

## **Introduction**

The Potomac Subregion enjoys an attractive location along the Potomac River just outside the Capital Beltway. The Subregion benefits from both its natural geography with large areas of permanently preserved river and stream valley parks as well as its relatively good access to major employment centers. It is predominantly a low-density residential community that still contains some rural and undeveloped areas.

The Subregion is comprised of four areas: Potomac, Travilah, Darnestown, and North Potomac. This report is different from the earlier report done on the Subregion because it reports on North Potomac—an area carved out of the Travilah and Darnestown Planning Areas that is quite distinct from the rest of the Subregion. In this report, Travilah and Darnestown refer to the areas that remain in those Planning Areas after removal of the six traffic zones comprising North Potomac.

The Subregion contains 67 square miles of rolling to moderately steep stream valleys and is part of the County's low-density residential wedge between the I-270 corridor and the Potomac River. The area is characterized by subdivisions of low-to-moderate density, large-lot residential areas, urban-fringe areas, and lands that are still rural or woodland, or part of the river and stream valley park system.

This report uses the results from the 1997 Census Update Survey of Montgomery County to evaluate the characteristics of the Subregion, and it uses 1987 Census Update Survey results to show any significant changes over the intervening ten years. The Potomac Subregion has distinguishing demographic characteristics that help make it stand out from the rest of the County. Most residents live in family households of at least three persons in relatively expensive single-family detached homes. As a group, residents of the Subregion are notable for their high academic attainment, high household incomes, and diverse ethnic make up.

Potomac, the closest area to the District of Columbia, is maturing with most of its buildable residential land already developed. North Potomac is rapidly developing and provides residential subdivisions for workers in the I-270 employment corridor and elsewhere. Darnestown and Travilah are the most rural, with both rapidly growing residential areas and considerable amounts of undeveloped area.

The Subregion continues to attract high-income households with its good access to employment centers, plentiful open space, and extensive supply of large single-family homes. The median 1996 household income for the Subregion was 71 percent higher than the County's, and many of the Subregion's demographic characteristics are those typical of wealthy areas. Homes are expensive in the Subregion, and in 1997, sold at prices averaging 41 percent higher than Countywide for new single-family detached units. Residents are well educated, with 43 percent of adults having advanced degrees, and 74 percent having at least a bachelor's degree. Family households are especially drawn to the Subregion and the average household size is greater than Countywide.

## Major Findings

- The major demographic characteristic of the Potomac Subregion is that it is a high-income area in this very high-income county. The other findings in this profile are consistent with the area's high incomes. Residents with high incomes have wide choices of where to live and many have picked this premier area of the County.
- The adult residents have very high levels of education, again, standing out even in this highly educated county.
- Many residents, particularly of the Potomac Planning Area, work in the District of Columbia, an area with many high-paying jobs. Residents that work in the District have higher household incomes than those that work in the County.
- The largest age group in the population is between 40 and 59 years of age. These are typically are the highest earning years for individuals, when they have reached the peak of their professions.
- Large single family detached homes are the predominant housing type.
- Families with above average numbers of children are the most typical household unit.

While the four areas share much in common, they also have important differences. Many of the Potomac Planning Area's distinguishing features relate to its closeness to the urban core, and thus to its earlier development and greater maturity than Darnestown, Travilah, and North Potomac. Travilah mirrors Potomac, but it is more rural and undeveloped; yet it is expanding rapidly. Darnestown is experiencing much of the same growth as Travilah, but has even more undeveloped land than the other areas. North Potomac has developed at a high rate in recent years and has relatively little remaining undeveloped land. It also allows much higher housing density.

The largest segment of the Subregion's population is between the ages of 40-to-59, the years during which most individuals earn their highest incomes. One result of this is that the Subregion has a larger segment than Countywide of preteens and teenagers between age 10 and 19, a common age group for children with parents in their forties and early fifties.

Younger high-income families were attracted to the growing areas because of their large supply of attractive new housing and proximity to the Rockville, Gaithersburg, and other I-270 employment centers. Darnestown and North Potomac, the most recently developed areas have proportionately more children under 20 than Travilah or the Potomac Planning Area, while the latter two areas have a greater share of residents over 64.

The household heads in North Potomac and Darnestown are younger, have fewer graduate degrees, and have lower incomes than those in the other two more mature areas. Household sizes in these two areas grew noticeably between 1987 and 1997, while during

the same period, household sizes declined in Potomac and Travilah.

The following pages will explore the above-noted themes concerning the demographic character of the Potomac Subregion. All demographic information, unless otherwise stated, is from the 1997 Census Update Survey conducted by the Department of Park and Planning, Research and Technology Center. Data on previous conditions are generally from the 1987 Census Update Survey.

### **Development Densities**

The density of development is related to many demographic traits and helps to define the character of an area. This table shows the tremendous range of population density across the Subregion in 1997. The densest area, North Potomac, has more than double the density of the Potomac Planning Area and the County and over twelve times the density of the most sparsely settled area, Darnestown.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>Population per Sq. Mile</b>
Potomac Subregion	66.7	1,188
Potomac Planning Area	28.1	1,596
Travilah	15.2	421
Darnestown	16.4	272
North Potomac	7.0	3,361
Montgomery County	497.0	1,657

The map on the next page shows the property lines in the Potomac Subregion. Areas with smaller lots show up darker, indicating higher density development. Notice the higher densities in North Potomac and the northern and eastern parts of the Potomac Planning Area. The map also shows that there is relatively little unsubdivided land left in the Subregion.