



# Westbard Sector Plan



Public Hearing Draft August 2015

MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION



## **Abstract**

This Plan contains the text and supporting maps for a comprehensive amendment to the approved and adopted 1982 Westbard Sector Plan. It also amends the General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, as amended; the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways within Montgomery County as amended; the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan, as amended; the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, as amended; the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan; and the Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan.

This Plan makes recommendations for land use, zoning, transportation, ecology, sustainability, urban design, community facilities and parks, trails and open space.

## **Sources of Copies**

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Online at [montgomeryplanning.org/community/westbard](http://montgomeryplanning.org/community/westbard)



# Westbard Sector Plan

Prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Department

[MontgomeryPlanning.org](http://MontgomeryPlanning.org)

**Public Hearing Draft August 2015**

MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Westbard, located in the southern part of Montgomery County, is an active mixed-use center surrounded by established residential neighborhoods near the District of Columbia, Friendship Heights and Downtown Bethesda. Convenient shopping centers, one of the few remaining light industrial districts in the Bethesda area and the popular Capital Crescent Trail are among its current assets. What was once a small African-American community in the 1870s now has a population of 1,970 residents inside the boundaries of this Sector Plan and 19,960 residents in the surrounding communities.

Westbard has experienced little change or new development over the past 30 years. The few changes to its physical environment have been guided by a series of County Master and Sector Plans identifying general goals for development on about 181 acres within the Sector Plan boundaries. These plans include specific recommendations for improving individual properties, streets and open spaces, and spurred the creation of the Capital Crescent Trail.

The previous Sector Plan for the area, approved in 1982, is the oldest in the County and many of its concepts have not been implemented. The need to take a fresh look at Westbard in light of anticipated demographic changes and infrastructure that is aging led the County Planning Department to take a holistic approach to refreshing the 1982 Sector Plan and, with community feedback, produce the recommendations in this document.

The new Westbard Sector Plan re-assesses and updates the goals and achievements of the 1982 Plan to provide guidance for the next 20 years. It addresses new challenges in the Westbard area, including changes in traffic, housing demand and office and retail trends.

This Sector Plan also seeks to fulfill the goals of the 1982 Sector Plan that were never realized, including streetscape improvements to River Road and Westbard Avenue, environmental enhancements to the Willett Branch stream and addition of much needed green spaces.

# 1.1 Westbard Today

## 1.1.1 A Brief History

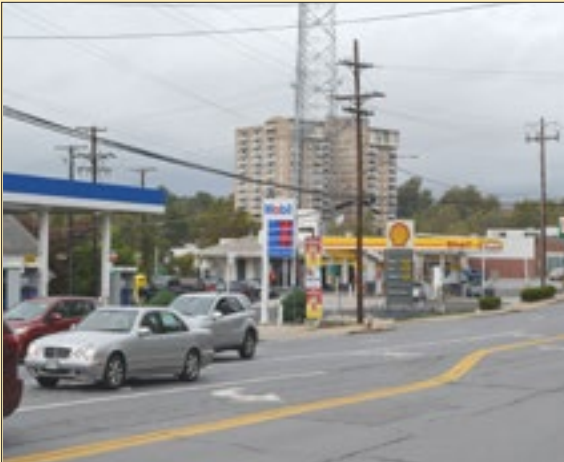
The 1982 Westbard Sector Plan attempted to reconcile industrial uses along an existing freight rail line with the need to preserve nearby residential communities. To further this goal, the 1982 Sector Plan made land use and zoning recommendations that proposed eliminating heavy industrial uses, while encouraging the retention of existing, community-serving light industrial uses. It also encouraged the planned development of mid-rise residential buildings and offices to the north of River Road, retention of local serving retail uses and addition of parkland and streetscape improvements to River Road.

The mix of residential, office and industrial uses that characterized Westbard at the time of the 1982 Sector Plan remains largely in place today. River Road is mostly devoted to retail, including Whole Foods and American Plant Food, and high-rise residential uses. Interior properties adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail right-of-way are used for auto repair, light industrial and other services. The Westwood Shopping Center remains a popular neighborhood retail destination.

The 1982 Plan's goals of eliminating incompatible heavy industrial uses adjacent to the existing single-family homes and encouraging uses that better serve the residents and landowners of Westbard have been largely fulfilled. The Plan's design concepts for improving the public realm, however, remain largely unrealized. These projects, including green spaces, the creation of a boulevard on River Road and improving the water quality of Willett Branch, were not implemented because they were not funded by the County's Capital Improvements Program and/or the market did not make major redevelopment feasible. They are now being addressed in this update to the 1982 Sector Plan.

## 1.1.2 Strengths and Challenges

Westbard offers many opportunities to the residents, landowners and business owners who live and work in the area. It is part of the original suburban ring of development that took place around the District of Columbia, starting in the 1920s.



*River Road today, looking west*

### *HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad:** Westbard is a mixed-use district that developed initially as industrial land bisected by the B&O Railroad's Metro Southern Branch. The rail line – known also as the Georgetown Branch – began construction in 1892 and was completed in 1910. The B&O Railroad's plan for passenger service never materialized and the line was used exclusively for freight, thus spurring the Westbard area's initial development as an industrial center.



The area serves as a location for many light industrial uses, including auto repair shops, landscape contractors, electronics repair and metalworking shops. The industrially zoned properties also host caterers, veterinarians and dog kennels, and several self-storage facilities.

These businesses replaced heavier industrial uses, such as rock quarries, concrete plants, stone working facilities and fuel oil storage and distribution, that were established in the early 20th century. These previous uses led to environmental challenges that will have to be addressed before redevelopment of some of these properties can take place.

Today, the Westbard area has many local and regional positive attributes:

- Westbard’s location is a short drive by vehicle to Downtown Bethesda, Friendship Heights and Washington, DC.
- A public middle school and a library offer shared recreational fields and other facilities, such as community meeting space.
- The Capital Crescent Trail bisecting the Sector Plan area provides easy bicycle access to Bethesda and Washington, DC.
- Two Metrorail stations are within a short drive, bus or bike ride from Westbard.
- There are a number of very successful and heavily-used retail centers and individual businesses.
- The Willett Branch runs through the entire Sector Plan area from north to south. Mostly contained within concrete channels, this stream presents the unique opportunity of being naturalized into an accessible natural park amenity in the middle of a suburban community.
- Westbard is of a size and a scale that offers the opportunity to create a more walkable community.
- Westbard has room for expanding green space and parkland, including new community gathering space.

#### *HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**Residential Development:** The first significant residential development in the Westbard area did not arrive until the 1920s, when the Kennedy-Chamberlin Development Company created the Kenwood Country Club and constructed the adjacent Kenwood subdivision. Extreme demand for development in the post-World War II era led to the transformation of greater Bethesda from farmland to dense subdivisions. The County’s population grew from under 90,000 in 1946 to nearly 580,000 by 1974. Surrounding Westbard are the suburban neighborhoods of Springfield, Sumner and Massachusetts Avenue Hills that date largely from the 1950s.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Westbard transformed into a mixed-use center. Dating from the 1950s are public facilities on Westbard Avenue; Western High School (1951) (now Westland Middle School) and Little Falls Library (1959), and a cluster of churches along Massachusetts Avenue, including Little Flower Catholic Church (1952), Pilgrim Lutheran (1957) and Saint Dunstan’s Episcopal (1958).

#### **Among the challenges in the Westbard area are:**

- River Road and Massachusetts Avenue, major arterials, funnel thousands of cars each day through the Sector Plan area. Within this area, River Road has more than 30 curb cuts that make traffic unsafe and unnecessarily congested, and present safety concerns for pedestrians, cars and cyclists.
- More development will challenge the existing road network and require additional transportation options.
- Additional residential units inhabited by families with children could put stress on local public schools already constrained by increased

student enrollment generated by the existing neighborhood.

- Many former industrial properties are negatively affected by past uses, requiring environmental remediation and/or limiting the potential for future uses other than industrial.
- Lack of modern stormwater management systems has led to degraded water quality and habitat.
- Expansive, impermeable asphalt parking lots have increased the heat island effect.
- The many light industrial uses currently serving the Westbard population have few local relocation opportunities and probably will remain in place in the short term.
- Public transit options within Westbard are limited.

### 1.1.3 Plan Area Boundary

The Westbard Sector Plan area is generally bounded by Massachusetts Avenue to the south, Little Falls Parkway to the east, Dorset Avenue to the north and residential neighborhood of Springfield to the west.

### 1.1.4 Outreach

Planning Department staff conducted extensive outreach programs since the planning effort began in July 2014. In July, August and September, staff was available at the Westwood Shopping Center and at the Whole Foods (Kenwood Station) to answer questions from the community. In fall 2014, staff held community meetings to describe the Sector Plan process.

From November 10-18, 2014, staff staged a week-long charrette, an intensive design workshop, with all the major stakeholders in the community. Participants included individual citizens and representatives from citizen's associations, property owners, business owners and local, state and federal agencies. More than 200 residents participated on a daily basis.

From this charrette came the Concept Framework Plan that established the general recommendations for new



*Westbard is characterized by large areas of impervious asphalt and rooftops, with little green open space.*

connections, housing, retail and public open spaces in the Westbard area. These recommendations were presented to the Planning Board on December 18, 2014. During the early months of 2015, Planning staff continued to meet with stakeholders to get additional feedback that helped refine the recommendations.

On April 30, 2015, the revised Concept Framework Plan was reviewed by the Planning Board. Staff outlined how the Westbard Sector Plan had changed in response to feedback from stakeholders and the transportation consultant.

All the ideas and work noted above were folded into the Working Draft of the Sector Plan.



*Westbard Charrette, November 2014*



Figure 1.1.1: Aerial Photo of Westbard



# 1.2 Westbard Tomorrow

## 1.2.1 Vision

In 2035, the residents of Westbard and surrounding neighborhoods will enjoy a vibrant village center that provides the community with greatly improved quality of life. They will be able to walk and bike safely on tree-lined streets to stores, offices and their favorite restaurants. Residents will walk or ride the Capital Crescent Trail to do light shopping, drop off a library book and enjoy a cup of coffee or a meal at a sidewalk cafe.

Walking alongside the restored Willett Branch will lead past the stream's clean water and shaded banks to community recreation facilities. Private shuttle bus service will provide quick access to Metrorail and Purple Line light rail stations in Bethesda and Friendship Heights for commuting to jobs or regional destinations.

The Westbard community is enhanced by building on its assets-- proximity to Downtown Bethesda, Friendship Heights and the District of Columbia; conveniently located shopping centers and industrial businesses; and established residential neighborhoods and civic institutions.

The neighborhood scale and amenities of Westbard are retained and the community is revitalized through a diversity of uses, transportation connections and environmental upgrades. Affordable housing, a variety of stores and restaurants, and numerous parks and open spaces will turn Westbard into a more vibrant, greener place in which to live, work and play.







### 1.2.2 Plan Framework

The goals of the Sector Plan are to provide the land use, zoning and urban design recommendations that will incentivize property owners to make investments and improve the quality of life in Westbard. These recommendations include:

- Transforming existing streets into multi-modal transitways and adding new connections.
- Preserving and enhancing local retail.
- Retaining light industrial uses.
- Designing mixed-use buildings that offer residents a range of retail, office and housing options.
- Providing housing options that will allow residents to age in place.
- Adding a network of green open spaces connected by trails and bikeways that provides places for outdoor recreation, gathering and relaxation.
- Renovating the Willett Branch stream into a major amenity that will become a unifying feature of the community.
- Increasing affordable housing options.



*Street with wide, tree-shaded sidewalks*



*A mixed-use building with housing and retail*

### 1.2.3 Optional Method Density Public Benefits Projects

- Provide an green open space (approximately ½-acre) within the Westwood Shopping Center site.
- Realign Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road to create a clear gateway into the retail area and protect single-family neighborhoods.
- Create a green urban park at the intersection of re-aligned Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road.
- Restore Willett Branch as a stream amenity and provide a pedestrian trail connector within Westbard. Use easements to preclude further encroachment and an amenity fund to finance these projects.



*Green open spaces for recreation and relaxation*



*A naturalized stream can create an attractive amenity*

**Table 1.2.1: Rental Units in Westbard Sector Plan Area**

Existing Units	469
Existing Rent Restricted Units	43
Potential New Units	2096
Min. 12.5% moderately priced dwelling units in new construction	262



# WHAT WILL WESTBARD BE LIKE IN 20 YEARS?



A green, mixed-use, walkable center



...with strengthened **connectivity**



...and this is how we get there...

Sidewalks,  
trails and  
bikeways

Green  
space  
network

Housing  
diversity and  
affordability

Improved  
street  
connections

Appropriate  
density and  
scale

**Table 1.2.2: Specific Short-Term Recommendations**

Description	Category
Provide a Central Civic Green (approximately ½-acre) within the Westwood Shopping Center site.	Parks
Provide a neighborhood green urban park at the intersection of re-aligned Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road.	Parks
Realign Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road to create a clear gateway into the retail area and protect single-family neighborhoods.	Transportation
Transform Westbard Avenue into a multi-use, pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined street with wide sidewalks and on-street parking where practicable.	Transportation
Create a pedestrian/vehicular connection between River Road and Westbard Avenue at the American Plant Food and Roof Center sites to provide another connection between the two streets and act as a gateway to the naturalized Willett Branch Urban Greenway.	Transportation
Provide private shuttle bus service between Westbard and Metrorail stations in Bethesda and Friendship Heights to supplement the existing public transit systems.	Transportation
Restore Willett Branch as a stream amenity and provide a pedestrian trail connector within Westbard. Use easements to preclude further encroachment, and an amenity fund to help finance these projects.	Environment
Reduce and control invasive plant species in the area.	Environment
Provide new storm water treatment systems and improve existing systems.	Environment
Provide affordable housing above the County’s minimum moderately priced dwelling unit (MPDU) requirement.	Housing
Provide local housing options for active seniors who are seeking to downsize from single-family homes.	Housing
Provide incentives for local assisted-living facilities. Provide senior housing options.	Housing
Maximize moderately priced dwelling unit (MPDU) options for new construction.	Housing
Preserve existing, local-serving light industrial uses.	Land Use
Maintain existing, local-serving retail establishments.	Land Use



**Table 1.2.3: Specific Long-Term Recommendations**

Description	Category
Provide a Countywide Urban Recreational Park adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail that could include a skate park, a pump track and a dog park.	Parks
Extend a hard surface trail from the Capital Crescent Trail to the Whole Foods site.	Parks
Provide a park or open space at the Whole Foods site if it redevelops.	Parks
Add community facilities, including civic buildings, recreational facilities and new school facilities, if needed.	Parks
Establish a new entrance to the Capital Crescent Trail between Whole Foods and Washington Episcopal School.	Parks
Enhance the existing park system and improve environmental stewardship through educational partnerships with local schools and community groups.	Parks
Incorporate a hierarchy of parks, public and private open spaces, and facilities which incorporate gathering places of varying sizes, serving all community members and visitors.	Parks
Provide plantings to complete Westbard’s Greenway network along the Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Parkway.	Parks
Create a road connection between River Road and Westbard Avenue, adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail, to provide access to businesses and improve access to the Capital Crescent Trail.	Transportation
Transform River Road into a multi-use, pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined boulevard with consolidated entry points to properties fronting River Road.	Transportation
When Washington Episcopal School redevelops, renovate the associated portion of Willett Branch to restore the flood plain and provide a trail connection to the Little Falls Stream Valley and Capital Crescent Trail.	Environment
Promote green roofs on buildings.	Environment
Meet forest mitigation requirements generated within Westbard as a priority where applicable, through retention, native plantings and invasive removal.	Environment
Seek a 50 percent canopy cover goal for all roads and at-grade parking lots.	Environment
Provide additional workforce housing.	Housing
Provide housing options for those who do not meet minimum income requirement for the MPDU program.	Housing
Provide for a mix of housing options and unit sizes for millennials and young adults.	Housing
Provide the kinds and types of retail that will meet market demand and maintain a lively retail environment	Land Use

- Provide private shuttle bus service between Westbard and Metrorail stations in Bethesda and Friendship Heights to supplement the existing public transit systems.
- Transform Westbard Avenue into a multi-use, pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined street with wide sidewalks and on-street parking where practicable.
- Create a road connection between River Road and Westbard Avenue, adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail, to provide access to businesses and improve access to the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Transform River Road into a multi-use, pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined boulevard with consolidated entry points to properties fronting River Road.



*A concept for a naturalized stream in Los Angeles*

### 1.2.4 Schools

There is concern among local residents that the Sector Plan will result in enrollment increases that will overcrowd the existing public school system that presently serves the Westbard Sector Plan area. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has several approaches for addressing increased student enrollment:

- Re-open closed school sites.
- Build additions to schools capable of expansion.
- Consider minor redistricting.
- Locate a new school site.
- Provide significant additional infrastructure to support MCPS recreation.



*Rendering of naturalized Willett Branch*



*Willett Branch base plan*



Figure 1.2.1: Concept Framework Plan







# Chapter 2: Areawide Approach

# 2.1 Land Use and Zoning

## 2.1.1 Land Use

### *A. Introduction*

In 2014, the Montgomery County Council approved a new zoning ordinance, one that encourages better development, enhances compatibility, promotes sustainability and supports our County Master Plans. The new code offers a better organization of uses and zones, clearer procedures for development approval and a solid foundation in modern planning and design principles.

On October 30, 2014, the new zones took effect and a District Map Amendment translated much of the commercial and industrial zoning in Westbard to new zoning categories. The new zoning structure promotes sustainable, mixed-use development in specified areas.

The map of the current zoning (page 17) shows the boundaries of the Westbard Sector Plan in red. Inside the boundaries, the existing zones are Moderate Industrial (IM), Neighborhood Retail (NR), Commercial-Residential Town (CRT) and Employment Office (EOF). Outside the Sector Plan boundaries, the predominant R-60 zones signify single-family residential uses.

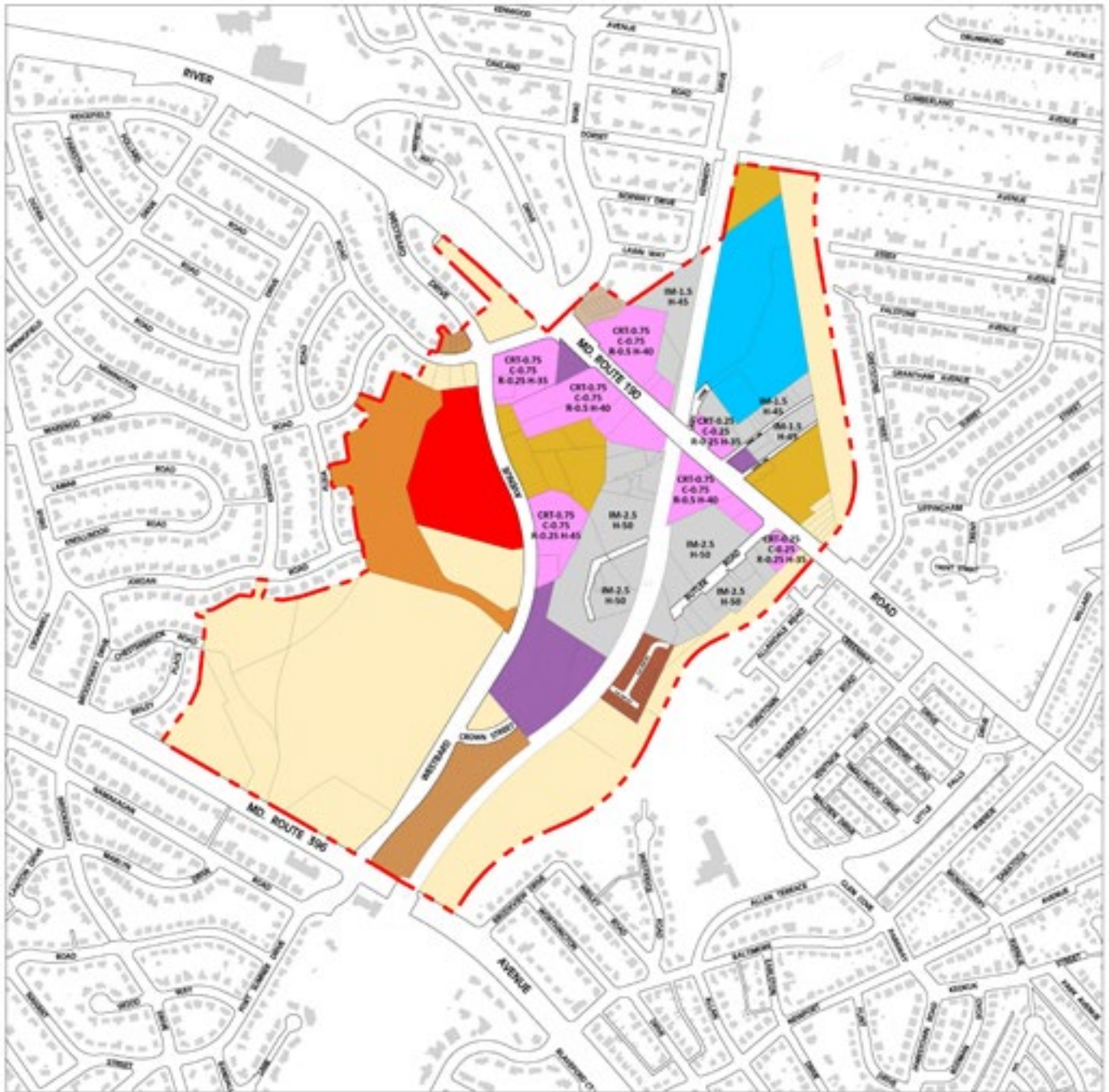
This Sector Plan update focuses on the commercial and industrial zones located within its boundaries, and recommends the reconfirmation of the existing, single-family residential zones.













### **Land Use Recommendations**

In general, the Sector Plan aims to create a new land use vision for Westbard that serves the local needs of the community today, while responsibly planning for future growth in an orderly, attractive and sustainable manner.



Figure 2.1.1: Existing Zoning Map



- |   |                                 |   |                               |   |                        |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|------------------------|
|  | Westbard Plan Boundary          |  | R-20 Multi-Family Med Density |  | PD Planned Development |
|  | EOF Employment Office-1.5 H-45  |  | R-60 One-Family Detached      |  | IM Moderate Industrial |
|  | NR Neighborhood Retail          |  | RT-8 Town Houses 8/DUA        |   |                        |
|  | CRT Commercial Residential Town |  | RT-12.5 Town Houses 12.5/DUA  |   |                        |
|  | R-10 Multi-Family High Density  |  | RT-15 Town Houses 15/DUA      |   |                        |

The overall land use concepts are:

- Preserving compatibility with adjacent residential uses.
- Providing flexible uses to promote commercial and residential redevelopment within the core of the Sector Plan area along Westbard Avenue and River Road.
- Allowing existing Moderate Industrial zones to remain while providing flexible options for properties in the future if requested.
- Preserving established institutional uses.
- Recognizing Willett Branch as the primary community asset.

Specific recommendations achieving these concepts are explained in Chapter 3 where land use is detailed in five separate and distinct geographical districts.

### **Preservation of Local Retail**

Currently, the Westbard Sector Plan Area is a retail activity center for neighborhood goods and services, serving the surrounding residential community. Nearly half of the existing commercial space in the Plan area is retail space (approximately 350,000 square feet) and more than half of this retail space is anchored by two major shopping centers, the Westwood Shopping Center and Kenwood Station.

There are many reasons why Westbard is attractive for retailers. The Plan area is easily accessible from other communities via River Road and Massachusetts Avenue. However, the retail selection in Westbard is relatively limited. In cases of redevelopment where businesses do not own their properties, some existing businesses could be displaced by larger retailers.

Retail districts with a mix of national and independent retailers help create unique shopping experiences, promote patronage and contribute to a sense of place. Furthermore, small, locally owned businesses add local flavor to the area and promote community identity.



