

## LAND USE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

### OVERVIEW

When asked what they liked most about living in Damascus, people attending the Issues and Alternatives Forum listed "rural environment," "sense of community" and "small town flavor" as the factors which make Damascus a special place to live. Residents are very proud of Damascus, its history as a market center, and the school system. Community support for some future additional growth reflects strong, local pride. Damascus is unique in other ways: the community is served by an all-volunteer fire company, another source of community pride.

The pattern of development in Damascus has been shaped by natural features. The Damascus business district is situated at the ridge line intersection of three major watersheds. Residential development has occurred linearly along the ridge roads leading to the business district. The valleys between the ridges pose many constraints to building and are largely undeveloped (the major exception being the Magruder Basin where public water and sewer has overcome some of the natural limitations).

Because of its distance from major employment centers, Damascus has not experienced growth pressures, as have communities such as Olney. Growth has occurred as envisioned by the 1969 County General Development Plan: slow but steady. An average housing completion rate of 60-65 homes per year (1971-1980) has allowed Damascus to absorb new growth without overburdening community facilities and without altering Damascus' stable community structure (many of the people who attended recent community forums helped write the 1966 Plan).

During the community forums, residents stated that Damascus differs in some respects from "down county" areas. Demographic and housing data, as well as field observation, support these feelings. In terms of housing, the prices of homes in Damascus generally run below the County average. A very high percentage of the work force is employed in the County (83%); most people who work outside the County are employed in Howard County or Frederick County rather than in urban areas inside the Beltway. The "up-county" orientation of many Damascus residents is understandable given their place of employment and the traveling distance to the Beltway (until only a few years ago, a phone call to Silver Spring was long distance).

The 1966 Damascus Master Plan envisioned Damascus as the "focal point for the upper county" and "provided for the expansion of the business district" to enable Damascus to compete with other centers. The Plan recognized Damascus was growing at a slower



rate than the County as a whole, noting "this is to be expected of any rural area out of the direct path of the forces of suburbanization." However, the Plan continues, "if water and sewer are extended to Damascus it would not be unreasonable to expect a population of around 7,000 persons by 1980 and about 14,000 by the year 2000." A residential land use pattern, reflecting the possible extension of public sewer, was proposed.

To support and encourage a population of 14,000 people, the 1966 Plan for Damascus proposed "an architecturally unified, clean and attractive" commercial center (58-92 acres). The 1966 Plan further recommended that residential development "of relatively high density," comprised of apartments and townhouses, serve as a transition between the business district and single-family residential areas to the south. With the exception of a small townhouse complex immediately east of the business district, the rest of Damascus was proposed to be developed at half-acre lot densities.

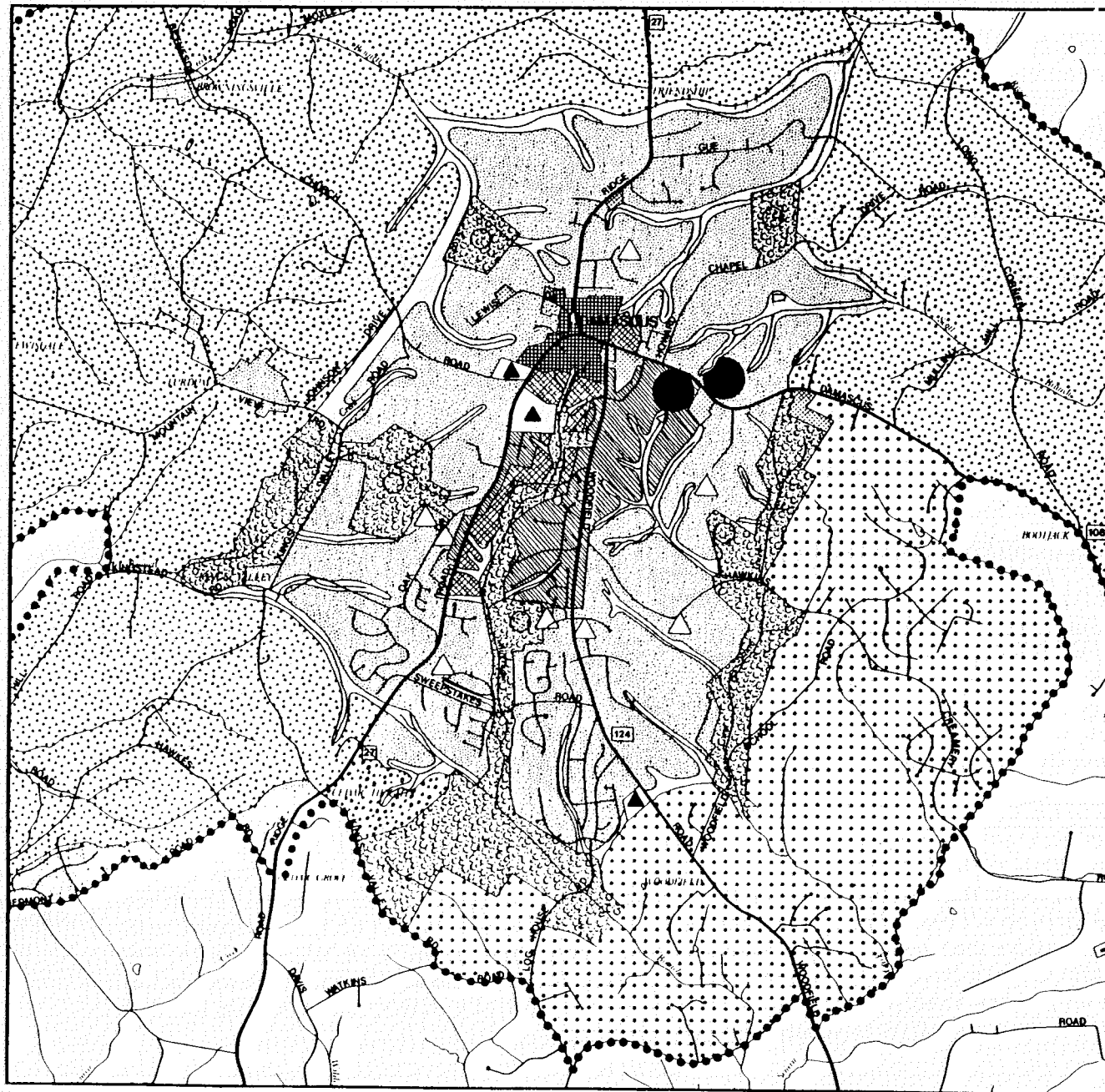
#### WHY DOES THE SCALE AND GROWTH ENVISIONED BY THE 1966 PLAN NEED TO BE RE-EXAMINED?

The passage of time and changing population and development trends pointed to the need to re-examine the 1966 Plan. The 1966 Plan goal to make Damascus the "focal point of the upper county" is still desirable, for example. However, the pace and extent of development planned for Damascus must be re-evaluated in light of changing market conditions, the limited availability of public facilities and generally slower population growth. These reasons, as well as others, are discussed below.

Market Demand and Growth Forecasts: The development potential assumed in the 1966 Plan has not been realized. The pace of growth in Damascus has been steady but gradual over the past several years, averaging about 60 units per year. Other County areas close to job centers have grown at faster rates. Growth forecasts project this 10-year trend to continue. Rather than 14,000 people in the year 2000, only 5,500 to 7,200 residents are expected in Damascus (P.A. 11) by year 2000 (see Table 2).

Because of nearby competing population centers which are closer to major transportation corridors, employment centers and, ultimately METRO, Damascus is not expected to attract a significant share of future County residential development, no matter what this Plan may ultimately recommend. Nor should it; a significant growth rate would be inconsistent with Damascus' rural character and environmental constraints.





## 1966 DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

- AGRICULTURE RESERVE
- RURAL (1 HOUSE/5 ACRES)
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL (1 HOUSE/2 ACRES)
- RESIDENTIAL (2 HOUSES/1 ACRE)
- MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (3-4 HOUSES/1 ACRE)
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (12-14 HOUSES/1 ACRE)
- COMMERCIAL
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- EMPLOYMENT CENTERS
- INSTITUTIONAL
- PARKLAND & RECREATION CENTER
- PRIVATE OPEN SPACE
- EXISTING SCHOOLS
- PROPOSED SCHOOLS

NOTE: Agriculture Reserve Areas are part of the 1980 Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space.

Approved and Adopted: June 1982  
**DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN**  
 Montgomery County, Maryland





TABLE 2  
GROWTH FORECASTS FOR DAMASCUS

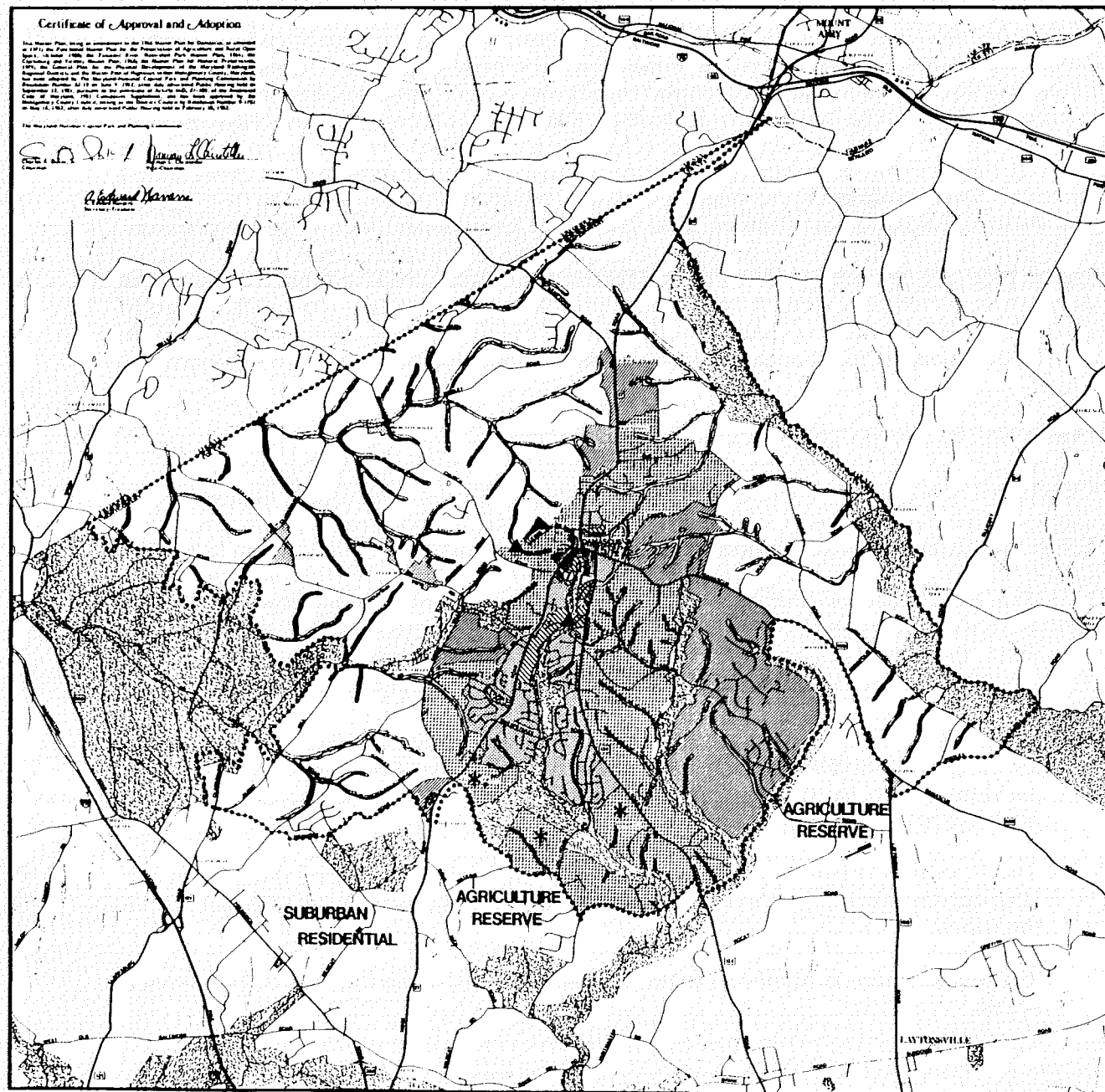
DAMASCUS (P.A. 11)	1980		1990		2000	
	Popu- lation	House- holds	Popu- lation	House- holds	Popu- lation	House- holds
Low	4,600	1,330	4,900	1,690	5,500	1,930
Intermediate	4,600	1,330	5,300	1,770	6,100	2,010
High	4,600	1,330	5,900	2,200	7,200	2,620
DAMASCUS PLAN STUDY AREA (Including P.A. 11)						
Low	8,500	2,700	9,700	3,450	11,200	4,250
Intermediate	8,500	2,700	10,500	3,750	12,400	4,700
High	8,500	2,700	11,100	3,950	13,450	5,100

SOURCE: MCPB, Long Range Forecast: People, Jobs & Housing, 1979.

