

Townscape Design

The 1974 *Germantown Master Plan* describes a vision for a new corridor city. Planned from the beginning, Germantown would avoid the sprawl and inconvenience of typical suburban development. Instead, development would be focused in a distinct series of activity centers surrounded by residential areas, all to be interconnected with a pedestrian pathway system and roadway network.

This Comprehensive Amendment to the Germantown Master Plan reconfirms the spirit of the 1974 *Master Plan* and recommends development guidelines designed to implement the vision and establish a sense of community identity for Germantown, as expressed in 1974 and as modified by this Amendment.

This chapter establishes the overall visual and functional framework in which the land use decisions have been made and specific development guidelines have been prepared. The Concept Plans delineate the basic land use organization of each major element of Germantown.

This Townscape Design chapter describes Germantown in terms of Places (Employment Corridor, Town Center and Village Centers), and Linkages (Roadways, Mixed-Use Center Villages, and Pedestrian Paths). (See Figures 3 and 12.) Since the primary goal of the Master Plan is to develop a greater community identity, the Townscape Design chapter will focus on that goal in the framework of Places and Linkages.

The primary objectives of the Townscape Design Chapter are twofold. The first and overriding objective is to facilitate the development of an improved community identity and sense of place for Germantown. The second is to provide the necessary guidelines for the transition between the large scale master plan and the individual analysis area guidelines for specific activity areas.

The guidelines in this chapter have been devel-

oped to provide direction in the development of each site plan. These guidelines identify issues that should be included as primary design constraints for each site. Since the topography and existing vegetation vary from one location to another, there may be circumstances in which some latitude in the guidelines should be given. The guidelines will apply unless the Planning Board finds that other issues or public purposes outweigh their strict application.

Places

TOWN CENTER (Figure 4)

The 353-acre Town Center is the focus of community activity in Germantown. This area represents Germantown's "downtown" and will be the visual and functional center for the entire community. Its ultimate design will reflect the image of the Germantown community to its residents, employees, and visitors.

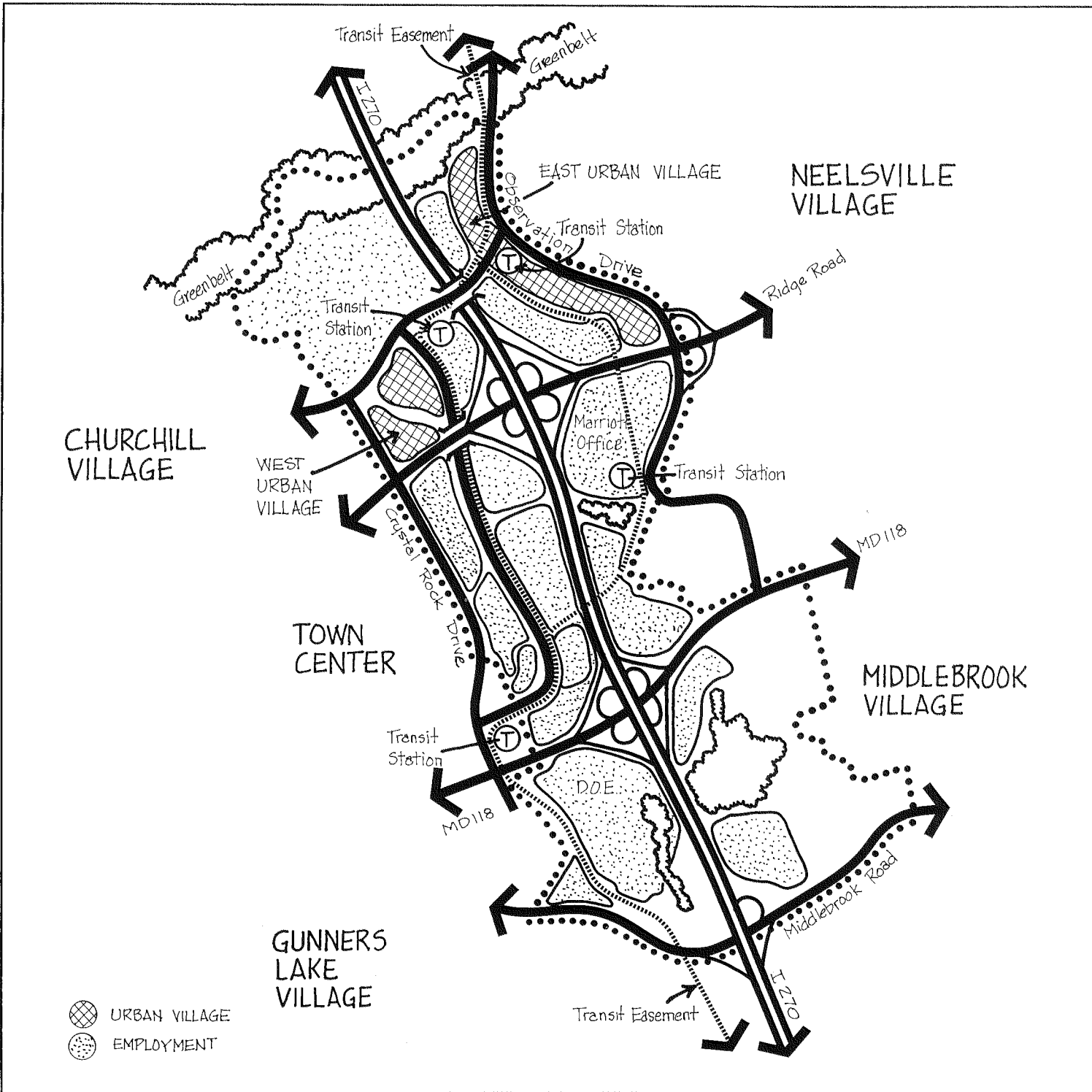
Objectives:

The Town Center should become:

- the location of a broad mix of land uses, including a cultural arts center, so as to create a focus for community activity in this large Corridor City;
- the central design element in the Germantown townscape which identifies Germantown and reinforces its community identity; and
- a major commercial area in Germantown offering a variety of shops; theaters; restaurants; multi-family housing; libraries, Upcounty Government Center and other public facilities; and public open space.

The following guidelines provide a design framework that will result in an identifiable, cohesive Town Center with a positive sense of place.