*Local serving retail in Westwood Shopping Center*

The Westbard Sector Plan recommends that new development should:

- Reserve space for small, independent retailers in the 500 square-foot to 1,000 square-foot range when possible.
- Encourage independent retailers through the optional development method in the Commercial Residential (CR) and Commercial Retail Town (CRT) zones by prioritizing the expansion of small business opportunities as a public benefit.
- Employ strategies for attracting independent retailers that may include incentives to preserve affordable rents, establishing business cooperatives and building smaller store sizes that could accommodate local businesses.
- Attract and support local retailers and small businesses through loans and technical assistance programs offered by State and County economic development agencies.
- Form an association comprising Westbard merchants, small businesses and property owners to implement a retail marketing and revitalization strategy, of which attracting and retaining small businesses will be a component. Such an association may also help foster relationships among residents, property owners and government agencies in promoting Westbard's business interests.

## Industrial Land Uses

There is a significant concentration of industrial uses in the east side of the Plan area, between the Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Parkway. The east side is home to a diverse mix of businesses involved in industries, such as food catering, automotive sales and repair, and building/maintenance, which provide important services that support County businesses and the regional economy. Given Westbard's inside-the-Beltway location, local businesses are able to be in close proximity to their customers in the County and District of Columbia. As a result, both vacancy rates and tenant turnover have been low; certain businesses have called Westbard home for several decades and even expanded their operations there.

Westbard's industrial space should continue to be highly competitive, particularly as it may attract small and emerging enterprises that are not purely industrial in nature to take advantage of lower rents, in fields such as production/distribution, media and communications, and the "maker" industry (hobbyist-oriented production, ranging from robotics to woodworking, often with a "do-it-yourself" ethos).

Given the industrial district's economic impact on the down-County and its ability to serve evolving business needs, the Sector Plan aims to:

- Preserve the majority of industrially zoned land to maintain its competitive advantages and minimize disruption of its operations.
- Allow modest industrial land use conversions, where new development will remain compatible with or adequately buffered from surrounding land uses.
- Working with economic development agencies, retain existing businesses and attract additional ones to strengthen the district's tenant mix and economic position, through marketing, incentives and business organization.



*The Plan encourages the preservation of local retail*



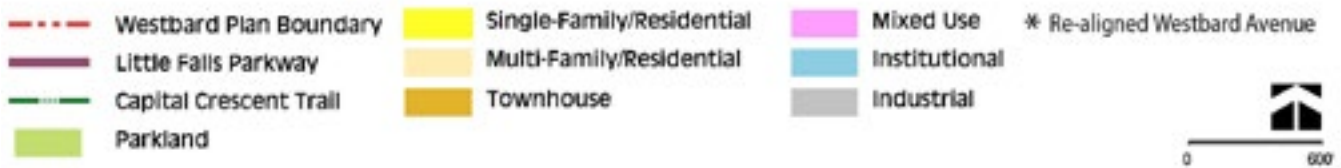
Figure 2.1.2: Existing Land Uses



- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  Westbard Plan Boundary |  Single-Family/Residential |  Office        |
|  Little Falls Parkway   |  Multi-Family/Residential  |  Institutional |
|  Capital Crescent Trail |  Townhouse                 |  Industrial    |
|  Parkland               |  Retail                    |  Vacant        |



Figure 2.1.3: Proposed Land Uses





## 2.2 Community Facilities

### 2.2.1 Plan Objectives

- Provide public facilities to meet the human service, recreation, security, educational and other needs of the community.
- Encourage flexibility in spaces and programming to adapt to future needs.

### 2.2.2 Human Services

- Child Care Services – The development of Westbard into a mixed-use suburban center, with retail, housing and office, will necessitate the need for child care services, for both employees and nearby residents.
- Elderly Care Services- The Westbard Sector Plan area has a large percentage of elderly residents who seek to age in place. This will result in an increasing demand for services that address their particular needs.
- Educational Facilities- Increases in population will create a need for additional school facilities.
- Civic Building – The Westwood Shopping Center, owned by Equity One, is the site for a proposed civic use. This future facility could offer a community space used for public meetings, community events and indoor festivals.
- Public Schools – The Long Range Planning Division of the Montgomery County Public School system has several options for addressing increases in student enrollment.



*Westland Middle School*

### **2.2.3 Other Public Facilities**

- Parks- Provide a Countywide Urban Recreational Park adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail that could include a skate park, a pump track and a dog park.
- Police Stations - The area is currently served by two police stations in Downtown Bethesda.
- Fire and Rescue - The area is presently served by the Glen Echo Volunteer Fire Department located at 5920 Massachusetts Avenue. Fire stations in Bethesda and Cabin John also provide backup service as needed.
- Library - The Plan does not recommend relocating the Little Falls Library at this time.



## 2.3 Transportation

### 2.3.1 Introduction

The Westbard Sector Plan study area is located between two major regional roads, River Road (MD 190) and Massachusetts Avenue (MD 396). These roads connect the southwest portion of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Plan Area, as well as areas beyond the Capital Beltway, to major employment areas in Bethesda and Friendship Heights, and to the regional Metrorail system.

River Road and Massachusetts Avenue also serve as the only two roads that connect the Westbard area from east to west. Little Falls Parkway is a limited access park road that runs along the eastern boundary of the Sector Plan area with truck restrictions. Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road serve as the local roads that connect a majority of the Sector Plan area. There are few local streets that provide connections to the existing developments. Most of the developments in the study area have access to either Westbard Avenue or River Road.

A tremendous asset in the community is the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) on the old B&O Railroad right-of-way. This pedestrian and bicycle trail is a major regional connection that also provides limited local service in the Westbard area. Increasing local connectivity to and from the CCT will allow it to be more integrated into the community.

A majority of trips to, from, within and through Westbard are made using private automobiles. Most of the vehicles traveling through the Westbard area are on River Road and Massachusetts Avenue, with the majority on River Road before Little Falls Parkway, and an even distribution on Massachusetts Avenue and River Road from Little Falls Parkway to destinations closer to the District of Columbia border. While the automobile still needs to be accommodated, data trends, at least in this area, indicate a shift in mode choice or commuting patterns away from the automobile. This shift provides the opportunity to use the existing and proposed rights-of-way for needed transportation facilities, other than just road capacity.

The concept for the future transportation network in Westbard envisions providing some additional roads for

local trips, while also enhancing the transportation options on the existing street network. This transportation network promotes all modes of travel with attractive mass transit (public and private) connections between the Westbard area and nearby destinations, including the Friendship Heights and Bethesda Metrorail stations. The transportation network should also move people within the Westbard area via an enhanced network of walkable streets, dedicated bicycle facilities and transit options.

In order to enhance the existing transportation network, this Plan recommends a complete street network that increases the connectivity, safety and quality for all modes of transportation. A complete street network means that all modes of transportation, including walking, bicycling, riding transit and driving, will be accommodated within the Westbard area. Not every street will have every complete street design element, such as wide sidewalks or dedicated bicycle facilities, but the entire street network within the Westbard area will accommodate all transportation modes.

Part of the complete street network is a high quality bicycle network that will help transform difficult-to-ride streets into low-stress streets that can accommodate most bicycle riders. The enhanced bicycle network should also make it easier to access the CCT from all destinations within the Westbard area.

In addition to a high-quality bicycle network, a high-quality pedestrian network is essential to the success of reducing the demand on automobiles, allowing local trips to be made on foot rather than by car. Additionally, pedestrian activity is not simply about the activity of walking, it is about experiencing the community between points of origin and destination. Nearly all modes of transportation require that at least a portion of each trip be completed as a pedestrian; therefore, the quality of the pedestrian network is an important issue for most residents, workers and patrons of Westbard establishments.

In addition to physical elements of the transportation network, such as the roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian strategies described above, this Plan recommends that developments participate in



*Improved bikeways contribute to complete streets*



*Pedestrian access across River Road is difficult*



*Westbard Avenue today*

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, which will increase efficiency within the transportation network by reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles during the most congested periods.

A component of the TDM program should be right-sizing the vehicle parking supply so that any particular



development in the Plan area does not provide an excess of parking, thereby decreasing the attractiveness of alternative transportation modes. TDM strategies will become increasingly important through the horizon year of this Plan and should assist in managing traffic congestion to avoid over-building any intersection or road.

An overarching goal for the Westbard area is to implement a complete transportation network that can accommodate all users. Specific steps for implementing the overall goal are as follows:

**Goals:**

- Improve mobility within and through the Westbard area with increased connections.
- Enhance roadways to accommodate multi-modal transportation options.
- Expand and implement new transit options.
- Accommodate regional mobility while increasing local connectivity.
- Maintain a land use and a transportation balance.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

**2.3.2 Roadways**

It is recommended that the Westbard Sector Plan area be designated as an Urban Area for the application of New Road Code Standards.

*A. Roadway Right-of-Way and Design Elements*

**River Road-MD 190 (M-2)**

(110-foot minimum right-of-way; West Sector Plan Boundary to East Sector Plan Boundary):

River Road is a major highway that provides east-west local connectivity. The segment contained within the Plan area measures approximately 1,800 linear feet. There are numerous curb cuts along this short segment of roadway that add to traffic stress on River Road. The vast amount of curb cuts contribute to many friction points caused by turning vehicles accessing local businesses, as well as through traffic on River Road. In

order to improve operations and enhance the safety on River Road, this Plan recommends that the curb cuts be reduced and driveway access points be consolidated in a logical pattern that allows for improved driveway and intersection spacing. Inter-parcel access should be provided to allow for driveway consolidation. Finally, a median should be provided with left turn lanes for access to the consolidated driveways.

River Road should contain the following elements within the right-of-way:

- Travel Lanes: Two, 11-foot lanes per direction.
- Median: To accommodate a left turn lane and pedestrian refuge area.
- Separated Bike Lane: 11-foot-wide, two-way separated bike lanes (cycle track) on the north side with a buffer.
- Landscape Buffer: To accommodate street trees.
- Sidewalks: Minimum 15-foot-wide (due to constraints associated with the Capital Crescent Trail, the sidewalk may need to be narrower under the CCT bridge).

**Westbard Avenue (MA-5)**

(74-foot minimum right-of-way; Massachusetts Avenue to Westbard Circle):

This minor arterial is the major north-south street for residents and businesses in the area. A shared-use path is recommended on both sides of the street to facilitate access to the school and library on the west side of the street, and because of the steep slope of the road on the east side (heading north). The shared-use path will transition to a cycle track and a sidewalk along Street B-1.

Westbard Avenue should contain the following elements within the right-of-way:

- Travel Lanes: Two, 10-11-foot-wide lanes per direction.
- Median: None.
- Landscape Buffer: To accommodate street trees.
- Shared-use Path: Provide on both sides of the street.

Figure 2.3.1: Roadway Classifications

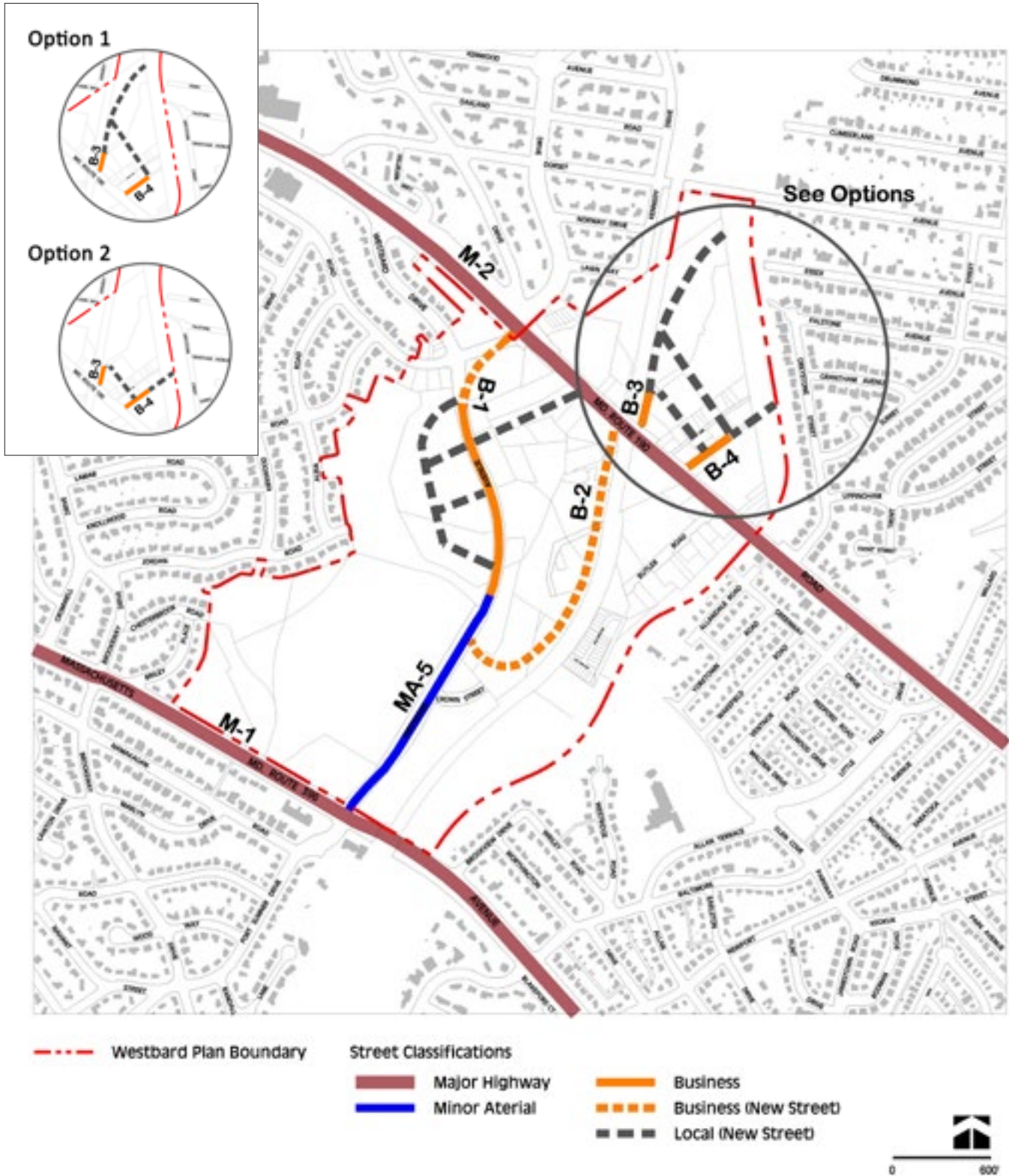
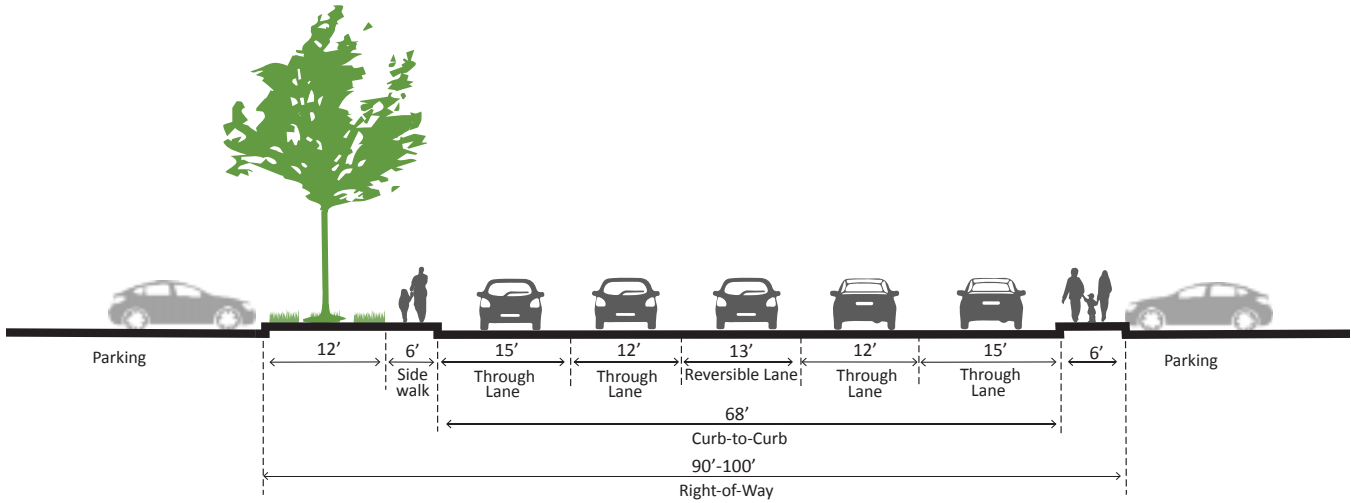


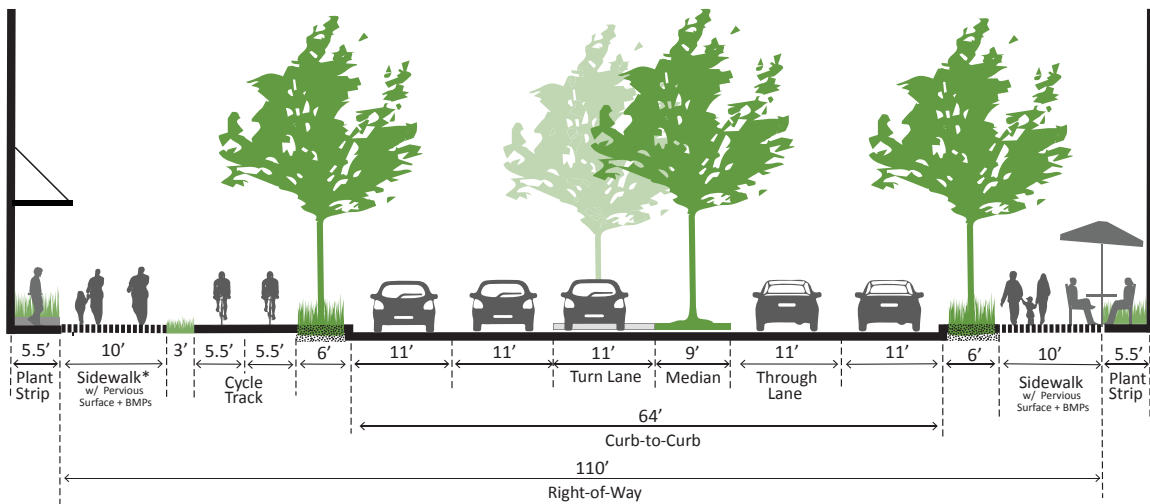


Figure 2.3.2: River Road Sections - Existing and Proposed

**River Rd (Ridgefield/Westbard Avenue Road to Little Falls Parkway, looking east)**  
Existing Section



**River Rd (Ridgefield/Westbard Avenue Road to Little Falls Parkway, looking east)**  
Proposed Section



\* To be Further Studied: Potential best management practices in curb extensions and sidewalks as well as pervious surfaces on sidewalks

Table 2.3.1: Roadway Classification		
Designation	Roadway	Limits
Major Highway		
M-2	River Road (MD 190)	W. Sector Plan Boundary to E. Sector Plan Boundary
Minor Arterial		
MA-5	Westbard Avenue	Westbard Circle to Massachusetts Avenue
Business District		
B-1	Ridgefield Road	Westbard Avenue to River Road
B-1	Westbard Avenue	Ridgefield Road to Westbard Circle
B-2	New Connector Road	River Road to Westbard Avenue
B-3	Landy Lane	River Road to Little Falls Parkway
B-4	Clipper Lane	River Road to Little Falls Parkway

### Westbard Avenue extended/Ridgefield Road (B-1)

(100-foot minimum right-of-way; Westbard Circle to River Road):

Westbard Avenue, a business district street, heading toward River Road should be reconfigured to prioritize the traffic movement from Westbard Avenue to Ridgefield Road, instead of Ridgefield Road to River Road. This reconfiguration would create Westbard Avenue extended that would connect directly with River Road. Ridgefield Road would be reconfigured and would no longer connect directly to River Road. Westbard Avenue should be studied to evaluate the feasibility and implementation of on-street, off-peak parking. Special consideration should be given to implementation of on-street parking on weekends and whether this weekend parking could be accommodated due to the retail and residential demands during those days.

Westbard Avenue should contain the following elements within the right-of-way:

- Travel Lanes: Two, 10-11-foot-wide lanes per direction.
- Median: None.
- Separated Bike Lane: 5-foot-wide, one-way separated bike lane (cycle track) on each side of the road with a buffer from traffic.
- Landscape Buffer: To accommodate street trees.
- Sidewalks: 15-foot-wide at a minimum.

### New Connector Road (B-2)

(52-foot minimum right-of-way; Westbard Avenue to River Road):

This business district street would improve local connectivity and contribute to providing a parallel route to Westbard Avenue. The street would serve local developments as well as provide a more direct connection to destinations on River Road on the west side of the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT). It would also provide for access to the CCT directly from Westbard Avenue. This street should align opposite intersections and consolidate adjacent driveways to the extent practicable at the time of implementation. Final road alignment and design should minimize conflicts between automobiles and park and trail users. The design and alignment of the road should be context sensitive to minimize impacts on existing and proposed parkland. If an alignment is chosen that runs adjacent to the CCT, then a high visibility pedestrian/ bicycle crossing should be implemented that signifies a major trail connection.

Westbard Avenue should contain the following elements within the right-of-way:

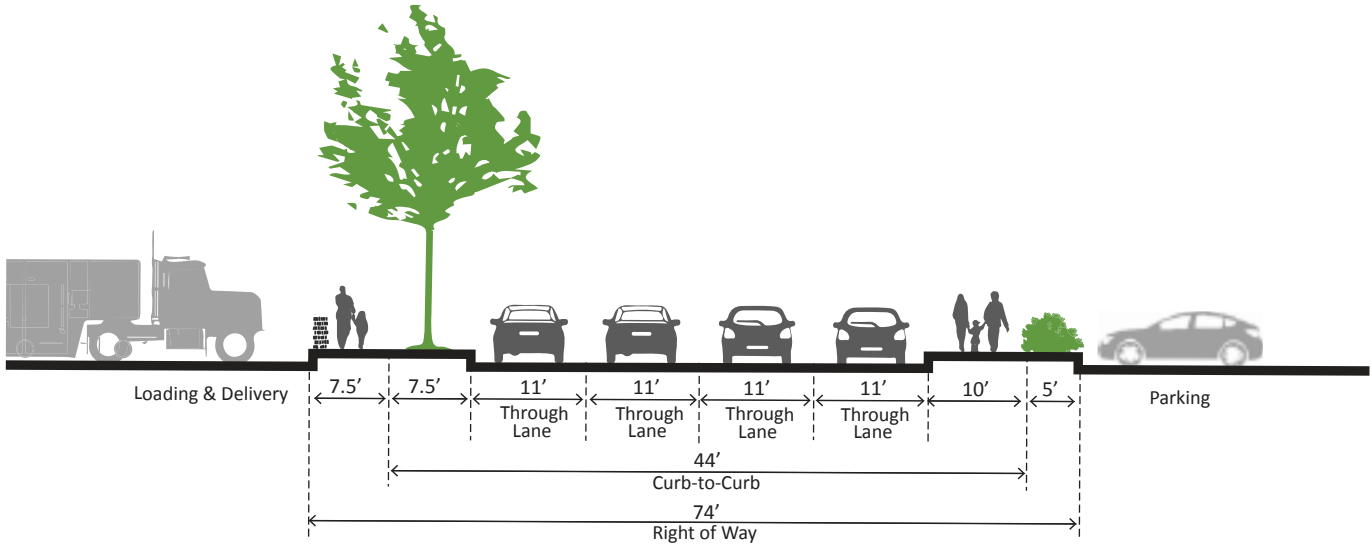
- Travel Lanes: one, 10-11-foot-wide lane per direction.
- Median: None.
- Bikeways: On-street.
- Parking: On-street on the west side.
- Landscape Buffer: To accommodate street trees.
- Sidewalks: Minimum 5-foot-wide.



