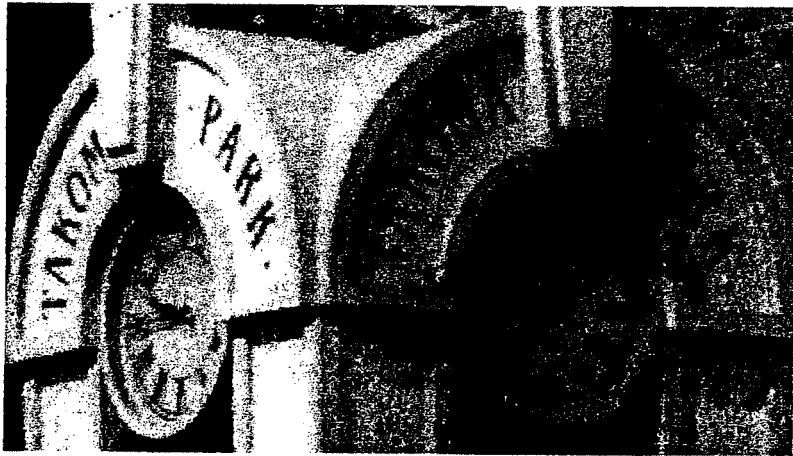


# Plan Introduction





# PLANNING CONTEXT

Montgomery County, Maryland, is one of the most prosperous jurisdictions in the country. The County offers an excellent public school system, extensive park resources, proximity to cultural amenities in Washington, D.C., and a wide variety of employment opportunities, including the federal government, high-tech and biotechnology firms, as well as major corporate, education, and research organizations.

Takoma Park is part of the County's "Urban Ring," which also includes the Silver Spring CBD and the central business districts (CBD) of Bethesda, Friendship Heights, and Wheaton. The Urban Ring, a concept first established in the 1964 *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District Within Montgomery and Prince George's Counties* and reconfirmed in the 1993 General Plan Refinement, is the more intensively developed area of Montgomery County nearest Washington, D.C.

The General Plan is based on a "wedges and corridors" concept of regional land use development. Six corridors of urban development radiate 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. This concept has shaped the County's land use pattern for more than three decades by channeling growth into development and transportation corridors, with the Urban Ring in lower Montgomery County as the most densely developed area.

The Urban Ring communities inside the Capital Beltway in Montgomery County have been designated as part of the State's Smart Growth initiative, a program that focuses development funds and incentives in appropriate growth areas and limits development in agricultural and other resource areas.

## ***Smart Growth Program***

### *What is Smart Growth?*

Smart Growth is a State program that invests public funds in older urban areas, revitalizing and maintaining them as desirable places to live, work, and spend time. The State of Maryland is moving forward with short- and long-term solutions to improve specific locations and is developing a comprehensive approach to balancing the demands of growth, and traffic with quality of life.

### *Why use Smart Growth?*

Using public funds to encourage private investment in urban areas preserves rural and suburban open space, and maximizes investments already made in urban infrastructure such as roads, transit and water and sewerage systems.

### *How can it work in Silver Spring/Takoma Park?*

The Silver Spring/Takoma Park community-based planning area is ideally positioned to become a premier Smart Growth community by providing a mix of land uses—housing, retail, jobs, transit access, and civic opportunities—that will support, sustain, and enliven community life.

# THE ROLE OF A MASTER PLAN

A master plan provides comprehensive recommendations and guidelines for the use of land within its boundaries. Each master plan reflects a vision of future development that responds to the unique character of the local community within the context of County-wide policies. It addresses physical planning issues, such as land use, zoning, transportation, parks, community facilities, and bikeway and pedestrian connections. Master plans are updated every 10-20 years, recognizing that circumstances change and that the specifics of a plan may become less relevant over time.

Master plans include text, design guidelines, graphics, and maps. Generally, graphics in an adopted master plan are for illustrative purposes and are intended to convey a general sense of desirable future character rather than a specific commitment to a particular detailed design.