Housing: The 1966 Plan recommends many apartment and higher density townhouse areas of development. This character is generally not within the current or future Damascus housing market or these areas are situated on land which is so difficult to develop that the construction for each unit would make the project more costly than the market would accept. Actual unit yields have been generally much lower than the maximum the zoning has permitted.

Public Facilities: The scale and growth envisioned for Damascus by the 1966 Plan was predicated on extensive public sewer and water service. One basin is sewered (Magruder) but the other basin (Great Seneca) proposed for 2-4 units per acre is not. Given the cost that would be associated with such a program, it is unlikely the Great Seneca will be served. Therefore, land use recommendations should be re-evaluated with the realization that public sewer extensions will not occur soon, if at all. Similarly, the State and County have reduced the funds available for road construction. This limitation and other county road projects make it very unlikely for any major road building for this area. This fact also affects school and park planning.





## LAND USE PLAN

- PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY
- AGRICULTURE RESERVE (TDR RECEIVING AREA)
- RURAL OPEN SPACE (1 HOUSE PER 4 ACRES CLUSTER OPT.)
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL (1 HOUSE PER 2 ACRES)
- SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL (12-20 HOUSES PER ACRE)
- MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (DENSITY PROPOSED FOR 8 HOUSES PER ACRE)
- APARTMENTS
- BUSINESS AREA/COMMERCIAL/OFFICE
- PARKLAND (INCLUDES STATE, W.S.C., MNC.P.P.C.)
- PRIVATE OPEN SPACE
- INSTITUTIONAL
- \* TDR RECEIVING AREAS (SEE TEXT)
- INDUSTRIAL
- ⑤ PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (DENSITY 8-7, DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE)
- PROPOSED COMMERCIAL AREA (SEE TEXT FOR DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES)
- ▲ POTENTIAL STORMWATER MANAGEMENT FACILITY (SEE TEXT)

Approved and Adopted: June 1982  
Amended July 1985

**DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN**  
Montgomery County, Maryland





Environmental Features: Damascus is characterized by ecologically sensitive headwaters, shallow depths to bedrock, a high water table and narrow steep-sided valleys. Land that is suitable for development is located on the high ground or ridges. Half-acre zoning blankets areas which, without public sewer or water, pose severe constraints to building construction. The scale and growth of Damascus proposed in the Master Plan must be re-evaluated in light of environmental constraints. These were recognized by the 1966 Plan but the Plan failed to assess fully the methods and practicability of overcoming these factors. Overbuilding at the headwaters of a stream creates problems throughout the entire valley. Engineering solutions have either not been undertaken or are expensive.

Agricultural Preservation: The 1966 Master Plan was prepared before farmland preservation was raised as a County-wide concern. Now that it is (as will be discussed in the Agricultural Preservation chapter), the issue of preserving agricultural land in Damascus for farming rather than for future residential development must be explored.

#### WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO THE 1966 PLAN?

A revised Land Use Plan proposal has been prepared (see map) which addresses the above issues. The Plan proposal will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters but, in general, the Plan is based on the following assumptions:

- The Plan assumes and encourages the same pace of development evident in Damascus for the past 10 years (see Table 2). This pace (about 60 houses per year average) reflects full development of the sewer Magruder Basin and would permit limited residential expansion along the major ridge roads.
- The Plan recognizes Damascus as the commercial center of the upper county as proposed in the 1966 Plan and encourages the location of agricultural services (feed and seed sales, farm implement dealerships, etc.,) in the business area to support farming operations.
- The Plan is consistent with County growth policies which channel new jobs and housing to the I-270 Corridor and other areas which are located close to job locations.
- The Plan channels higher residential densities to sewer and/or water service areas.



- The Plan reduces densities where soil limitations contribute to septic system failures and thereby to health hazards.
- The Plan recognizes the importance of farming to the character of Damascus.
- The Plan reflects the probability that funds for major public improvements (particularly sewage treatment and major highway projects) will be very limited in the next 10, and probably even 20, years.

The proposed Land Use Plan continues Damascus' existing development pattern. Within the Magruder Basin, where public sewer and water is available, higher residential densities and commercial development are proposed. The existing development pattern outside the sewer service area consists of homes along ridge lines and farms in the valleys. This form of development is continued and encouraged.



## TRANSPORTATION

The proposed Transportation Plan (see fold-out map) generally supports the road network proposed in the 1966 Plan. However, this Plan does eliminate a major by-pass of the business area. The Plan recommends instead a series of improvements to roads in the business area itself. Table 3 gives a description of all proposed highways and roadways (see page 38). No new roadways are proposed in outlying areas proposed for Agricultural Reserve. A brief description of bikeways and pathways is also included in this chapter.

### RELIEVING TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

The major transportation issue in Damascus stems from existing and future regional through traffic. Commuters from Howard County (Mt. Airy), Carroll and Frederick Counties travel Route 27 to employment centers along the I-270 Corridor. When coupled with traffic generated by the business center itself, the average daily traffic (ADT) on Route 27 north of Main Street reaches 13,000 vehicles per day (derived from a 1980 count). The level of service at Main Street and Ridge Road during the P.M. peak hour is E, which represents an unacceptable degree of congestion, as described on Table 4.

Route 124 (Woodfield Road), which carries traffic between Damascus and Woodfield, Washington Grove, Gaithersburg and Rockville, has experienced a 22 percent increase in average daily traffic (ADT) from 1977 to 1980. There has been a corresponding increase of 33 percent in northbound traffic during the P.M. peak hour. This is probably due in part to the opening of Shady Grove Road from Route 355 to Route 115. This road provides a new and more convenient path from South Gaithersburg to and beyond Damascus. Traffic volumes are expected to increase even more when the Metro station at Shady Grove opens, now scheduled to be operational in late 1983.



TABLE 3

**PROPOSED HIGHWAYS AND ROADWAYS**  
(See Zoning and Highway Fold-Out Map)

Map No.	Route No. and/or Name	Limits	Right-of-Way	Recommended Lanes of Paving*	Implementation
<b><u>MAJOR HIGHWAYS</u></b>					
M-27	Md. 27 (Ridge Road)	Southern boundary of P.A. 11 to A-11A	120'	4-6 lane divided highway	State Highway Administration (S.H.A.)
M-60	Md. 108 (Damascus Rd.)	From 2800' east of Woodfield Rd. (Md. 124) to boundary of P.A. 11	120'	2 lanes	S.H.A.
<b><u>ARTERIAL ROADS</u></b>					
A-11	Md. 80 (Kempton Rd.) and Md. 27 (Ridge Rd.)	Frederick County Line to Ridge Rd. (Md. 27) thence from Md. 80 to 2800' south of northern intersection with Oak Drive (excluding business district).	80'	2 lanes	S.H.A.
A-12	Md. 124 (Woodfield Rd.) plus northern extension (A-5 on 1966 Plan)	From southern boundary of Planning Area 11 to Md. 108 (Main Street) thence to an intersection with Ridge Road.	80'	2-5 lanes	S.H. A. and private developers.
A-13	Md. 650 (Damascus Rd.)	From Etchison southeast to boundary of P.A. 11	80'	2 lanes	Existing paving.
A-10	Bethesda Church Rd.	From Clarksburg Rd. to Woodfield Rd. (Md. 124)	80'	2 lanes	Existing paving.
A-25	Valley Park Drive	From Ridge Rd. (Md. 27) to Woodfield Rd. (Md. 124)	80-120'	2 lanes	Montgomery County, private developers.
A-27	Clarksburg-Lewisdale-Gladhill Rd.	From southern boundary of P.A. 11 to Frederick County line.	80'	2 lanes	Existing paving.
A-9	Burnt Hill-Kingstead Rd.	From Clarksburg Rd. to Ridge Rd. (Md. 27)	80'	2 lanes	Existing paving.
A-26	Md. 108 (Main Street)	From Woodfield Rd. (Md. 124) to 2800' east	80'	2 lanes	Existing paving.



TABLE 3 (Cont'd.)

Map No.	Route No. and/or Name	Limits	Right-of-Way	Recommended Lanes of Paving*	Implementation
<b>BUSINESS</b>					
B-1	Md. 108 (Main Street)	From Woodfield Rd. (Md. 124) to Ridge Rd. (Md. 27)	80'	3 lanes	S.H.A. and private developers.
B-2	Damascus Blvd.	From Ridge Rd. (Md. 27) to 600'+ east	80'	4 lanes	Existing paving.
B-4	Lewis Drive	From Ridge Rd. to end of commercial zone	80'	2 lanes exist	Montgomery County.
B-5	Md. 27 (Ridge Rd.)	From Main Street (Md. 108 to end of commercial zone	80'	See Map	S.H.A. and private developers.
B-6	Ridge-Lewis Connector	From Ridge Rd. to Lewis Drive	80'	See Map	S.H.A.
<b>PRIMARY</b> (Primary roads propose only generalized locations; final alignment will be determined at time of subdivision)					
P-1	Gue Rd.	From Ridge Rd. to Long Corner Rd.	70'	2-3 lanes	Existing paving, except for P-2, P-5 and P-9. Primary roads are usually the responsibility of private developers.
P-3	Kings Valley Rd.	From Ridge Rd. (Md. 27) to Bethesda Church Rd.	70'	2-3 lanes	
P-4	Sweepstakes Rd.	From Ridge Rd. (Md. 27) to Woodfield Rd. (Md. 124)	70'	2-3 lanes	
P-5	New road	From Woodfield Rd. (Md. 124) to Hawkins Creamery Rd.	70'	2-3 lanes	
P-6	Hawkins Creamery Rd.	From Woodfield Rd. to Boundary of Planning Area II	70'	2-3 lanes	
P-7	Burdette Rd. (Piedmont Rd.)	From Clarksburg Rd. to Ridge Rd. (Md. 27)	70'	2-3 lanes	
P-8	Moyer Rd.	From Woodfield Rd. (MD 124) to M-NCPPC property	70'	2-3 lanes	

\* The actual number of lanes will be determined prior to construction by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation or the Maryland State Highway Administration, as appropriate. An 80' R.O.W. can accommodate a 5-lane undivided roadway.



TABLE 4

## HOW LEVEL OF SERVICE IS DETERMINED

"Level of service" is a traffic engineering term which describes conditions on a segment of roadway. There are six levels, ranging from free flowing conditions to very heavy traffic, extremely unstable flows, and long delays. "Levels of service" are identified alphabetically. The terms are described as follows:

<u>Level of Service</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
"A"	Free unobstructed flow, no delays. All traffic signal phases sufficient in duration to clear all approaching vehicles.
"B"	Conditions of stable flow, very little delay. A few signal phases are unable to handle all approaching vehicles.
"C"	Conditions of stable flow, delays are low to moderate, full use of peak direction signal phase(s) is experienced.
"D"	Conditions approaching unstable flow, delays are moderate to heavy. In a significant number of signal phases, during short durations of the peak traffic period, traffic will not clear a signalized intersection.
"E"	Conditions of unstable flow, delays are significant, signal phase timing is generally insufficient. Congestion exists for extended duration throughout the peak period.
"F"	Very long delays. Jammed traffic conditions.



## HOW CAN CONGESTION IN THE DAMASCUS BUSINESS AREA, DUE LARGELY TO THROUGH TRAFFIC, BE RELIEVED?

The 1966 Damascus Master Plan proposes an ultimate solution: a by-pass of the business area to the east. The 1980 State Highway 20-Year Needs Inventory does not include the by-pass on its list of needed improvements. This means that, as of this date, the state does not recognize a need for the by-pass. Instead, the state lists reconstruction of Route 27 as a divided highway as a needed project with no schedule for construction. This Plan recommends that Route 27 should not be considered for widening to a divided highway north of Cedar Grove (the edge of the planning area) until such time that the traffic load indicates improvements are needed. At that time, alternatives to widening Route 27 between Cedar Grove and Claggettville should be considered. Alternative routes discussed during the preparation of this plan are found in Appendix A.

In addition to the lack of funds to construct a by-pass and the fact that the State does not recognize it as a needed project, there are environmental impacts (such as stream crossings) which must be recognized. There is also the problem of reserving the right-of-way until such time as construction or acquisition funds are available.

In recognition of funding, land use and environmental constraints, the proposed Transportation Plan does not propose a by-pass. Instead, it reaffirms the need for the northern extension of Woodfield Road to an intersection with Md. 27. This will serve the same purpose of diverting traffic from Main Street but on a smaller scale.

If at some future date funding constraints are lifted and proposed interim improvements are not adequate to handle traffic needs, this Plan should be re-examined to consider other by-pass alternatives. Any re-examination of a by-pass should address the following concerns:

- land use impacts, particularly on existing residential development and farmland;
- impact on economic vitality of business area;
- cost;
- the ability of the County and/or state to reserve the necessary right-of-way;
- impact on environment;
- ability of a by-pass to divert significant traffic volumes from the business area.