Figure 2.3.3: Westbard Avenue Sections - between River Road and Westbard Circle

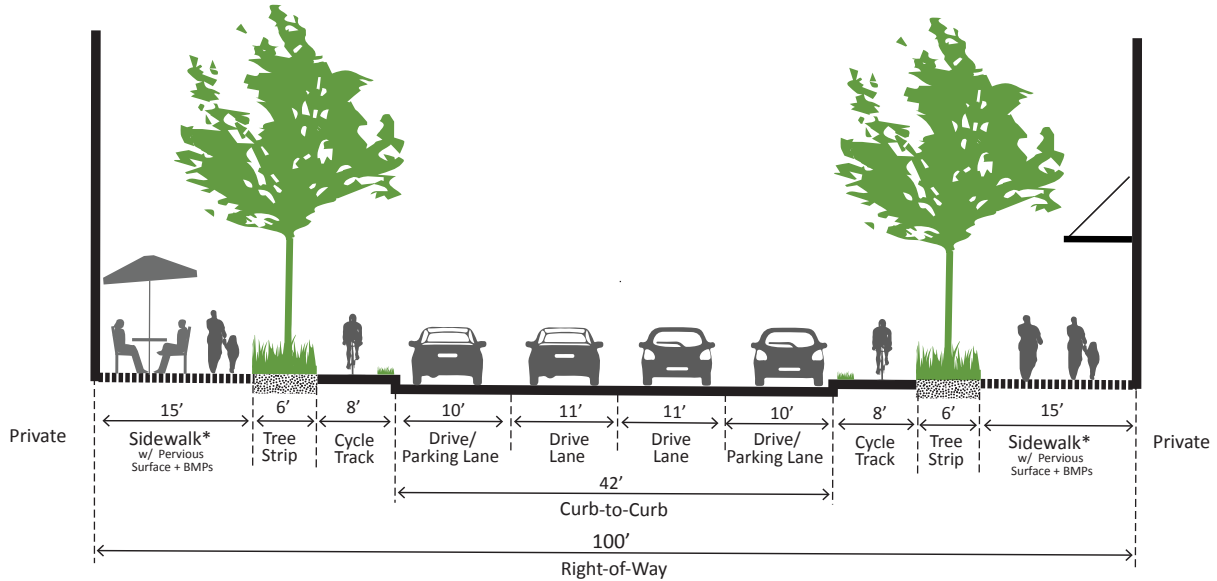
### Westbard Avenue ( River Road to Westbard Circle, looking north)

Existing Section



### Westbard Avenue (River Road to Westbard Circle, looking north)

Proposed Section

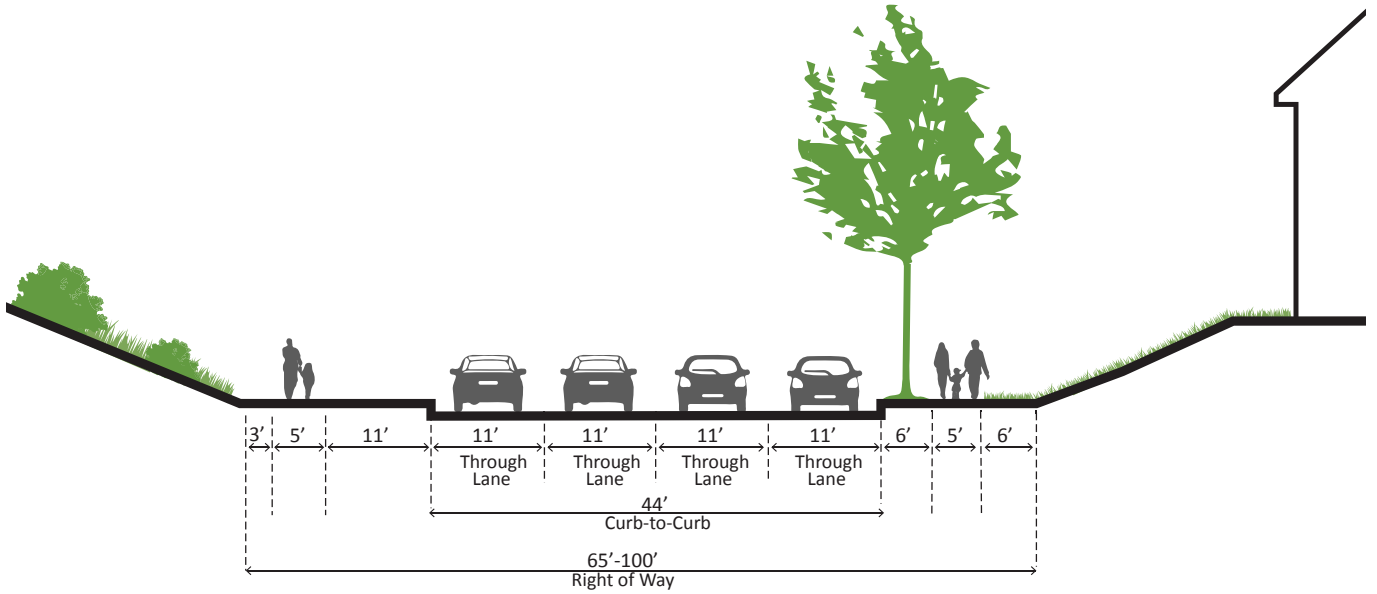


\* To be further studied: Potential best management practices in curb extensions and sidewalks as well as pervious surfaces on sidewalks

Figure 2.3.4: Westbard Avenue Sections - between Westbard Circle and Massachusetts Avenue

### Westbard Avenue ( At the Mews, looking north)

Existing Section



### Westbard Avenue ( At the Mews, looking north)

Proposed Section

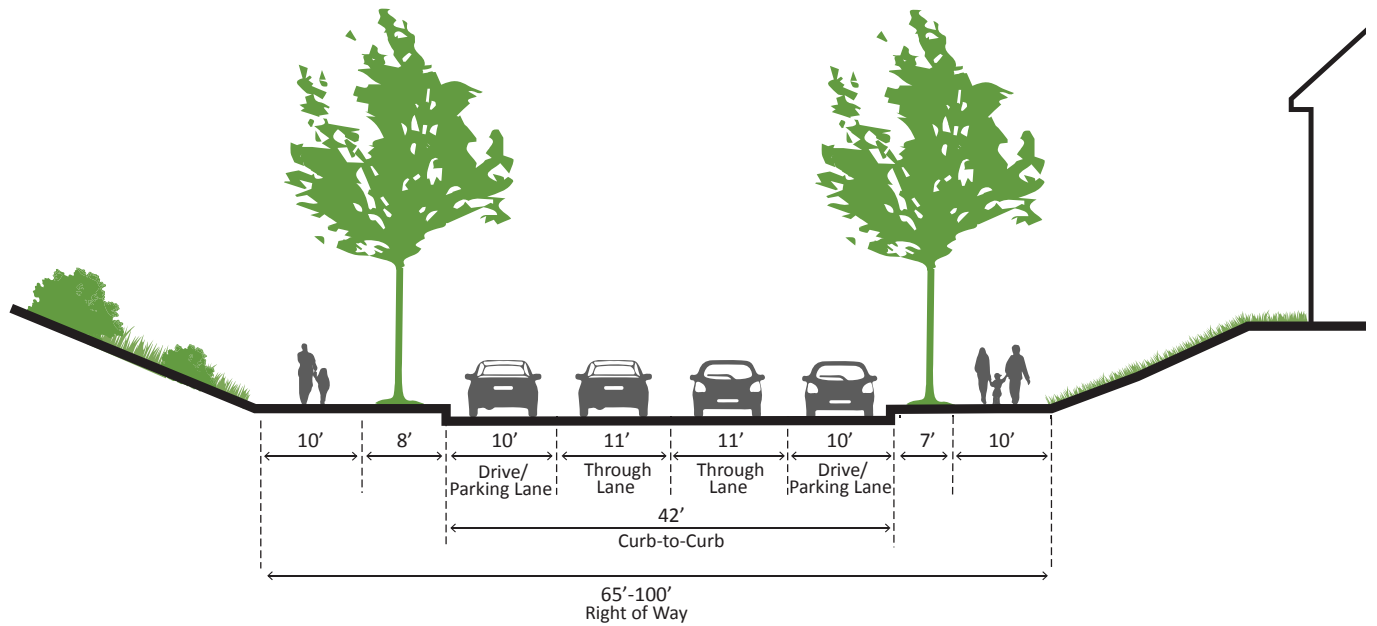


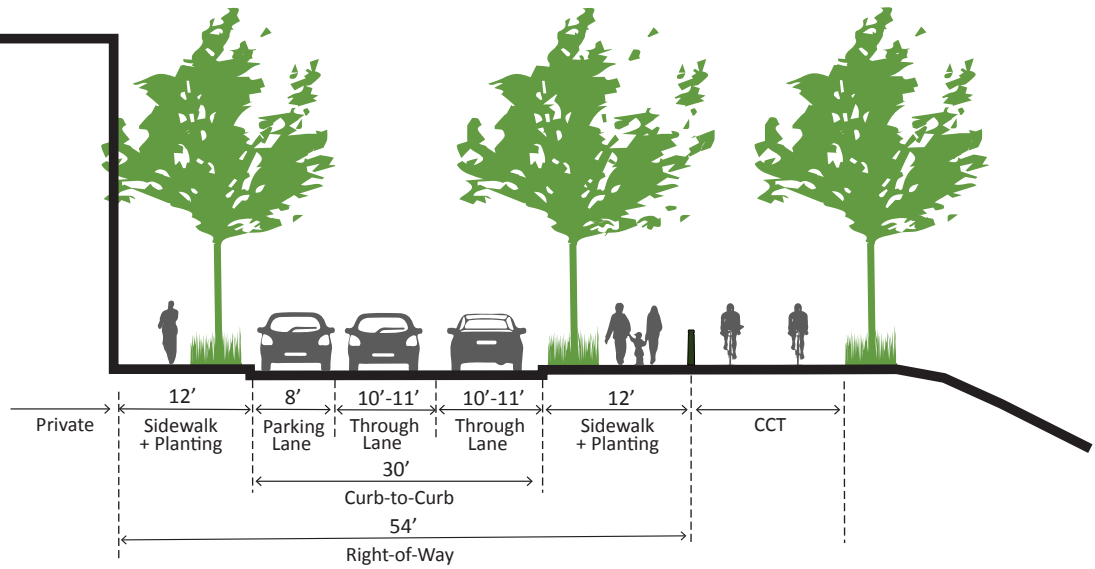
Figure 2.3.5: Bikeway Classifications



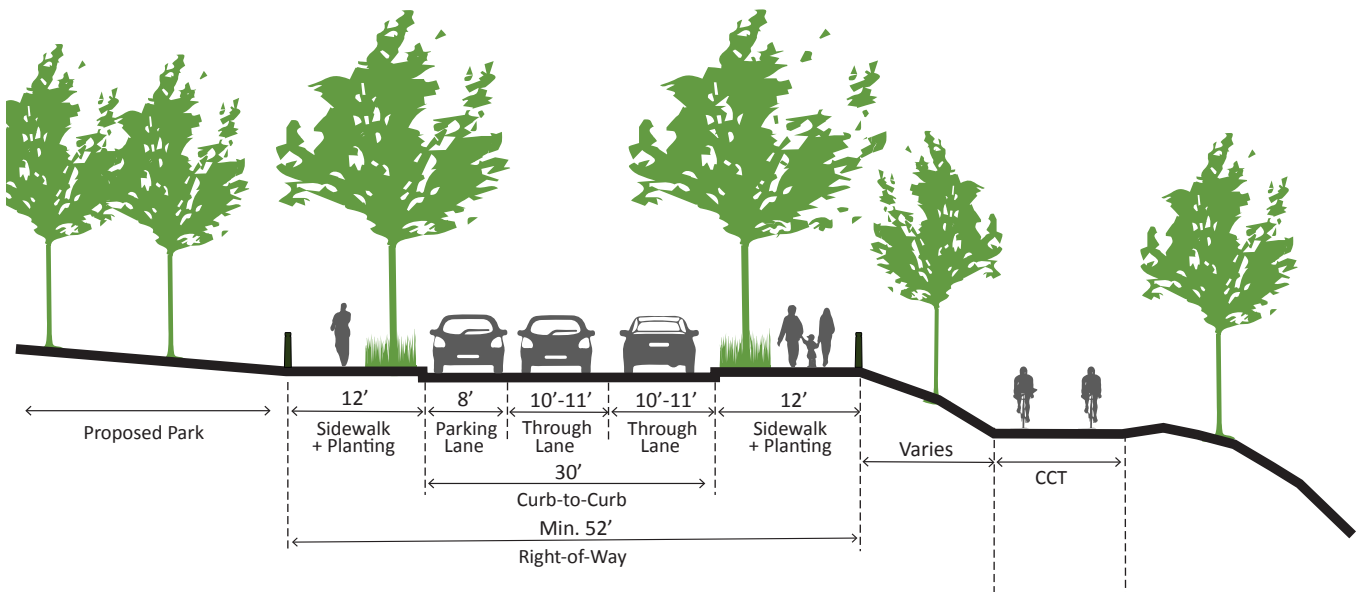


Figure 2.3.6: Proposed Connector Road Sections - between Westbard Avenue and River Road

**New Connector Road (Adjacent to CCT)**



**New Connector Road (Adjacent to proposed park)**



**B. Additional Roadway Recommendations**

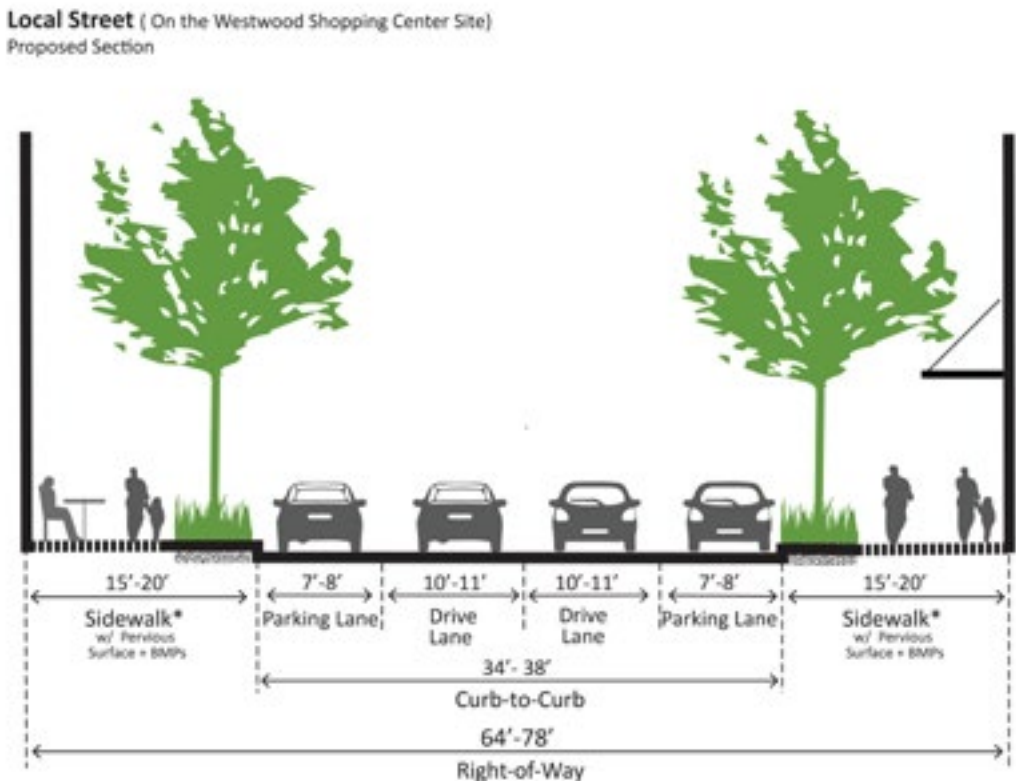
A grid of streets should be created on the Westwood Shopping Center property (Giant Food) to provide connectivity for future development. The connections should accommodate two-way vehicular travel and on-street parking. A concept diagram of the grid of street is shown in Figure 2.3.1. on page 27; however, the exact location and alignment will be determined with new or redevelopment of the site. An example of a local street is provided in the cross-section below.

A long-term recommendation of this Plan is a street connection between River Road and Westbard Avenue at what is currently the American Plant Food Company and Roof Center property. This road would provide an opportunity for a local connection and extending the street grid from the Westwood Shopping Center north to River Road. Additionally, the street would improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation by providing

more direct access from the redevelopment area on Westbard Avenue to River Road as well as to the renovated Willett Branch stream. This connection should be implemented with private development and would be either a vehicular road or at least a pedestrian/bikeway connection. The connection is contingent on the assemblage of sufficient contiguous properties, as specified in the Land Use section of this Plan.

In order to maintain a balance between land use and transportation, intersection improvements may be needed, based on more detailed studies. Intersection improvements should balance the competing needs of all transportation modes when being considered. Additionally, exclusive right-turn lanes should be avoided to the extent possible both at intersections and at driveways. For this reason, exclusive right-turn lanes are not part of the minimum right-of-way recommendations.

**Figure 2.3.7: Westbard Business - Private Street Section**



\* To be further studied: Potential best management practices in curb extensions and sidewalks as well as pervious surfaces on sidewalks

### C. Roadway Adequacy

#### Local Area Traffic Analysis

A traffic analysis was conducted to estimate projected levels of congestion at key roadway intersections within and just outside of the Plan area in year 2040. The future 2040 roadway network includes any funded improvements in the State and County Capital Improvements Programs and other road widening projects currently in the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP). There are no capital improvements scheduled or road widenings identified in the CLRP that would affect the Plan area. In general, the analysis indicates that all intersections within Westbard would operate below the area congestion standard of 1,600 Critical Lane Volume (CLV).

#### Policy Area Roadway Network Adequacy Test

In support of the 2012 Subdivision Staging Policy (SSP), a Transportation Policy Area Review (TPAR) analysis was performed for each policy area in the County to test the roadway network's adequacy in 2040. The year 2040 TPAR analysis took into account build-out of all the adopted County Master Plans by the year 2040 in combination with the implementation of all the unbuilt master planned projects anticipated to be constructed by 2040. It should be noted that this study differs from TPAR analysis for year 2024 that is currently used in the context of the regulatory review process.

In the 2012 SSP year 2040 TPAR analysis, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Policy Area is shown to be adequate for the roadway test. Given that the Westbard Sector Plan area is a small subset of a much larger policy area and the planned growth in Westbard is anticipated to be relatively minor compared to what is zoned but not built, the transportation network is considered to be in balance with the land use and densities proposed by the Westbard Sector Plan.

### 2.3.3 Transit

#### A. Local Bus Service

Multiple bus routes currently serve the Westbard area and/or operate along roads adjacent to Westbard.

These routes are operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and Montgomery County Ride On. They connect Westbard to the Metrorail system, and directly to various parts of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Potomac areas. The center of the Westbard Sector Plan area is a little more than 1.5 miles from the Friendship Heights (direct route) Metrorail Station and about 2 miles from the Bethesda Metrorail Station (direct route).

Transit service that is frequent and, if possible, branches into the nearby communities should be provided to increase the use of transit for trips to, from and within Westbard. The transit service could be a combination of both public and private service.



*Local bus service should connect to mass transit*

Private shuttle service should be provided as part of development in the Westbard area. Developers and property owners should work together to provide a comprehensive private service that complements the public service already provided. Any private service should be integrated with other transit serving the Westbard Sector Plan area and be accessible, frequent and convenient for users. The increased use of private transit will help justify the increase in public bus service.

#### B. Transit Facilities and Enhancements

Transit enhancements should be provided to increase the use of transit in the Westbard area. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Transit hub in the redevelopment area on Westbard Avenue. Space should be reserved for



bicycle facilities, such as a bike share station and long-term bicycle parking. Real-time information display for transit service should be incorporated into the transit hub. If the transit hub is not located within the redevelopment area but on Westbard Avenue, then there should be a stop on each side of the road.

- Enhanced transportation stops in the Westbard area with heavy transit usage and/or adjacent to redevelopment areas. These stops are envisioned to have shelters and real-time information displays.
- Implementation of bus priority measures. This could include signal priority, which would need to be determined by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

### 2.3.4 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Wide sidewalks, as depicted in the cross sections, should be implemented where heavy pedestrian traffic is expected or desired. These sidewalks should be of sufficient width to invite and encourage walking in the Westbard area. An enhanced at-grade crossing of River Road at the CCT should be provided to facilitate an easier and faster crossing of River Road for pedestrians and bicyclists. The enhancement could be tied into a possible signal that could be located at the Landy Lane/River Road intersection. As depicted in Figure 2.3.8, in order for a pedestrian using the CCT to cross from one side of River Road to the other, the person must cover a distance of nearly 1,000 feet or seven and one half minutes. Providing a direct at-grade crossing of River Road would shorten this distance to 80 feet or about 20-30 seconds.

Figure 2.3.8: CCT Access



Existing River Road pedestrian crossing at the CCT

**A. New Bikeway Proposals**

**River Road (CT-5)**

Separated Bike Lanes; West Sector Plan Boundary to East Sector Plan Boundary

The separated bike lanes are a two-way cycle track on the north side of River Road. This bikeway would provide east-west connectivity within the Sector Plan area and would bridge an area that is currently inaccessible to most bicyclists. It was previously recommended as a shared-use path in the 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan. The separated bike lanes and sidewalk will transition to a shared-use path outside of the Sector Plan boundary. The separated bike lanes and sidewalk will also connect to the proposed trail that runs between the Capital Crescent Trail and River Road.

**Westbard Avenue/Ridgefield Road (LB-1)**

Separated Local Bike Lanes; River Road to Massachusetts Avenue



*Cycle tracks offer dedicated bikes lanes free from pedestrian and automobile interference* (Source: City of Calgary Bike Program)

The separated bike lanes are a one-way cycle track on each side of Westbard Avenue/Ridgefield Road from River Road to Westbard Circle. The one-way cycle tracks on Westbard Avenue would transition to an off-road shared use path on both sides of the road south of Westbard Circle to Massachusetts Avenue. The separate bike lanes would provide a continuous bikeway from Massachusetts Avenue through the



*Better and more frequent connections to the CCT are needed in the Westbard Plan area*

redevelopment area along Westbard Avenue to River Road. This bikeway would provide north-south connectivity within the Plan area and would serve as the primary bike route to access businesses and residences along Westbard Avenue.

**New Connector Road (LB-2)**

On-road Shared Lane; River Road to Westbard Avenue

The roadway is envisioned to be a low speed road that would allow for bicyclists to safely share the travel lane with vehicles. This road would also lead to a proposed new connection to the Capital Crescent Trail.

**Table 2.3.2: Bikeway Classification Table**

Designation	Roadway/Route	Limits
Separated Bike Lane		
CT-5	River Road (MD 190)	W. Sector Plan Boundary to E. Sector Plan Boundary
Shared Roadway		
Park On-Road Trail	Little Falls Parkway	N. Sector Plan Boundary to S. Sector Plan Boundary
Local Bike Lane		
LB-1	Westbard Avenue	River Road to Massachusetts Avenue
LB-2	New Connector Road	River Road to Westbard Avenue

## B. New Trail Connections

New Connector Road to Capital Crescent Trail Connector; Bicycle Ramp; west side of the New Connector Road

There is currently no trail connection from Westbard Avenue to the Capital Crescent Trail. A connection from the new connector road to the CCT would allow pedestrians and bicyclists to gain access to the CCT instead of using ramps on River Road or a staircase on Massachusetts Avenue. Final road alignment and design should minimize conflicts between automobiles and park and trail users. The design and alignment of the road should be context-sensitive to minimize impacts on existing and proposed parkland. If an alignment is chosen that runs adjacent to the CCT, then a high visibility pedestrian/bicycle crossing should be implemented that signifies a major trail connection.

## C. Intersection Improvements

When compared to linear bikeway projects, intersection improvements for bicycle accommodation have a disproportionate impact on the quality, enjoyment and safety of each bicycle trip, because an intersection that does not accommodate convenient bicycle crossings presents a significant hazard to cyclists. At the same time, however, many improvements are highly technical in nature and beyond the Plan scope. This Plan recommends that all bikeway improvements be completed to the nearest intersection with appropriate transitions across major roadways such as:

- Medians.
- Crosswalks.
- Signage.
- Pedestrian control signals.