Figure 5



Employment Corridor: Concept Diagram



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Guidelines

Functional:

- Create a pedestrian and bike path system that connects the Town Center to all forms of transit and land uses; separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic where possible.
- Design pedestrian connections to all areas with a common theme that is expressed through such features as furniture, pavement, lighting, and landscaping.

Visual:

- Create gateway landscaping and signage at major entrances to the Town Center.
- Establish a specific visual theme including lighting, landscaping, and street furnishings.
- Provide place-making elements such as sculpture, water features, clock towers, and gateways throughout the Town Center.
- Establish a place-making element at each corner of the intersection of MD 118 and Middlebrook Road.
- Require a building and parking setback of 30 feet along MD 118 through the Town Center.
- Soften all "edges" through the provision of extensive landscaping.
- Establish visual continuity along the street through elements such as low walls or rows of trees.
- Establish the visual quality of a landscaped, tree-lined boulevard along MD 118, since it functions as the Main Street of Germantown.
- Minimize the visual impact of parking areas from adjacent roadways through the use of berms, decks, fences, landscaping, and trellises.

MIXED-USE CENTER

The 58-acre Mixed-Use Center (sometimes referred to as the Town Center Core) is an essential element of the Town Center, having the broadest mix of uses in Germantown. The densities and built form in this area should be sufficiently compact and massed to create a sense of urbanity.

Objectives:

The Mixed-Use Center should convey an image of urban center and become the location for:

- a cultural arts center,
- a high density residential neighborhood, and
- a mix of land uses, including office, retail, and other commercial uses.

The Master Plan recommends that this Center be developed as a highly activated, mixed-use residential community with a cultural arts center as one of the hubs of community activity. The *1974 Master Plan* rec-

ommended that the Mixed-Use Center be developed as Germantown's downtown, with major retail activity as the focal point. A regional shopping mall is now designated for a portion of Neelsville Village. This Plan's designation of a large area in Neelsville Village as the location for a potential regional shopping mall, creates the prospect of a second regional focal point or activity center. The placement of the cultural arts center in the Mixed-Use Center is an important aspect of the essential effort to assure the viability of the Town Center as the principal community focal point.

The Mixed-Use Center would most appropriately be developed as a multi-family residential community with some office buildings, convenience retail uses, the cultural arts center, and a hotel. A concentration of multi-family residential uses is recommended given the site's proximity to the transit easement. Office development is recommended to be limited due to market and transportation constraints. A hotel could serve the Employment Corridor and would add some evening activity to the area. Convenience retail, restaurants, and services should be encouraged to locate in the lower floors of the office buildings to serve the needs of both office users and residents alike.

This area should be designed to communicate a clear, succinct image of downtown while maintaining a humane pedestrian-scaled environment.

EMPLOYMENT CORRIDOR (Figure 5)

The Germantown Master Plan has historically called for a well defined Employment Corridor. The Master Plan recommends integrated, multi-use activity centers rather than unrelated, single-use developments.

Objectives:

The Employment Corridor should provide for:

- the development of two urban villages with a mix of residential, employment, and retail services;
- a built form that reflects an urban environment and streetscape;
- pedestrian-oriented, transit-serviceable employment development;
- a broad range of retail service uses designed to serve the employees and residents; and
- a range of development densities that would provide a variety of employment opportunities and centers.

Guidelines

Functional:

Develop pedestrian systems that:

- reflect practical walking distances and tie building to building;

- are visible, unifying, and coherent, while providing an enjoyable walking experience;
- provide clear informational and directional graphics;
- provide employees with opportunities for active and passive recreation; and
- provide opportunities to improve transit serviceability.

Develop parking areas that:

- keep paving to a minimum, reduce on-site runoff, and provide on-site detention ponds as amenities;
- divide parking into small lots interspersed with natural land forms and landscape features;
- include an internal road system designed to minimize conflicts and facilitate pedestrian movement; and
- provide clear directional and informational graphics.

Visual:

- Provide landscape buffers to soften the public view of parking.
- Protect environment of stream valleys of Little Seneca Creek and its tributaries.
- Site buildings away from the edge of I-270 to create a park-like appearance.
- Give equal priority to views of structures and sites from secondary roads and from I-270.
- Minimize the use of reflective glass on buildings in those conditions in which the sun's reflection on an adjacent site may become a nuisance.
- Encourage corporate identity through entry signage.
- Design entry signage as part of streetscape planning.
- Provide clear informational and directional graphics, including gateway features.
- Use earth berms, walls, and setbacks to provide visual and noise separation, thus enhancing the utility of open space.

VILLAGE CENTERS (Figure 3)

The relationship between the Village Centers and community identity is significant. Both the 1974 *Master Plan* and this 1989 *Master Plan* recognize that the Village Center is an essential form-giving element for each Village.

Objectives:

- Create identity and focus for the residential communities served by each Village Center.
- Create an opportunity for community interaction at the village scale.

- Provide an opportunity for retail and professional services that can be reached by walking or bicycling.

Guidelines

Functional:

- Provide a comprehensive pedestrian/bike system that links each Village Center to its supporting residential community.
- Provide "public uses" — open space, community building, senior citizen center, etc. — as an integral part of the Village Center.
- Use schools, churches and similar community-oriented facilities as transitional buffers between residential and retail uses.
- Give priority to the pedestrian in resolving potential auto/pedestrian conflicts.
- Provide for seating, open shelter, and public information as part of the village public open space.

Visual:

- Encourage integration of focal points into each Village Center.
- Limit commercial Village Center buildings to two stories while allowing architectural elements to be taller.
- Orient buildings in the Village Centers to minimize the potential for visual intrusion into residential areas.
- Minimize the use of metallic surfaces, reflective glass, and other materials foreign to a residential environment.
- Separate parking from adjacent land uses and roadways with landscaping.

VILLAGES

The village concept was incorporated in the 1974 *Germantown Master Plan*. It is the primary planning unit in the village-town hierarchy of the master plan. The village is an essential element in the effort of this *Master Plan* to establish a positive community identity. The village is particularly important in this regard because it provides the "connective tissue" between individual subdivisions and the *Germantown* community as a whole.

Objectives:

Each village should:

- be distinguished by its own identity and character,
- provide a mix of housing types at varying prices and rental levels,
- have an identifiable activity area, and
- have a functional pedestrian/bikeway, sidewalk, and roadway system that facilitates inter- and intra-village circulation.