A master plan is created over time with the input and participation of community members, residents and business people, and with discussion between City, County, and State agencies. Developing a plan is a process that educates, prompting thought and self-definition; it culminates in a commitment to the community's future. Once the plan is approved by the County Council and adopted by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), the rezoning process and special studies needed to implement the plan's recommendations are begun. Definitions of selected master plan terminology is found in Appendix C.

# THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

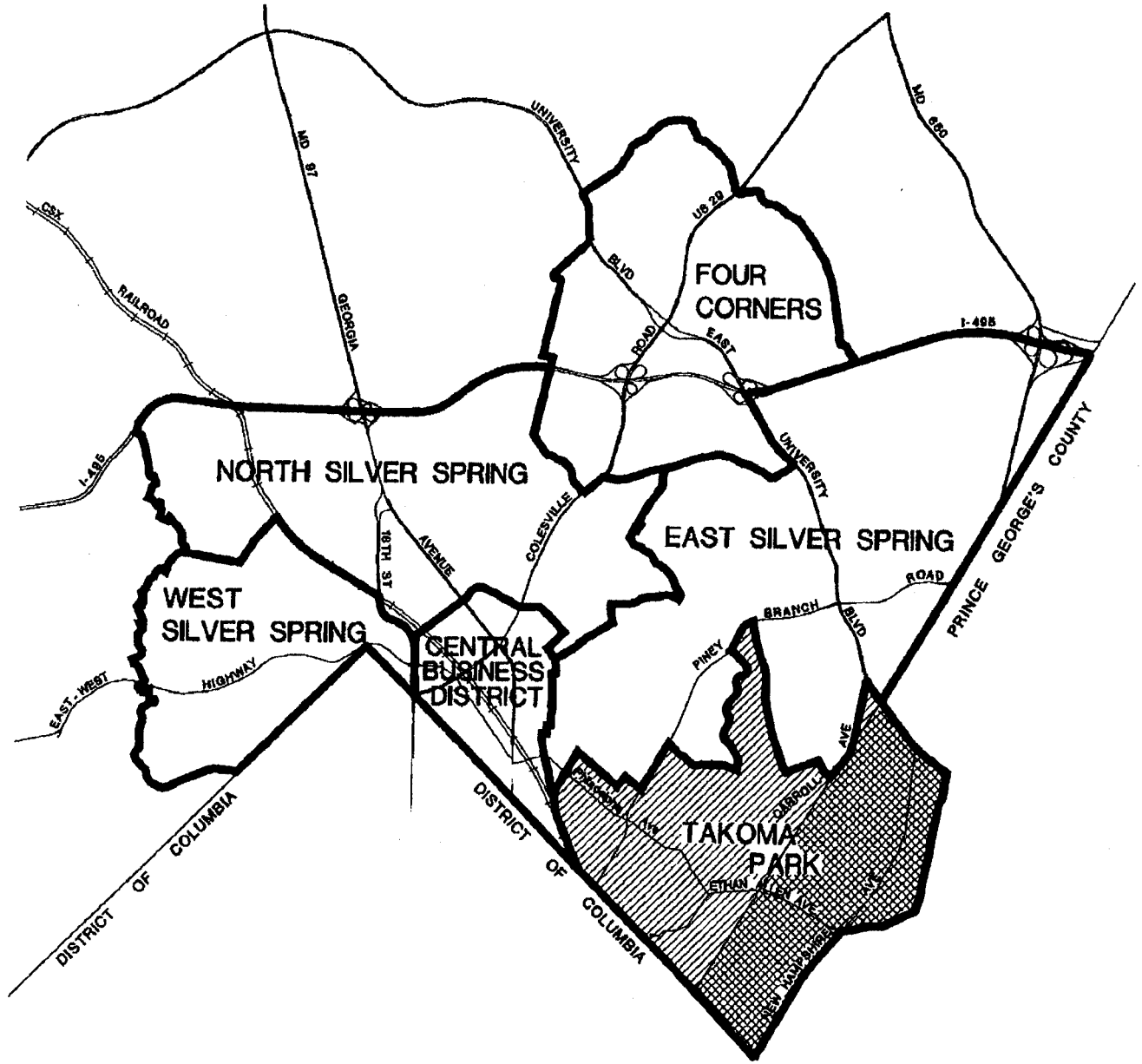
The Silver Spring/Takoma Park community-based planning area covers the portion of Montgomery County that is generally located between the Capital Beltway and the District of Columbia, east of Rock Creek Park and west of Prince George's County. It encompasses several community master plan areas: East Silver Spring, Four Corners, North Silver Spring, the Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD), Takoma Park, and West Silver Spring (see Map 3). All master plans in the Silver Spring/Takoma Park planning area are being updated, except Four Corners, which was adopted in late 1996. Keeping the master plan updates on parallel schedules allows planners to share information and make recommendations that are consistent among plans. It also enables County staff and community groups to focus their energies on the shared issues in this part of the County.