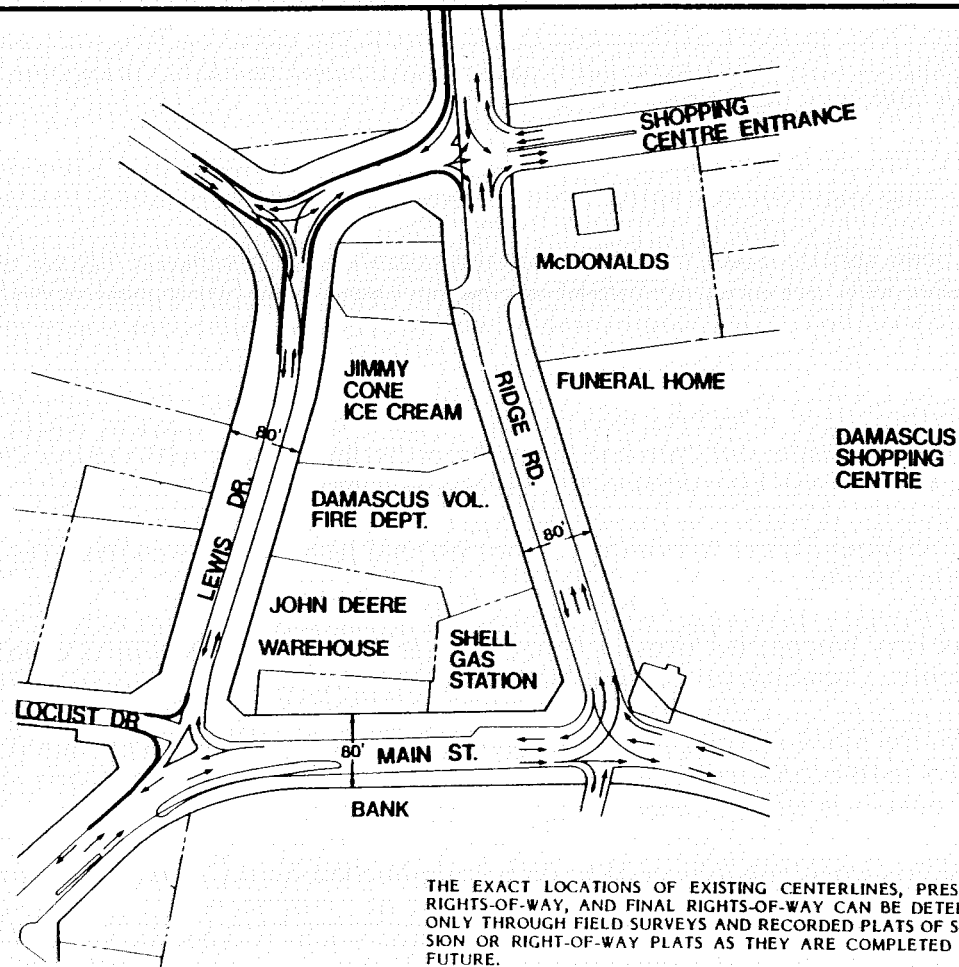
To relieve traffic congestion at the intersection of Route 27 and Main Street, which is already operating with significant traffic delays during the P.M. peak hour (Level of Service E), some immediate measures are proposed (see Proposed Circulation and Rights-of-Way).

The 1966 Master Plan also proposes to re-align Route 27 through the business center (see Proposed Business Area Roadway Improvements Map). When coupled with the extension of Woodfield Road north of Ridge Road, this would provide two north-south parallel roads through the Damascus business area and reduce turning movements from Route 108 to Route 27.

This Plan slightly modifies the 1966 Plan for the business area to provide better control of traffic on Ridge Road at the shopping center's access road. The Damascus Shopping Center was not built when the 1966 Plan circulation system was devised; due to the location of the center's driveway off Ridge Road, the 1966 Plan is not the most effective treatment. The Proposed Transportation Plan recommends instead a connecting road between Ridge Road and Lewis Drive which lines up with the shopping center's access driveway. This scheme will make better use of existing pavement and rights-of-way. There will also be less effect on existing points of access. The immediate effect on the flow of traffic through the center of Damascus will be better than could be obtained by means of the 1966 Plan alignment. No alignment adopted will constitute an obligation on the Maryland State Highway Administration to build. State project planning requires consideration of feasible alternatives prior to any final choice of alignment or commitment to construct improvements.

The items described under "Proposed Immediate Road Improvement: Damascus Business District" represent the first stage of a public improvement package which this Plan proposes in order to provide capacity to handle anticipated traffic increases in the near future. The entire improvements package is described in Proposed Business Area Roadway Improvement Map. This Plan recommends that these improvements be included in the State Highway Administration's "Special Projects" programs as quickly as possible. These improvements are calculated to raise the level of service from "E" to "A" at the intersection of Routes 108 and 27 during P.M. rush hour.





THE EXACT LOCATIONS OF EXISTING CENTERLINES, PRESCRIBED RIGHTS-OF-WAY, AND FINAL RIGHTS-OF-WAY CAN BE DETERMINED ONLY THROUGH FIELD SURVEYS AND RECORDED PLATS OF SUBDIVISION OR RIGHT-OF-WAY PLATS AS THEY ARE COMPLETED IN THE FUTURE.

THIS DRAWING SHOWS PROPOSED RIGHTS-OF-WAY, LOCATION, AND DIRECTION OF ROADWAY LANES.

ALL ROADS WILL REQUIRE, ULTIMATELY, 80 FOOT RIGHTS-OF-WAY.

WHERE RIGHT-OF-WAY HAS NOT BEEN DEDICATED, STATE LAW PRESCRIBES 40 FOOT RIGHTS-OF-WAY BASED ON CENTERLINES OF ALL STATE MAINTAINED ROADS.

PROPERTY LINES SHOWN ARE INCOMPLETE. THEY WERE OBTAINED FROM AVAILABLE RECORDS AND ARE SHOWN FOR ORIENTATION ONLY.

## PROPOSED TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY

— PROPOSED TURNING  
AND DIRECTIONAL  
MOVEMENTS

Approved and Adopted: June 1982

### DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland





## PROPOSED IMMEDIATE ROAD IMPROVEMENTS: DAMASCUS BUSINESS DISTRICT

- a. Extend the eastbound through lane, in front of the bank, back around the curve on Route 27 southward to Damascus Boulevard. This improvement will make both eastbound lanes accessible during the P.M. peak hour. Right lane is now intermittently blocked by standing vehicles.
- b. Extend the southbound right turn lane on Route 27 from the fire house northward to a point opposite the old Woodfield-Ford garage. This improvement will permit operation described in e. and f. below.
- c. Construct a 24 foot 2-lane open section road from the existing entrance to Damascus Center at Route 27 westward to intersect radially with the existing curved paving on Lewis Drive (this road is referred to as Ridge Road-Lewis Drive connector). This improvement will provide an alternate route through the business area.
- d. Re-stripe and install appropriate signs to create two eastbound lanes on Main Street at Ridge Road with left turn mandatory from the left lane and optional from the right lane. This will reduce the time required for eastbound traffic to clear the intersection during its green cycle.
- e. Re-stripe Ridge Road north of Main Street to create two northbound lanes and one southbound lane as far as the entrance to the shopping center.
- f. North of the above intersection merge the two northbound lanes into one. Additional capacity is not recommended beyond this point. Capacity will be provided to the east by A-12.
- g. Beginning opposite the furniture store (former Woodfield garage) on the west side of Ridge Road, stripe the paving so as to provide a southbound free right lane and a central through-left turn lane approaching the intersection of Ridge Road-Lewis Drive connector.

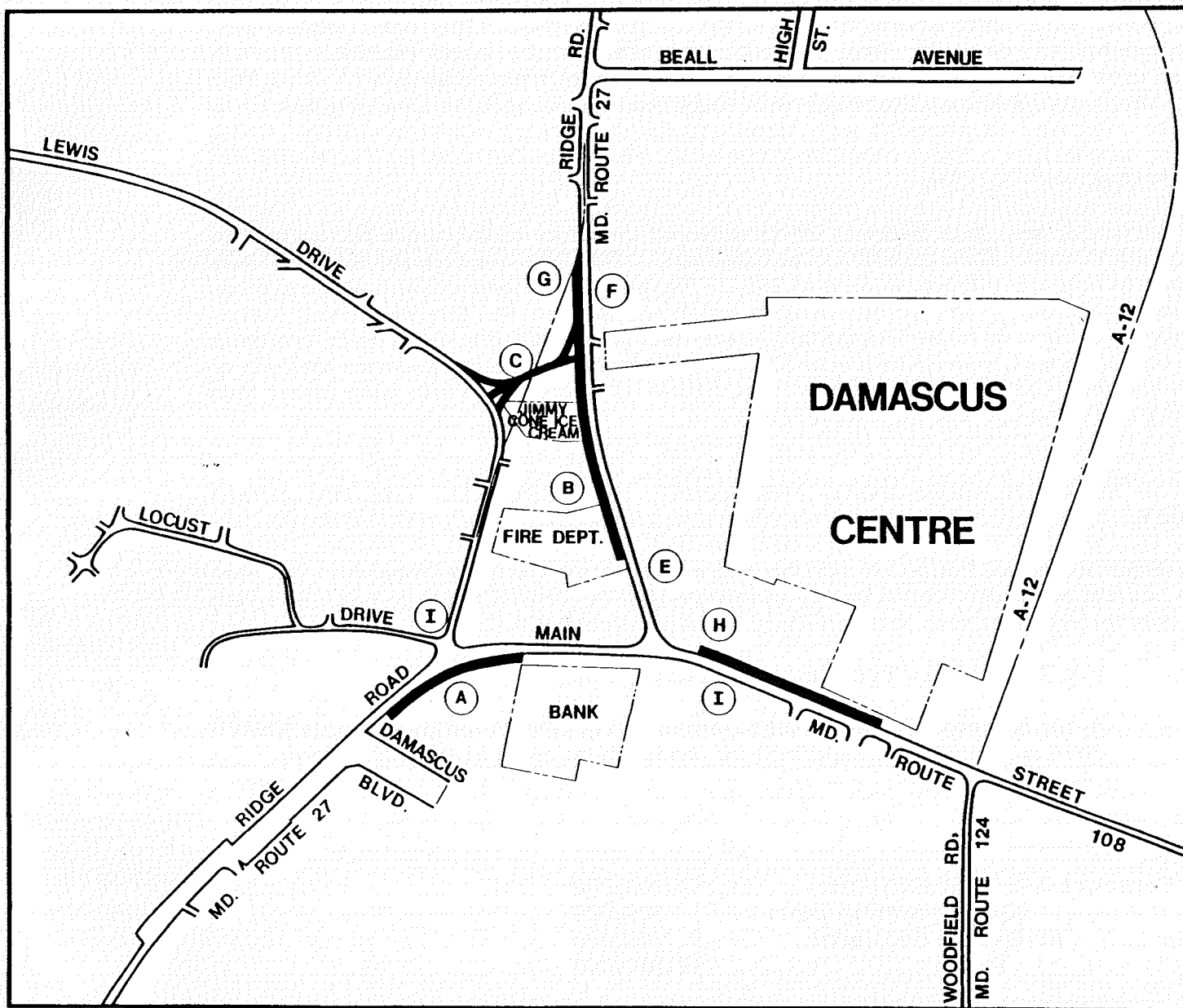
This new intersection should be clearly marked so as to direct southbound Route 27 traffic to turn right at this point and proceed via Lewis Drive rather than turning right at Main Street. (Operation should be observed to determine need for a future signal). Right and left turns would still be allowed at Main Street to serve local needs.

- h. Extend the widening of Main Street adjoining the entrance to the Damascus Center westward to meet the very short right turn lane now existing just east of the intersection at Ridge Road.

Improvements "a" through "h" are recommended to be included in the state's "Special Projects" program.

- i. To improve safety, parking on the south side of Main Street east of the intersection with Ridge Road should be removed to an off-street location or, at least, converted from a diagonal to parallel pattern.





# PROPOSED BUSINESS AREA ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

- (D) LETTERS REFER TO SECTIONS IN TEXT
- EXISTING PAVING
- PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION
- 1966 PLAN RECOMMENDATION

Approved and Adopted: June 1982

## DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland





To accommodate the additional traffic that is expected along Woodfield Road (Md. 124) in future years, particularly when the Shady Grove Metro station opens, Woodfield Road should be extended north of Route 108 to Ridge Road. This link, coupled with improvements to the Ridge Road - Route 108 intersection, would distribute through traffic over several roads and would greatly reduce rush-hour congestion. This Plan recommends that Woodfield Road intersect Ridge Road south of Faith Lane and that Faith Lane be relocated to intersect with Woodfield Road extended rather than Ridge Road. Further capacity, if needed, could be attained by adding another lane to Woodfield Road between A-25 and Main Street.

As noted, the State Highway 20-Year Needs Inventory recommends reconstruction (widening) of Route 27 to relieve future congestion. This Plan has explored the possibility of constructing a parallel road west of Md. 27 (between Gue Road and Md. 80) to provide additional capacity. The cost of acquiring a right-of-way and building 9000 linear feet of roadway is estimated to be \$2.8 million.<sup>1</sup> The estimated cost of adding one or two lanes to Route 27 ranges from \$450,000 to \$780,000. This Plan therefore endorses the idea of reconstructing Route 27 within the present right-of-way north of Faith Lane rather than building a new road paralleling Route 27.

