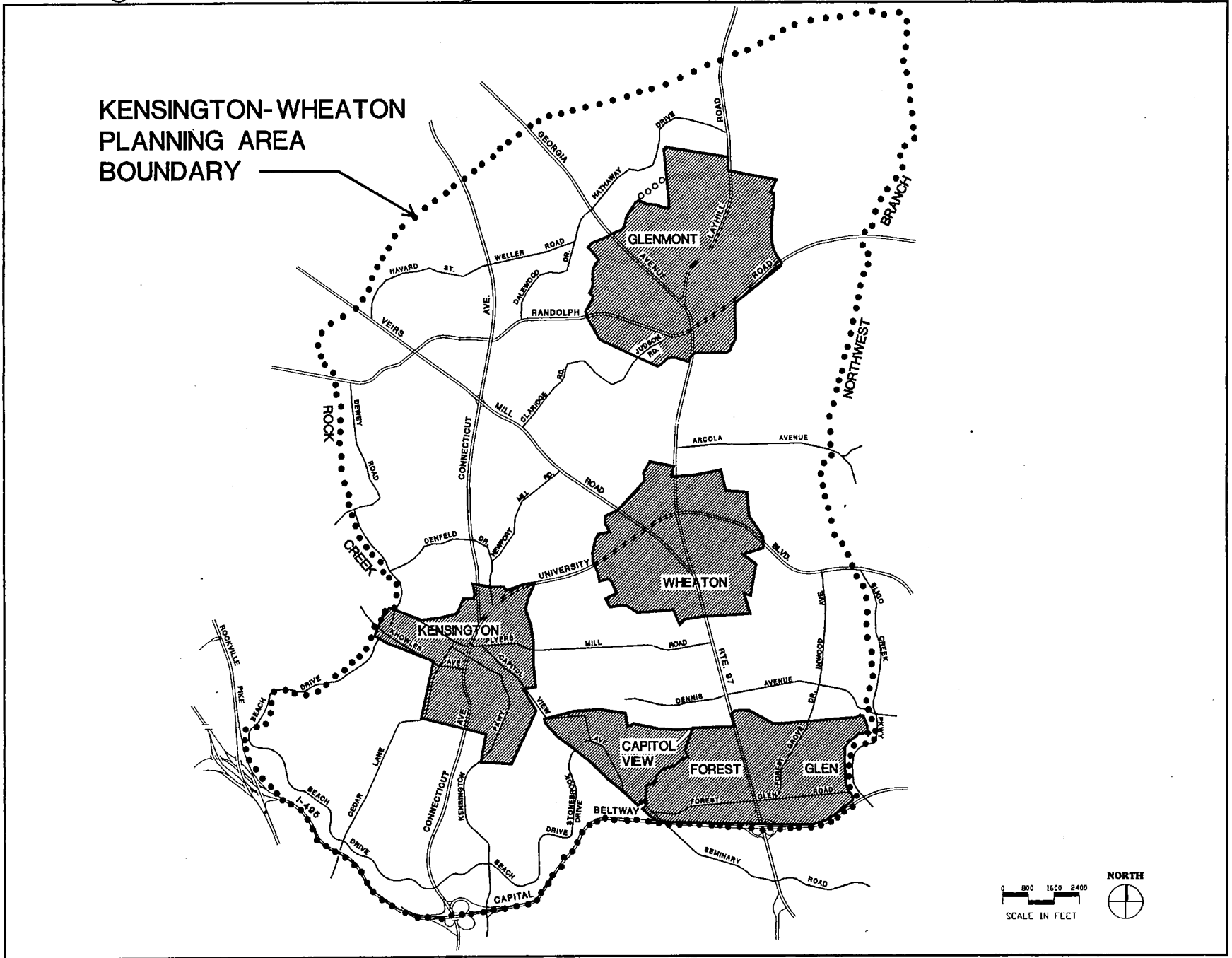
The seven visions of the Maryland Economic Development, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 (the Planning Act) are embraced and confirmed by the Forest Glen Sector Plan.

The seven visions of the State 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;

# Kensington-Wheaton Planning Area Boundary

Figure 4





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."

This Plan provides for development in suitable areas by focusing new development on key parcels near the Metrorail station. These include the Freeman and WMATA parcels, where medium density residential uses are recommended. Lower densities are recommended near environmentally sensitive areas; for example, the western portion of the sector plan area.

In addition to the Plan's conformance 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 Act as 100-year floodplains, streams and their buffer areas, habitats of threatened and endangered species, and steep slopes. The Environmental Resources chapter of this Plan, along with regulatory strategies for protecting these areas, complies with the sensitive areas requirement of the State Planning Act.

Flexible development regulations, the streamlining of the development process, and innovative economic development techniques are also required by the Planning Act. The Forest Glen Sector Plan recommends flexible development standards in certain instances where significant new development is contemplated.

## 1993 General Plan Refinement

The Forest Glen area is identified in the December 1993 Planning Board General Plan Refinement as being located in the

Urban Ring, a concept that was first established in the 1964 General Plan.

The Urban Ring is an older, well-established, and densely developed area characterized by diversity in income, ethnic, and racial composition. Within the Urban Ring there is great variety in density and character among areas. Communities in the Urban Ring are generally well maintained and many feature landmarks that identify them as distinct neighborhoods. A strong sense of community pride exists among residents in these neighborhoods of tree-lined, well-connected streets. The Urban Ring is an area in which suburban lifestyles exist, if not side by side, then very close to an urban environment. The Urban Ring is expected to remain as the County's most densely developed area.

The General Plan Refinement foresees continued growth in the Urban Ring. The challenges for the future of communities located in the Urban Ring include: accommodating additional development and redevelopment in a sensitive manner while preserving existing neighborhoods, expanding transportation options while accommodating pedestrian needs, and emphasizing development, particularly housing, in appropriate transit station areas. The General Plan Refinement designates the Urban Ring as a high priority location for new infrastructure and expects Montgomery County to avoid the creation and perpetuation of abandoned or blighted areas. In conclusion, with regard to Urban Ring communities, the General Plan Refinement states:

While encouraging continued growth in the Urban Ring, the General Plan Refinement seeks to preserve the flourishing neighborhoods already located there. The Refinement encourages the County to protect these areas from the encroachment of non-conforming land uses, excessive noise, and through traffic. It seeks to maintain and reinforce the many desirable community features that are common in the Urban Ring.