The following guidelines for each village focus on implementing the preceding objectives.

Churchill Village (Figure 6)

Much of the distinctive visual quality of Churchill Village has been established by Lake Churchill and Seneca Lake.

- Future development on the corner of Father Hurley Boulevard and Waters Landing Drive should be designed to emphasize the corner of the street, minimize the view of surface parking, and become a focal point of the vista along that portion of Father Hurley Boulevard.

Gunners Lake Village (Figure 7)

The character of Gunners Lake Village relies heavily upon the visual image of its namesake and its stream valleys.

- The widening of Middlebrook Road should be designed to include noise mitigation and reduce visual impacts on adjacent land uses.
- Parkway landscaping should be part of the design program for Great Seneca Highway from Middlebrook Road into Clopper Village.

Clopper Village (Figure 8)

- The landscaping recommended along the Great Seneca Highway in Gunners Lake Village should to be continued through Clopper Village to Seneca State Park.
- The stand of mature trees on the north side of Clopper Road and east of Great Seneca Highway should be considered and retained, if possible, when the adjacent site is developed.
- The Clopper Village Center should be designed to contribute to the concept of an entrance to Germantown and to provide distinctive building form and visual buffering of the surface parking.

Kingsview Village (Figure 9)

- Adjacent residential land uses and road improvements should provide for adequate pedestrian access to the Kingsview Village Center.
- A distinctive building form and screened parking should be priorities in the design program.

Middlebrook Village (Figure 10)

- The widening of MD 355 should be designed to include noise mitigation and reduction of visual impacts on adjacent land uses.
- There is a need for a grade-separated pedestrian crossing of MD 355 near Gunners Branch and Scenery Drive.

- The vacated right-of-way that will result from the realignment of Middlebrook Road is a potential opportunity for a "gateway" feature.

Neelsville Village (Figure 11)

- Visual integration of the proposed regional shopping mall into Neelsville Village is critical.
- The vacated right-of-way that will result from the realignment of MD 118 is a potential opportunity for special treatment to create a Germantown entry feature.

Linkages

The visual character of a community is composed of structures, natural land forms and vegetation, and roads. Roads are the location from which views and impressions of a community are created. A positive or negative perception of a community depends on the quality of the view from the road.

ROADWAY SYSTEM (Figure 12)

Objectives:

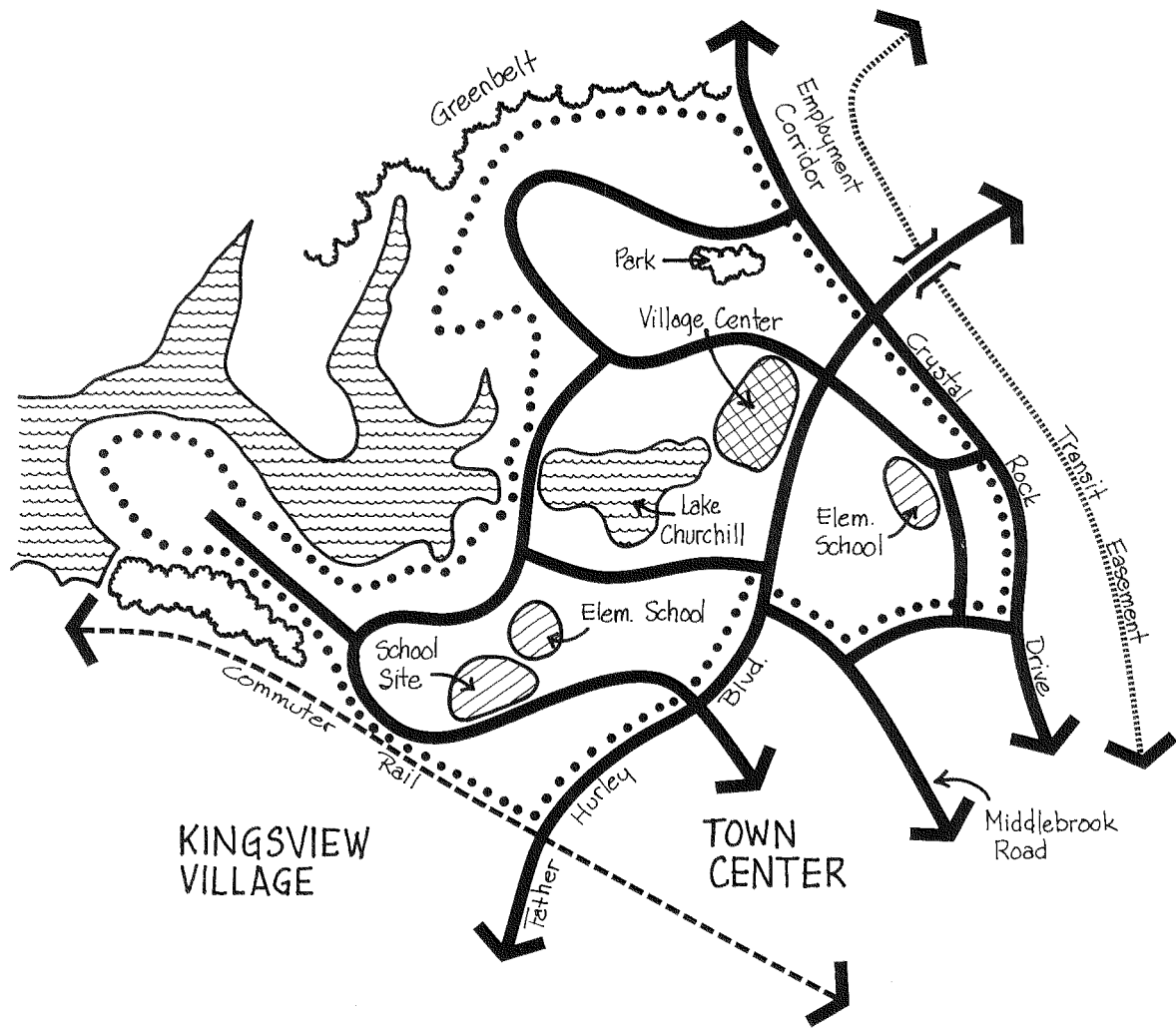
- Provide a roadway network that enhances the character of existing and new development.
- Design roadway alignments that respect the quality of the existing natural environment.
- Provide rights-of-way that are sufficiently wide to permit visual and acoustic buffers, both man-made and natural.

