

## **II. PLANNING POLICIES**

### **A. VISION**

*The Glenmont of the future will be a transit-oriented area. A compact, mixed-use center will be the focus of community activity and establish a sense of place. New development will be concentrated around the new Metro station. Existing neighborhoods with single-family homes surrounding the new development will be preserved and protected.*

This Plan envisions Glenmont with an identifiable commercial center surrounded by residential neighborhoods that are linked to the center and to each other. The Plan envisions a cooperative, public and private approach to provide a renovated and upgraded retail environment for both the Glenmont Shopping Center and the Layhill Triangle. These areas will become attractive and convenient places to satisfy day-to-day shopping needs.

While accommodating appropriate redevelopment in close proximity to Metro, this Plan seeks to preserve and enhance the existing viable neighborhoods that surround the center and offer a variety of housing choices. The Plan reinforces the existing diverse community by creating new housing opportunities for all income groups, an element of successful mixed-use areas that is under-represented today in Glenmont.

This Plan promotes the use of alternative modes of transportation. Pedestrian and bicycle paths will provide easy and safe access to transit, retail and community facilities. Georgia Avenue will be a high quality, pedestrian-sensitive boulevard that provides safe pedestrian crossings, attractive landscaping and a greenway along its west side. Well-designed and safe sidewalks connect residential areas, community facilities, shopping, and the Metro station. Glenmont will also be a destination for those in other communities who seek to access the Metro system.

This Plan envisions Glenmont as a greener place, well served by public infrastructure. Local parks and new community facilities would enhance the status of the community and generate new economic vitality. A greenway along the west side of Georgia Avenue would soften the impacts of through traffic and provide a pleasant access to the Metro station. The Plan envisions improvements to the appearance and use of the former Glenmont Elementary School site through an appropriate public use.

### **B. PLANNING GOALS**

This Sector Plan seeks to achieve a fair and responsible balance between competing interests. In some cases, this requires balancing local interests with regional interests; in other cases, it may involve balancing the interests of adjoining property owners. Although it would be desirable to satisfy each interest fully, it is more often the case that each interest is only partly satisfied. Usually, compromise is required. The Planning Goals identified below, and the specific recommendations in the chapters which follow, reflect this reality.

1. Preserve the Glenmont community as a stable, predominantly residential community.
2. Enhance community identity by strengthening the neighborhoods within the Sector Plan area and providing additional gathering places such as community facilities, public open spaces, and pedestrian friendly streets.
3. Focus new development at appropriate locations near the Metro station consistent with the General Plan.
4. Provide a center for Glenmont to serve as a focal point and gathering place for the community.
5. Ensure that new development is compatible with the existing community.
6. Provide safe and efficient traffic circulation for local and regional travel, balancing transportation needs with the impacts on the community.
7. Provide attractive, safe, and convenient linkages to major destinations, including the Metro station and the proposed Glenmont Center, to promote walking and biking.
8. Encourage the use of the existing and future public transportation systems and reduce reliance on travel by single occupant vehicles.
9. Develop a transportation system that serves as the foundation of an emerging Center in Glenmont.
10. Assure that neighborhoods are protected from intrusive uses.
11. Support the continuity of the County's Green Corridors Policy along Georgia Avenue, Layhill Road, and Randolph Road by providing attractive, landscaped roadways.
12. Protect the edges of residential neighborhoods along busy highways.
13. Concentrate commercial uses along Georgia Avenue, Layhill Road, and Randolph Road in a limited number of key locations, as called for by the Green Corridors Policy expressed in the 1989 Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan.
14. Stop commercial blight by improving Glenmont's existing commercial area in terms of access, circulation, appearance, and economic viability.
15. Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive features and environmentally sensitive areas.

16. Protect and improve water quality in the Rock Creek and Northwest Branch watersheds.
17. Protect the residents of Glenmont from exposure to excessive noise levels and degraded air quality.

## **C. EXISTING POLICIES AND CONSTRAINTS**

### **1. 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 Glenmont 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;
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.”

Consistent with these visions, this Sector Plan provides for development in “suitable areas” by focusing the most intense uses in a transit serviceable Center. In addition to the Amendment'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.

## 2. 1993 GENERAL PLAN REFINEMENT

The Glenmont area is identified in the 1993 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. (General Plan Refinement Goals and Objectives, page 20.)

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. (General Plan Refinement Goals and Objectives, page 21.)

Consistent with this guidance, the recommendations in this Sector Plan reflect a Center and Neighborhoods concept (see Section D, below) intended to accommodate growth while preserving existing neighborhoods. This Plan focuses new development in a transit serviceable Center. At the same time, the surrounding neighborhoods are protected from intrusive uses and through traffic. Open spaces and gathering places are provided in the neighborhoods to enhance their quality of life. Pedestrian friendly streets are created so that the neighborhoods have easy access to the more intense uses in the Center, without becoming part of it. The result is a

community where residential neighborhoods coexist with an urban environment without being overwhelmed by it.