#### ACCESS BETWEEN RIDGE ROAD AND ROUTE 124: CROSSING THE MAGRUDER VALLEY

Ridge Road and Route 124 are the two major access roads to Damascus. Between them lies the Magruder Stream valley and substantial residential development. This Plan proposes three connections between Ridge Road and Route 124.

- P-4, Sweepstakes Road - this is an existing road;
- A-10, Bethesda Church Road extension - the completion of Bethesda Church Road is a condition of approval for development north of the high school;

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<sup>1</sup>	Construct 2-lanes @ \$225.00/ft.	=	\$2,300,000
	+ 20% engineering costs	=	\$ 500,000
	R-O-W @ \$500/acre	=	\$ 80,000
			<u>\$2,880,000</u>



- A-25, Valley Park Drive - this connection replaces the crossing recommended in the 1966 Damascus Master Plan. Valley Park Drive is unbuilt but dedicated along much of its length. Unlike the crossing to the south recommended in the 1966 Damascus Master Plan, Valley Park Drive makes use of existing grading and filling in the stream valley.

The proposed Plan recommends that Damascus Boulevard (B-2) not be extended from Ridge Road to Route 124 for the following reasons:

- The crossing affects the sensitive headwaters of the Magruder Branch;
- The proposed Business District Plan recommends commercial zoning be eliminated from the headwaters, thereby eliminating the need for a business street.

#### ACCESS IN RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS

Outside the Business District and the Magruder Basin, farming is the primary land use.

The only new roads proposed for construction in this area are:

- P-2 to provide access from Route 124 extended east towards Howard Chapel Drive;
- P-5 to provide access from Route 124 to areas south of Hawkins Creamery Road; and
- P-6 to eliminate a curve in Hawkins Creamery Road.

All of these proposed primary roads are consistent with the 1966 Master Plan. These roads will be built by developers of the adjoining properties if and when the land develops.



No new roads are proposed in the portion of the Study Plan Area designated Agricultural Reserve by the Master Plan for Preservation of Agriculture and Open Space. Piedmont Road, designated as an arterial roadway on the Master Plan of Highways and recommended for re-alignment near Ridge Road, is re-classified to a primary road (P-10) and no changes are proposed to its present alignment. This change is reasonable in light of the fact that the Master Plan of Highways arterial alignment traverses a farm in the Agricultural Reserve area; it is unlikely this segment of the road will ever be built by the landowner.

## HIGHWAY AND ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION

The proposed Transportation Plan includes four types of roadways:

- Major highways (120' right-of-way)
- Business District streets (80' right-of-way)
- Arterial roadways (80' right-of-way)
- Primary roadways (70' right-of-way)

The Highway Typical Cross Sections show the configuration of each; the key to the Transportation Plan map describes the roads by this classification.

The only major highways in the planning area are Md. 108 between Etchison and the Damascus Business area and Ridge Road (Md. 27) south of A-25. Although Md. 108 will probably not be widened in the next 10 or 20 years, new homes will be required to be set back from the proposed right-of-way. Maryland 27 is listed in the State's 20 Year Highway Needs Inventory to be reconstructed as a divided highway.

Arterial roadways usually are obtained by dedication during the subdivision process and are usually constructed with private funds. Driveway access to arterial roads can be controlled in accord with subdivision regulations, thereby assuring high capacity and smooth traffic movement.

Primary roadways provide internal circulation within a subdivision or neighborhood. Although the Transportation Plan shows proposed locations for primaries, the final location is determined at time of subdivision. Primary roads may also be deleted or added at time of subdivision.



## IMPLEMENTING PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

Table 5, Staging of Road Improvements in Damascus, places a priority on road improvements and identifies how they would be implemented.

### PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Damascus area is not currently served by public transportation. Current planning and financial studies being conducted by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, with input by Montgomery County, include a proposal to extend Metrobus service to Damascus. The proposal is being made for purposes of analysis as part of a 10 year projection of budget impacts of Metro transit services. The results of the study, which are not yet available, will indicate the patronage demand and costs associated with the proposal. The proposal specifies 30 minute peak-only headway between Damascus and the Shady Grove Metrorail Station. Service of that nature would most likely be implemented, if warranted, some time at or soon after the opening of the Shady Grove Line late in 1983.

Informal commuter parking for 30 cars is occurring every business day near the church north of the intersection of Md. 80 and Md. 27 at Claggettsville. If public funds become available for commuter parking in Damascus, sites north of the business area should be considered to reduce congestion at Ridge Road and Route 108. One possibility which should be explored is leasing a church parking lot during weekdays.

### BIKEWAYS

The Master Plan of Bikeways proposes three bikeways in the Master Plan Area:

- P-34 (6.6 miles) would link Magruder Valley Park to Little Bennett Regional Park via linear open space and Little Bennett Park;
- P-39 (15.6 miles) would provide a scenic route along Md. Route 108 from Ridge Road east to Etchison;



TABLE 5  
STAGING OF ROAD IMPROVEMENTS IN DAMASCUS

Item		Cost (1981 Dollars)	Effect	Implementation
1.	a. Complete westbound lane on north side of Main Street	\$ 60,000	Critical lane volume reduced at Main St. and Ridge Rd. from 1476 to 1110.	State Highway Administration "Special Projects" program.
	b. Eastbound lane on south side of Main St. approaching Ridge Road	\$ 50,000	(Level of service E to B)	
		\$ 110,000 total		
2.	a. Construct Ridge-Lewis connector	\$ 150,000	Critical lane volume reduced at Main and Ridge from 1110 to 927.	Montgomery County or State Highway Administration.
	b. Complete paving and re-stripe Ridge Rd. from Main St. north to connector	\$ 40,000	(Level of Service B to A)	
		\$ 190,000 total		
3.	Extend Woodfield Rd. north of Main St. to Ridge Rd.		Will divert 310 Westbound and 113 Eastbound vehicles per hour from Main St. and from Ridge Rd. north of Main St. to limit of extension. <u>Note:</u> As traffic on Woodfield Rd. and Rte. 108 grows, these figures will increase.	Montgomery County and private developers.
		\$1,300,000 total		
4.	Widen Md. 27 north of A-12 to Claggettville (adds two lanes).	\$ 780,000	Would carry future increased traffic.	State Highway Administration.
5.	Extend Bethesda Church Rd. to Woodfield Rd.		Would serve new development. Could divert maximum of 50 eastbound and 50 westbound vehicles from Main St. during the P.M. peak hour. Probably fewer diversions if items 1 and 2 have been completed.	Private developers.
		\$ 500,000		
6.	Hold A-11-A right-of-way (M-27 on 1966 Plan) for future use in connection with the extension of Woodfield Road north of Main Street.		Could divert northbound through traffic from intersection of Main St. and Ridge Rd. to Woodfield Rd.	State Highway Administration.

Source: MCPB staff. Costs are estimates only.



- As will be noted in the Community Facilities chapter, residents at community forums expressed support for a pathway system along the Magruder Valley Park. A more detailed proposal for such a system will be developed as part of Plan implementation, and will include study of a bikeway proposal prepared by residents of Damascus.





## DAMASCUS BUSINESS AREA PLAN

This Plan reaffirms and plans for the continuation of the Damascus Business Area as the commercial center for northern Montgomery County and Western Howard County. In addition to providing typical shoppers goods, Damascus offers important farm-related products which help support the area's agriculture heritage. Farm-related commercial uses are specifically encouraged by this Plan.

The community has expressed a desire for a second shopping center location in the business area. This Plan recommends a shopping center site along Ridge Road at the southern edge of the existing business area.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are presently 71 acres of commercially zoned land in the business area. About 55 acres are actually developed; much of this acreage is not fully utilized.

The largest concentration of retail floor space is 130,000 square feet in the Damascus Shopping Center. Safeway is the major tenant; other occupants include a drug store, a hardware store, restaurants, the County library, clothing stores and other specialty shops. Of 42 stores in the shopping center, many were vacant during the time this Plan was under study in 1982. Many causes were suggested at public meetings for the high vacancy rate, including poor access from Main Street and inconvenient Mall layout.

In terms of zoning, all commercial land in Damascus is General Commercial (C-2). Although this zoning allows a floor area ratio of 1.5 (that is, floor area may not exceed one and one-half times the lot size) and permits 3-story buildings, none of the Damascus businesses are developed to this extent. Most businesses occupy small, detached 1-story buildings. There are vacant lots in the business area but the greatest potential for future retail commercial expansion lies in redevelopment of under-utilized parcels and leasing of vacant stores (particularly in the shopping center, although other vacant stores do exist).

### 1966 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The 1966 Plan proposes a minimum of 58 acres and a maximum of 92 commercial acres by the Year 2000 based upon a population forecast of 14,000 people (see 1966 Master Plan Map, page 31).



The design concept for the business area encourages an "architecturally unified center" and proposes a system of vehicular and pedestrian traffic distribution to support the center. The area between proposed Damascus Boulevard and Main Street and the land north of Main Street are proposed primarily for central business district uses. The area west of Route 27 is proposed for service and other non-retail uses, while the area south of proposed Damascus Boulevard, (which the Plan describes as "topographically unsuited for typical shopping area use") is proposed for offices.

## WHY AMEND THE 1966 PLAN?

The generalized design concept for retail and office development in the 1966 Plan provides an identifiable, well-integrated commercial center for Damascus. No change to the generalized concept is proposed. However, several changes to the 1966 recommended land use and zoning pattern are proposed for the following reasons:

### Environmental Concerns

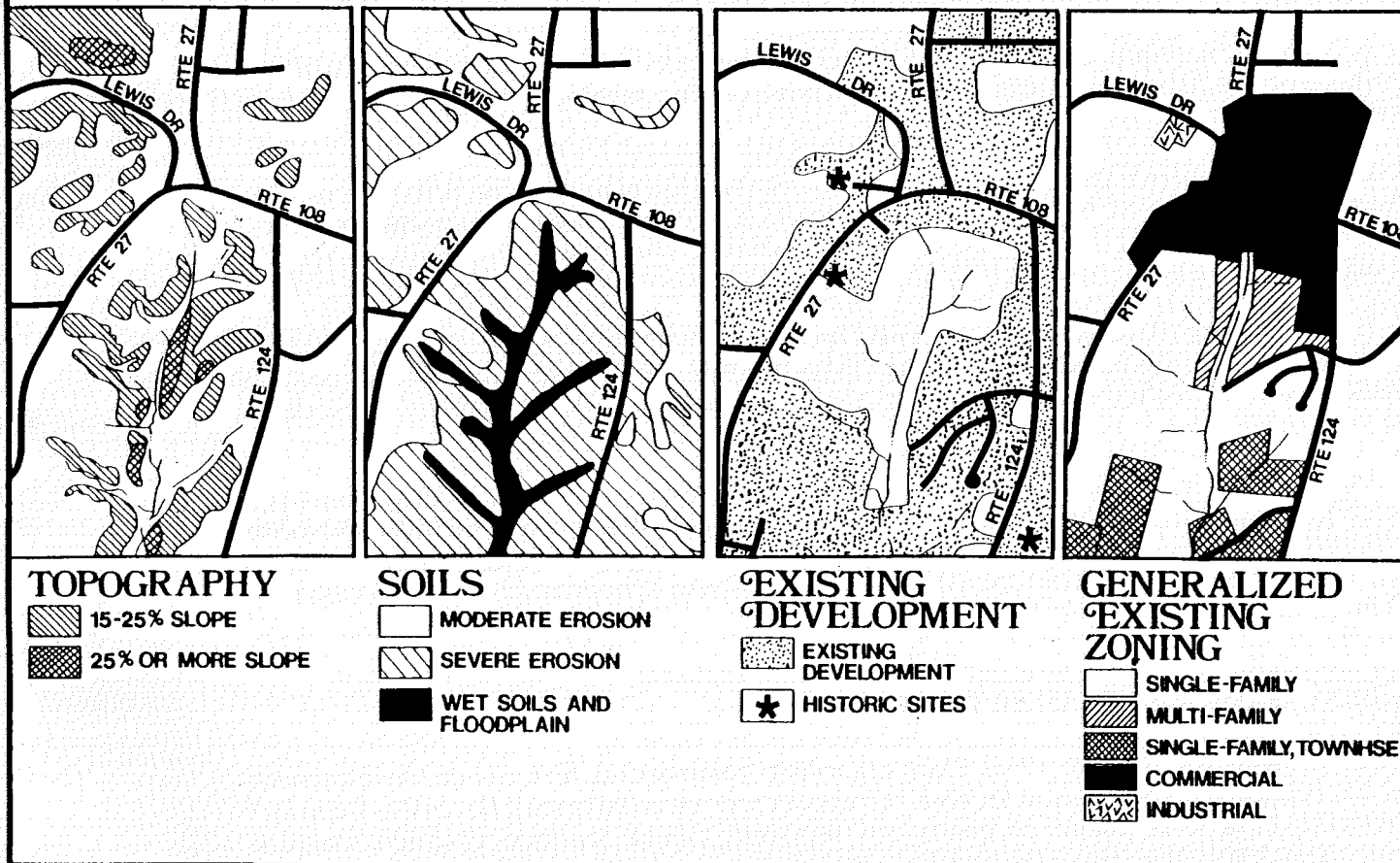
The 1966 Plan locates about 15 acres of commercial development (C-2 zoning) in the fragile headwaters of the Magruder Stream Valley. Commercial areas have a high percentage of area covered by impervious surfaces (e.g., parking lots and roofs) which accelerate run-off, produce erosion and cause flooding problems. Pollutants that are washed off streets and parking lots also have the potential for degrading the quality of surface waters. If the commercial area proposed in the 1966 Plan were to be fully developed, there would be harmful impacts on the headwaters of Magruder Stream. Further, other environmental features of the headwaters (steep slopes, erodible soils) have severely limited commercial development possibilities. Alternative land uses to retail commercial are proposed in this chapter.

