

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

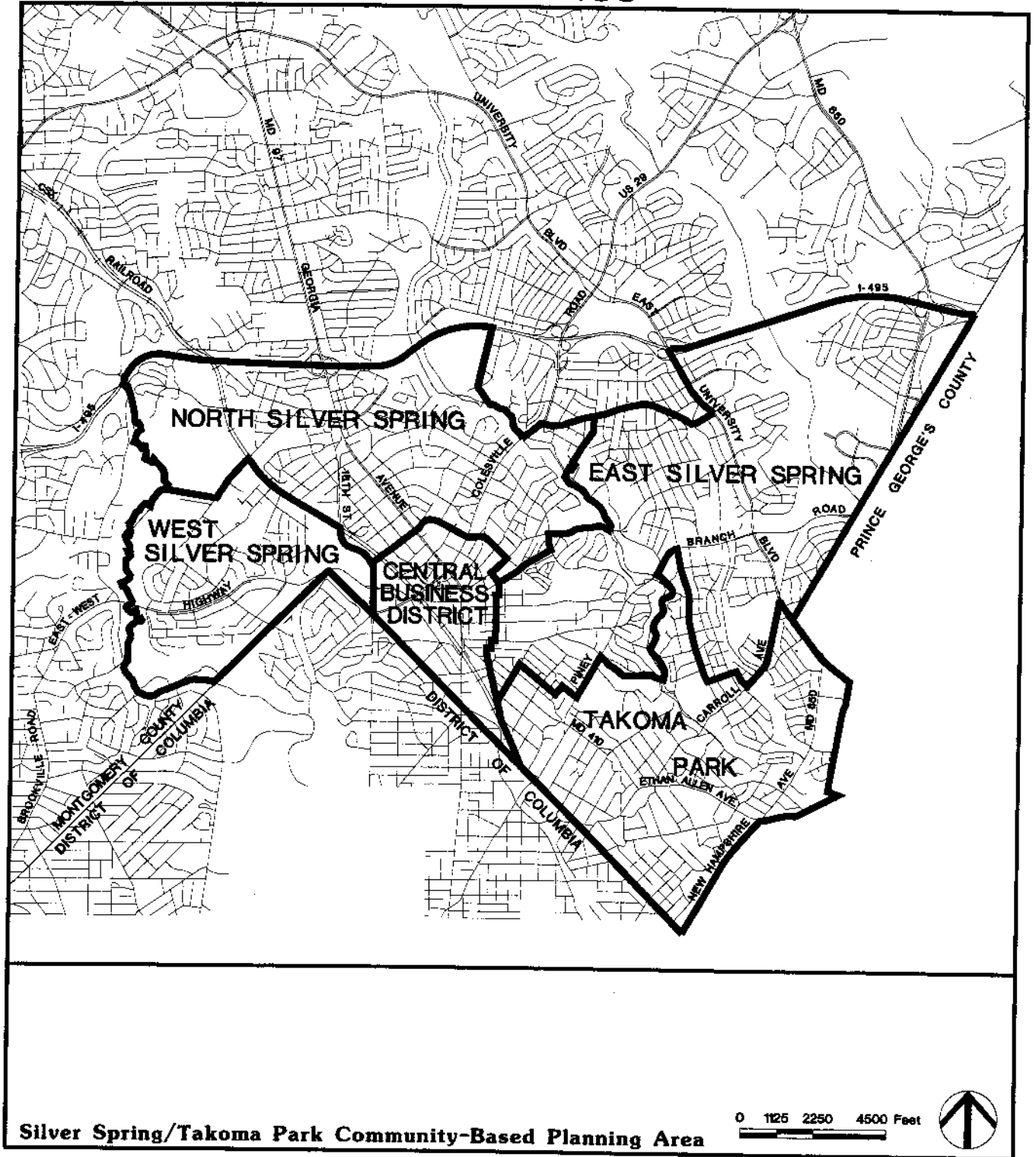
Under contract to the Research and Technology Center, Greater Washington Consumer Research recently completed a telephone survey of residents of the Silver Spring/Takoma Park Master Plan Areas. The purpose of the survey was to obtain community opinion about local issues related to the master plan process. We are particularly pleased that the survey reached a large number of residents who do not have the civic association ties or other obvious connections to the master plan process that would have facilitated their participation without the survey. Almost 1,000 calls were completed during January 1998, achieving a 44 percent response rate. Spanish speaking interviewers were available for respondents who were uncomfortable speaking in English. Twelve respondents took advantage of this opportunity. A description of the survey methodology is detailed in Appendix A.

This report presents the initial findings of the survey. Generally, it highlights responses offered by at least 10 percent of respondents. The overall area results are presented in each case. Individual master planning area results are included when they differ by more than a few percentage points. As the largest, most populous area, East Silver Spring and Takoma Park opinions may strongly influence the totals for the whole Silver Spring/Takoma Park area. A copy of the questionnaire used by the telephone interviewers is included in Appendix B.

Findings

- Most respondents consider their Silver Spring/Takoma Park neighborhoods good places to live. Eighty-five percent rated their neighborhoods “good” or “excellent.”
- Almost half of Silver Spring/Takoma Park residents, 49 percent, knew that the **master plan process** was underway. Most would like to contribute to this effort. Communication by phone or in writing was the most popular method for participating, 41 percent, followed by public meetings, 38 percent.
- Good **transportation** options are a major attraction of Silver Spring/Takoma Park. Convenient public transportation, especially Metro, and the two Beltway interchanges are among the features that residents like about the area and an important reason why they moved there. Residents register few complaints about the system at the current time. Fifty-seven percent say that there is no traffic problem in their neighborhoods. Those who identified a problem mentioned “congestion” and “speeding” most frequently. There appears to be a desire for better pedestrian facilities, especially sidewalks, both in the question about pedestrian activities and in the question about master plan goal topics, where it was third most popular after protecting the environment

Master Plan Boundaries



M-NCPPC

Silver Spring/Takoma Park Community-Based Planning Area

0 1125 2250 4500 Feet



and quality of life. Need for sidewalks is also mentioned in response to other questions, such as “dislikes” about the area, although by small numbers of respondents.

- **Crime** emerges as a major concern, as evidenced by the percentage of respondents who identify it as what they dislike most about the area. Nonetheless, over 60 percent report that they feel “very” or “somewhat” secure walking in their neighborhoods after dark. The most commonly suggested solution is “more police.” The next most frequent answer is “better lighting.” Better lighting appears not only as a response to the direct question about security but also in connection with pedestrian facilities and parks.
- On the whole, respondents are content with local **public facilities**. Sixty-one percent said that there are *no* new community facilities they would like to have in their neighborhoods, and 55 percent indicated that there are no specific improvements that they want for the parks.
- There was strong support for **parks**. Parks were mentioned most often among those who want new facilities. Better maintenance was the most frequently suggested improvement. Individual questions about park usage, the Capital Crescent Trail, and Sligo Creek Park indicated heavy usage and widespread familiarity with these resources.
- Most residents of the Silver Spring/Takoma Park Community Based Planning Area, 91 percent, shop for groceries within the area. Most also do other types of day-to-day **shopping** there. Respondents are more likely to go out of the area for comparison shopping for clothes, furniture, and similar items.
- Residents rely first on newspapers; second on word of mouth for **information** about their communities. Only 28 percent say that their households are active in their civic associations.