The major roadways of Germantown consist of a hierarchy of four road types including: limited access freeway, major highway, employment access road, and residential arterial.

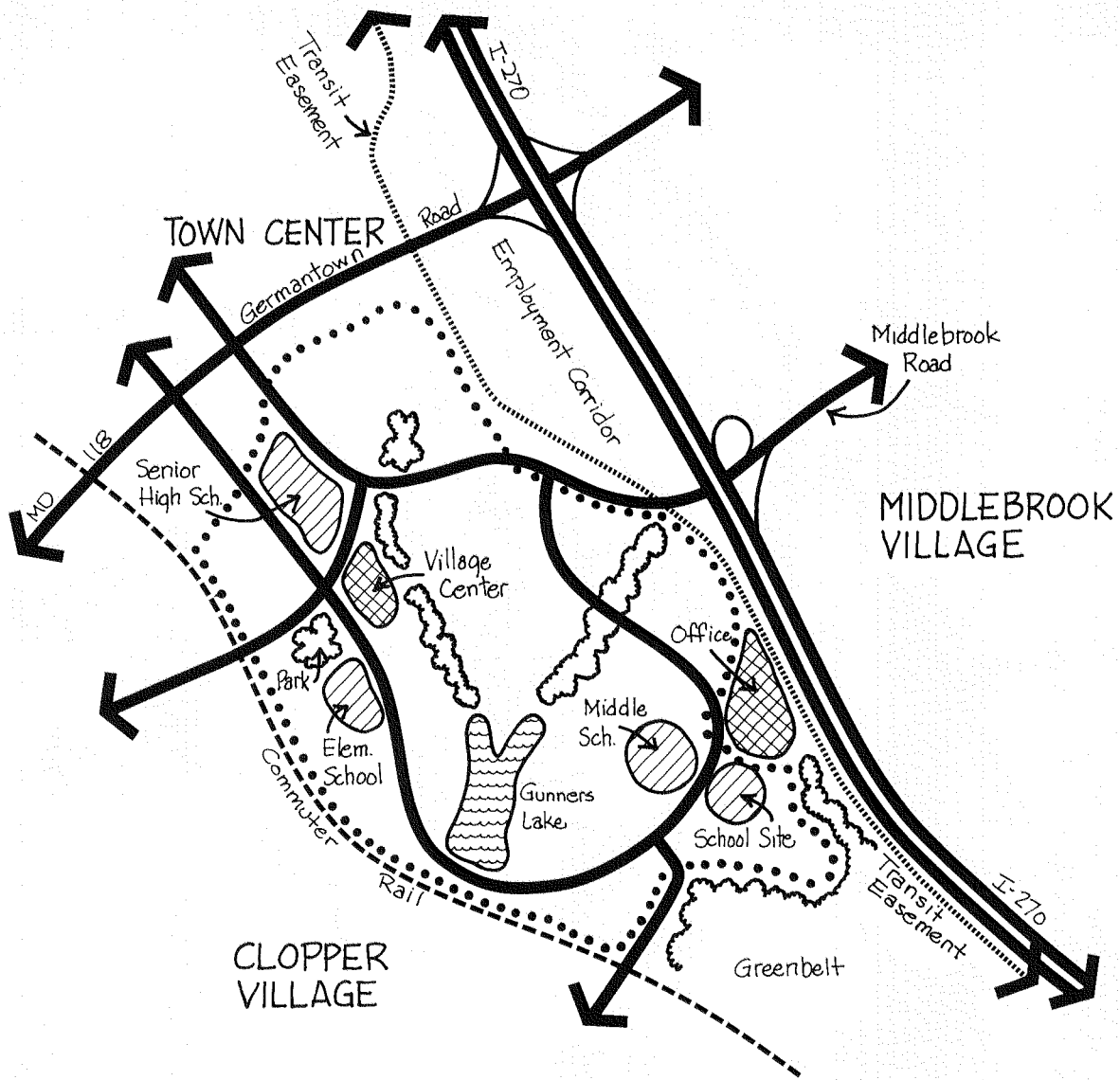
The limited access freeway, I-270, has the widest right-of-way in the Planning Area and carries the greatest number of cars. I-270 links Germantown to points north (Clarksburg, Frederick County) and points south (Gaithersburg, Rockville, and the Capital Beltway — I-495). The right-of-way varies from 200 feet to 250 feet wide. Much of the right-of-way for what is now I-270 was established when the road became a Federal highway. Widening the right-of-way has been restricted in those areas where development exists, based on the earlier width. This Master Plan recommends a 300-foot-wide right-of-way in order to accommodate eight travel lanes and two two-lane collector-distributor roads as well as adequate separations and landscaping.

Eight major highways are located in Germantown, some of which are part of the historic road network, such as MD 355 (Frederick Road), MD 117 (Clopper Road), MD 27 (Father Hurley Boulevard/Ridge Road), and MD 118 (Germantown Road). Of the remaining major highways, Great Seneca and