At the time of implementation, intersection improvements should be based on best practices available from the transportation planning field nationwide, including, but not limited to, sources such as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) and American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHTO).

## D. Bicycle Parking

In an effort to encourage bicycling in the Westbard Area and to destinations nearby, short term and long-term bicycle parking amenities should be provided that are safe, secure and convenient. Short-term bicycle parking emphasizes convenience and accessibility, providing parking for visitors, shoppers and guests. Short-term parking typically consists of bike racks that are near



*Bike storage facilities encourage bike use*

primary entrances to buildings and are intended for site users. Racks should preferably be protected from the elements and be highly visible. Long-term bicycle parking provides not only convenience but security. This type of bicycle parking accommodates employees and residents where parking duration is typically longer. Parking amenities include bike lockers, bike cages and bike rooms.

## E. Bike Share

Bike share stations should be expanded in and around the Westbard Plan area. Such an expansion should be directly tied to new development and/or redevelopment; however, stations outside the Plan area could also be considered for implementation as part of the County's Capital Improvements Program, as funding permits. Bike share stations should also be timed to open with implementation of bikeway recommendations identified in this Plan.

New bike share stations should be sited in proximity to existing bike share stations, high density development and transit to optimize use of the system. To the extent





*Bike share programs encourage bike use*

possible, bike share station sites should be located proximate to existing and master planned bicycle infrastructure. Specific bike share station sites for development projects will be selected to ensure consistency with bike share system objectives and siting requirements.

### **2.3.5 Transportation Demand Management**

A specific Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) goal is not being recommended for the Westbard area; however, new development should strive to minimize its impact on the transportation network by encouraging the use of travel modes other than single occupancy vehicles. One way of minimizing impacts is to implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies. TDM represents programmatic elements aimed at reducing the demand on the transportation system, particularly to reducing single occupancy vehicles during peak periods, and expanding the choices available to residents, employees, shoppers and visitors. The result is more efficient use of the existing transportation system.

TDM should be considered as a mitigation strategy and thus is recommended as part of any development in the Westbard area. Mobility needs to be maximized in order to keep the transportation network in balance as well as decrease congestion to create livable and walkable spaces, and to minimize the effects of traffic on neighboring communities. One TDM strategy can include the use of the latest information technology techniques to encourage teleworking; provide sufficient information to enable commuters and other trip makers to choose travel modes and travel times; or decide if travel is actually necessary at that time.

The appropriate mix of uses is also a TDM strategy that helps to reduce congestion by providing services within close proximity to minimize trips and trip lengths, or by better balancing trips on the road network to promote non-peak period directional travel or off-peak period travel.

Achieving TDM strategies and encouraging transit use are possible through shared parking for uses which have different peak demand periods and instituting paid parking or other parking reduction strategies. These parking strategies can serve to reduce vehicle trips and increase the cost-effectiveness of the provision of parking. Parking should be right-sized to each development. On-street, structured and underground parking should be encouraged for development.

## 2.4 Urban Design, Parks and Open Space



*Green urban parks provide community gathering places*

### 2.4.1 Introduction

Successful urban design is anchored by a well-functioning network of parks, trails and open space that connects the public realm. The public realm is broadly defined as those spaces where civic interaction can occur. It includes public parks, trails, plazas, streets and sidewalks, as well as privately owned, publicly accessible spaces like outdoor seating areas and plazas adjacent to residential and commercial buildings.

### 2.4.2 Parks, Trails and Open Space

#### Overview of Existing Network

Parks, trails and open space in the Plan area are provided through two linear park corridors:

- Little Falls Stream Valley Unit 2, which follows Little Falls Stream and Little Falls Parkway.
- Capital Crescent Trail Special Park, a regionally significant hard surface rail-trail linking Montgomery County and the District of Columbia. The CCT acts as a major transportation and recreation corridor.

In addition, the existing conditions of parks, trails and open spaces are characterized by the following:

- Westbard lacks an interconnected system of park facilities to serve present-day and future residents. The area within the Sector Plan boundary does not contain any M-NCPPC local, neighborhood or recreational parks.
- Six local and neighborhood parks are located within a mile of the Plan area, not including the Bethesda swimming pool.

- Two parks – Willard Avenue Neighborhood Park and Glen Mar Neighborhood Park – are within a 10-minute walk from areas within the Sector Plan boundary, but those parks are not easily accessed on foot through safe and convenient routes. Together, they only offer two playgrounds, a basketball court, a half-court (basketball) and a tennis court.



*The Plan recommends trails along Willett Branch*

### A. Policy Guidance

The 2012 Parks Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan focuses on how the parks and recreation system should be designed to meet the needs of the County’s growing population and improve its quality of life. Central to the PROS Plan are strategies to ensure the “right parks” are put in the “right places” by recommending the type, number and general location of lands and facilities needed through 2022. PROS guides current and future plans for urban parks, trails, dog parks, community gardens and other needed facilities.

As the County becomes more urban, acquiring park sites in growth areas is increasingly difficult because of competition for land. The Urban Park Guidelines, approved by the County Planning Board as part of PROS, recommend that a system of parks and open spaces be provided for every urban Master Plan or Sector Plan area through a combination of public and private efforts. The parks recommended in this chapter are based on approved policies, such as PROS, as well as community input.

### B. PROS Plan Urban Parks Hierarchy

The Urban Parks Hierarchy is guidance outlined in the 2012 PROS Plan for the evaluation and creation of a more complete park, trail and open space system. The hierarchy is defined as follows (page 22, PROS Plan):

*Each area master plan should include a system of open spaces based on the roles of each type of open space. The amount and size of open spaces may vary from plan to plan and should be directly proportional to the projected density, and adjusted to the pattern of existing open space and other factors, such as community-specific needs.*

The following hierarchy should be applied, where feasible, to any new urbanizing area:

#### For the Sector Plan Area:

- Active recreation destinations located within or near the Plan area, including courts, playgrounds and lawn areas large enough for pick up soccer, festivals or events, etc.
- A central “civic green” urban park (see Chapter 3 for details), ranging in size from approximately ½ to 2 acres, depending on projected densities. The park should be located in close proximity to a public transit hub, next to activating uses, with a mixture of hard and soft surfaces, including a central lawn area for events.
- An interconnected system of sidewalks and trails to connect parks and open spaces.
- Wooded areas that will provide a sense of contact with nature.

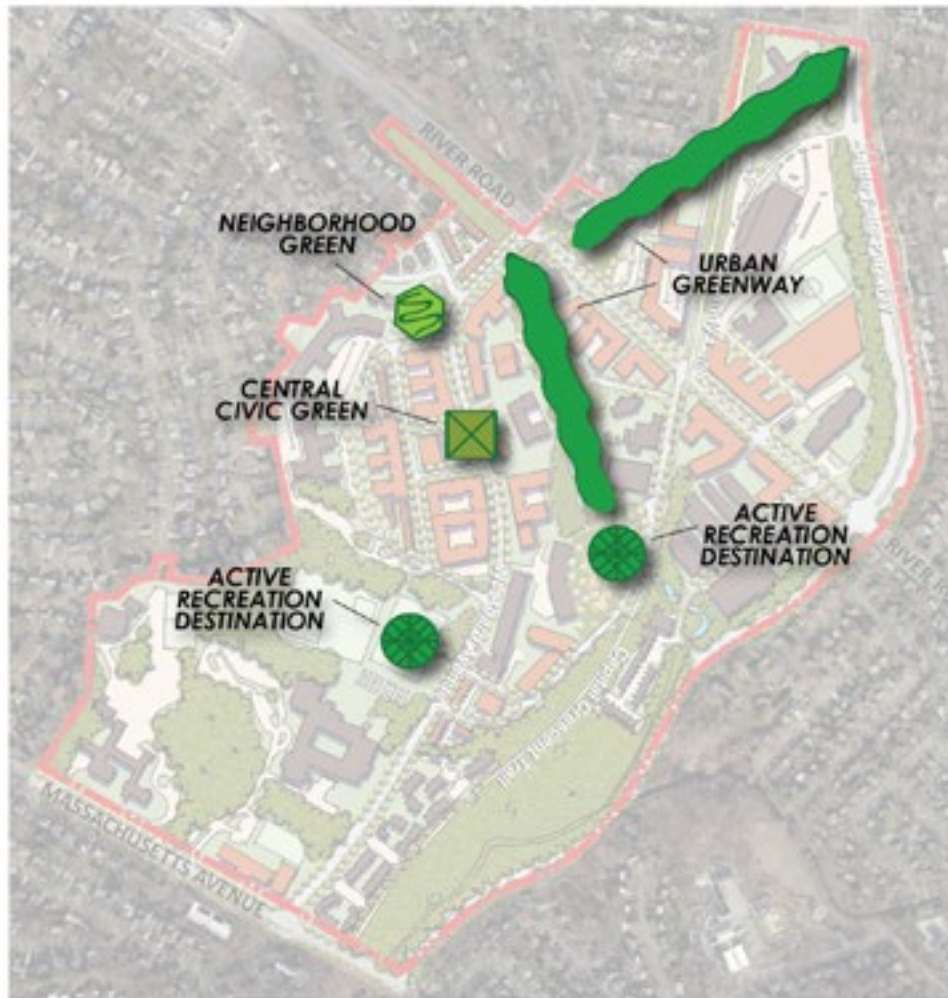
**For each Urban Neighborhood:** a neighborhood green, urban buffer park or community use recreational park.

**For each Block:** an urban square, plaza or green area.

**For each Building:** outdoor recreation space to serve the residents of that building.



Figure 2.4.1: Westbard Parks Hierarchy



**A HIERARCHY**

Each area master plan should include a system of open spaces based on the roles of each type of open space. The amount and size of open spaces may vary from plan to plan and should be directly proportional to the projected density, and adjusted to the pattern of existing open space and other factors such as community-specific needs.

The following hierarchy should be applied to any new urbanizing area:

**FOR THE SECTOR PLAN AREA:**

- Active recreation destinations located within or near the plan area, including courts, playgrounds, and lawn areas large enough for pick up soccer, festivals or events, etc.
- A central “civic green” urban park (Chapter 3), ranging in size from 1/4 to 2 acres, depending on projected densities, located in close proximity to a public transit hub, next to activating uses, with a mixture of hard and soft surfaces including a central lawn area for events.
- ← An interconnected system of sidewalks and trails to connect parks and open spaces.
- Wooded areas that will provide a sense of contact with nature.

● **FOR EACH URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD:** A neighborhood green, urban buffer park, or community use recreational park.

**FOR EACH BLOCK:** An urban square, plaza, or green area.

**FOR EACH BUILDING:** An outdoor recreation space.

**FOR EACH RESIDENCE:** A private outdoor space.

### C. ESTABLISHING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE NEEDS IN WESTBARD, CURRENT AND FUTURE

Staff analysis and input from the public outreach process indicated that Westbard:

- Lacks a central, attractive, green outdoor community gathering space.
- Needs more outdoor recreational space.
- Requires safe and attractive pedestrian facilities.
- Needs improved connections to natural areas.
- Has significant impervious surface cover.
- Offers a regionally significant transportation and recreation rail-trail corridor.
- Hides and channelizes the stream connected to the Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Stream Valley parks.

### D. PARKS, TRAILS, AND OPEN SPACE GOALS

Parks, trails and open space recommendations are structured into four **goals**:

1. Develop new park spaces to meet needs identified through the public outreach process and the 2012 PROS Plan needs for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase / North Bethesda Service Area.
2. Improve Capital Crescent Trail connections and overall circulation for people on bikes and people on foot.
3. Improve the public realm and provide public open space.
4. Retain and enhance existing parkland.

All Parks, Trails, and Open Space recommendations are listed below. (See Chapter 3 for specific **recommendations** in detail on a district scale):

- Establish a Central Civic Green at the Giant Food site for community gathering and events.



*A local green activated by surrounding retail uses*

- Restore the wooded area along the Willett Branch stream as an Urban Greenway to be owned and managed by M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks.
- Create a M-NCPPC Countywide Urban Recreational Park that could include a skate park, a pump track and a dog park.
- Provide a Neighborhood Green Urban Park to serve the immediate community with a playground and a community open space.
- Create safe and inviting pedestrian routes across the Willett Branch for people who want to walk from Westbard Avenue to River Road.
- Daylight the Willett Branch north of River Road, if the Washington Episcopal School site redevelops, to connect Little Falls Stream Valley and the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Acquire the triangle of land where Lawn Way intersects the Capital Crescent Trail to create a new entrance / exit to the trail.
- Create a hard surface trail leading from the Capital Crescent Trail to the Whole Foods site.
- Provide a community open space at the intersection of the proposed hard surface trail and River Road.
- Reforest parkland along Little Falls Parkway at Landy Lane and Willet Bridge Road.
- Create and maintain an interconnected system of safe, convenient and attractive routes between parks, civic spaces, plazas, residential communities and commercial buildings.



Figure 2.4.2: Proposed Parks, Trails and Open Spaces





### E. Legacy Open Space Recommendation

To support the goals for Parks, Trails and Open Space, designate the Willett Branch as an important Urban Open Space and Greenway Connection within the Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan (2001). The restoration of this stream valley meets the following Legacy Open Space criteria:

- Creates an important restored natural area to serve the green space needs of the growing Westbard community.
- Provides interconnectivity of the urban green infrastructure.



*A renovated Willett Branch will become an attractive community amenity*

### 2.4.3 Urban Form

The urban fabric of the Plan is characterized by the wide open spaces of large surface parking lots and low-slung retail and industrial buildings. The major streets act as through-streets in Westbard, carrying commuter traffic to and from destinations in and around Washington, D.C. There is no network of street and sidewalks that can accommodate local vehicular and pedestrian traffic within and around Westbard, and four buildings over 100 feet in height stand alone in the landscape.

Given this context, the goal of this Sector Plan update is to create a low scale building fabric, composed of small blocks and walkable streets, new buildings of approximately six stories or less (maximum 75-foot heights) and open spaces integrated into the new system of streets and buildings.

**Goal 1:** Accommodate future growth in Westbard by allowing building height increases in specific areas that support the Plan Vision and Concept Framework Plan.

#### Recommendations:

- Allow building heights of up to 75 feet along River Road and on the east side of Westbard Avenue.
- Limit building heights to 50 feet on the west side of Westbard Avenue and adjacent to existing single-family neighborhoods.
- Allow 75 feet of height on the west side of Westbard Avenue in the southeast quadrant of the



*Short blocks and wide sidewalks encourage foot traffic*

Westwood Shopping Center site to accommodate a future grocery store and associated structured parking.

- Allow 75 feet of height in the proposed floating zone proposed for the South River District.

**Goal 2:** Create a network of local streets, both public and private, to accommodate local vehicular and pedestrian travel, while alleviating gridlock caused by pass-through commuter traffic.

#### Recommendations:

- Create a grid of small streets and blocks on the existing Westwood Shopping Center site.
- Create a connection between Westbard and River Road through the American Plant Food/Roof Center site.

- Create a connection between Westbard and River Road adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail within the existing right-of-way. This street will provide much needed access points along the CCT as well as frontage for the existing properties in the South River District.

**Goal 3:** Create a network of parks and open spaces, both public and private, to accommodate local residents’ needs for recreational activities as well as outdoor relaxation and enjoyment.

**Recommendations:**

- Create a green open space (approximately ½-acre) on the existing Westwood Shopping Center site that will act as a civic green or a commons.



*Staff concept of an approximately 1/2 acre green open space at the Westwood Shopping Center site*

- Renovate the Willett Branch stream to provide a much needed community amenity and environmental enhancements.
- Create a Countywide Urban Recreational Park along the CCT new connector road.
- Create a Neighborhood Green Urban Park at the intersection of Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road.
- Create a public green open space at the current site of the Whole Foods parking lot.

**2.4.4 Placemaking**

Fostering a sense of place is central to enhancing Westbard’s community character and identity. Placemaking involves creating great streets, open spaces and buildings that are unique to Westbard, and bringing its rich history to life so the physical setting is recognizable and special to both residents and visitors alike.



*Public art helps create a sense of place*

**Goal:** Encourage and accommodate opportunities for creative placemaking to activate Westbard’s streets, buildings and open spaces.

**Recommendations:**

- Incorporate art and interpretive signage throughout the Plan area that highlight and educate the public regarding the unique history of each area of Westbard.
- Create gateways at River Road that integrate elements such as wayfinding, landscape and building form unique to Westbard.
- Incorporate materials similar to those that were once supplied by the area’s stone quarries and metal shops into new buildings, streets and open spaces.
- Design streets not just for mobility but also as great public spaces for gathering, events and play.
- Activate streets and open spaces with temporary and phased uses that can catalyze future investment and growth.

Figure 2.4.3: Existing Zoned Building Heights

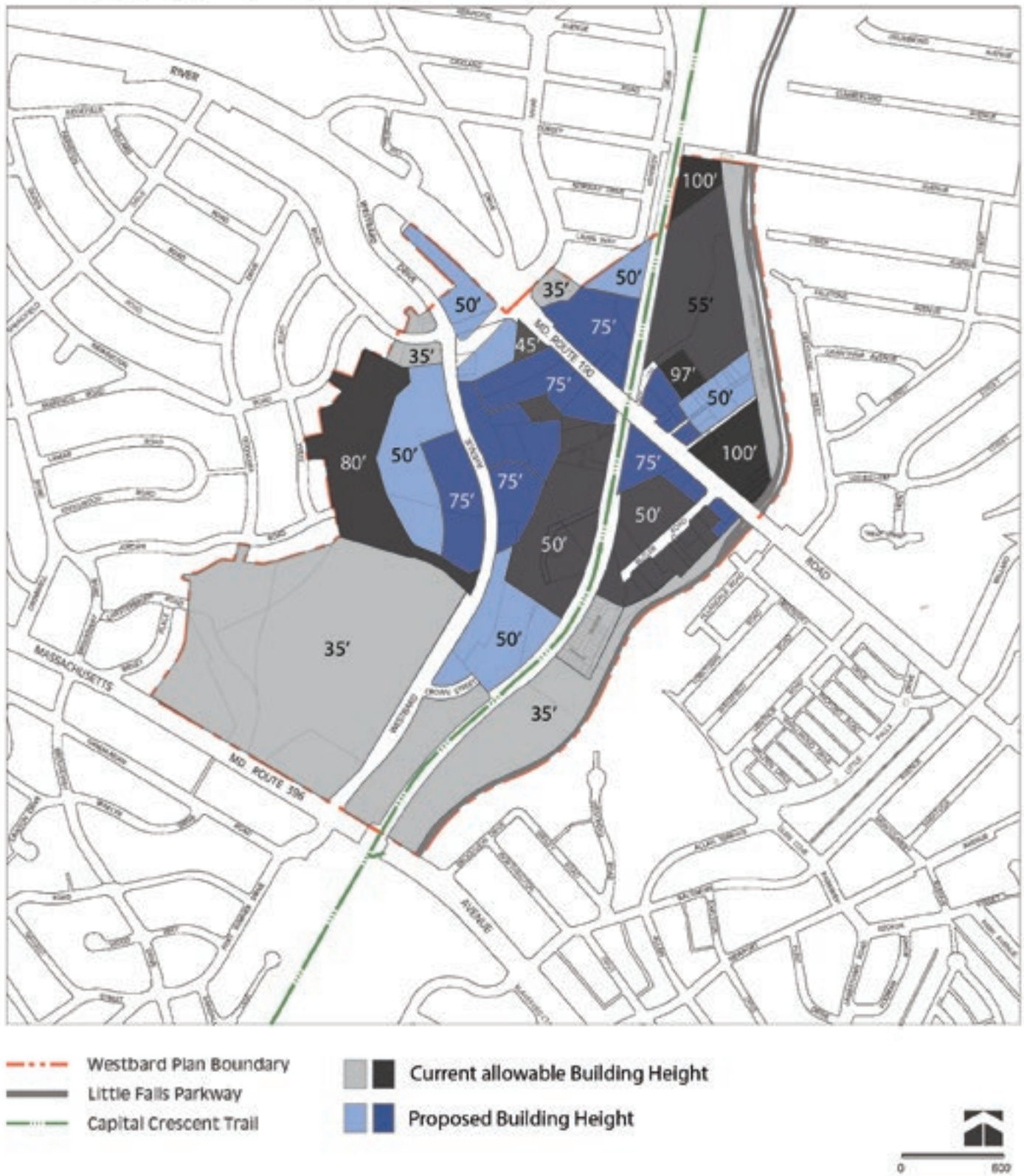


- - - Westbard Plan Boundary
- Little Falls Parkway
- - - Capital Crescent Trail
- Current Allowable Building Height





Figure 2.4.4: Recommended Building Heights



## 2.5 Environment



*Westbard is characterized by large parking lots*



*Willett Branch is contained in concrete channels*

Much of Westbard is a heavily paved landscape with more than two-thirds of its imperviousness devoted to roads and parking lots for vehicles. These impermeable surfaces intensify the urban heat island effect, creating health hazards and increasing use of energy in cars and buildings. As redevelopment takes place, surface areas for roads and parking should be reduced and replaced with a shaded, more inviting and healthier landscape.

The Sector Plan's overall goal is to move Westbard closer to environmental sustainability and make this area a healthier and more desirable and livable place by supporting and improving its remarkable environmental features, including:

- **Willett Branch** flows through the heart of the Sector Plan area. Few, if any, development centers in Montgomery County have a stream running through them. However, Willett Branch has been engineered as a storm drain and continues to be used for illicit dumping. High velocity, uncontrolled runoff is a major impact to the stream system. In addition, major trunk sewer lines have been placed parallel to the stream. In spite of these challenges, the Willett Branch stream valley has the potential to become a community asset, a unifying feature and a rare natural area right in the heart of Westbard.
- **Greenways** are adjacent to and within Westbard. They include the Little Falls Parkway, Capital Crescent Trail and forested areas along the Willett Branch stream valley. Willett Branch can become an accessible, walkable greenway through Westbard, connecting to the Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Parkway in three different locations. This type of interconnected green network can moderate local temperature and remove excess heat.
- **Tree Canopy:** Covers 42 percent of the Westbard area. In addition, trees create a nearly continuous canopy along the Capital Crescent Trail, Willett Branch and Little Falls Parkway.





*Little Falls stream runs through the southeastern section of The Westbard Sector Plan area*

- **Heat Island Effect:** Many sizable areas within Westbard are completely lacking trees and canopy cover, creating an intense and unhealthy urban heat island effect. This Plan recommends that forest mitigation requirements for development be met by improving, expanding and enhancing existing forest in the area.

### **Challenges:**

**Invasive species:** Existing trees and forest areas are threatened by invasive plants, such as aggressive vines, that smother the canopy. Furthermore, many sizable areas within Westbard are completely lacking trees and canopy cover, creating an intense and unhealthy urban heat island effect. This Sector Plan recommends that, wherever possible, forest mitigation requirements for development in Westbard be met by improving, expanding and enhancing existing forest in this area.

**Heavy industrial uses:** Westbard’s history of heavy industrial uses, such as rock quarries and gas storage, has left its mark on the area. A number of properties have deeded development restrictions due to industrial contamination. These sites are limited to their current uses and any change in land use, particularly residential uses, would require further cleanup efforts.

State requirements for decontamination and on-going mitigation must be met in order for redevelopment to take place. Although there are former munitions dumps in the Washington region, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers knows of no munitions on sites in or near Westbard.