The City of Takoma Park is located in the southeastern corner of Montgomery County, adjacent to Prince George's County and the District of Columbia. The *Takoma Park Master Plan*, covering most of the City of Takoma Park, was adopted in May 1982. Because the City of Takoma Park was located in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, the Master Plan was prepared as a bi-County effort by staff of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The *Sector Plan for the Takoma Park Transit Impact Area* was adopted in July 1974. The *Master Plan for Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt* was adopted in 1989. Together, these Plans established a vision for Takoma Park that emphasized preservation of existing neighborhoods, upgrading of commercial areas, and adequacy of public facilities and transportation services. The Sector Plan also envisioned transit oriented redevelopment in the Takoma Old Town area.

In the 1990's, several events led to the annexation of additional area into the City of Takoma Park and the unification of all of the City within the bounds of Montgomery County, Maryland (see Map 3). Because of differences between the Zoning Ordinances of both counties, several amendments were adopted to the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance to retain most of the existing property rights which owners of property formerly in Prince George's County had enjoyed. An expiration date was incorporated in some of these amendments so that the extension of existing property rights is due to expire on July 1, 2001. As a result, this Master Plan addresses how such properties should be viewed in the future.

Prior to initiation of the Takoma Park Master Plan, an agreement was reached between the City of Takoma Park and the Montgomery County Planning Board to guide the preparation of the Master Plan. The agreement outlined the means of coordination between the City of Takoma Park and Planning staff at M-NCPPC. At specific points in the process, the agreement identified opportunities for public involvement in preparing the Master Plan and points of interaction with the Takoma Park City Council. The process included briefings of the City Council and City Council testimony at the Planning Board public hearing.

The City of Takoma Park is a municipality, incorporated in 1890, with a council/city manager form of government. The City has full-service police and public works departments, and an independent public library. It also provides recreation, code enforcement, landlord-tenant, economic and community development, and neighborhood planning services. Although the building permits process is handled by Montgomery County, the City has stormwater review authority and requires permits for tree removal and curb cuts. M-NCPPC has planning and zoning authority, but the City also has adopted transportation, open space and neighborhood plans that are implemented by the City. City, County, and M-NCPPC staff perform complementary planning, development review, and environmental protection functions.



-  Master Plan Boundary
-  Takoma Park
-  Takoma Park Unification Area

Not To Scale 

## **OUTREACH PROGRAM**

The Takoma Park Master Plan was prepared under the streamlined process approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board and the County Council in September 1997 and described in *The Master Planning Process* report published by the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning. As part of this process, a Master Plan Advisory Group (MPAG) was appointed by the Planning Board. The MPAG included residents as well as people with other interests in Takoma Park. A draft Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report was presented to the Planning Board in May 1998 and, after input from the MPAG and the community, was approved by the Board in July 1998. The Purpose and Outreach Strategy report identified those issues to be addressed in the Master Plan and described the strategy for obtaining public input during the process.