Figure 6



Churchill Village: Concept Diagram



Gunners Lake Village: Concept Diagram

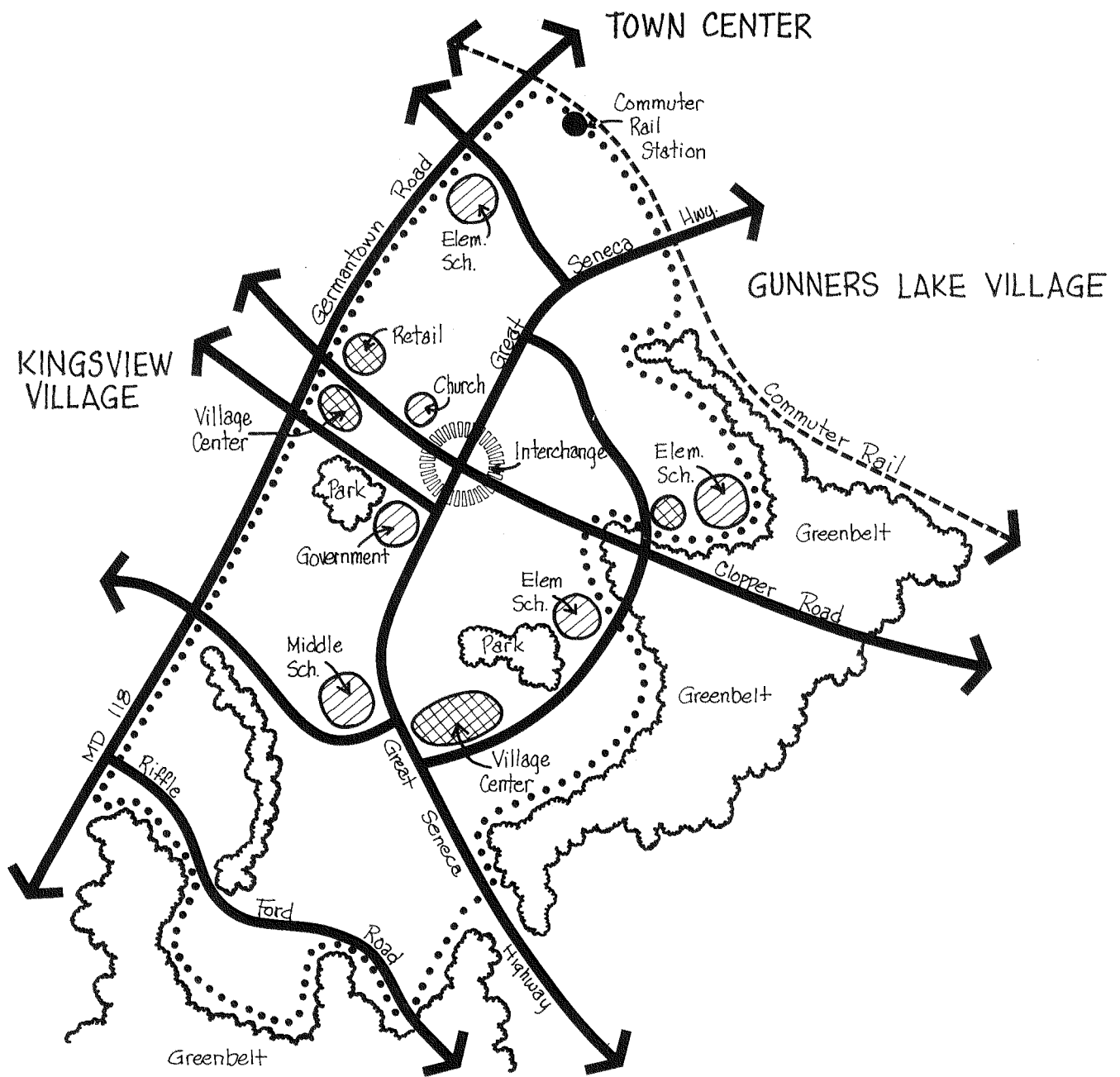


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Figure 8



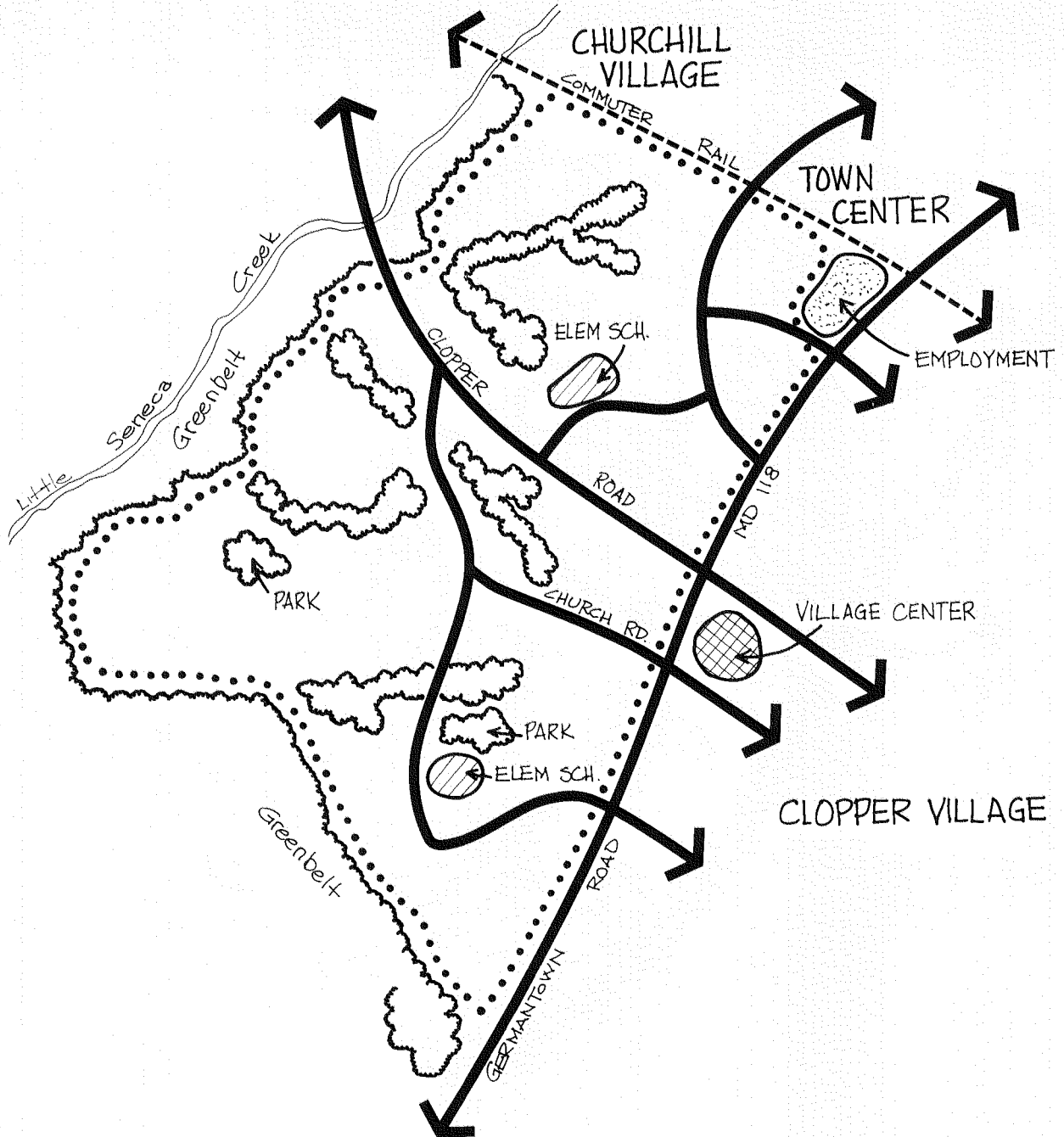
Clopper Village: Concept Diagram



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Kingsview Village: Concept Diagram