*Invasive species growing in Westbard*



Figure 2.5.1: Westbard Watershed



Figure 2.5.2: Impervious Areas

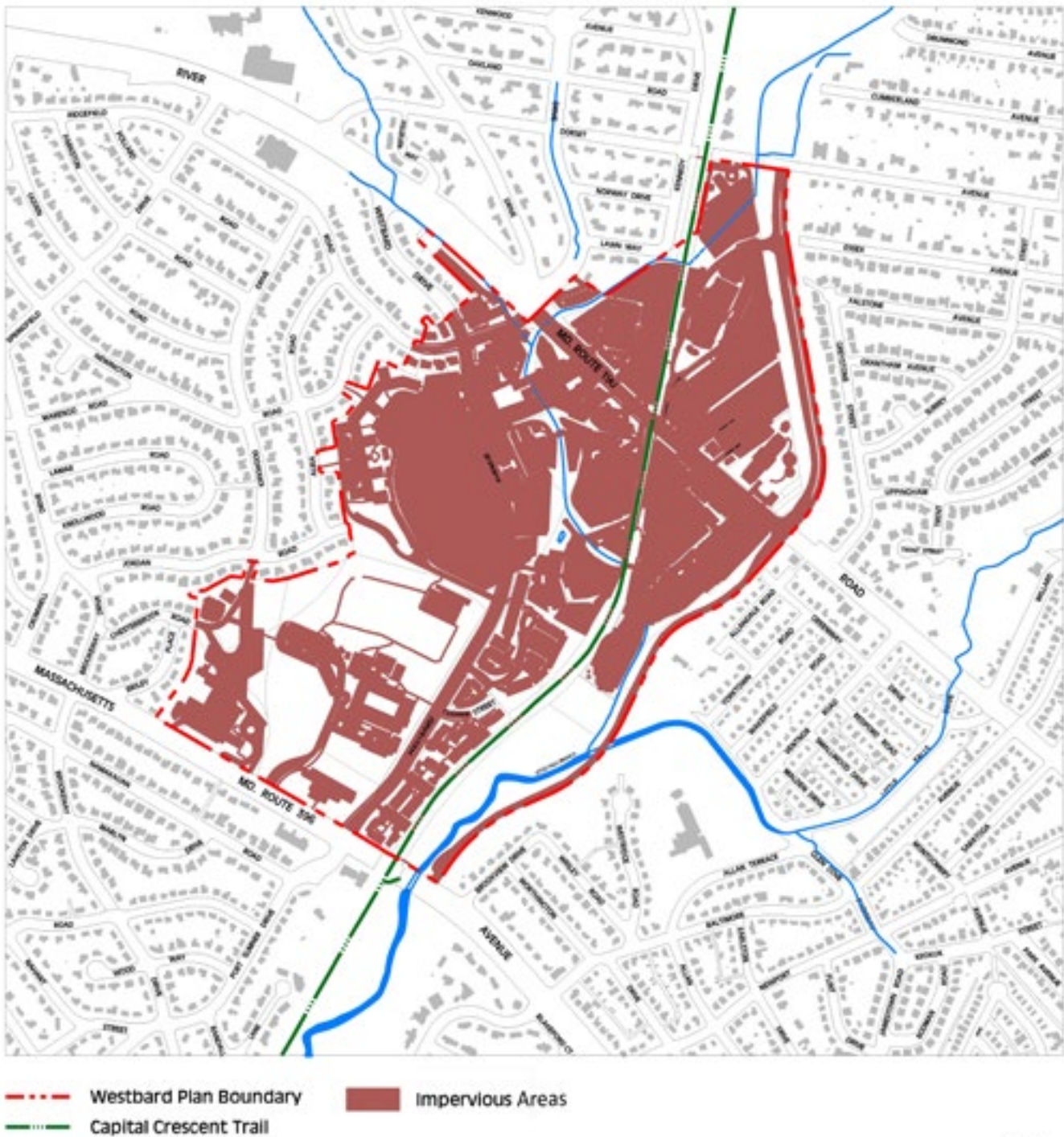




Figure 2.5.3: Forest Cover





Figure 2.5.3: Canopy Cover



## 2.6 History

### 2.6.1 Goals

Today's Westbard Sector Plan area is a mixed-use neighborhood of primarily mid-20th-century structures. Its physical fabric gives few clues as to its earlier history and new development may remove much of its mid-20th century character.

This Sector Plan proposes making Westbard's past more evident, both to ensure its history is remembered and strengthen its sense of place. Specific recommendations and historical background are provided below.

### 2.6.2 Recommendations

- Recognize and preserve the African-American heritage of the neighborhood through historical markers.
- Recognize and capitalize on the Native American, agricultural, industrial, suburban, transportation and mid-20th-century architectural history of the area through interpretive signage.

Strategies for recognizing and celebrating local history include the following:

- Use building materials for new construction that have significance to the area and, if they are unavailable, use similar substitutes. Locally significant building materials include the brick and Stoneyhurst stone found in Westbard's mid-20th century development; Indiana limestone fabricated at the George A. Fuller Stone Plant for the Washington National Cathedral; and Westbard granite quarried over centuries by native people, early settlers and the Bethesda Blue Granite Company.
- Consult the Sector Plan's companion urban design guidelines for information and examples of locally significant building materials.
- Incorporate historically-oriented interpretive signage, markers and commemorative art throughout Plan area, including along the Capital Crescent Trail.

- Make such signage, markers and art a priority in new development and seek funding for them.
- Consult County Historic Preservation Office staff to determine the content and coordinate location of such signage, markers and art.
- Consult the Plan’s urban design guidelines for examples of historically-oriented interpretive signage, markers and commemorative art.
- County Historic Preservation staff will continue to evaluate 20th-century resources in the Sector Plan area for addition to the Locational Atlas and designation in the Master for Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County.

Westbard’s primarily 20th-century built environment belies the area’s long history and gives scant clues to the forces that shaped its current land use patterns.

With the exception of River Road, a “rolling road” over which tobacco was transported to market, and Milton, a National Register-listed and locally designated plantation house constructed before 1820, few vestiges of the 18th- and 19th- century agricultural landscape remain in what is now Westbard. That landscape started to change following the Civil War, as land in the area was put to new uses.

Beginning in 1869, newly freed African Americans began the establishment of a community in Westbard, buying land flanking Willett Branch and along River Road. By 1880, the River Road African American



*Interpretive signage, such as these displays created by the Neighborhood Design Center in Prince George’s County, may be used to educate residents regarding important local history. (Source: NDC-MD.org)*

community had 24 households and 102 people. Constrained by land competition from industrial and other uses, and by prevailing segregationist attitudes and restrictive covenants prohibiting African Americans from purchasing certain property, the community had only grown to 27 households and 107 people by 1940. Growth was only possible by taking in boarders and subdividing land within the community. The resulting grid of streets northeast of River Road, with streets named after the African American families who lived there, remains.

Several schools served the community over time. The first may have been established by the Freedman’s Bureau school program, which ran from 1865 to 1872. Another operated out of a house.

The River Road Colored School began in 1912/13, operating in a leased building until 1926 when, under the auspices of the Rosenwald Fund, a new school was constructed near the site where the communications tower stands today. Sears Roebuck & Company President Julius Rosenwald established the program to improve education for rural African American communities in the South.

There were a number of other community institutions, such as the River Road Lions semi-professional baseball team that played near today’s Washington Episcopal School property, a beer hall on River Road called the Sugar Bowl and swimming at the nearby quarry. In 1911, White’s Tabernacle #39, a local lodge



*A Rosenwald school, like the one pictured above, once stood near the site of the Channel 20 radio tower. (Source: youneedaschoolhouse.com)*



of a national African American benevolent association, bought land for a cemetery along the Willett Branch. The cemetery is no longer extant, the land having been sold in 1958. Only the Macedonia Baptist Church, perhaps the community's most important institution, remains.

Founded in 1920 by the Reverend William A. Mason, the congregation currently worships in the church at 5112 River Road. The Macedonia Baptist Church has long been an advocate for Montgomery County's African American community, performing philanthropic deeds, such as contributing half of the money necessary to equip two rooms for use by African American patients at Bethesda Suburban Hospital in 1943.

The River Road community dispersed by the late 1960s in the face of development pressures. River Road was widened in 1962, Little Falls Parkway was constructed in the mid-1960s and rezoning brought new industrial and commercial land use. The Macedonia Baptist Church, along with Dorsey and Clipper Lanes, serve as indicators of the area's African American heritage.

Westbard was shaped in part by its industrial history. The B&O Railroad's Georgetown Branch cut through

Westbard by 1910, principally shipping freight. The Bethesda Blue Granite Company, the Stoneform Corporation, the Lakeshore Artificial Stone Company, the George A. Fuller Stone Plant (now the Washington Episcopal School) and the Loughborough Oil Company established operations in the area. By the 1960s, instrumentation and defense manufacturing facilities, including Gardiner Laboratories and Airtronix, joined the earlier operations.

Much of the development that characterizes today's Westbard dates to the middle of the 20th century. By this time, dense, single-family subdivisions surrounded Westbard and the neighborhood had experienced a wave of residential development of its own. Kenwood dates to the 1920s.

Albert Walker, son of Bethesda Blue Granite founder Allan Walker, developed Wood Acres (1939-1959) and Green Acres (1940s). Westhaven (1940s) was followed in the 1950s by the nearby Springhill, Sumner, Westmoreland Hills, Glen Mar Park and Massachusetts Avenue Hills developments. These residential neighborhoods led to the construction of Western Suburban Junior High School (1951) (renamed Westland Middle School), Pilgrim Lutheran (1957), Saint



*The Macedonia Baptist Church today, located at Clipper Lane and River Road, is nestled between the Bank of America and the Kenwood Place Condominium.*

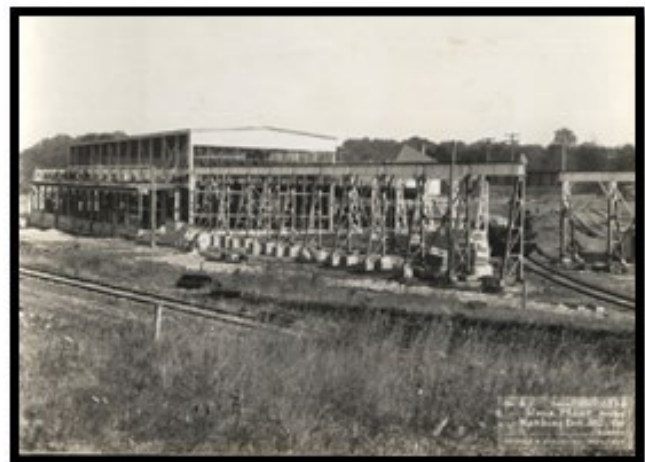
Dunstan’s Episcopal (1958), Little Falls Library (1959), and Little Flower Catholic School and Convent (1952) and church (1967). The designs of these institutions drew on hallmarks of mid-century modern architecture and native materials like Stoneyhurst stone.

The Westwood Shopping Center opened in 1959. Westwood, a garden apartment complex (known today as Kenwood Place) and Bowl America Westwood (now Bowlmor) opened in 1960. Additional apartments, offices and other development followed: the Westwood Building (now Park Bethesda Apartments) (1964), Kenwood Building (1966) and Westwood Shopping Center II (1982).

Various aspects of Westbard’s history, from early Native American and African-American contributions to the introduction of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and associated industrial activity, can be referenced by property owners to help shape future development in the area. Those elements representing this legacy of industrial, commercial, institutional and residential uses, which were largely in place by the mid-20th century and extant today, should be preserved and celebrated to honor Westbard as a unique place within Montgomery County.



A granite quarry was located in the Westbard Sector Plan area

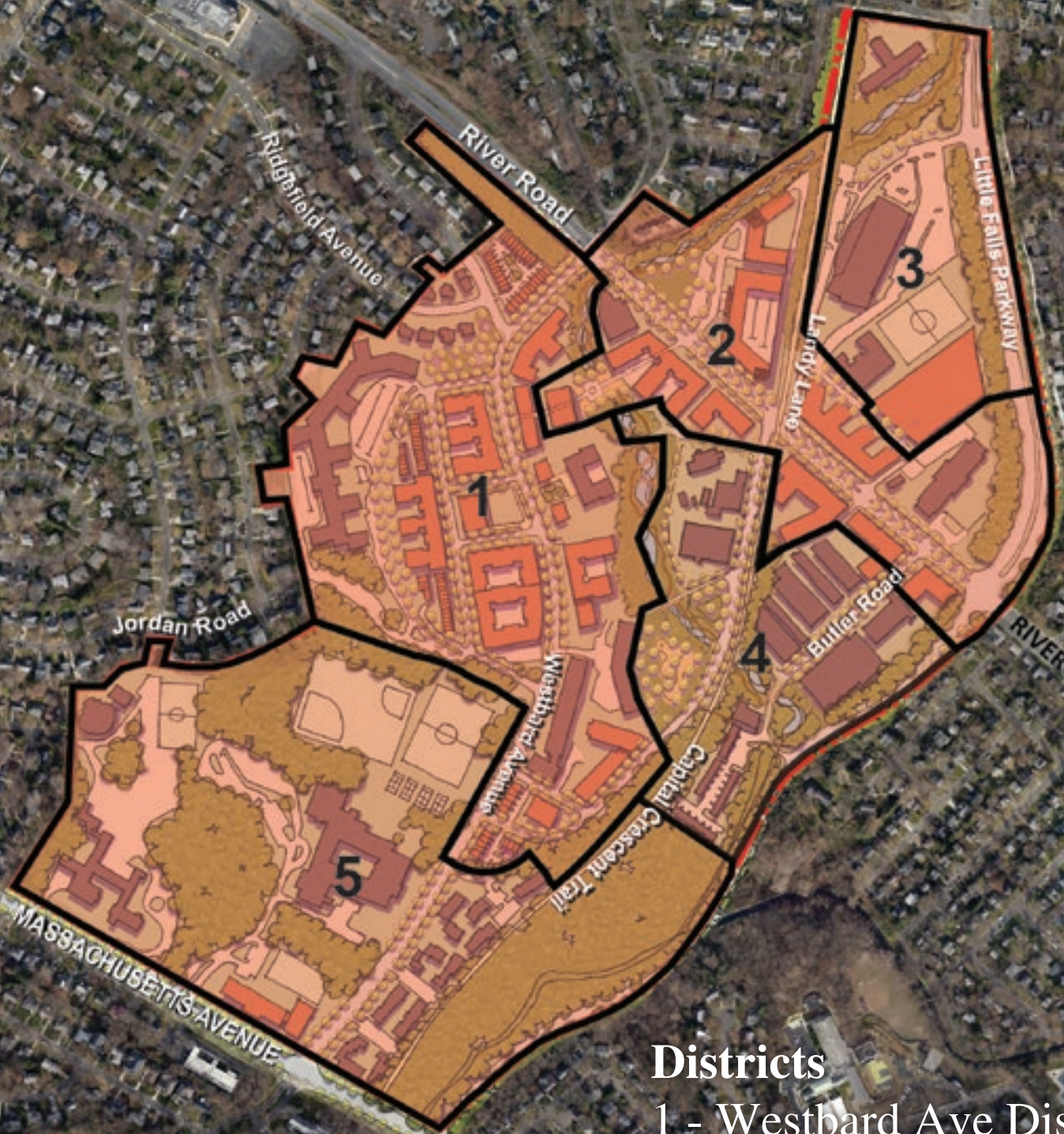


Today, the Fuller Stone Fabrication building houses the Washington Episcopal School





Figure 3.0.1: Districts Map



**Districts**

- 1 - Westbard Ave District
- 2 - River Road Corridor
- 3 - North River District
- 4 - South River District
- 5 - South Westbard District



# Chapter 3: Districts

The Sector Plan has five identifiable areas that are unique from each other and present different challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, the Sector Plan has been divided into five Districts. They are the following; 1-Westbard Avenue District; 2-River Road Corridor; 3-North River District; 4-South River District; 5-South Westbard District. Recommendations for each District are detailed in this chapter.

## 3.1 Westbard Avenue District



*A tobacco plantation, like the one above, once existed where the Springfield neighborhood stands today. (Source: US history.org)*

### *HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**Tobacco Plantations:** In the 18th and early 19th centuries, English and Scottish planters from southern Maryland and their slaves cleared Westbard's forests and began cultivating tobacco. One area plantation was Springfield (later known as "Peter Posey's Place"). The plantation's stone house was located north of Westbard on Parkston Road near its junction with Springfield Drive, which roughly follows the route of the farm road. The dwelling was gone by 1951, replaced by the first houses of the Springfield subdivision. Springfield was owned in the 18th and early 19th century by Samuel Busey, and his family cemetery was located along the west side of the farm road.

The Westbard Avenue District lies at the heart of the Plan area. It is bounded by Willett Branch to the east, the Springfield community to the west, River Road to the north and Westland Middle School and Westbard Mews townhouses to the south. The dominant feature of this district is the Westwood Shopping Center with its vast, impervious, asphalt parking lots.

The vision for improving the Westbard Avenue District is to transform the parking lots into an inviting, livable and walkable village with stores and apartments. A central outdoor space, new pocket parks and a Neighborhood Green Urban Park would provide places for gathering, leisure and recreation. These green amenities would create a transitional zone between the Westwood commercial and residential developments and the adjacent Springfield neighborhood.

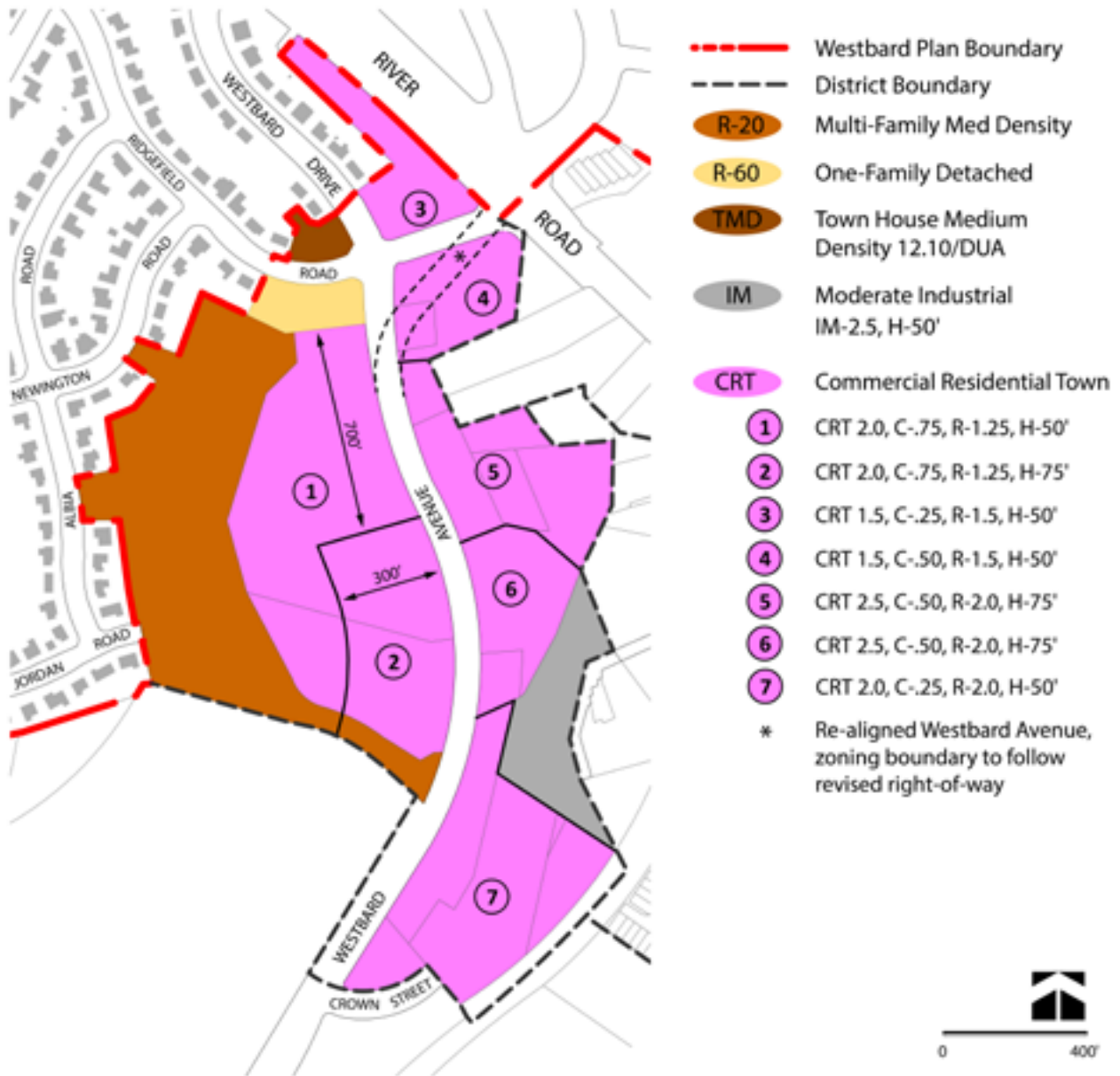
### **3.1.1 Land Use and Zoning**

This District is composed of those properties fronting Westbard Avenue between River Road and the Westbard Mews townhouses. The Plan recommends the Commercial Residential Town (CRT) zone, ranging in heights between 50 and 75 feet, and densities up to 2.5 floor area ratio (FAR) More specific recommendations are as follows:

- Along the west side of Westbard Avenue (parcel 235, see pg. 67), heights of 50 feet.
- Heights of up to 75 feet on the east side of Westbard Avenue to accommodate the redevelopment of the Giant Food grocery store (parcels 235 and 360).
- On the east side of Westbard Avenue, heights of 75 feet (parcels 143, 238, 303 and 357). Taller buildings here will keep the core of density away from the single-family residential communities to the west. They will be located where building heights of 120 to 150 feet already exist.
- At Westwood Towers (parcels 143, 175, 238 and 240), the Plan recommends a CRT zone with an FAR of 2.5 and a maximum height of 75 feet.



Figure 3.1.1: Proposed Zoning Map - Westbard Avenue District



### 3.1.2 Urban Design, Parks, Trails and Open Space

The Sector Plan recommends:

- Dividing the existing super-block composed of the Westwood Shopping Center (parcels 235 and 360) and associated large surface parking lots (approximately 11 acres in size) into smaller streets and blocks, with ground-floor, street-facing retail and residential and community uses in the stories above the retail.
- Designing new streets on the Westwood Shopping Center site to have a building-face to-building-face dimension of approximately 65

feet to accommodate two travel lanes, on-street parking and wide sidewalks (see Transportation 2.3 section for street rights-of-way).

- Situating most of the parking underground with some on-street and surface parking to accommodate shoppers making stop-and-go trips to service retail establishments, such as drug stores, coffee shops, etc.
- Accommodating pedestrians throughout the Westbard Avenue District and between the districts through the addition of tree-lined sidewalks and bike lanes.
- Locating a civic use in the center of the Westbard Avenue District.

Recommendations for public open spaces and trails in the Westbard Avenue District include:

### Westbard Central Civic Green

**Vision:** A formally planned, flexible, programmable open space that:

- Provides a place for informal gathering, quiet contemplation or large special event gatherings.
- May support community activities, including open air markets, concerts, festivals and special events, but will not be used for programmed recreational purposes.

**Purpose:** The principal outdoor gathering and civic space in Westbard:

- Provides a town green that fronts the central civic use.
- Serves as a focal point for the existing residential community that surrounds this district or the Westbard area.
- Incorporates a central lawn as the main focus with adjacent spaces providing complementary uses.
- May include gardens, water features, shade structures.

**Recommended Size:** Approximately 0.5 acres

The Westbard Central Civic Green should include the following characteristics:

- Located within direct view of Westbard Avenue and adjacent to the highest concentration of commercial and civic land uses.
- Includes green lawn area for flexible use (events, ceremonies, celebrations, informal seating).
- Includes shaded areas with seating; shade provided by trees and structures.
- Designed to welcome public use; integrated into the public realm.
- Inclusive design serving all age groups.

### Springfield Neighborhood Green Urban Park

**Vision:** Located along the north edge of the Westwood Shopping Center (parcel 235), this park is envisioned as flexible open space that will serve the residents and workers from the surrounding neighborhood or district. It may be designed for more activity than an urban buffer park.