### Employment Centers

Another recommendation of the 1966 Plan which needs to be re-examined is a 100-acre employment center concept. Although the concept of local employment is a good one, the proximity of more attractive employment locations (I-270) makes it unlikely that a large-scale employer would locate in Damascus. Further, the employment center is oriented to the proposed major by-pass of Damascus, but it is unlikely this by-pass will be built in the next 20-25 years. A 100-acre employment center would place additional pressure for housing and services which could change Damascus' rural character.



# DAMASCUS BUSINESS AREA DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS



Approved and Adopted: June 1982

## DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland





### Residential Development

The housing densities proposed by the 1966 Plan (12 to 14 units per acre) are too high not only in terms of environmental constraints but also in terms of Damascus' existing residential character. From strictly an environmental viewpoint, very low densities would be most desirable to help limit sediment, turbidity and urban run-off, all of which negatively affect water quality. The proposed Business Area Land Use Plan balances these environmental concerns with the existing land use pattern (which includes apartments), pedestrian access and commercial viability.

A density of 6-8 homes per acre is proposed as an alternative to the 1966 Plan recommendation of 14 units/acre for the following reasons:

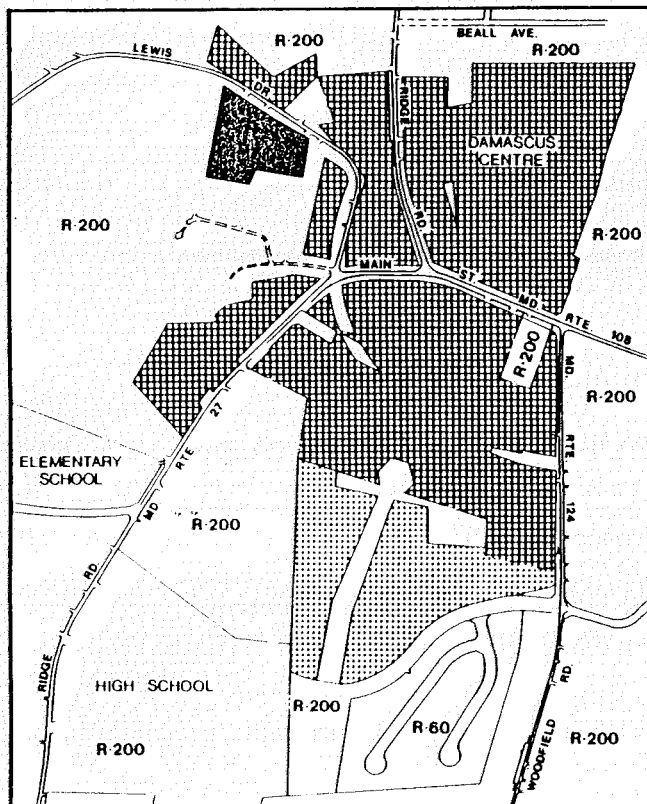
1. It is unlikely a density of 14 units per acre can be achieved given the percentage of the headwaters area that is poorly suited for development (see Development Constraints Map);
2. The residential character of Damascus is predominantly low density suburban residential. A density of 6-8 units per acre would encourage a mix of housing types at a density that is compatible with the overall residential character of Damascus and the Magruder Valley;
3. A lower density than 14 units per acre will help reduce the amount of impervious surface (particularly parking lots) in the headwaters and would be less destructive of the highly erodible soils in the headwaters (see Development Constraints Map).

As discussed in the Environmental Concerns Chapter, stormwater management is a major concern in the Magruder Valley. Private conservation areas will be required along the tributaries of the Magruder. On-site stormwater management impoundments should be required unless a centralized facility is planned. These concerns would be addressed in detail at time of subdivision.

### HOW SHOULD THE 1966 PLAN BE REVISED?

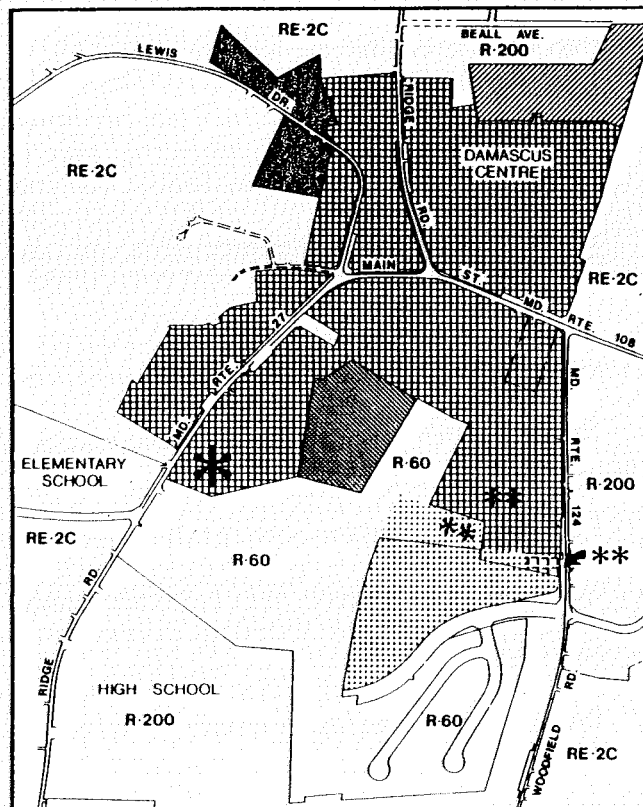
Many elements of the 1966 Plan regarding commercial and office development should be retained. The Plan objective "to encourage an architecturally unified center" and "to provide a wide range of goods and services" should continue to guide the plan process. The 1966 Plan recommendation regarding the extension of Route 124 north of





### ZONING (1982)

- R-200 2 UNITS/ACRE
- R-60 5 UNITS/ACRE
- R-30 14 UNITS/ACRE
- C-2 GENERAL COMMERCIAL
- I-1 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL



### ZONING PLAN

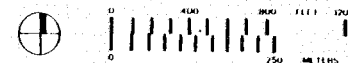
- R-200 2 UNITS/ACRE
- RE-2C 1 UNIT/2 ACRES
- R-60 5 UNITS/ACRE
- R-30 14 UNITS/ACRE
- RT-8 8 UNITS/ACRE
- C-2 GENERAL COMMERCIAL
- C-T COMMERCIAL TRANSITIONAL
- O-M OFFICE BUILDING MODERATE INTENSITY
- I-1 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- PROPOSED LOCATION FOR FUTURE SHOPPING AREA
- SUITABLE FOR C-3

## DAMASCUS BUSINESS AREA ZONING PLAN

Approved and Adopted: June 1982  
Amended July 1985.

**DAMASCUS  
MASTER PLAN**

Montgomery County, Maryland





Main Street is critical to the relief of congestion and the development of strong pedestrian movements in the business district. And finally, the Plan designation of the area west of Route 27 for service and other non-retail uses should be confirmed.

This Plan for the business area (see page 61):

1. Supports the 1966 Design Plan recommendations regarding vehicular access with one exception: Damascus Boulevard, which would cross the headwaters of the Magruder and which would require substantial fill and grading, is eliminated;
2. Encourages office development on the fringe of the retail area as a transitional use between retail stores and non-commercial development;
3. Extends service, non-retail commercial uses along Lewis Drive to accommodate local needs for services such as warehousing, repair facilities, etc.;
4. Endorses the 1966 Plan recommendation for pedestrian pathways through the business area;
5. Proposes an area for new retail commercial development;
6. Proposes that future retail development along Ridge Road and Main Street, should be consistent with the existing development: buildings fronting the road with parking in the rear;
7. Eliminates 100 acres of employment and industrial land use along Route 108.

#### PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A FUTURE SHOPPING CENTER SITE

Market forecasts prepared by Montgomery County Planning Board staff indicate a potential need for 40-80 commercial acres in Damascus by the year 2000 (see Table 6).

These market forecasts are based on a very optimistic service area; the population of the Damascus Master Plan study area in 1980 was 8500 people and by 2000, the population is expected to be 13,000. The market forecasts increase these population numbers by almost 20 percent to reflect potential Howard and Frederick County shoppers.

Even with these optimistic assumptions about the Damascus market area, the forecasts indicate that existing commercial acreage in Damascus is sufficient to meet



1990 market demand. The high vacancy rate in the shopping center, vacant store fronts, and undeveloped lots attest to the fact that the Damascus market is not yet strong enough to support major additional retail uses, particularly another shopping center. Nearby malls (Lake Forest, Francis Scott Key) offer strong competition. A second shopping center in Damascus would likely compete for businesses already in the business area, drawing new tenants from either Damascus Center or Main Street. If this occurs Damascus could have two weak centers, not just one.

Despite market forecasts, community residents have presented strong testimony that additional acreage should be planned to allow a second shopping area. The possibility of additional competition, they feel, is needed to offer merchants an alternative to locating in Damascus Shopping Center and to spur design and building improvements in the Center.

TABLE 6  
DAMASCUS MARKET AREA  
POPULATION AND SUPPORTABLE COMMERCIAL ACREAGE

<u>Damascus Market Area</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>
Number of People*	12,730	14,000	15,460
Supportable Commercial Acreage**	25-50 acres	31-62 acres	41-82 acres

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\* To help determine the Damascus' market area, staff of the Frederick and Howard County Planning Departments were asked to estimate the number of people who might shop in Damascus. Generally, these forecasts assume that every resident of the Damascus Master Plan area shops in Damascus (even those living closer to Mount Airy) and that another 3,000-4,000 people from Howard and Frederick Counties shop in Damascus.

\*\* Montgomery County Planning Board Retail Commercial Model was used to convert population into supportable acres of commercially zoned land. The acreage range presented is based on how much of the site is actually used for floor area. If 20 percent of the land is used for floor area, less acreage is needed; if only 10 percent of the land is used, more acreage is required.



In response to this testimony, this Plan recommends a site for a second but smaller shopping area. The proposed location is along Ridge Road at the southern edge of the Damascus business area much of which would otherwise be designated general commercial. This site has excellent visibility from Ridge Road and sewage will flow by gravity to the sewage treatment plant.

During the Plan process, another site was analyzed east of Damascus Shopping Center. This site was not selected because needed road improvements (the extension of Woodfield Road to Ridge Road) and sewerage facilities are not planned for 10 to 20 years. However, this Plan does recommend the use of this location for a shopping area in the future if development of the site along Ridge Road does not occur.

The type of shopping envisioned by this Plan is a grocery store and several small convenience shops. Only 80,000 square feet of floor area is recommended to ensure a scale of development compatible with the neighborhood; a regional-type shopping mall is not proposed.

To ensure site plan review by the Planning Board and to afford the community ample opportunity to comment on any commercial plans that are submitted, this Plan proposes a Planned Development (PD) zone for the site.