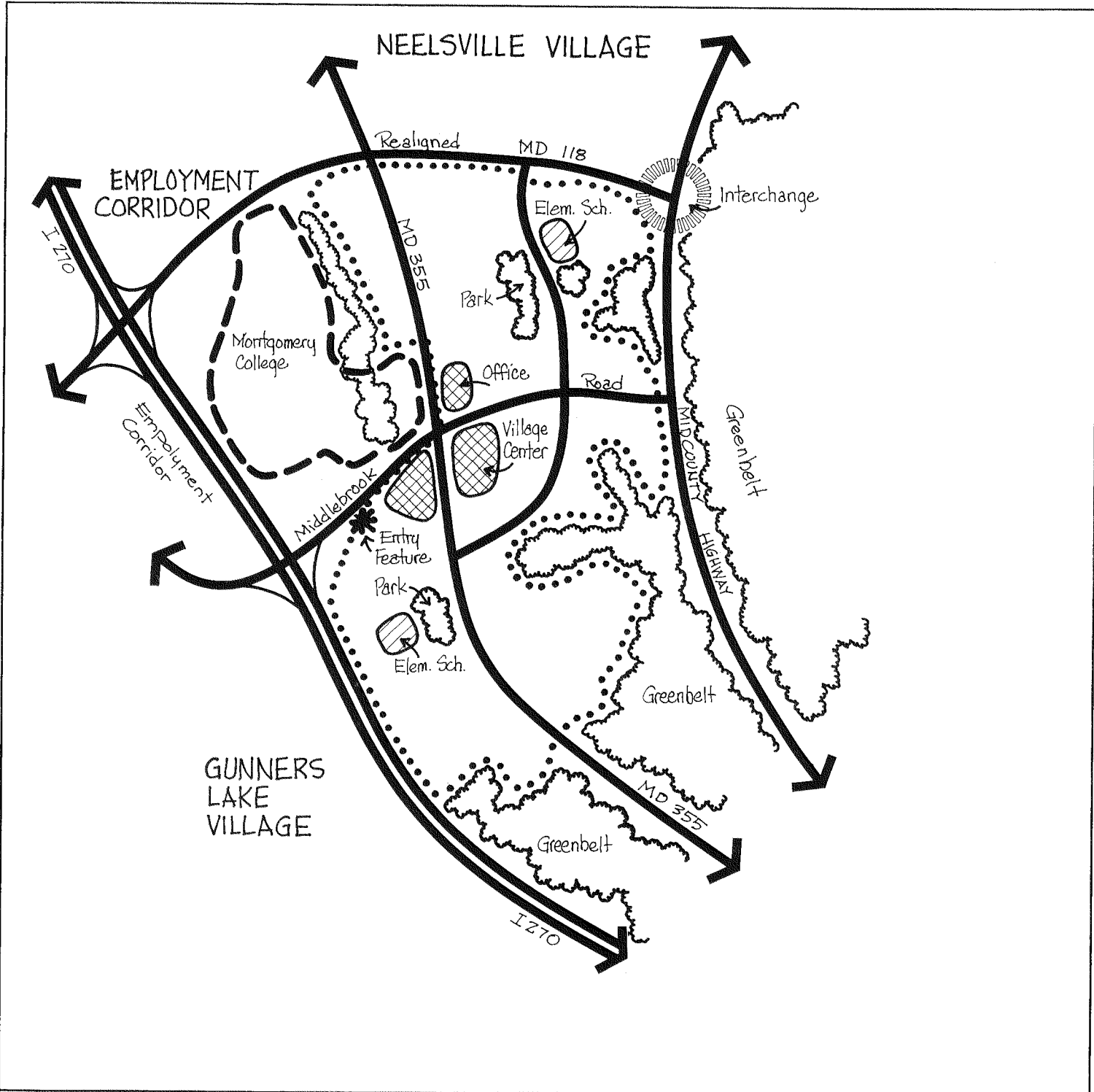


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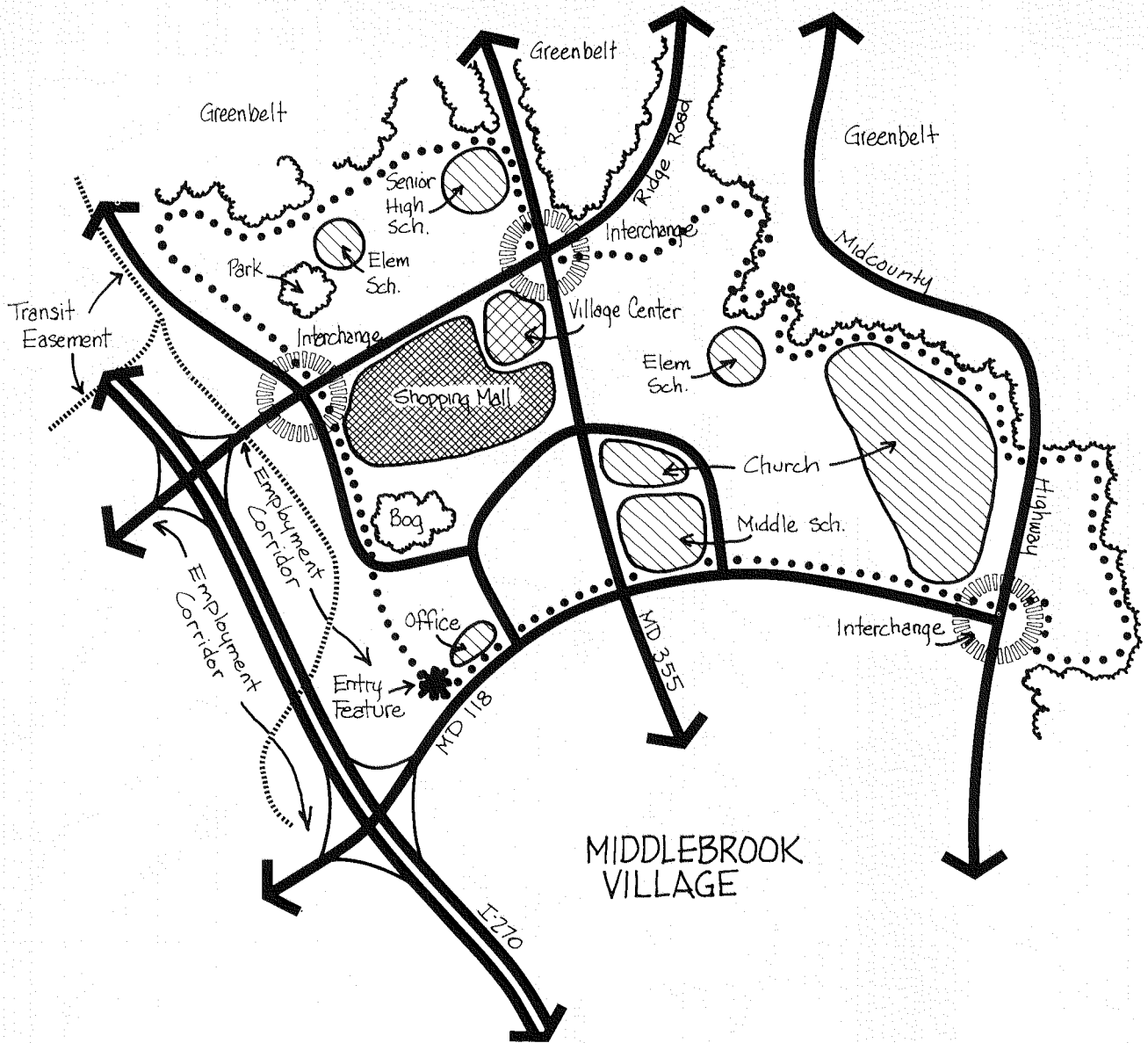
Figure 10