*Rendering of recommended Central Civic Green from Concept Framework Plan*

**Purpose:** The 1982 Westbard Sector Plan indicated a need for this park, but the space was never built. This Plan repeats the recommendation to:

- Provide a needed transition between the planned Westwood Center development and the Springfield neighborhood. Provide needed space for facilities, such as a playground, a community open space or a dog park.
- Establish a place for informal gathering, lunchtime relaxation or small special event gatherings.

**Recommended Size:** Approximately 0.5 acres

### Willet Branch Urban Greenway/Stream Valley Park (parcels 175 and 240)

**Vision:** The Willett Branch Urban Greenway/Stream Valley Park will provide the Westbard community with access to the stream, native plantings and forested areas.



Rendering of recommended Springfield Neighborhood Park from Concept Framework Plan

**Purpose:**

- Provide access to the renovated Willett Branch stream valley that runs through the Westbard Avenue District on the property presently leased by the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC). Establish critical pedestrian linkages between River Road and Westbard Avenue. Naturalizing the stream will improve the water quality of the Little Falls Branch.

This M-NCPPC-owned Urban Greenway is envisioned as the portions of those properties that are publicly accessible open spaces and located in the stream and flood plain buffer. Certain portions or areas under current environmental restrictions may not be developed.

**Pedestrian Linkage through Equity One / HOC Property (parcel 143)**

The property leased by the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) on the east side of Westbard Avenue has the potential to act as the southwestern terminus of a connection between Westbard Avenue and River Road. This connection, either a pedestrian link or a vehicular/pedestrian link between the Westbard Avenue District and River Road (at parcels 131 and 133), will create synergy between these two retail nodes. It would also serve as a gateway to the renovated Willett Branch stream valley, providing easy access from both River Road and Westbard Avenue.

**3.1.3 Environment - Naturalization of Willett Branch**

The tributary to Willett Branch that runs along River Road has vertical/undercut banks within 6 feet of the edge of River Road and the area has heavy pockets of invasive plants. As the stream enters a culvert, there's a log jam with extensive blockage and considerable build-up of sediment. This site restoration should include parcel 902, an approximately 3,000-square-foot property which is adjacent to the Sector Plan area and River Road. Coordination with the State Highway Administration will be necessary to complete this work.



A tributary to Willett Branch runs along River Road

Willett Branch enters a tunnel at the corner of River Road and Ridgefield Road (adjacent to parcel 077), re-emerging near a parking lot currently used as a dog park and overflow parking for the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) apartment building across Willett Branch. Water seepage from the McDonalds retaining wall flows across the floodplain-turned-parking lot to the Willett Branch. Although not open to general traffic, the bridge that connects the HOC building with the parking lot is one of the Willett Branch crossings within Westbard.

The Plan recommends the following environmental improvements:

- Deconstruct and reforest the linear parking lot on the Manor Care site as part of the stream stabilization.
- Provide forest conservation credit for mitigation requirements in Westbard.



- Daylight the Kenwood tributary on each side of Ridgefield Road. Artfully re-engineer and enhance the existing waterfall on the east side of Ridgefield Road as an amenity.
- Allow improvements near the stream, such as a landscaped pocket park with seating that celebrates the watershed.
- Remove the large retaining walls and create amenity areas with gentler slopes. Include terracing and ramps to facilitate access to the stream.
- Provide pedestrian access to the future Willett Branch Trail.
- Plan the Willett Branch Trail and amenities (such as stream naturalization and floodplain enhancements) as part of future developments.



*Restored stream with enhanced flood plain, landscape amenities and pedestrian connections*

- Preserve the large trees along the entrance driveway to the Kenwood Place Condominium and the property boundary between the condominium and Westwood Shopping Center.
- Address the currently unmitigated storm flows that drain from the Kenwood Place condominium into the Giant Food site (parcels 235 and 360) by installing stormwater buffer strips along and within the perimeter of the Westwood Shopping Center site.
- Establish a 50 percent canopy cover for all roads, on-street parking and ground-level parking lots.
- Reduce impervious surface parking areas.

### 3.1.4 Housing

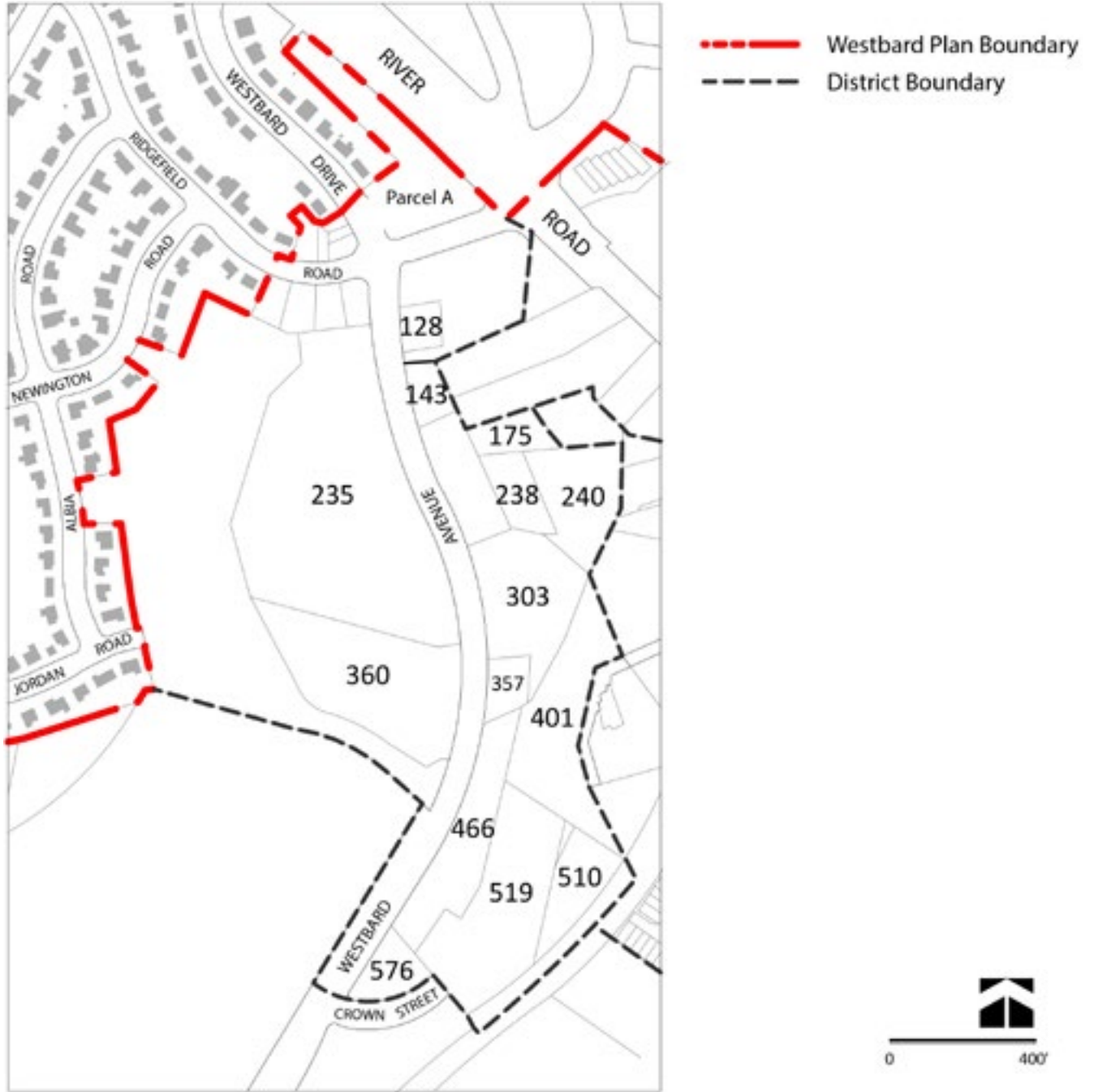
The proposed Commercial Residential Town (CRT) zones in this district provide incentives for additional affordable housing when new development occurs. The Sector Plan recommends that affordable housing be given priority for public benefit points under the optional method of development that may occur on sites between Westbard Avenue and River Road, east of Ridgefield Road. Development in this location should include moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs).



*Affordable housing units over ground-floor retail*

In addition, the Westwood Towers property (parcels 143, 175, 238 and 240), which is owned by Equity One and controlled by the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), may be purchased by HOC in order to increase the share of affordable housing not covered by the MPDU program. This development would include, potentially, 20 to 30 new units that would serve those renters who currently earn between 20 percent and 50 percent of the area median income.

Figure 3.1.2: Westbard Avenue District - Parcel File Map



## 3.2 River Road Corridor



*Spinning Wheel Tavern once stood near the intersection of River Road and Ridgefield Road*

### *HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**Tavern:** The Spinning Wheel Tavern, located near the junction of today's Ridgefield and River Roads, served local planters and travelers to Georgetown, and reputedly was part of a large complex that predated the American Revolution. Taverns were important social venues in the 18th century, prior to the existence of towns and villages. The tavern, no longer extant, was still standing in 1933. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the tavern was owned by the Willett family.

The River Road Corridor is composed of the land on either side of River Road between Ridgefield Road and Little Falls Parkway. It is characterized by low buildings and unshaded parking lots. Roadside shade trees are lacking because of narrow right-of-way widths outside of the road pavement. In addition, tall utility poles have four to five tiers of wires spread over 30 feet of height, precluding the co-existence of tree canopy.

The River Road Corridor is envisioned as an active, pedestrian-friendly, multi-modal boulevard with a 110-foot-wide right-of-way.

### **3.2.1 Land Use and Zoning**

The Plan recommends:

- Maintaining the existing Commercial Residential Town (CRT) zones along both sides of River Road while increasing maximum heights from 35 feet and 40 feet to 75 feet.
- Increasing floor area ratio (FAR) to a range of 1.5 to 3.0.
- The Whole Foods property, currently owned by Royco Inc. (parcel 029), is to be zoned CRT 3.0 (FAR) with height of 75 feet.
- The Moderate Industrial (IM) zoned property behind the Whole Foods site, currently owned by Kenwood Storage, LLC (parcel 002), is to be zoned CRT 1.5 with a height of 50 feet.

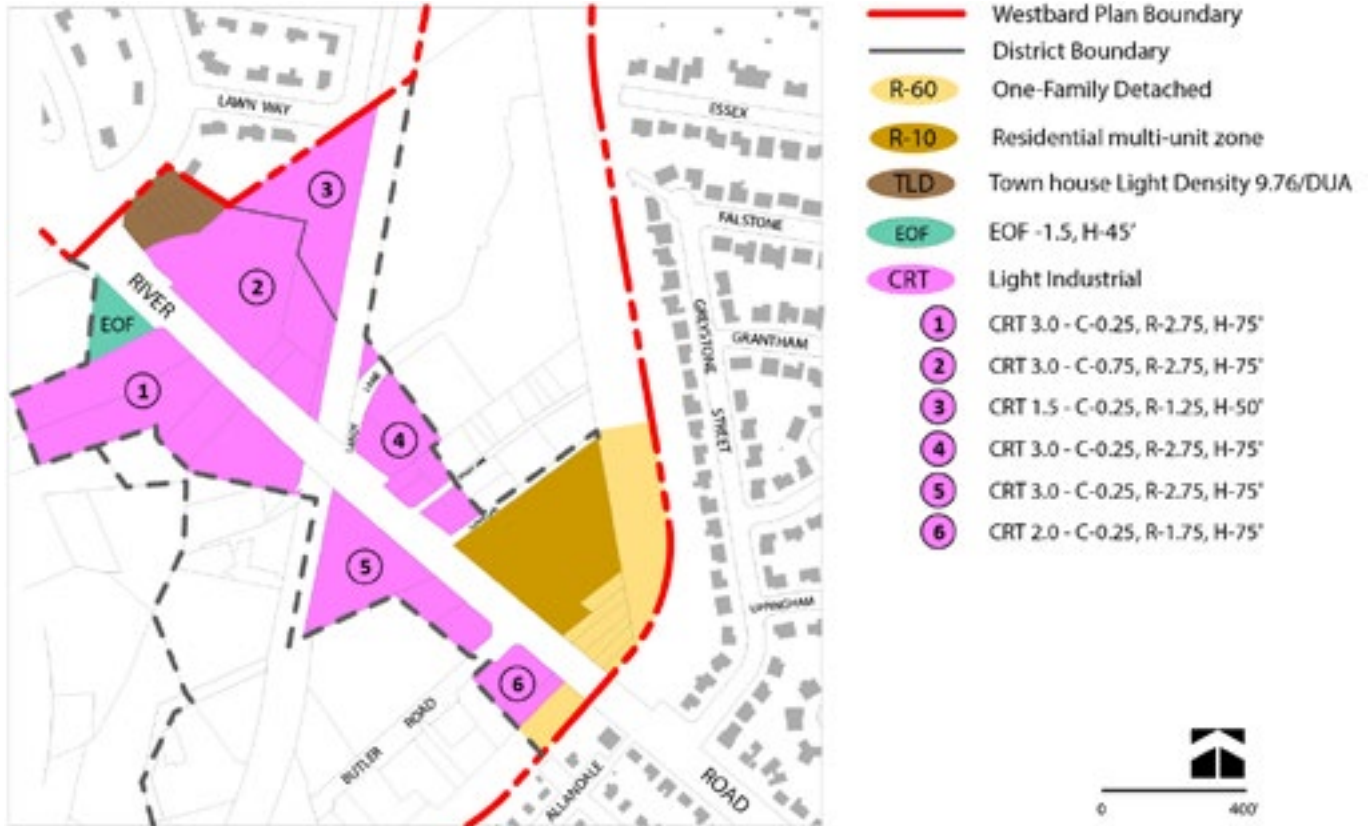
### **3.2.2 Urban Design, Parks, Trails and Open Spaces**

The Plan recommends:

- Permit buildings on both sides of River Road to be as tall as 75 feet, allowing for the five-over-one construction type. This type of construction consists of a 20-foot-tall concrete podium on the ground floor that accommodates retail uses and five floors of wood construction above the podium for multi-family residential units.



Figure 3.2.1: Proposed Zoning Map - River Road Corridor



- Accommodate parking in underground structures or above-ground structured parking fully screened by residential units and retail built in front.
- Provide 15 to 20-foot-wide sidewalks on both sides of River Road to accommodate pedestrians and outdoor seating. These sidewalks will be separated from the street by 6-foot-wide strips planted with shade trees, shrubs and groundcover, buffering pedestrians from fast-moving traffic.
- Activate the street level with storefronts of various designs in different materials and colors that are distinct from building to building.

**Improved Access to the Capital Crescent Trail**

The Capital Crescent Trail is a regionally significant recreation and transportation corridor connecting Silver Spring and southwestern Montgomery County with the District of Columbia. User counts indicate that the trail serves more than 10,000 users per week, many of

whom pass through the Westbard Sector Plan area in any given week. The trail is an important component of the larger bicycle and pedestrian beltway around the District of Columbia.

During the 2014 Westbard charrette and public meetings, residents indicated that trails, cycling and pedestrian routes are highly important to this community. Their feedback mirrors the 2010 survey findings associated with the Vision 2030 Strategic Plan of Parks and Recreation developed by the Montgomery County Department of Parks. The survey found cycling and walking on hard and natural surface trails to be the County’s most popular recreation activities. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents reported using both types of trails, and nearly 75 percent considered them very important to their households. In addition, trails ranked the highest outdoor facility on the survey as to the overall importance of adding, expanding or improving them.



*River Road once served as a “rolling road,” like the one pictured above.*

**HISTORICAL NOTE:**

**Rolling Road:** River Road, possibly a former native trail, became a “rolling road” during the 18th century. Large wooden casks known as hogsheads were hooked via saplings or wood posts to oxen and pulled along the road to the tobacco warehouse and inspection station in Georgetown. Later, the casks were transported by wagon. A 19th-century owner of the Spinning Wheel Tavern recalled her grandmother saying that the songs and banjo music of the tobacco drivers frequently awakened her as a child as the wagons passed the tavern. The grandmother still remembered the lyrics to a song about rolling tobacco down to town.

**Recommendations:**

**Create a new Capital Crescent Trail entrance and spur at Lawn Way and a hard-surface trail.**

This new entrance and exit from the Capital Crescent Trail will enable trail users to:

- Access the Whole Foods property and make a pedestrian connection to River Road.
- Follow the Willett Branch stream – outside of the stream and flood plain buffer – to River Road. When the Whole Foods site redevelops, a hard-surface spur trail connection should be built. (See map of Westbard Proposed Parks, Trails and Open Spaces.)
- Cross River Road and travel on Ridgefield Road to Westbard Avenue on foot or bike lanes.

**Community Open Space at the existing Whole Foods parking lot.**

Much of the Whole Foods parking lot is within the 100-foot stream and flood plain buffer for the Willett Branch stream. Since future development cannot take place within such a buffer, a community open space is recommended with the following features:

- The space should include open, level, grassy areas for a variety of informal recreational activities.
- A minimum of 10,000 square feet, with 60 feet of width.

**3.2.3 Environment**

The most prominent natural feature in the corridor is the Willett Branch. This stream straddles the boundary between Westbard and the Kenwood neighborhood, and circles around the southern part of this district. Contained within a large concrete channel, the stream flows past the Kenwood storage facility and Whole Foods site at a level approximately 12 feet lower than

Public comments from the Westbard community indicate the desire for:

- More access points to the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Better pedestrian routes between the areas west of Westbard Avenue and the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Improved sidewalk conditions, particularly along River Road, adding bike lanes where appropriate.

the surface of the parking lot. It next crosses under River Road within a large tunnel. Near this point, the tributary flowing within the median of Brookside Drive converges with the Willett Branch.

Willett Branch re-emerges south of River Road in a deep, canyonlike setting and flows across the Westwood II property. At this point, another tributary to Willett Branch joins with the stream from across Ridgefield Road in an extremely constrained area. The existing stream valley is barely wider than the stream channel itself.

Areas of fill associated with surrounding buildings and parking areas are held in place by massive retaining walls. These walls, situated 10 to 20 feet from the stream, are showing stress in many locations. The walls of the stream channel itself are between 15 and 25 feet high at the point where the stream flows into a large, 250-foot-long tunnel as it crosses under the American Plant and Roof Center sites.

This tunnel is covered by extensive fill placed directly over the stream channel. The upstream edge of site incorporates an extremely tall, timber retaining wall which is nearing the end of its functional life span. The downstream edge of site has a large, informally built concrete retaining wall with large cracks apparent in the structure.

The Capital Crescent Trail and pedestrian bridge over River Road is a gap in the forest cover (Greenway Gap) provided along the Capital Crescent Trail, with major encroachments of pavement and other uses within park property.

**Goal:**

- Improve the stream valley from its current condition and return the landscape to more natural vegetation in the vicinity of the Willett Branch.
- Create community amenities along the Willett Branch that include trail gathering locations and attractive stream elements.



*Macedonia Baptist Church on River Road*

*HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**Macedonia Baptist Church:** Westbard’s historically African-American Macedonia Baptist Church, located at River Road and Clipper Lane, was founded in 1920 by the late Reverend William A. Mason. Though members no longer live in Westbard, the congregation is still active there. The current church building stands atop a small crest at 5112 River Road, at its junction with Clipper Lane. The front-gabled brick and stucco structure may date from 1945, when the church bought the current property. The church granted land to the State Highways Commission when River Road was widened in 1962 and granted an easement to the adjacent bank in 1983 to allow widening of Clipper Lane.

The Macedonia Baptist Church has long been an advocate for Montgomery County’s African-American community. In 1943, the church contributed half of a \$600 donation to the Bethesda Suburban Hospital from black residents of suburban Maryland to equip two rooms for use by African Americans. The Black Ministers Conference of Montgomery County, Maryland was founded at the Macedonia Baptist Church in 1981 “to be supportive of the total community, spiritually, socially, physically and in other appropriate areas of need that are not being met by any other organization.”



## Recommendations:

- In the long term, redevelopment of the Kenwood storage facility and/or the Whole Foods shopping center should be built outside of the 100-foot-wide stream buffer area adjacent to the Willett Branch (parcels 029 and 002).
- Link the proposed trail along the Willett Branch to the Capital Crescent Trail and River Road.
- Reconstruct the River Road crossing of Willett Branch with a wider span to accommodate a naturalized channel and a pedestrian trail along the stream.
- Create a Willett Branch Trail crossing within the right-of-way just north of the River Road bridge so that the trail continues under River Road on the west side of the stream.
- Provide access to the River/Brookside Road intersection from the Willett Branch Trail.
- Provide an amenity area along the Willett Branch for new buildings on the Westwood II site south of River Road (parcel 238).
- Designate Parcels 238 and 240 as a floodplain area, as a stream restoration/amenity area for development within Westbard and provide a landscape setting in this location that is respectful of site history.
- At parcel 175, rebuild the pedestrian crossing near the floodplain area as a connection from the Capital Crescent Trail to the new commercial center.
- Consolidate the extensive and excessively tall overhead utility wire infrastructure within the District.
- Designate River Road as a Greenway road.

At the American Plant Food/Roof Center property (Parcels 131 and 133), where the Willett Branch passes through a 250-foot-long tunnel, the following is recommended:

- Remove existing infrastructure over the stream.
- Naturalize Willett Branch as part of the Willett Branch Urban Greenway/Stream Valley Park.
- Create an environmentally-sensitive vehicular crossing of Willett Branch that may include a bottomless culvert and allows pedestrians to move along the Willett Branch Urban Greenway/Stream Valley Park trail.

### 3.2.4 Housing

The proposed Commercial Residential Town (CRT) zones in this district provide incentives for additional affordable housing when new development occurs. The Sector Plan recommends that affordable housing be given priority for public benefit points under the optional method of development that may occur on sites south of River Road, east of the Capital Crescent Trail. Development in this location should include moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) at 15 percent (2.5 percent above the mandated 12.5 percent for developments with more than 20 dwelling units).

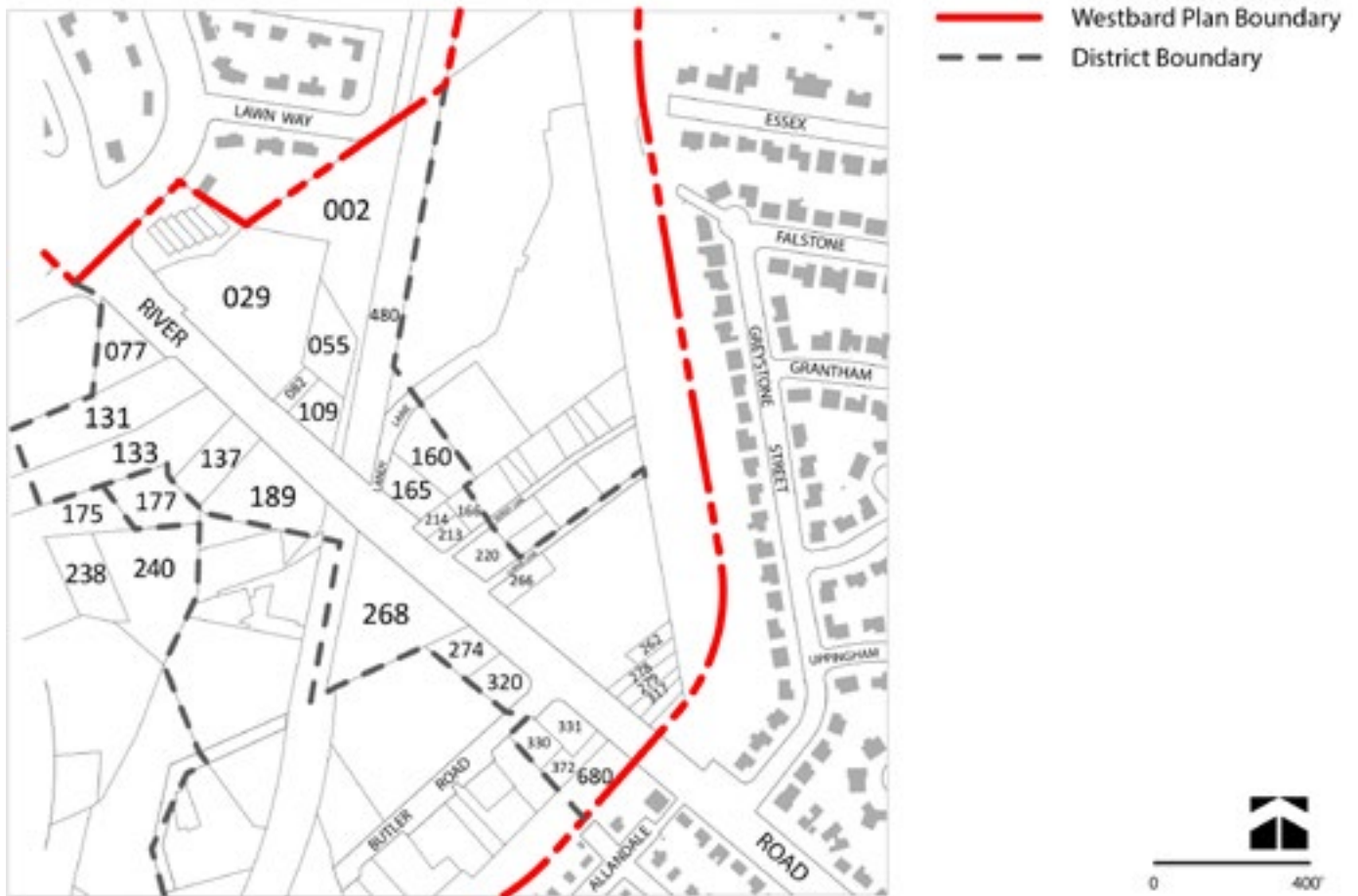


*An example of an environmentally-sensitive stream crossing for parcels 131 and 133*

Parcels 131 and 133 adjoin property to the west, parcel 143, controlled by the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC). The Plan recommends a connection be established between River Road and Westbard Avenue through this property. This adjacency provides an opportunity for HOC and the American Plant Food

Company and others to create a joint development between their properties. This project could take advantage of the proposed connection, to create a unified development; which includes workforce housing in addition to the MPDU requirement.