In the PD zone, the Planning Board and the County Council are empowered to review

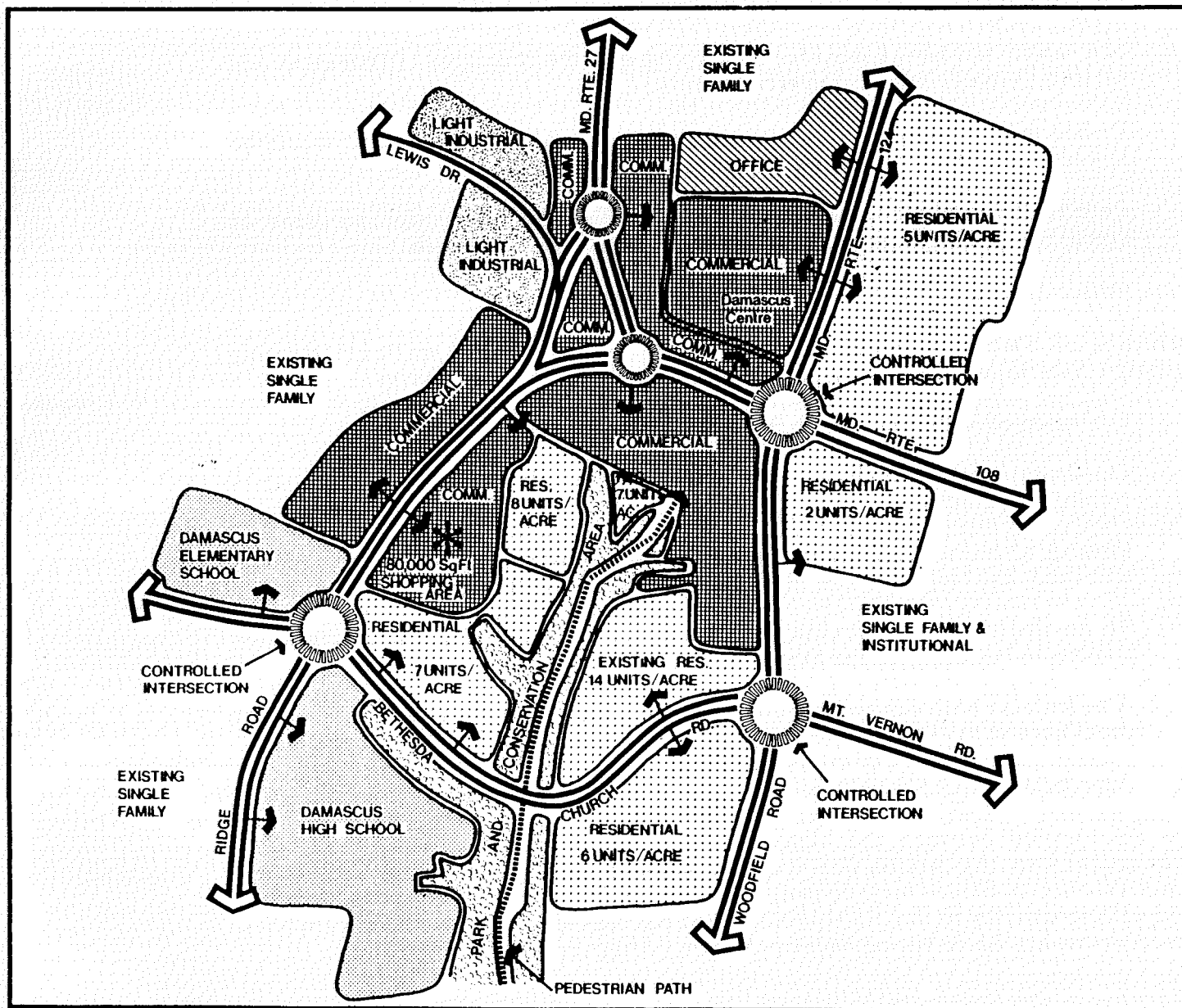
- location, height, ground coverage and use of all structures
- landscaping
- lighting
- floor areas
- grading
- pedestrian linkages

This level of review is desirable both from the Planning Board's and the community's viewpoint since Planned Development zones require a Public Hearing on the actual physical plan for the development.

#### Commercial Development Criteria

The preparation of a PD application should be guided by the following plan principles:





## BUSINESS AREA LAND USE PLAN

Approved and Adopted: June 1982

## DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland





- Environmental disruption should be minimized (the topography at the rear of the site includes steep slopes and erodible soils);
- The design and layout should be in keeping with the character of Damascus and related to the existing commercial center;
- Proper traffic and pedestrian access should be included and the site should be linked to the Magruder Valley park;
- Retail floor area should not exceed 80,000 square feet (for purposes of comparison, Damascus Shopping Center is 130,000 square feet);
- Office floor area should not exceed 10,000 square feet;

Approval of the PD application would be conditional on the applicant meeting several design criteria including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Extension of Bethesda Church Road from Ridge Road to Route 124;
- Construction of an additional lane on Route 27 (Ridge Road) to accommodate turning movements;
- Phasing of the shopping center in coordination with residential development (7 units per acre) so that a mix of commercial and housing occurs;
- An on-site or central stormwater management facility which protects water quality and quantity in the Magruder Valley;
- A pedestrian pathway system that links the shopping center and the residential development to Magruder Valley parkland.
- Appropriate buffering between commercial uses and the high school.

The relationship between the high school and the proposed shopping area is of particular concern to the School Board and to parents of students at Damascus High School and Damascus Elementary School. To help assure that the shopping center is developed with sensitivity to the close proximity of the high school and elementary school, this Plan recommends the following development and design criteria:



- to the maximum extent possible, residential development should be located between the high school and commercial uses;
- parking lots should be visible from nearby roads;
- buffering along Bethesda Church Road should be of such type and extent to channel pedestrian movement to the signalized intersection at Bethesda Church and Ridge Road;
- buffering along Bethesda Church Road should be in place prior to the completion of the shopping area;
- an anti-loitering program should be submitted as part of the PD application.

In reviewing the Planned Development application, the Planning Board will also seek input from the School Board and the principals of Damascus Elementary and Damascus High Schools regarding the appropriate mix of stores, lighting plans, and accessibility.

As noted, a major planning concern is the viability of the Damascus market to support a second shopping area. When a PD application is filed, it will be evaluated in light of market conditions and the potential impact of the commercial development on existing businesses.

#### OTHER COMMERCIAL LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Main Street (Route 108)

No changes are proposed to the land use (commercial) or zoning (C-2) along Main Street. The existing scale of development is attractive and there is an opportunity for a very strong pedestrian orientation here. The extension of Route 124 north of Main Street would help pedestrian movement by shifting through automobile traffic from Main Street to the Route 124 extension.

##### Ridge Road (Route 27)

Most of the businesses along Ridge Road north and south of Main Street are automobile oriented and are zoned General Commercial (C-2). No changes are proposed to these businesses or their zoning.



Several small properties now zoned residential are proposed for commercial. They are:

The King property (2.3 acres) is located between the Elementary School and a small commercial development. A brick home is located on the portion of the property closest to the Elementary School. This Plan recommends Commercial-Transitional (C-T) zoning in the portion of the property with the house (1.15 acres) and General Commercial (C-2) zoning on balance (1.15 acres). Access to commercial development should be from the same driveway that serves the neighboring stores.

East of Ridge Road, south of the Farmers and Mechanics National Bank, this Plan recommends General Commercial (C-2) on about 7 acres fronting Ridge Road (County Maintenance Depot; Gladhill property; Souder property). As noted earlier, this amount of commercial acreage could be expanded as part of a Planned Development application for a mix of commercial and residential uses.

This Plan recommends the maintenance depot along Ridge Road be relocated from the commercial area to a more appropriate location for equipment storage.

#### The Damascus Shopping Center Area

The northeast section of the Business Area is dominated by the Damascus Shopping Center. The Center is partly vacant in part due to market conditions and, according to residents, in part due to mall design. As part of Plan implementation, staff will contact mall owners and managers to offer design assistance to increase the mall's attractiveness and to improve access and circulation.

Just north of the shopping center is a vacant 5-acre lot which has no public road access from Ridge Road on Route 108. This Plan recommends medium density residential or low-intensity office development for this property as a transition between existing homes and the shopping center. Commercial development is not proposed here but is channeled to Ridge Road, where the Plan proposes enough commercial land use to support a retail shopping center. The Plan proposes a residential density of 8 units per acre on the site. A low intensity office building developed under C-T (Commercial Transitional) or O-M (Office, Moderate Intensity) zoning standards would be compatible if the project followed development standards in the RT-8 (townhouse) zone regarding building mass, density, heights, setback and lot coverage. It should be noted that development of this site is dependent on road access which may not be available until Route 124 is extended north of Route 108.



A residential Planned Development zone (PD-5) is recommended east of the Damascus Shopping Center. This area is not planned to develop until additional sewage treatment capacity is available (sometime beyond 1995) so as not to compete with development in the Magruder Valley. Review of an application for a PD-5 would include, but not be limited to the following development criteria:

- Extension of Route 124 north of Main Street along the length of the property;
- Construction of a pumping station to pump sewage into the Magruder Valley sewage system;
- Construction of on-site stormwater management facilities to protect water quality in the Patuxent River basin;
- Pedestrian and bicycle linkages to commercial areas;

Commercial uses in the PD would be appropriate if a market for additional commercial uses exists and if the shopping area along Ridge Road has not commercially developed.

#### Lewis Drive Area

Service type commercial and light industrial uses are proposed in the Lewis Drive area. Lewis Drive near Ridge Road is well-suited for small scale, light industrial development. An auto parts dealer, a farm implement dealer and the Damascus Fuel building set the light industrial character of this portion of Lewis Drive. Further west, detached homes, an American Legion building and a fairground are present. A vacant building, once used as a roller rink, forms the logical boundary between light industrial uses and residences to the west.

Light industrial uses (I-1 Zone) which would be permitted include (but are not limited to) minor manufacturing, storage yards, lumber yards, warehousing and general offices. A major industrial employment center is not recommended. Buildings greater than 3 stories would require detailed site plan review by the Planning Board.

#### Magruder Valley Headwaters

The 1966 Plan recommends office, commercial and residential development (14 units per acre) in the Magruder Valley headwaters area.



This Plan recommends the same land uses but reduces residential densities, reduces commercial acreage, and recommends site plan review of any development in this sensitive area.

Vacant land in the headwaters area consists of two parcels: a 6 acre tract (the Acme property), an interior parcel that lies behind existing commercial uses along Ridge Road; and a 5 acre tract to the rear of the Damascus Motor Company.

This Plan recommends residential, rather than commercial zoning, on the Acme property and proposes conservation areas along two streams. A density of 8 units per acre is recommended.

Vacant property (approximately 5 acres) lies between the Damascus Motor Company and the Magruder Stream Valley. This Plan recommends enough commercial zoning (no more than 3 acres) to allow expansion of the service department but proposes the balance of acreage be dedicated as parkland or private conservation use to protect steep slopes and stream valleys from development and to enhance pedestrian access to the business area from the proposed Magruder Branch Stream Valley Park. (By private conservation use, this Plan intends the land remain undeveloped and not be used as storage or parking facilities for adjoining commercial development.)

Approximately 1.0 acre of land lies between the Damascus garden apartment and the Damascus Motor Company. This transition area is proposed for residential (R-30, apartments). If, at some future date, the adjoining commercially zoned land is redeveloped, this parcel could be integrated into an overall development proposal in accord with the C-3 Zone. The C-3 Zone involves site plan review; approval of the site plan would be conditioned upon, but not limited to, the developer providing an appropriate buffer between the apartments and commercial uses. The area proposed for C-3 is shown on the Zoning and Highway Plan Map and the Damascus Business Area Generalized Existing and Proposed Zoning Map.

Two apartment buildings (Perrywood Apartments) adjoin Damascus Motors to the south. Given the age of these buildings, their redevelopment is almost certain. Thus, the major land use issue is what the ultimate land use should be on this site. This Plan, recommends the C-3 Zone if the site is redeveloped in concert with the Damascus Motors property.

The C-T Zone is recommended for the apartment building closest to Woodfield Road until joint redevelopment does occur. The C-T Zone is appropriate as a transitional zone between general commercial (C-2) and residential (R-30) uses.

The rear apartment building is recommended for the R-30 Zone.



## RESIDENTIAL LAND USE PLAN

This chapter focuses on two areas of Damascus:

- the Magruder Valley, where most of the subdivision activity in the planning area is occurring; and
- the "transition area" between the Magruder Basin and outlying farmland (see Transition Area map). Land use in the transition area consists of rural subdivisions, large individual lots, farms and parkland. The farming area is discussed later in the Agriculture and Open Space Preservation section.

Land use policies for each of these areas are discussed in this chapter.

This chapter also proposes alternative Transferable Development Rights (TDR) receiving areas.

### Existing Conditions

The residential development pattern in Damascus has been shaped by the topography. Since much of Damascus is poorly suited to septic systems due to steep slopes, floodplains and poorly-drained soils, development has traditionally occurred along the ridges where soil and slope constraints are less severe.

Public sewer and water was extended to a portion of Damascus known as the Magruder Basin in the early 1970's. About 1,700 acres are in the sewer service area; this land is largely developed or recorded or part of an approved preliminary plan (see map).

Existing residential densities in the Magruder Valley generally range from 2 houses per acre to 8 houses per acre (5 apartment buildings along Route 124 near Main Street are the major exceptions). Although the present zoning pattern would theoretically allow higher yields, site constraints have reduced actual development potential.

A key concern of this Plan process is the transition from suburban residential densities in the Magruder Valley to agriculture and open space areas which surround Damascus. Presently, all this "transition" area is zoned for half-acre residential lots. As might be expected, given environmental constraints and the absence of public sewer, these densities are not being realized (in some instances, 10 to 20 acre lots are necessary to meet county health standards).



Lying just beyond the transition area are many large farms and an active farm community.

## 1966 RESIDENTIAL LAND USE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The 1966 Plan recommends development of low- to medium-density in the Magruder Valley. Townhouse densities are proposed along the stream valley, oriented to the park, to "provide a variety in housing which could be quite pleasing." Apartments are located on the edge of the business district.