Middlebrook Village: Concept Diagram

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Neelsville Village: Concept Diagram

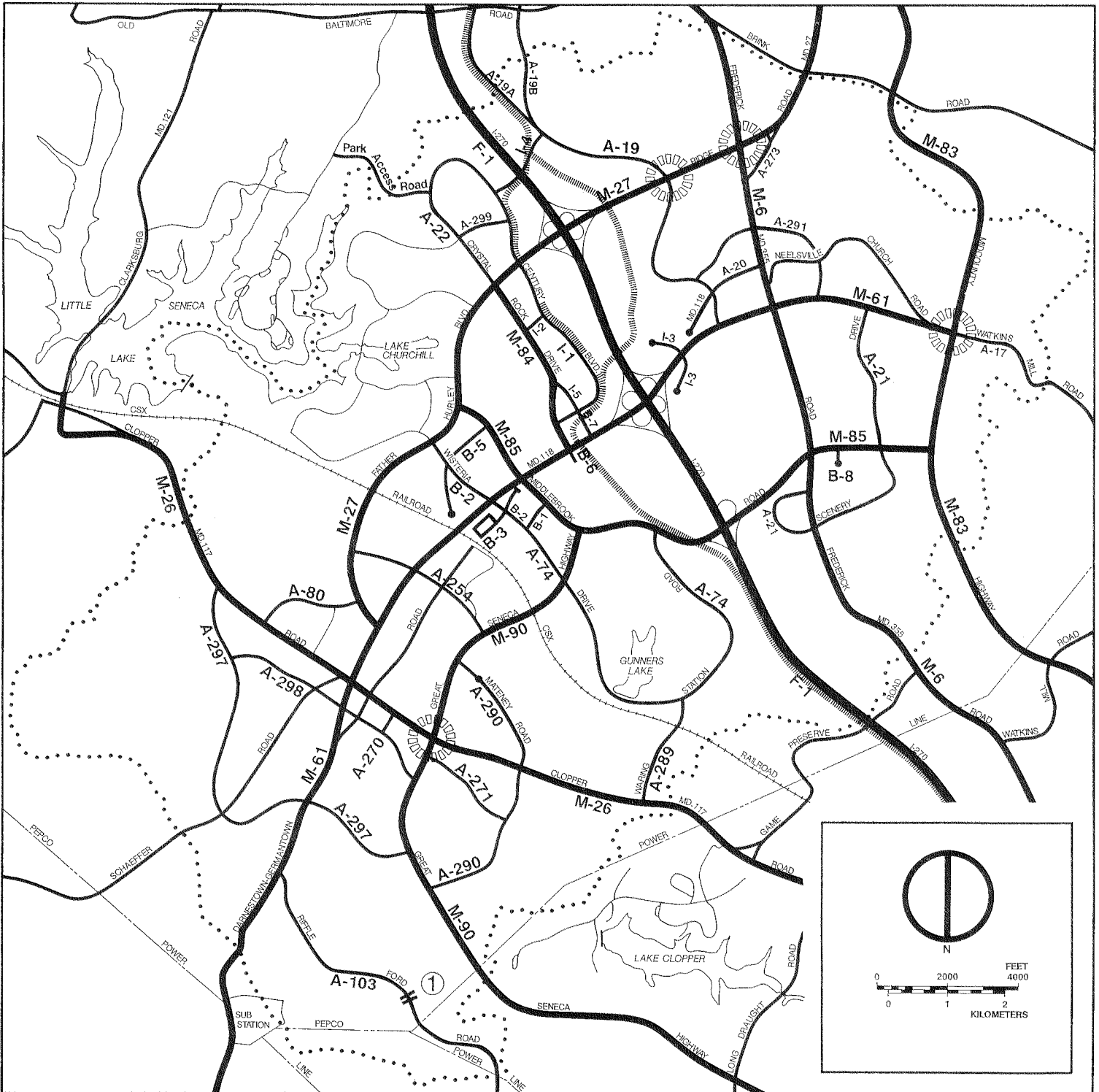


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Figure 12




Roadway System

- Grade-Separated Interchange 
- Freeway 
- Major Highway 
- Arterial(A), Industrial(I), and Business District Roads(B) 

May be closed when Great Seneca Highway  is opened to traffic through Great Seneca Park

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Midcounty Highways are commuter roads that link Germantown to employment areas beyond the planning area. Crystal Rock Drive, as a major highway, parallels the west side of I-270 between Father Hurley Boulevard and MD 118. The last, Middlebrook Road, links the east and west parts of Germantown separated by I-270. The new highways and realigned stretches of the older roads are planned for a 150-foot right-of-way with an ultimate design of six lanes.