Figure 3.2.2: River Road Corridor - Parcel File Map



## 3.3 North River District



*A baseball field similar to the one above was once located adjacent to today's Washington Episcopal School*

### *HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**Sports and Entertainment:** Sporting activities in the North River District included games played by the River Road Lions, a semi-pro baseball team, on a parcel south of and adjacent to today's Washington Episcopal School. The Sugar Bowl, a noisy late-night beer hall, often disturbed residents; it was located on the northeast side of River Road south of the railroad tracks. A quarry swimming hole, although dangerous, drew residents during the summer.

This District is located in the northeast quadrant of the Sector Plan, to the north and east of River Road and the Capital Crescent Trail. The area is presently occupied by the Washington Episcopal School and several industrial-zoned properties that host many local serving businesses, including The Ballroom, Autobahn Motor Works, Bethesda Iron Works and Ridgefield Catering.

The vision for this District is to maintain the existing uses, such as the local service light industries and the Washington Episcopal School, while improving connections within the district to River Road and Little Falls Parkway. The Plan also makes provisions for the potential redevelopment of the Washington Episcopal School property, if and when that occurs.

### **3.3.1 Land Use and Zoning**

The Plan recommends maintaining the Moderate Industrial (IM) zone and the existing heights and densities along Dorsey Road and Clipper Lane. It recommends changing the PD-28 zone presently assigned to the Washington Episcopal School property to the Commercial Residential Town (CRT) zone.

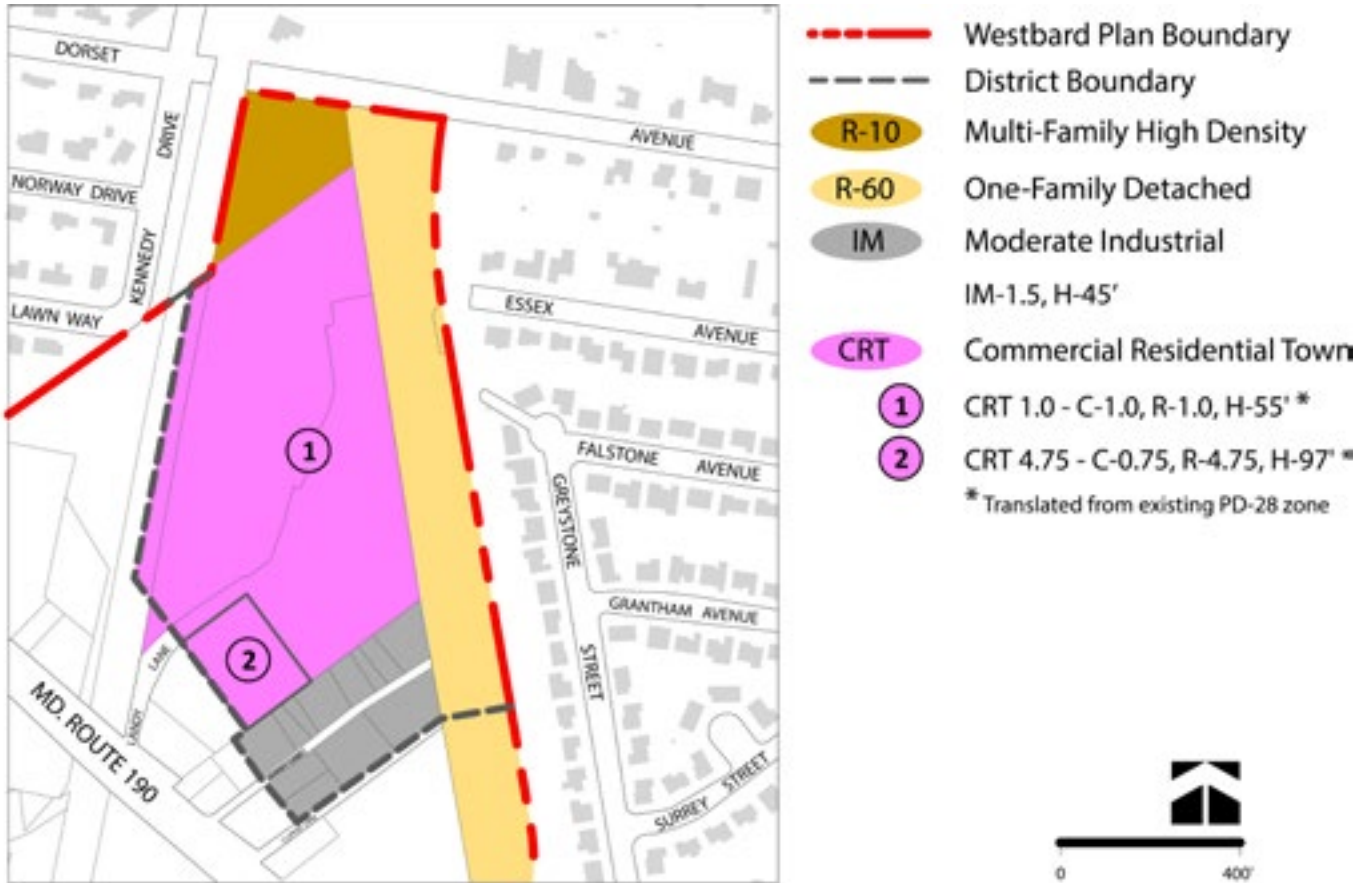
### **3.3.2 Urban Design, Parks, Trails and Open Spaces**

**Recommendations:** Create a network of new and re-aligned streets that better serves the traffic patterns in this area as well as on the adjacent River Road:

- Provide internal connections between properties, allowing the consolidation of the several existing curb cuts on River Road into one or two intersections.
- Connect a new road extending Landy Lane from River Road to Little Falls Parkway at the Washington Episcopal School, or extend Clipper Lane to Little Falls Parkway. Both road extensions are contingent upon the redevelopment of the school site or the several industrial properties located on Dorsey Road and Clipper Lane.



Figure 3.3.1: Proposed Zoning Map - North River District



**Daylight Willett Branch between Little Falls Stream Valley Unit 2 and the Capital Crescent Trail.**

**Vision:** The vision for this section of the Willett Branch Greenway is a daylighted and naturalized floodplain.

**Purpose:** This section of the Willett Branch Greenway allows for pedestrian connections between Little Falls Stream Valley Unit 2 and the Capital Crescent Trail, a naturalized floodplain and open section of stream.

**3.3.3 Environment**

The natural features of this area include the Little Falls Parkway Greenway, Capital Crescent Trail Greenway and Willett Branch.

More than half of the surfaces in this District are unshaded and impervious, mostly due to extensive unplanted parking lots and large buildings.

Nearly continuous on the eastern boundary of Westbard, the Little Falls Greenway contains most of the forested area of Westbard. In this district, the stream suffers from encroachment by the adjacent uses.

The Capital Crescent Trail Park, another Greenway, curves through the middle of Westbard. In the District, the canopy cover over the trail is nearly continuous. However, as the trail approaches River Road, the green, natural features associated with the CCT disappear.

Willett Branch enters the Westbard area at the northern boundary of the Plan area. The stream's Dorset Avenue crossing is a low and narrow box culvert. For approximately 150 feet, the stream becomes channelized as it flows past the Kenwood Place Condominium.

The stream then goes underground as it flows into a very wide and long tunnel under the Washington

*HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**Stone Fabrication:** The George A. Fuller Stone Plant, now the Washington Episcopal School (parcel 050), was built in the fall of 1926 by the George A. Fuller Company, specifically to fabricate stone for the Washington National Cathedral. Indiana limestone was shipped by railroad and brought by moving Bedford cranes right into the steel-framed facility. The Fuller Company, a nationally known general contracting firm, held the contract for the Washington National Cathedral from 1907 to the firm's dissolution in the 1970s. The George A. Fuller Stone Plant operated from 1926 to 1944, and its late night working hours in early years generated complaints from Somerset and Kenwood residents. The Fuller Plant is a familiar feature and historically and architecturally important within Westbard. Eventually, the building housed the Hot Shoppes commissary. In 1955, a new office was constructed at the front and the facility became the Hot Shoppes (later Marriott) headquarters. The Taiwanese Embassy occupied part of the building in the 1970s, and there were a number of other occupants over the years. The Washington Episcopal School took up occupancy in the 1980s and purchased the property in 1996.



*Large stone-cutting machine at Fuller Plant*

Episcopal School ballfield (parcel 050). A large sewer line also crosses under the ballfield south of the Willett Branch tunnel.

Just beyond the end of the tunnel, the stream crosses under the Capital Crescent Trail and returns to the surface.

**Goals:**

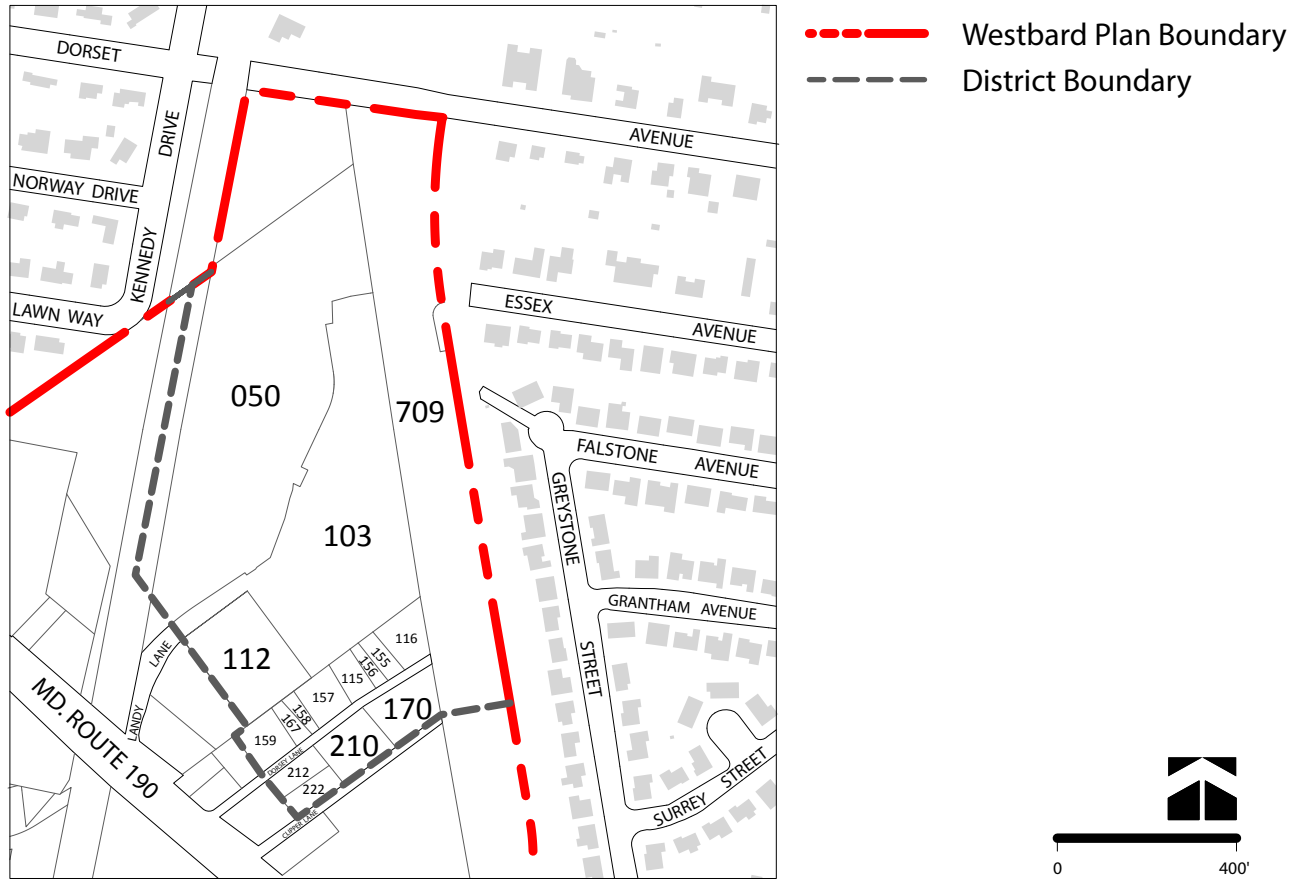
- Daylight Willett Branch as a stream valley and a pedestrian connection between Little Falls Parkway and the Capital Crescent Trail (parcel 050).
- Return Greenway encroachments to a more naturalized condition.
- Reduce and/or make better use of the extensive pavement in this area.
- Increase the canopy cover on pavement dedicated to car use.

**Recommendations:**

- The Little Falls Greenway should be enhanced and restored where encroachments into the forest setting have taken place.

- Remove the acceleration and deceleration lanes on parkland associated with the entrance to the Washington Episcopal School site to the extent possible.
- Create environmentally sensitive Willett Branch crossings at Dorset Avenue and the Capital Crescent Trail that consist of wider spans for a naturalized channel and a pedestrian trail along the stream.
- If redeveloped, Kenwood Place should have an increased buffer area around the stream. Stream channel enhancement and restoration should take place where possible.
- Return the Willett Branch to the surface and create a natural buffer with a restored floodplain when the Washington Episcopal School property redevelops (parcel 050).
- Reclaim paved areas of the Capital Crescent Trail and use them for greenway parking, adding plantings and pedestrian amenities.
- Restore the Landy Lane connection between River Road and Little Falls Parkway.
- Plant the parking lot perimeters and islands with shade trees.

Figure 3.3.2: North River District - Parcel File Map





## 3.4 South River District

### *HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**Industrial Area:** Shortly after construction of the Georgetown Branch in 1910, a small industrial area developed in Westbard around the tracks near the African-American neighborhood. Its first industries were a stone quarry, stone fabricators and a fuel storage company. They include the Bethesda Blue Granite Company, Stoneform Corporation, Lakeshore Artificial Stone Company, the George A. Fuller Stone Plant and Loughborough Oil Company. By the 1960s, Westbard's industrial area had diversified with the addition of instrumentation and defense manufacturing facilities, including Gardiner Laboratories and Airtronix, and the WDCA/20 television studio and transmitter, among other uses. From 1976 to 1982, WDCA broadcasted the Emmy-Award-winning *Petey Green's Washington*, hosted by well-known African-American radio talk show personality, Ralph Waldo "Petey" Green, Jr.

Following the adoption of the 1982 Westbard Sector Plan, land within the industrial area was rezoned from heavy to light industrial. The move to light industrial uses helped address long-standing conflicts between the industrial area and the suburbs that grew around it. The uncomfortable proximity between the residential neighborhoods and heavy industrial area was most notably highlighted by a 1958 fire that raged for a mile along the Willett Branch, ignited near the fuel storage tanks in close proximity to Milton, an historic home, and the Green Acres neighborhood.

This District is located in the southeast quadrant of the Sector Plan, to the south and east of River Road and the Capital Crescent Trail. The area is bounded on the east by Little Falls Parkway and includes the industrial properties along the Capital Crescent Trail right-of-way to the west. Willett Branch also bounds the district on the west.

This District is presently occupied by neighborhood serving retail uses, such as self-storage facilities, auto repair shops, a veterinarian and dog boarding facility, and a sports training business.

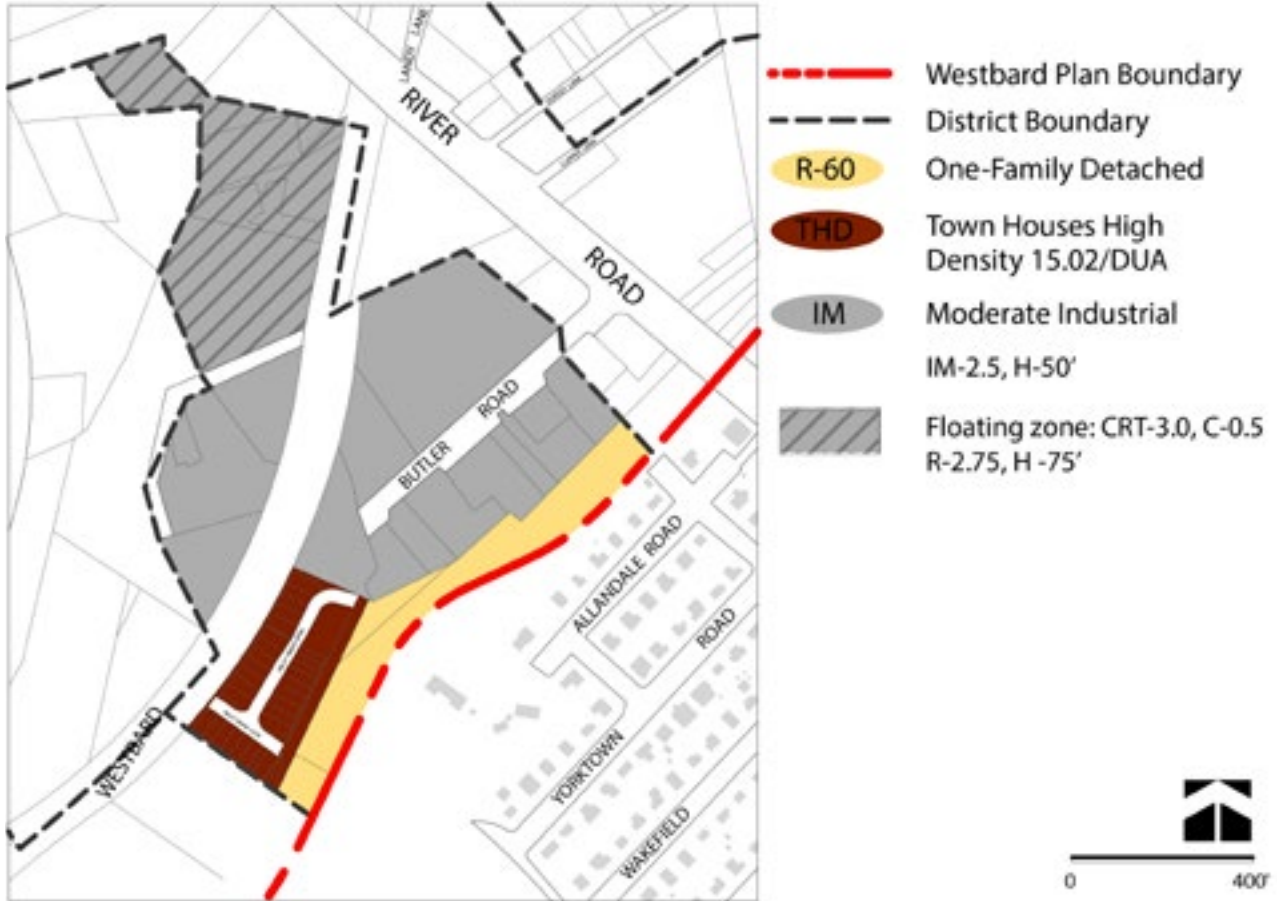
The vision for this District is to maintain existing light industrial businesses that serve the nearby community, while creating a place that is well connected to the Westbard Avenue District and the River Road Corridor and the Capital Crescent Trail. It should also provide amenities for residents in and around the Plan area.

### **3.4.1 Land Use and Zoning**

#### **Recommendations:**

- Maintain the Moderate Industrial (IM) zone and the existing heights and densities.
- Consider a floating CRT zone for the IM-zoned property (parcels 191, 242, 243, 244, 245, 296, see page 81) to the south of River Road along the service alley west of the the Capital Crescent Trail. It would have an FAR of 3.0 and a height of 75 feet. The present uses currently satisfy the landowners and meet the community's need for local serving auto-repair shops. However, in the future as market conditions evolve, these properties could be reconsidered for rezoning.

Figure 3.4.1: Proposed Zoning Map - South River District



### 3.4.2 Urban Design, Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

#### Recommendations:

- Establish a new connector road between Westbard Avenue and River Road, providing street frontage for the businesses along the existing alley, which presently serves as an access road (see Table 2.3.1, page 29 and Figure 2.3.6, page 33). The design and ultimate alignment will be evaluated to accommodate park activities, grading impacts to properties and access to the CCT.

#### Countywide Urban Recreational Park

- Create a Countywide Urban Recreational Park as an open, level area for a variety of informal recreational activities (parcels 352, 354, 404, 401). A major long-term goal in this district is the purchase of these properties by the Montgomery County Department of Parks for this park.

- Locate this urban recreational park along the Capital Crescent Trail where Willett Branch crosses under the trail just south of the River Road bridge.
- Situate the park to serve as a gateway to the naturalized Willet Branch Urban Greenway/ Stream Valley Park corridor and a destination along the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Design the proposed park for active recreation to serve the residents and workers from the surrounding neighborhood or district. Typical facilities may include:
  - Sport courts.
  - Skate spots/skate park.
  - Lawn areas.
  - Playgrounds or similar neighborhood recreation facilities.

**Purpose:** Public input during the week-long Westbard charrette and community meetings mentioned the need for “more active parks.” Skate parks, dog parks and community open space are the most frequently requested facilities in this part of the County.

### **Naturalize Willett Branch between River Road and the Capital Crescent Trail.**

**Vision:** Naturalize the Willett Branch, which passes between the Willco and Schnabel properties. At this location, the Willett Branch is contained within very steep fill slopes and requires a more intensive renovation effort than the section of Willett Branch located in the Westbard Avenue District.

**Purpose:** Create a naturalized stream setting and pedestrian connection along Willett Branch. This recommendation is dependent on the naturalization of Willett Branch as a natural feature to be enjoyed by the public in Westbard. The vision for Willett Branch is discussed in more detail in the Environmental recommendations.

### **Protect and enhance the existing Little Falls Stream Valley Unit 2 Parkland.**

In those locations where roads cut through Little Falls Stream Valley Unit 2, the Plan recommends replanting and reforesting parkland to retain the parkway setting.

### **3.4.3 Environment**

This area of Westbard along the old B&O railroad line has a long history of industrial uses. A number of sites are known to be contaminated with industrial pollution and there are restrictions on the use of groundwater in many areas. The State may require both long and short-term mitigation measures in order to redevelop or change the land use. Although there are known former munitions dumps in the Washington region, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers knows of no munitions site in or near Westbard.