### **3. ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES ORDINANCE/ANNUAL GROWTH POLICY**

The Montgomery County Council adopted the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) in 1973 as part of the Montgomery County Subdivision Ordinance. The County uses the APFO to promote orderly growth by matching the timing of new development approval to the availability of existing or programmed public facilities needed to support that development. The Ordinance requires a review of transportation, schools, water, sewerage, police, fire, and health facilities. The APFO mandates that the Planning Board approve only those preliminary plans with adequate public facilities in place or programmed in the local or state capital improvement programs. Developers may supplement these facilities when necessary to obtain a finding of adequacy.

In 1986, the legislation was amended to permit the Council to give direct policy guidance for the administration of the APFO through a document called the Annual Growth Policy (AGP). The AGP legislation states that it “is intended to be an instrument that facilitates and coordinates the use of the various powers of government to limit or encourage growth and development in a manner that best enhances the general health, welfare and safety of the residents of the County.” For the purpose of the transportation review there is both an areawide test for adequacy--policy area review, and a nearby intersection test for adequacy--local area review.

The policy area review is reflected by the number of housing units and jobs which the Council will permit the Planning Board to approve in each of the “policy areas” established in the AGP. Glenmont is located in the Kensington-Wheaton Policy Area. As of July 1, 1997, new developments which would accommodate 1,762 dwelling units and 2,400 jobs could be approved to the extent that the individual projects pass the local area review test.

Within Glenmont, it is somewhat doubtful that any new development could be approved under standard local area review guidelines. The AGP does, however, provide alternative local area review procedures for areas designated as “Metro Station Policy Areas.” The “alternative review procedure” permits development in a Metro Station Policy Area that is under the development ceiling to be approved without the construction of intersection improvements if the developer pays a fee and joins a transportation management organization. Creation of these policy areas enables the County to pursue a goal of encouraging development in areas well-served by transit facilities.

In 1995 the County Council directed the Planning Board to perform the analysis necessary to allow the creation of a Glenmont Metro Station Policy Area. That analysis has been completed but the Planning Board has recommended that the creation of the new policy area, and the boundaries of such an area, should be decided after the Glenmont Sector Plan has been adopted. It is appropriate for this Sector Plan to provide guidance to the AGP concerning the timing, boundaries, and ceilings of a Glenmont Metro Station Policy Area. Such guidance can be found in the Implementation chapter of this Sector Plan.

## **D. PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

### **1. CENTER AND NEIGHBORHOODS CONCEPT**

Unlike most master/sector plans, this comprehensive amendment to the 1978 Glenmont Sector Plan is organized geographically rather than functionally. All of the recommendations affecting a geographic area—whether they are land use, urban design, transportation, or community facility recommendations—can be found together in a single section of this Plan. Only the environmental recommendations are identified separately since they tend to address regional concerns.

Geographically, this Plan is divided into two basic units: a center and the surrounding neighborhoods. (See Figure 5.) The Glenmont Center is intended to serve as a focal point for the community and promote a sense of place within the community. In addition to the new Metro station, the Center should include a mix of uses with particular emphasis on Transit Oriented Development. Gathering places and pedestrian friendly streets are also key elements of a viable Center.

Surrounding the proposed Center is a ring of stable residential neighborhoods. Although these neighborhoods already exist—in contrast to the proposed Center—it is critical that they be strengthened so that they will continue to be viable elements of the Glenmont community.