The two other road types, the employment access roads and residential arterials, are local roads that convey traffic to and between the major highways. The rights-of-way vary from 80 feet to 120 feet in width depending on the presence of a median in the proposed road section and the number of proposed lanes.

Guidelines for setbacks and landscape treatment that affect roadside character are included as Appendix O in the Technical Appendix.

STREETSCAPE

To many, the visual quality of the street's edge establishes an image of the community. The kinetic experience of the street and the repetitive nature along its edge creates one of the primary elements which gives a community character and identity.

Streetscape is a term which is used to describe the street and its edges. The term normally includes signage, lighting, street trees, sidewalks, street furniture and paving. Accepting the fact that the street and pedestrian paths should function in a safe and efficient way, a streetscape plan would examine the role of each to support a humane environment as well.

A streetscape design program will be undertaken by the Urban Design Division of the Montgomery County Planning Department. While that design program is not included in this Plan, the objectives and guidelines set forth in this Plan are critical to the direction of that future work.

Objectives:

- Design a Streetscape Plan that creates a clear, positive image of Germantown, reinforcing its community identity.
- Develop a Streetscape Plan that will reduce visual clutter and provide order.
- Develop a Streetscape Plan that will increase pedestrian amenities and pedestrian safety.
- Develop a Streetscape Plan that reinforces the hierarchy of streets throughout Germantown.

Guidelines

Functional:

The Streetscape Plan should be designed:

- to be developed in stages and extended into internal public spaces by the private sector;

- to give a priority to pedestrians, with particular emphasis on handicapped access;
- to improve transit serviceability;
- to minimize the impact of street lighting on residential land uses; and
- to provide information, direction, and identity within Germantown.

Visual:

The Streetscape Plan should recognize the need to:

- place all utility lines below grade on all major roads;
- increase the amount of vegetation in general, and trees in particular, along the edges of streets;
- increase the visual interest of public places while providing visual continuity along the streets' edges; and
- create a clear statement and cohesive image of the character of Germantown through materials, street furniture, and lighting.

PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE SYSTEM

This Master Plan underscores the importance of a pedestrian/bikeway circulation system. Pedestrian systems are considered to be crucial to the success of the village centers. Improving transit serviceability is contingent upon the development of visible, direct pedestrian pathways.

Objectives:

- Develop a comprehensive network of pathways, linking housing to recreational, retail and community facilities.
- Develop a pedestrian system that supports transit services.
- Develop a bikeway network along major roadways connecting activity areas.

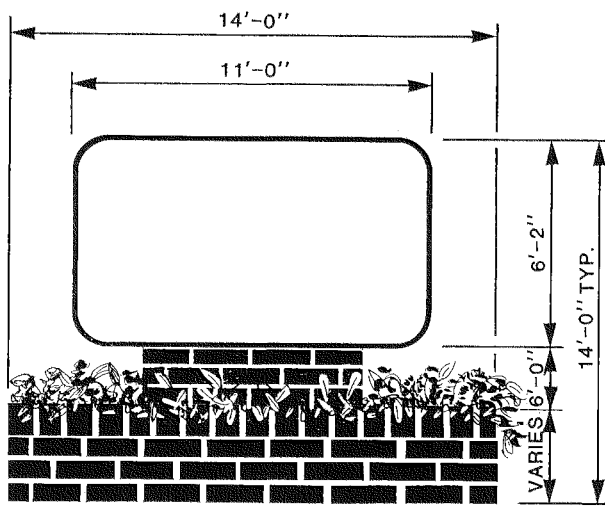
Guidelines:

- Construct sidewalks on at least one side of all closed section roadways.
- Construct incomplete segments of the existing system where connections are missing.

Signage (Figure 13)

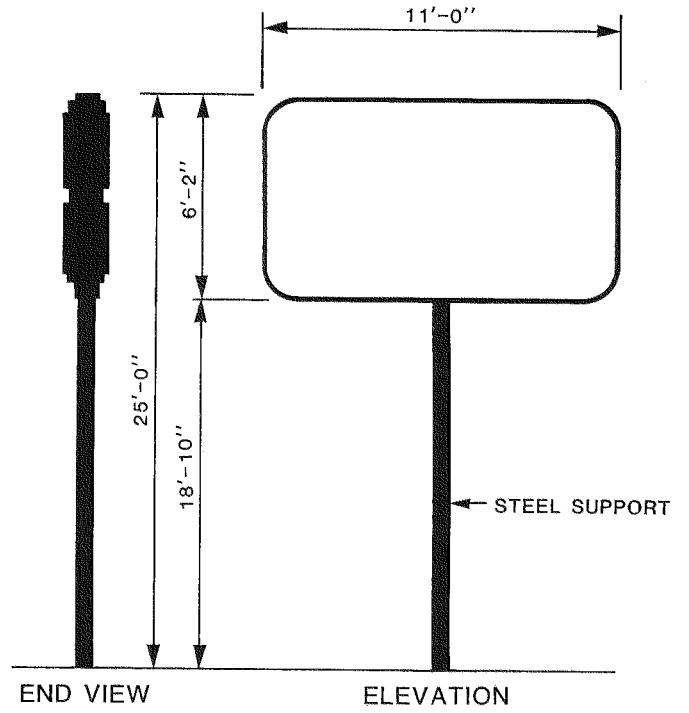
Signs are controlled by Section 59-F-1 of the Zoning Ordinance, which regulates the size, location, height, and construction of all signs placed for public observance. The intent of the ordinance is that the display of signs be appropriate to the land, building, or use on which they are located, compatible with the character of existing architecture and the fabric of development. The signs are not to compete with more

Figure 13



MONUMENT SIGN

6'-2" x 11'-0" WITH BRICK BASE



PYLON SIGN

Signage

essential signs, create public confusion, or increase the potential for traffic accidents.

Large signs, including outdoor advertising structures or billboards advertising products or businesses not related to the site or buildings on which they are located, are not permitted.

To improve the quality, appearance, and consistency of Germantown's Main Street (MD 118), in the Town Center area, a strict signage policy is appropri-

ate. Signs along this portion of MD 118 should be limited to a maximum size of 66 square feet and a maximum height of 14 feet. These signs, furthermore, are to be monument design rather than pylon design. The use of earth berms to increase the allowable height of signs should not be permitted. These restrictions shall be implemented through the site plan review process.