The MPAG members met with staff on a regular basis, discussing a broad range of issues during the development of the Master Plan. Community workshops and forums were also held to broaden public participation opportunities in the planning process.

A Draft Illustrative Concept Plan, a graphic illustration of major master plan themes, was developed with community and MPAG input and presented at a community workshop. The MPAG and staff then began to identify and evaluate master plan alternatives. During this process, a Technical Working Group (TWG) composed of staff from relevant City, County, and State agencies, as well as Park and Planning staff, provided valuable input on implementation issues associated with master plan alternatives and preliminary recommendations.

During the development of this Plan, several other initiatives provided valuable information about the Takoma Park communities. A telephone survey conducted in English and Spanish provided information about the concerns and opinions of Silver Spring and Takoma Park residents. An economic health assessment of the area's retail activities was prepared, as was an assessment of housing and the resident population. A transportation and circulation report was prepared to look comprehensively at the overall circulation system in the five Silver Spring/Takoma Park master plan areas. (See report in Appendix G.)

## **OVERARCHING ISSUES**

Both the Takoma Park and the East Silver Spring Master Plans were updated at the same time so that issues that are common to both areas could be addressed collectively. Such issues include apartment zoning, commercial and institutional centers, community facilities, parks, traffic circulation, and pedestrian and bikeway connections.

Issues that are specific to Takoma Park are addressed in this Plan, thereby reflecting the unique aspects of the diverse Silver Spring/Takoma Park communities. Since this Plan addresses an area totally within the City of Takoma Park, there are issues of special interest to the municipality. Such issues include zoning related to the recent unification, commercial center coordination with adjacent jurisdictions, neighborhood park and community service needs, and neighborhood circulation needs.

## **NEXT STEPS**

After data collection, community outreach, and MPAG meetings, recommendations that reflected a balanced response to the needs of the Takoma Park community were developed and presented in a Staff Draft Master Plan.

The Staff Draft was reviewed by the Planning Board and approved for release as a Public Hearing Draft, with any necessary modifications, for public comment at a public hearing. The Board held worksessions to review testimony and the Plan's recommendations. The Planning Board recommended the Planning Board Draft Master Plan to the County Council.

The County Council conducted a similar review process, including a public hearing and worksessions. The County Executive prepared a fiscal analysis of the Master Plan's recommendations. After close scrutiny and appropriate modifications, the Plan was approved by the County Council and adopted by the M-NCPPC. Once the Master Plan is adopted, a Sectional Map Amendment application will be prepared and filed to implement the zoning recommended by the Plan.



## **THE TAKOMA PARK MASTER PLAN PROCESS**

### **Phase One**

Undertake detailed data collection, technical analysis, map preparation, and community information gathering; undertake Silver Spring/Takoma Park telephone survey

### **Phase Two**

Develop Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report and form Master Plan Advisory Groups (MPAGs)

### **Phase Three**

Finalize Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report; form Technical Working Group(TWG)

### **Phase Four**

Develop draft Illustrative Concept Plan; meet with MPAGs and TWG, hold community workshops; develop Master Plan recommendations

### **Phase Five**

Prepare and finalize Staff Draft Master Plan; present to the Planning Board

### **Phase Six**

Hold Planning Board Public Hearing and Worksessions; transmit Final Draft Master Plan and Framework for Action for the County Council and County Executive

### **Phase Seven**

Receive County Executive comment and fiscal impact analysis on the Final Draft Master Plan and Framework for Action

### **Phase Eight**

Hold County Council Public Hearing and Worksessions; approve Master Plan and Framework for Action

### **Phase Nine**

Plan adopted by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

### **Phase Ten**

Plan implementation monitored through the Framework for Action and the Master Plan Status Report

Each phase of this process involved consultation with the City of Takoma Park, and several phases involved formal participation by the City.

A two-thirds majority vote of the Planning Board of Montgomery County is required to take any action relating to land use planning within the City of Takoma Park that is contrary to a resolution of the Mayor and City Council of Takoma Park.