### **2. CIRCULATION SYSTEM**

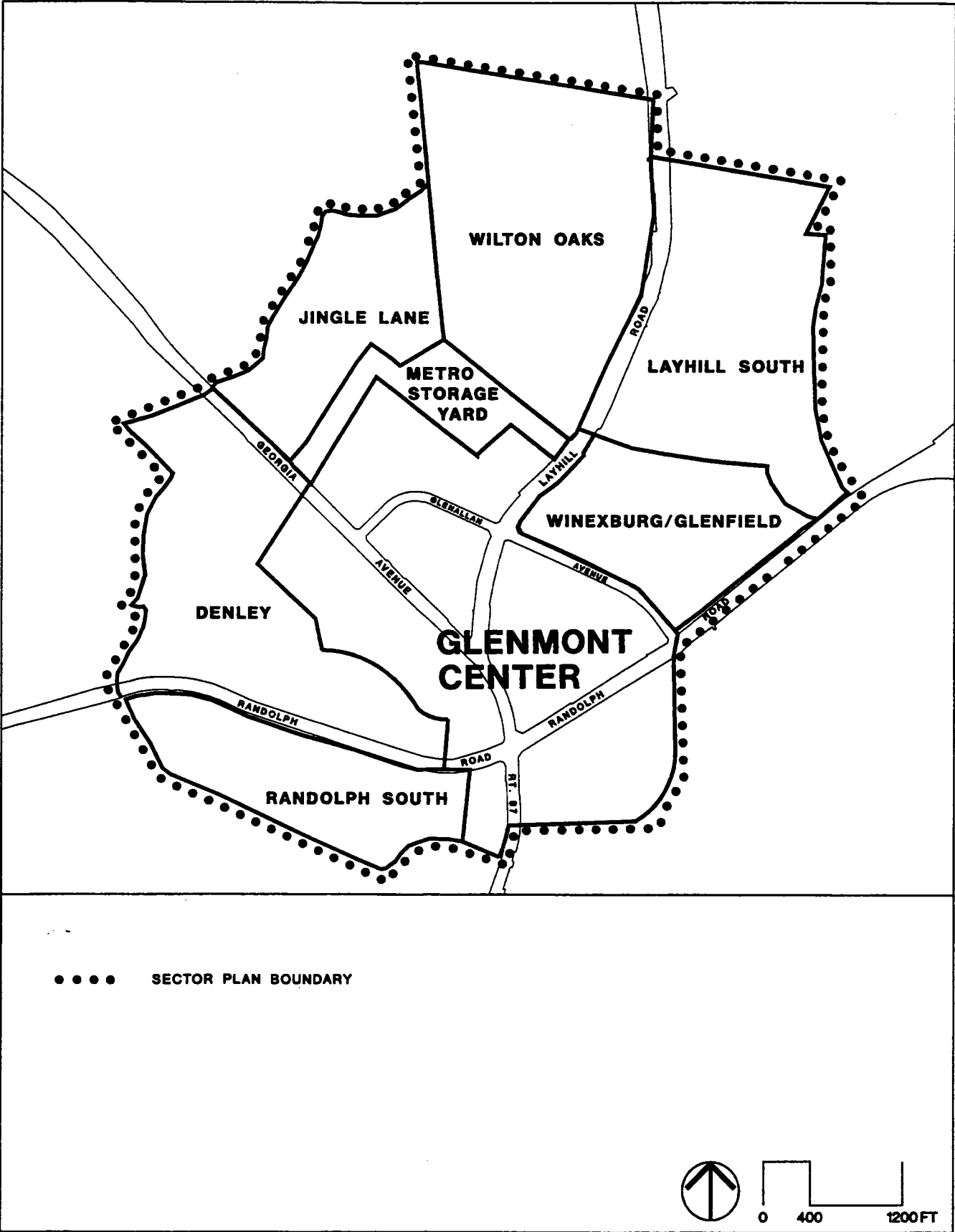
As the title indicates, the focus of this Sector Plan is a transit station impact area. The opening of the Glenmont Metro station is indeed a watershed event for Glenmont. It also marks the completion of the Red Line in Montgomery County.

Metrorail, the Metro and Ride-On bus systems, and the proposed transitway from Glenmont to Olney form a transit system that is integral to the future of Glenmont. Much of the development recommended in Chapter III is specifically designed to take maximum advantage of proximity to these facilities; for this reason, it is referred to as Transit Oriented Development, or TOD.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that motor vehicles will continue to be an important and pervasive form of transportation. In addition to the traffic generated by Glenmont residents and workers, it is anticipated that some commuters who would otherwise not drive through Glenmont will drive there to access the Metro system at its northeastern terminus; a new parking garage awaits them. The availability of public transit notwithstanding, many other commuters will also drive through Glenmont on their way to employment centers elsewhere. Unfortunately, congestion levels on Georgia Avenue in Glenmont are not expected to improve significantly after the Metro station opens in 1998. Factors which will combine to maintain high levels of congestion include growth in regional traffic volumes, new development within the Glenmont Sector area, Glenmont's new status as a destination for residents to the north seeking to access the Metro system, and the Red Line's limited benefit in terms of east-west travel. As discussed in Chapter III, a decision not to build the Intercounty Connector could also impact traffic volumes in Glenmont.

# CENTER & NEIGHBORHOODS CONCEPT

FIGURE 5



Walking and bicycling are also important forms of transportation, particularly useful for short trips. This Plan provides for comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle systems to interconnect the various parts of Glenmont and to provide connections to regional trails.

The circulation system in this Sector Plan therefore incorporates all modes of travel. Individuals will be encouraged to use transit facilities to reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles and maximize the public investment in transit. It is acknowledged, however, that individuals will utilize that mode (or modes) which enable them to reach their destinations as quickly and inexpensively as possible. The various alternatives available under the Glenmont circulation system recognize that reality.

### **3. HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The Glenmont area does not include any properties currently designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* or the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites*. During the 1989 Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan process, several *Atlas* resources were studied; however, none were found to merit designation and they were removed from the *Atlas*. This Plan does not propose any changes to previous historic designations and specifically reaffirms those earlier actions.

There has been some citizen interest in an evaluation of the former Glenmont Elementary School. It may be appropriate to evaluate this property for historic designation in the future.