Willett Branch enters this district flowing under a driveway bridge crossing. This driveway originates at River Road, parallels the Capital Crescent Trail on parkland and then leads to an industrial area, currently home to a landscape company and a small business.

### *HISTORICAL NOTE:*

**Granite Quarry:** The Bethesda Blue Granite Company quarry, polishing mill and finishing sheds opened in 1916, with local realtor and banker Allan E. Walker as its president and general manager. Walker had purchased a 50-acre site to create the quarry that was once part of the historic Milton estate. The site straddled the railroad tracks on the southwest side of River Road and was almost entirely underlain with granite. The quarry itself was located north of the railroad tracks where a storage facility and adjoining industrial land are today. The operation employed innovative technology for its time, including a pneumatic drilling machine shipped from the Cavicchi Polishing Company in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Bethesda Blue granite was used for building and monumental work, including headstones, and the rubblestone was used for foundations, walkways and fireplaces. A local example of Bethesda Blue granite may be found in nearby Washington, DC, at 5323 Jocelyn Street, NW.

This industrial area is also the former site of a granite quarry. The stream flows into a 25-foot-deep canyon that is about 80-feet-wide and forested up to the concrete channel of the stream. These canyonlike slopes are the result of fill operations by adjacent property owners.

As it passes for the second time under the Capital Crescent Trail, Willett Branch enters a 450-foot long tunnel. The tunnel continues at the base of Butler Road across the parking areas of several businesses until it reaches Little Falls Park in the vicinity of the recently constructed townhomes. There, Willett Branch emerges at the entrance bridge to the new townhouses. The Willett Branch is only 6 to 8 feet lower than the surrounding grade in this location, although the stream is still channelized. The stream parallels the townhouse property, flowing south within M-NCPPC Park property until it reaches the confluence with Little Falls Branch near the southern boundary of the Plan area.



**Goals:**

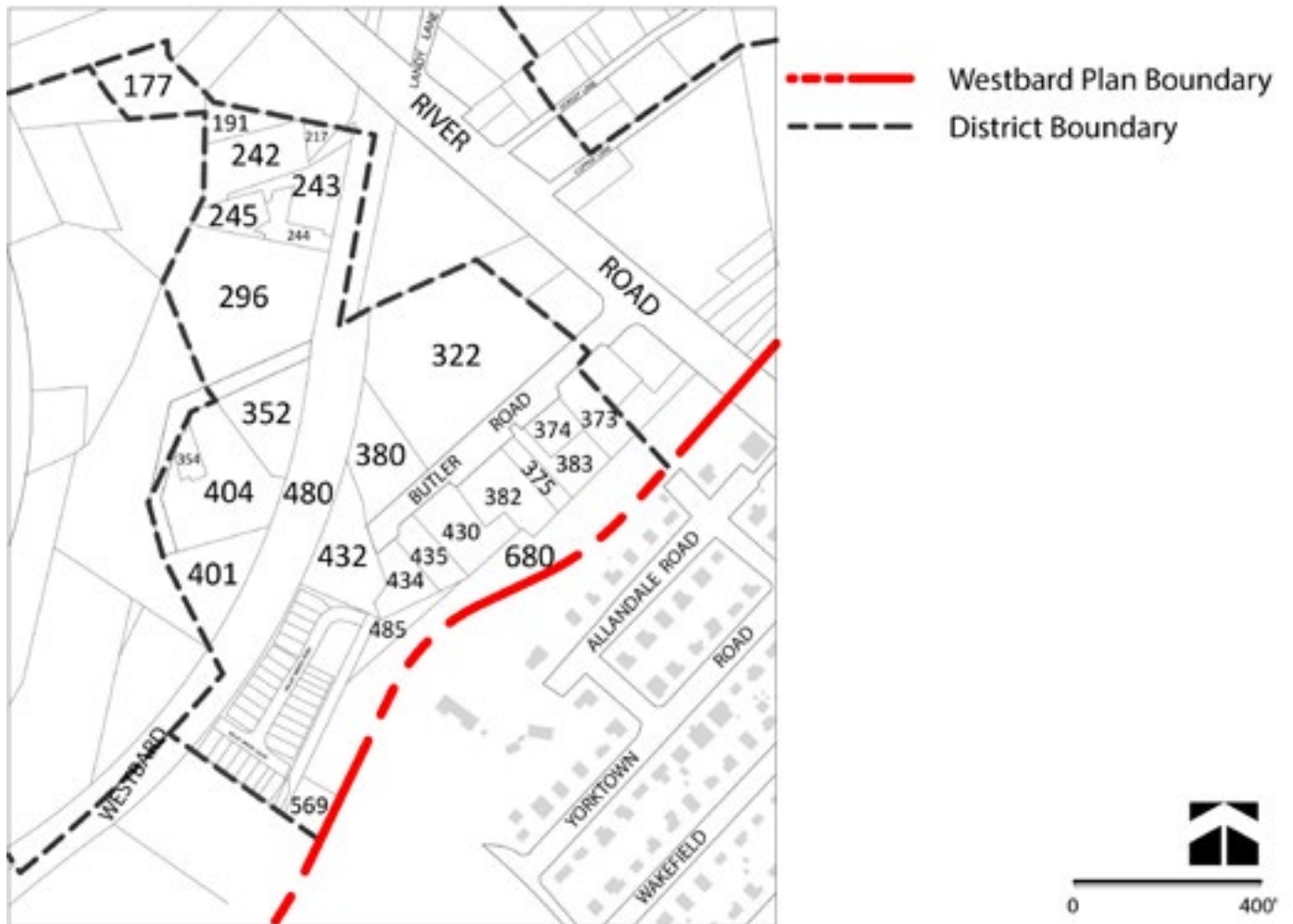
- Naturalize and daylight the Willett Branch as part of the Willett Branch Urban Greenway/Stream Valley Park and create a pedestrian connection between Little Falls Parkway and the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Improve the park setting of the Capital Crescent Trail Special Park.

**Recommendations:**

- Maintain and/or provide stability of the forested slopes along the Willett Branch.

- Create a pedestrian connection between the Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Parkway.
- Daylight the Willett Branch from the Capital Crescent Trail to Little Falls Branch.
- When culverts below the Capital Crescent Trail need replacement or extensive repairs, reconstruct them with an environmentally sensitive crossing to accommodate a naturalized channel.
- Reclaim and replant encroachments on the Capital Crescent Special Park to create a more naturalized condition.

**Figure 3.4.2: South River District - Parcel File Map**



## 3.5 South Westbard District



### **HISTORICAL NOTE:**

*Native peoples, including the Susquehanna (depicted above), frequented the Westbard area during the 17th century*

**Wilderness Crossroads:** During the 17th century, Montgomery County was a wilderness traversed by the Piscataway tribes from the south, the Seneca and Susquehanna from the north, and European explorers, traders and rangers. Native people frequented Westbard for its granite deposits in this area, as evidenced by lithic scatters and arrowheads found nearby. By the end of the 17th century, the Piscataway, Seneca and Susquehanna had largely withdrawn, ushering in the era of European settlement.

This District, located in the southernmost part of the Sector Plan, is bisected by Westbard Avenue. It is bounded on the east by Little Falls Parkway, on the south by Massachusetts Avenue and on the west by the Springfield community. The District includes several community institutions, including the Little Falls Library, Westland Middle School and the Little Flower Catholic Church and grade school. The Westbard Mews townhouses are located on the east side of Westbard Avenue near Massachusetts Avenue.

### **Land Use and Zoning**

The existing zones are R-60 for the school and library sites and RT-12.5 for the townhouse site. The Plan recommends reconfirming R-60 zones and rezoning the townhouse development from its current RT 12.5 zone to the Townhouse High Density (THD) zone. With the adoption of the County Zoning Ordinance in October 2014, RT zones are being phased out and the new townhouse zones are implemented through the master planning process.

### **3.5.1 Urban Design, Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces**

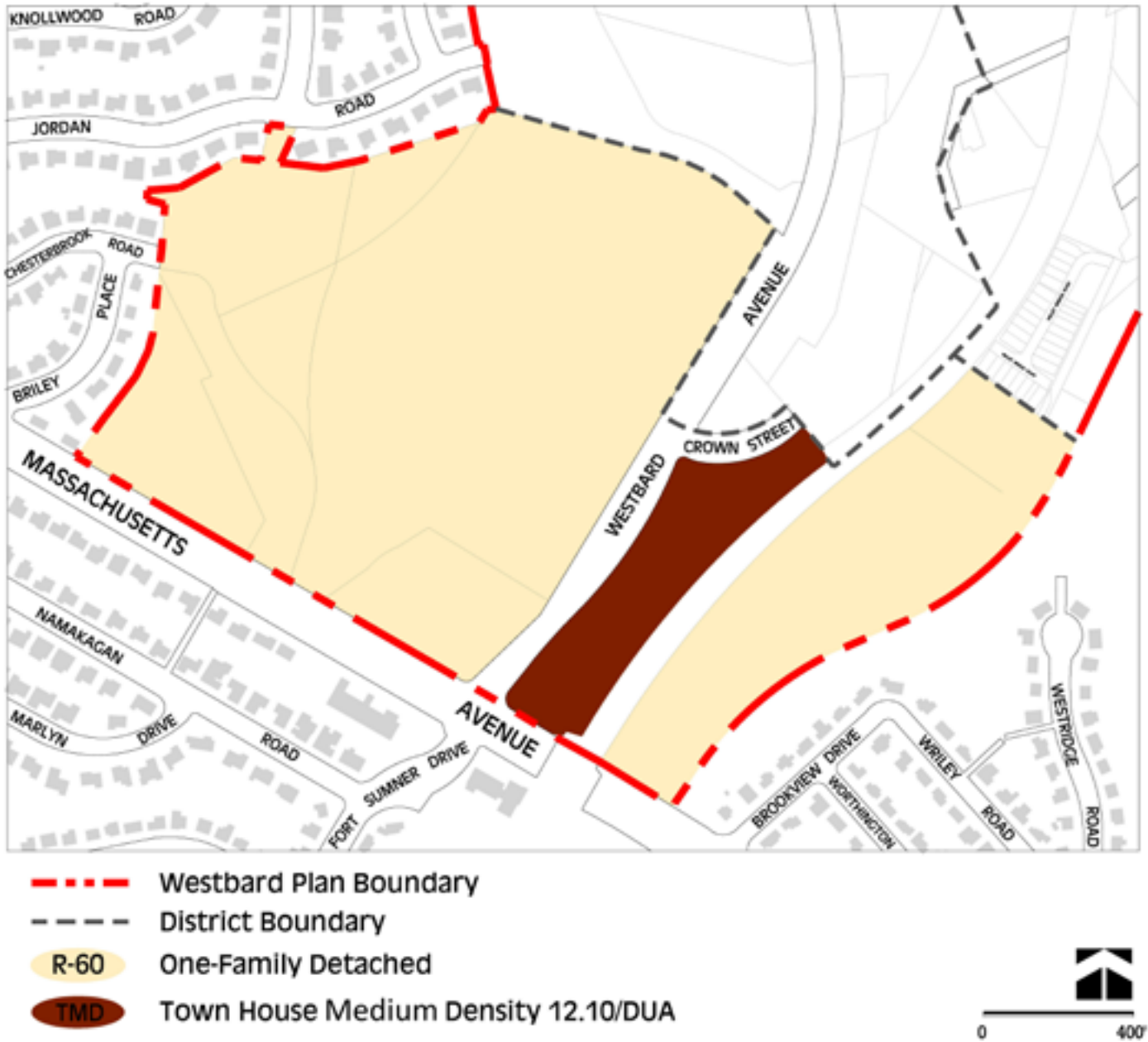
**Vision:** The vision for the South Westbard District is to link the Westbard Avenue District to the following public facilities:

- Link the Westbard Avenue District to the following public facilities in the South Westbard District:
  - Playing fields at Westland Middle School.
  - Little Falls Library.

### **Recommendations:**

- Develop a multi-use turf field on the site of the existing Westland Middle School where the tennis court and grass playing field are presently located. The Plan recommends re-locating the tennis courts to the south, adjacent to the Westland Middle School building, and locating the turf field adjacent to Westbard Circle (the drive that serves Kenwood Place condominium) and the Westwood Shopping Center.

Figure 3.5.1: Proposed Zoning Map - South Westbard District



- Provide a mid-block crosswalk on Westbard Avenue where the new connector road adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail intersects with Westbard Avenue. This crosswalk would provide access to the wide sidewalks on the new road, which, in turn, would provide easy access to the Capital Crescent Trail and the new community recreational park.
- Protect and enhance the existing Little Falls Stream Valley Unit 2 and Capital Crescent Trail parkland.

### 3.5.2 Environment

This district is the most stable of all areas in Westbard. Institutional uses, such as a private school, a public school, a library and a stream valley park, which includes the Capital Crescent Trail, all work together to create an area that has significant forest cover, shaded impervious areas and continuous greenways. Little Falls Branch, on the eastern edge of the district, is located within parkland and almost entirely within a naturalized stream buffer.



**Enhance and maintain the natural features of this district.**

**Recommendations:**

- Forest mitigation requirements generated within Westbard will be met within Westbard through forest enhancement and invasive plant treatments.
- Reclaim stream buffer where parking areas have encroached upon areas near the Little Falls Branch.
- Maintain the natural condition of forested slopes extending to the Capital Crescent Trail.



*Milton, now located in the Green Acres neighborhood, was built circa 1700. Originally a tavern and a stagecoach stop, it became the home of Nathan Loughborough. (Source: Bethesda Magazine)*

**HISTORICAL NOTE:**

**Milton:** Was originally a tavern and a stagecoach stop built on high ground across Little Falls from Indian encampments, where arrow heads were discovered. Milton became home to Nathan Loughborough, an early 19th-century comptroller of the U.S. Treasury. Nathan, a tobacco farmer and slave holder, sold Milton to his son Hamilton. In 1864, a new Maryland constitution outlawed slavery and Hamilton gave plots of land along River Road to his freed slaves. Hamilton died in 1865.

Hamilton's son, James, who was born at Milton, was a Southern sympathizer and fought for the Confederacy with the 10th Virginia Calvary during the Civil War. During that conflict, Union soldiers destroyed the plantation's mill and miller house, using the timbers to build area fortifications. Union officers also boarded at Milton and vandalized it. Graffiti left by them is still visible in one of Milton's upstairs bedrooms.

After the war, James, who bought Milton from his father's estate, farmed the property, and, with his wife Margaret, raised eleven children. James died at Milton in 1921 at the age of 87.









# Chapter 4: Implementation

# 4.1 Zoning

## 4.1.1 1. Commercial Residential (CR) and Commercial Residential Town (CRT) Zoning

The CR and CRT zones permit optional method development, which allows for higher density than under the standard method, but requires significant public use spaces and more amenities to support the additional density. Under the optional method, developers can achieve a minimum number of public benefit points, depending on the size of the project and other factors.

Ensuring the right mix of public benefits in connection with future development in Westbard is crucial for realizing this Sector Plan's vision for a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented community center. Therefore, one of the key implementation strategies of the Sector Plan is to clearly identify those public benefits as a top priority, meaning that optional method development should be approved only if it provides the recommended benefits.

### 4.1.2 Public Amenities and Benefits

#### A. *Westbard Avenue District*

- Central Civic Green facing onto Westbard Avenue, at approximately 0.5 acres.
- A neighborhood park located along the north edge of the Westwood Shopping Center, approximately 1/2 acre in size.
- Renovation of Willett Branch stream and the creation of an urban wooded area and greenway.
- Streetscape upgrades on Westbard Avenue.
- Pedestrian connection between Westland Middle School and the Capital Crescent Trail.

#### B. *River Road Corridor*

- Creation of a tree-lined boulevard on River Road.
- Large green open space within the 100-foot stream buffer on Whole Foods site (Royco property) of approximately 10,000 square feet.
- Renovation of Willett Branch.

- Pedestrian trail between River Road and Capital Crescent Trail.
- Extend Willett Branch Trail under River Road.

- Moderately priced dwelling units.
- Affordable housing not covered by moderately priced dwelling units.
- Small business opportunities.

*C. North River District*

- Establishment of a vehicular connections between River Road and Little Falls Parkway.
- Daylighting and renovation of Willett Branch stream on Washington Episcopal School property.
- Pedestrian trail between the Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Parkway.

*D. South River District*

- Establish a new connector road between Westbard Avenue and River Road.
- Establishment of a Countywide Urban Recreational Park at a minimum of 10,000 square feet as an open, level, grassy area for a variety of informal recreational activities, including a skate and a dog park.
- Renovation of Willett Branch stream.

*E. South Westbard District*

- Establishment of a dual-use turf playing field at Westland Middle School.
- A mid-block crossing on Westbard Avenue between Westland Middle School and the Park Bethesda property where the new connector road intersects Westbard Avenue.
- Pedestrian connection between Westland Middle School and the Capital Crescent Trail.

**4.1.3 Other Priority Benefits**

The CR and CRT zones permit an optional method development, which allows for higher density in exchange for public amenities. To ensure that future development recommended in the Westbard Sector Plan addresses the important commercial, housing and environmental needs of the community, public benefits that should be strongly considered during development review are:



## 4.2 On-Site Public Open Space

Westbard has a considerable amount of open space, but more important to its future is the right quality of space that serves the goal of enhancing the public realm. In many of the more developed sections of the County, the goal of obtaining public open space has resulted in site layouts that provide the required amount of space, but in a way that fails to enhance the public realm. In some instances, buildings are set back from the street to make room for a public open spaces, and, in the process, the benefit of positioning the building closer to the street is lost. In other cases, a public use space may be located within the interior of a block, isolating it from any public thoroughfare. In other instances, public use space is simply too small to perform a meaningful function.

In order to ensure the right amount and quality of public open space, this Sector Plan recommends offsite improvements or contributions instead of public open space that is too small, fails to enhance the public realm or prevents a building from activating the street. This Plan further recommends that any project whose public open space requirement under the County Zoning Ordinance is less than 10 percent be required to make an improvement or a contribution to offsite public open space under Section 6.3.6.C of the County Zoning Ordinance.

### 4.2.1 Willett Branch Implementation

**Vision:** The Willett Branch Greenway will reveal and naturalize the forgotten Willett Branch stream to create an open space corridor, providing the Westbard community with access to the stream, native wetland plants and forested areas. The Greenway will also create critical pedestrian linkages between River Road and Westbard Avenue, and to the Capital Crescent Trail.

Because of its connection on both ends to this extremely popular rail-trail, the Willett Branch Greenway is envisioned as a regional gem in the Montgomery County park and trail system. This innovative urban greenway corridor will celebrate Willett Branch as a unique natural feature in the Sector Plan area, connect residents to new and existing park spaces, and improve stormwater runoff into the Little Falls Branch.

### A. Stream and Wetland Buffer

Areas within the Willett Branch stream and wetland buffer in Westbard cannot be developed, according to the Guidelines for Environmental Management of Development in Montgomery County (approved January 2000). In the case of Willett Branch, storm drain easements and Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) infrastructure in the stream corridor further prevent redevelopment of sites in the Willett Branch stream and wetland buffer. Given these constraints, it is logical that the Willett Branch corridor be recommended as a Greenway in the Westbard Sector Plan area. This undevelopable land provides the perfect opportunity to create an urban greenway with connections to the existing Capital Crescent Trail Special Park and Little Falls Stream Valley Unit 2.

### B. Parks Department Ownership

Implementation of the Willett Branch Greenway as a continuous open space corridor in the Sector Plan area is most likely to succeed under the control of one public entity. As experts in stream valley restoration and management, trails and recreation, the Montgomery County Department of Parks can provide consistent standards for design, naturalizations, maintenance, policing and programming of the Greenway corridor.

### C. Acquisition

Numerous tools exist for acquisition of primarily undevelopable portions of properties that will make up the Willett Branch Greenway. They include, but are not limited to:

- Dedication through the regulatory review process.
- Fee-simple acquisition via:
  - Legacy Open Space (LOS) funds. The following recommendation is made in the Sector Plan, Section 2.4.2 E: “Designate the Willett Branch as an important Urban Open Space and Greenway Connection within the Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan (2001).” The restoration of this stream valley meets the following Legacy Open Space criteria:

- Creates an important restored natural area to serve the green space needs of the growing Westbard community.
- Provides interconnectivity of the urban green infrastructure.
- Program Open Space (POS).
- Advance Land Acquisition Revolving Fund (ALARF).
- Private sector contributions, including:
  - Off-site improvements.
  - Contributions to an established amenity fund.
- Additional local, state and federal sources, including:
  - Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund Small Watershed Grants Program.
  - American Rivers and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program grants.

### D. Implementation of Greenway Naturalization

As segments are acquired, funding the naturalization of the Willett Branch Greenway corridor and construction of trails and related infrastructure would be achieved through a combination of County funds and grants, and private sector contributions fed into the Parks Department Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

## 4.3 Capital Improvements Program

The vision for the Westbard Sector Plan is a mixed-use center that is green, walkable and well connected. That vision can be accomplished through the creation of wide, tree-shaded sidewalks, a green open space network, housing diversity and affordability, and improved street connections.

The following infrastructure projects are needed to fulfill the Westbard Sector Plan:



**Table 4.1.1: Capital Improvements Program**

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Coordinating Agencies</b>	<b>Cost Estimate</b>
Willett Branch renovation	Environment and M-NCPPC Parks	M-NCPPC	DEP/MCDOT	TBD
Redesign of River Road with median and cycle track	Transportation	SHA	M-NCPPC/MCDOT	TBD
Reconfigure Westbard Avenue at Ridgefield Road	Transportation	MCDOT	M-NCPPC/SHA	TBD
Redesign Westbard Avenue with cycle track from River Road to Westbard Circle	Transportation	MCDOT	M-NCPPC	TBD
Construct shared-use path on Westbard Avenue from Westbard Circle to Massachusetts Avenue	Transportation	MCDOT	M-NCPPC	TBD
Construct new connector road from Westbard Avenue to River Road with bicycle shared roadway	Transportation	MCDOT	M-NCPPC/SHA	TBD
New CCT connection from new connector road	Transportation	MCDOT	M-NCPPC	TBD
New transit hub at Westwood Shopping Center (Giant Food)	Transportation	MCDOT	M-NCPPC	TBD
Ride-on service expansion (headways and possible coverage area)	Transportation	MCDOT	M-NCPPC	TBD
Bike share stations	Transportation	MCDOT	M-NCPPC	TBD
Underground of public utilities	Transportation	MCDOT	SHA/M-NCPPC	TBD
Adding to Montgomery County Public Schools recreational facilities	MCPS and M-NCPPC Parks	MCPS	M-NCPPC	TBD
Establishment of Countywide Urban Recreational Park at a minimum of 10,000 square feet	M-NCPPC Parks	M-NCPPC Parks	DEP/M-NCPPC	TBD

## 4.4 Partnerships and Associations

Housing Opportunities Commission and private landowners for the development affordable housing opportunities

Little Falls Watershed Alliance, Montgomery County Department of Parks and private landowners for the renovation of Willett Branch.

Citizens Coordinating Committee for Friendship Heights (CCCFH); a committee composed of representatives from various citizen and homeowners associations located in the Westbard Sector Plan vicinity.

Brookdale Citizens Association

Chevy Chase Village

Chevy Chase West

Fort Sumner Citizens Association

Friendship Heights Village Civic Association

Glen Mar Park Community Association

Green Acres-Glen Cove Citizens Association

Citizens Association of Kenwood, Inc.

Kenwood House Cooperative

Kenwood Place Condominium

Mohican Hills Citizens Association

Town of Somerset

Sumner Citizens Association

Sumner Square Condominium

Sumner Village Condominium

Springfield Civic Association

Tulip Hill Citizen Association

Westwood Mews Condominium Association

Westbard Mews Homeowner Association

Westmoreland Civic Association

Wood Acres Citizens Association





# Westbard Sector Plan

Public Hearing Draft, August 2015

M-NCPPC  
Montgomery County Planning Department  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

[MontgomeryPlanning.org](http://MontgomeryPlanning.org)