The area outside the Magruder Valley is designated for half-acre residential lots based in part "upon the feasibility of providing public sewer."

## WHY AMEND THE 1966 PLAN RESIDENTIAL LAND USE RECOMMENDATION?

The reasons for re-examining the 1966 Plan's residential recommendations have already been noted in the Overview. They include environmental concerns; a slower pace of growth than envisioned by the 1966 Plan; inappropriately high housing densities; decreased availability of public facilities; and newly adopted agriculture preservation policies.

## PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL LAND USE POLICIES IN THE MAGRUDER VALLEY

The residential character of the Magruder Valley, the sewered portion of the planning area, is developed or committed to development in accord with the 1966 Plan. The Master Plan encourages the continued development of the Magruder Valley.

The only major change to the 1966 Plan concerns 45 acres recommended for 12 houses per acre by the 1966 Plan; instead a density of 6 units per acre is proposed in order to reflect environmental constraints and actual development yields on adjoining properties. The topography on these properties makes higher yields than 6 or 7 units per acre very unlikely; less constrained land just to the north, although zoned for 8 units per acre actually yielded only 7 units acre even with a 20 percent density bonus for including moderately priced dwelling units.

A density of 6 units (RT-6) is also more compatible with the overall character of the Magruder Valley which consists mainly of low to medium density single-family homes.



The Planning Board will carefully review subdivision plans to ensure that development fronting Ridge Road or Route 124 is compatible with the existing land use pattern (small, residential lots with detached homes) and that environmental concerns are addressed.

A minor change to the 1966 Plan concerns a 5 acre property on Woodfield Road adjoining the swimming pool entrance. The 1966 Plan proposed 2 units per acre on this parcel. However, adjoining property is developed at a higher density (6 units per acre). To allow the property owner greater flexibility in developing this small amount of acreage, this Plan recommends 6 units per acre, which is compatible with adjoining development.

## RESIDENTIAL LAND USE POLICIES IN THE TRANSITION AREAS

The key residential issues relate to the transition areas lying between developed or soon-to-be developed portions of the Magruder Valley and outlying agriculture areas.

Presently zoned for half-acre residential lots, this land lies outside the sewer service area and includes many working farms. Retaining half-acre zoning would be inconsistent with plan policies to channel development to the sewer service area and to retain the small-scale, rural character of Damascus; and to preserve the County's agricultural base.

The following objectives have guided land use decisions for the transition area:

- Densities should be low enough to protect fragile environmental features. Numerous streams cut through the transition area, including natural trout waters (Little Bennett Creek) and streams feeding public water supply reservoirs (Patuxent River tributaries). Rural densities will best protect these streams from sedimentation and erosion.
- Residential development should be encouraged to cluster away from farmland to minimize negative effects on farming operations.
- The traditional development pattern of Damascus should be continued: individual lots along the ridge lines. Limited development along ridge roads is consistent with the rural character of Damascus; homes frame beautiful, even dramatic, views of rolling farmland, woodstands and stream valleys. Allowing this trend to continue would not open up extensive new areas to development, but would allow "rural infill" among existing residences. To allow residential infill to occur, 1 to 2 acre lots should be permitted if public water is available and if soils pass percolation tests.



Farmland which can be considered part of the larger County-wide agricultural area should be included in the Agricultural Reserve area.

The following transition area land-use recommendations are based on these objectives (numbers refer to Transition Area Map).

1. Ridge Road

The land use pattern along Ridge Road north of the business area and south of Route 80 is a mix of houses fronting Ridge Road and farmland in the interior. Permitting residential infill along the frontage will continue historic development patterns. Near the business area, where residential subdivision has been most extensive and slopes pose fewer constraints to development, the Plan recommends a density of one house per 2 acres. North of Holsey Road, the development pattern becomes less dense and the number of farms increases. In this area, the Plan proposes a density of one house per 5 acres to begin the transition from Damascus to the agricultural reserve area further north.

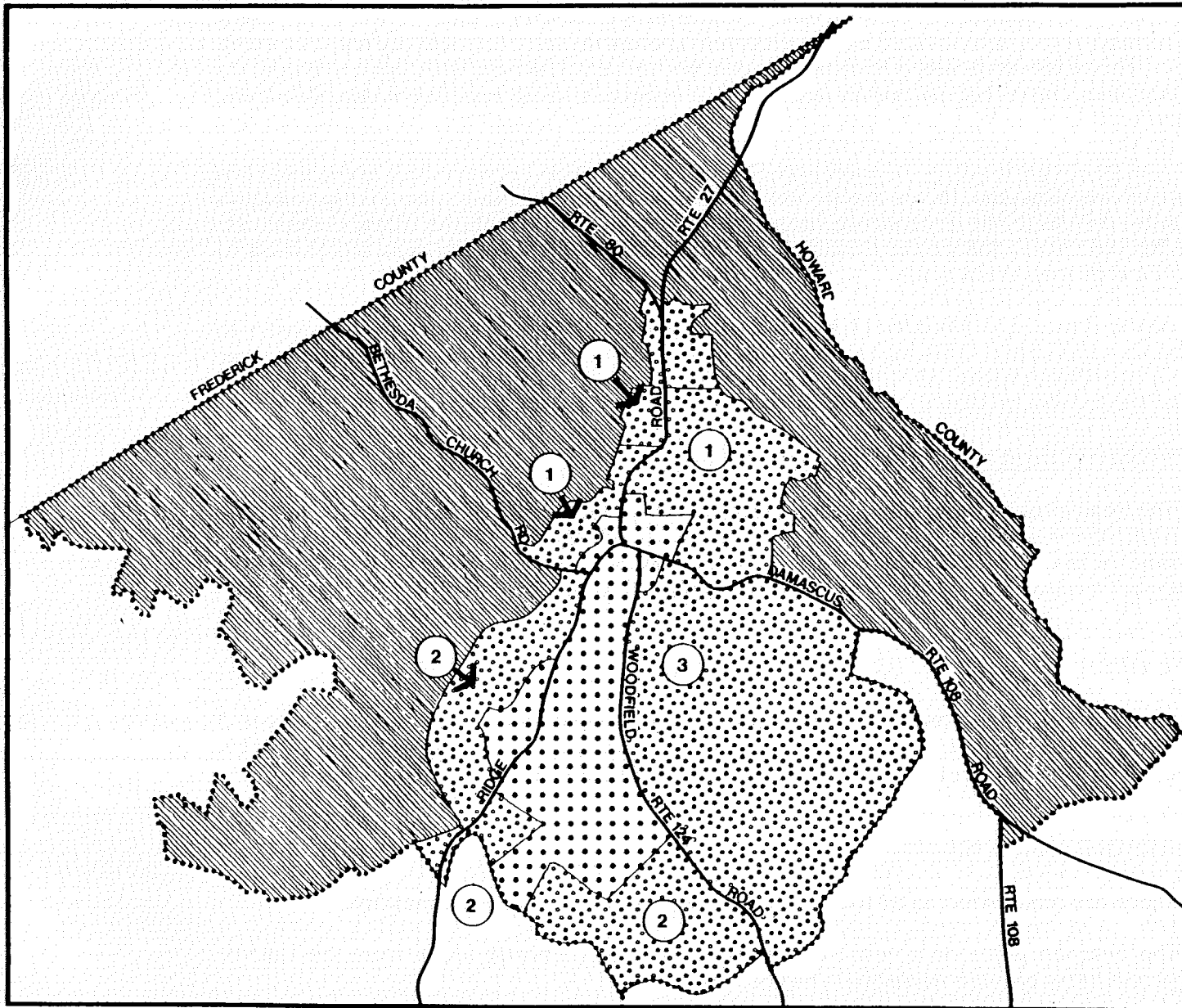
To allow a small amount of residential infill north of Bethesda Church Road, the Plan recommends a density of one house per 2 acres. Soils here are poor for septic tanks (sewerage lines are being extended to nearby Lewis Drive to relieve failing septic tanks) so residential development should be limited. This area is inappropriate for agricultural preservation because of the existing development pattern and because of the rough terrain.

2. Rural Entryway along Ridge Road and Woodfield Road

Damascus is located north of an urbanizing area (Germantown and Gaithersburg) and a future new town (Clarksburg). As development proceeds in these areas, it is important that Damascus retain its identity as a separate community. Special care must be taken to provide a low density buffer along portions of Route 124 and Ridge Road to visually emphasize that Damascus is a separate, distinct community.

Along Ridge Road, north of Cedar Grove, two-acre densities are proposed. A sewer pumping station serves approximately 330 acres proposed for two-acre densities west of Ridge Road. Property owners will be encouraged to cluster development (minimum lot size: 25,000 square feet) with sewer in a way that preserves wooded areas, stream banks, steep slopes and scenic vistas. All these features contribute to a rural entry along Route 27.






## TRANSITION AREAS

 TRANSITION AREA BETWEEN SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES AND FARMS

 SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL (MAGRUDER VALLEY)

 FARMS (AGRICULTURAL RESERVE)

 PROPOSED LAND USES IN TRANSITION AREA (NUMBERS KEYED TO TEXT, 1-3)

Approved and Adopted: June 1982

**DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN**

Montgomery County, Maryland





Just south of Kings Valley Road are two properties which are designated for half-acre lots by the Clarksburg Master Plan. These properties form part of the rural entry into Damascus and are limited in development potential by a stream valley and steep slopes. This Plan proposes a density of one house per 5 acres, with public water, to facilitate the clustering of homes on more developable land fronting Ridge Road and Hawkes Road.

East of Ridge Road, a 91-acre parcel forms a transition between half acre, suburban residential development to the north and a highly productive family farm (Tregonning) to the south. Although the Tregonning farm, part of the Clarksburg Master Plan, is currently zoned for half-acre, the revised Clarksburg Plan will re-examine this area in relation to agricultural preservation goals.

Along Route 124 (Woodfield Road) 2 units per acre densities are also proposed to maintain a rural entry. This approach is consistent with the Approved and Adopted Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Open Space which designates this rural area for low density development.

### 3. Woodfield Road and Route 108 Transition Area

The residential character of this area is well-established. From an environmental viewpoint, there are relatively better soils for development here than in the other transition areas. Two units per acre densities are recommended with clustering encouraged towards Route 108, Woodfield Road and Hawkins Creamery Road.

## RURAL OPEN SPACE LAND USE POLICIES IN THE TRANSITION AREA

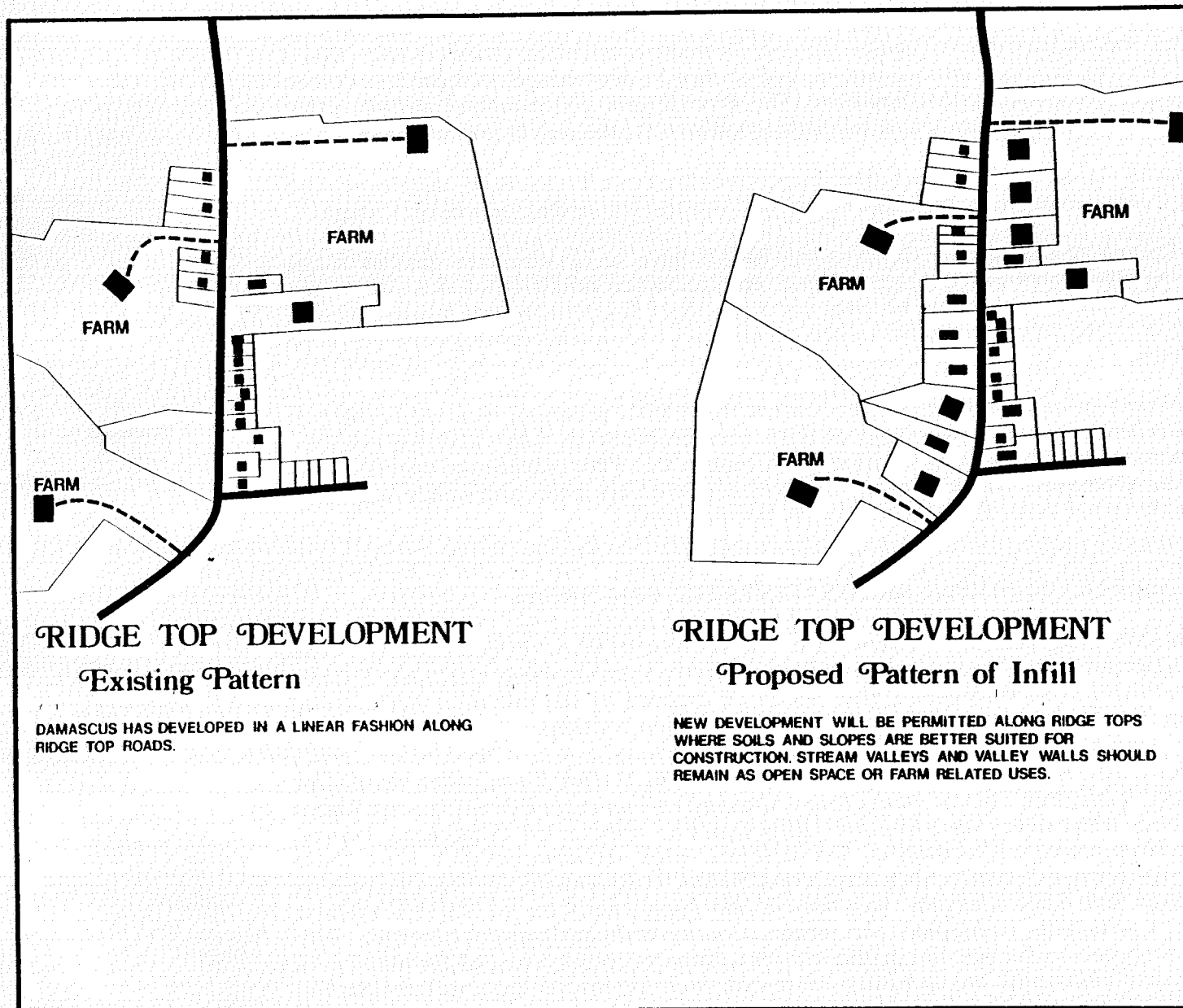
As shown on the Transition Areas map, Rural Open Space densities (1 house per 5 acres) are proposed as a transition from residential land uses to the Agricultural Reserve. This policy is discussed in the Agricultural and Open Space Preservation chapter.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

There are many sources of low-to-moderate income housing in Damascus.

The average price of a new home in Damascus is generally lower than the County average and helps provide moderate-cost housing.



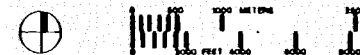


## RIDGE TOP DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Approved and Adopted: June 1982

## DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland





For persons unable to afford these prices, the moderate-priced dwelling unit (MPDU) provisions of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance offer an alternative. Every subdivision of fifty or more units must include a certain percentage of moderate-priced homes. Several subdivisions in Damascus (The Plantations, for example) already offer these less costly homes, and as future subdivisions are built, the supply will increase.

Damascus Gardens, a 104-unit apartment complex built by a private developer with federal and County assistance, provides rental units in the low and moderate rent range.

The Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) owns a 15 acre site east of Ridge Road near the Oak Drive intersection. The Commission has no plans for the site at the present time. Presently zoned for 12 units per acre, this Plan recommends a lower density (6 units per acre) to reflect environmental constraints and actual development yields on nearby parcels.

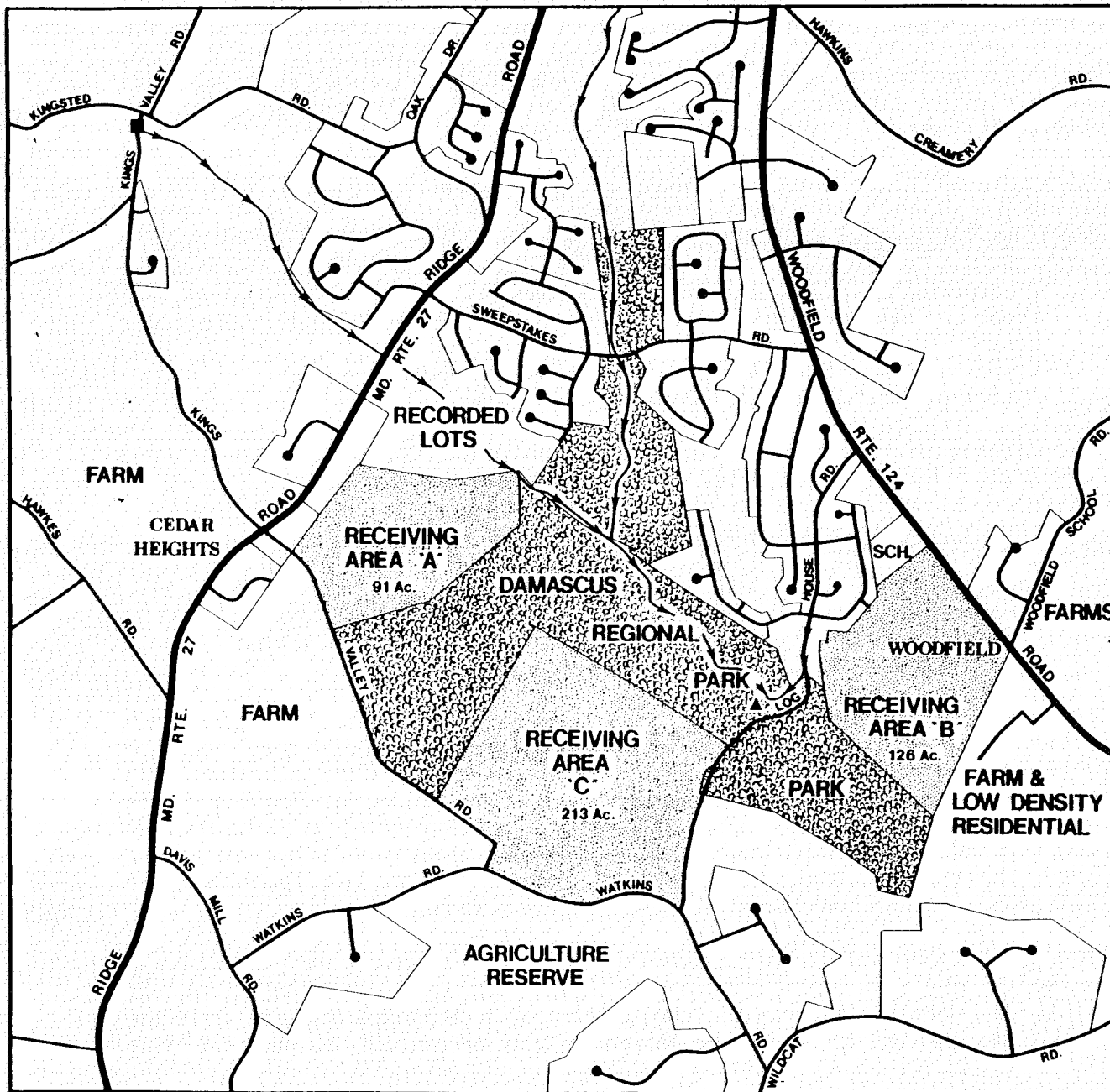
The market price of housing in Damascus; the MPDU program; assisted housing at Damascus Gardens and HOC ownership of a 15 acre property all help meet the need for low to moderate priced housing in Damascus. Although this Plan proposes no specific sites for additional affordable housing, recommended densities are proposed which will allow smaller lots sizes and less costly housing types (townhouses).

#### TRANSFERABLE DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDR) RECEIVING AREAS

The proposed Agriculture Reserve area in Damascus (P.A. 11) consists of 1,050 acres. Development rights are created at the rate of one development right per 5 acres. Thus, a "pool" of 210 development rights would be created by the proposed Agricultural Reserve area (see Agriculture and Open Space Preservation Section).

In accord with Planning Board policy to examine all Master Plans under review for TDR receiving areas, this Plan proposes three alternative Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) receiving areas where development rights could be transferred to increase density. These alternative areas are located on the southern edge of Damascus (PA 11). These properties help form a "rural" entry way along Ridge Road and Route 124. Increasing density through the TDR program may reduce the rural character of these particular parcels, but it will help strengthen the larger, County-wide agricultural reserve. This trade-off is proposed to further the public interest, namely, preservation of farmland. All TDR subdivision plans will be carefully reviewed to help ensure the rural residential character of the entry way is retained.





## TDR RECEIVING AREAS

AREA	BASE DENSITY	TDR OPTIONAL DENSITY
A	1 HOUSE PER 2 Ac.	1 HOUSE PER 1/2 Ac.
B	1 HOUSE PER 2 Ac.	1 HOUSE PER 1/2 Ac.
C	1 HOUSE PER 2 Ac.	1 HOUSE PER 1 Ac.

▲ DAMASCUS SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT

— SEWER LINES

Approved and Adopted June 1982

**DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN**  
Montgomery County, Maryland





These receiving areas, if fully developed in accord with TDR program, would absorb 430 development rights. Density increases in two of these Receiving Areas will require sewage treatment capacity. As discussed in the Implementation Section, most of the treatment capacity in Damascus has been allocated; many allocations, however, have not been used to the Treatment Plant is not operating near its capacity. TDR receiving areas would simply compete for recaptured allocation. The third TDR receiving area should be eligible for public water in accord with the TDR program.

The proposed TDR receiving areas (shown on page 75) are:

Receiving Area A: Cedar Grove Area (91 acres)

- Present Zoning - Rural (one house per 5 acres)
- Proposed Base Density Without TDR - Rural Residential (one house per 2 acres)
- Proposed TDR Optional Density - 2 units per acre (half-acre lots)
- Maximum Density Increase With TDR - 135 houses

This parcel is part of the low-density entry proposed for Damascus. If developed as a receiving area, density in this property could increase to 2 units per acre.

Receiving Area B: Woodfield Road Area (126 acres)

- Present Zoning - Rural Residential (one house per 2 acres)
- Proposed Base Density - Rural Residential (one house per 2 acres)
- Proposed TDR Optional Density - two houses per acre (half-acre lots)
- Density Increase With TDR - 189 houses

This property also forms part of the rural entry into Damascus. The Agricultural and Rural Open Space Preservation Plan confirmed a density of one house per 2 acres for this parcel, which is presently being farmed. This parcel begins the transition from suburban residential densities to the northwest and the rural residential densities (2 acre lots) to the southeast and southwest. Allowing half-acre development through the transfer of development rights would shift the beginning of the transition area further south along Ridge Road. However, this trade-off is an acceptable one given the larger public purpose that a TDR program would implement: the preservation of farmland.

Although this Plan designates the entire 126 acres as a receiving area, the Planning Board recognizes only a portion of the property flows by gravity to the sewage treatment plant. This Plan does not endorse the construction of a pumping station to serve the property but the acreage which can be served by gravity can only be determined by



detailed engineering studies which are not part of this Master Plan. These studies should be undertaken at time of subdivision. Only that portion of the property which can be served by gravity is recommended as a receiving area.

Receiving Area C: North of Watkins Road (213 acres)

- Present Zoning - Rural Residential (one house per 2 acres)
- Proposed Base Density - Rural Residential (one house per 2 acres)
- Proposed TDR Optional Density - one house per acre
- Density Increase with TDR - 106 houses

A third receiving area is bounded to the north by Damascus Regional Park and to the south by Agriculture Reserve land. Owners of the Agriculture Reserve land also own the 213 acres north of Watkins Road. Allowing the transfer of development rights would permit an "internal" transfer from one portion of the property to another.

No sewer service is proposed, with or without TDR. However, if developed as a receiving area, this property should be eligible for public water to facilitate the transfer of rights.

A TDR density of one house per acre is consistent with the rural residential character of this area.



## AGRICULTURAL AND OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Damascus has always been a town surrounded by farms. Today, a substantial number of working farms are still present in the Master Plan area (see page 81, Agriculture and Open Space). The approved and adopted Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space in Montgomery County (October 1980) identifies farmland in this portion of Montgomery County as "the pivotal point in the County's agricultural and rural open space program." Without farming around Damascus, the character of Damascus and the upper county would change because Damascus links the two "halves" of the County's Agriculture Area and provides continuity for the western and eastern farming areas.

Preserving farmland in Montgomery County is adopted county policy. Past experience has shown that minimum lot sizes of 2 to 5 acres have not slowed conversion of farmland to residences. Much stricter subdivision requirements, coupled with economic incentives to encourage farming, are needed. The County's farmland is already dotted with many subdivisions. This does not make farmland preservation any less important or farming less viable - in fact, it only underscores the need for stricter controls if farmland is to be preserved for future generations.

Agricultural preservation in Damascus (P.A. 11) and the Master Plan Study Area as a whole is important not only in terms of maintaining the County's agricultural base, but in strengthening the role of Damascus as the rural commercial focal point of Upper Montgomery County. Between 1971 and 1980, residential development in the rural vicinity of Damascus equalled development in Damascus itself (P.A. 11) as can be seen in Table 7.

Channeling residential development from outlying areas to the center of Damascus will strengthen the rural satellite town concept as well as preserve farmland.

### PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Much of the land around Damascus has already been designated "Agricultural Reserve" by the Agriculture and Open Space Plan to help preserve farmland from residential development pressures. Damascus itself (P.A. 11) was not studied as part of the County-wide Agriculture and Open Space Plan because a new Master Plan for Damascus was underway. Lands designated Agricultural Reserve are afforded special protection from urban and suburban development pressures. Non-farm uses, especially intensive



residential development, are discouraged and farm-related activities, such as farm markets and primary agricultural processing, are encouraged. Although farming is the preferred use in the Agricultural Reserve, the farmer does have some development options:

- One lot may be subdivided on the land for every 25 acres, and these lots may be as small as one acre, soils permitting;
- One development right may be sold off the land at the rate of one right per 5 acres (more about the "transfer of development rights" program later in this chapter).

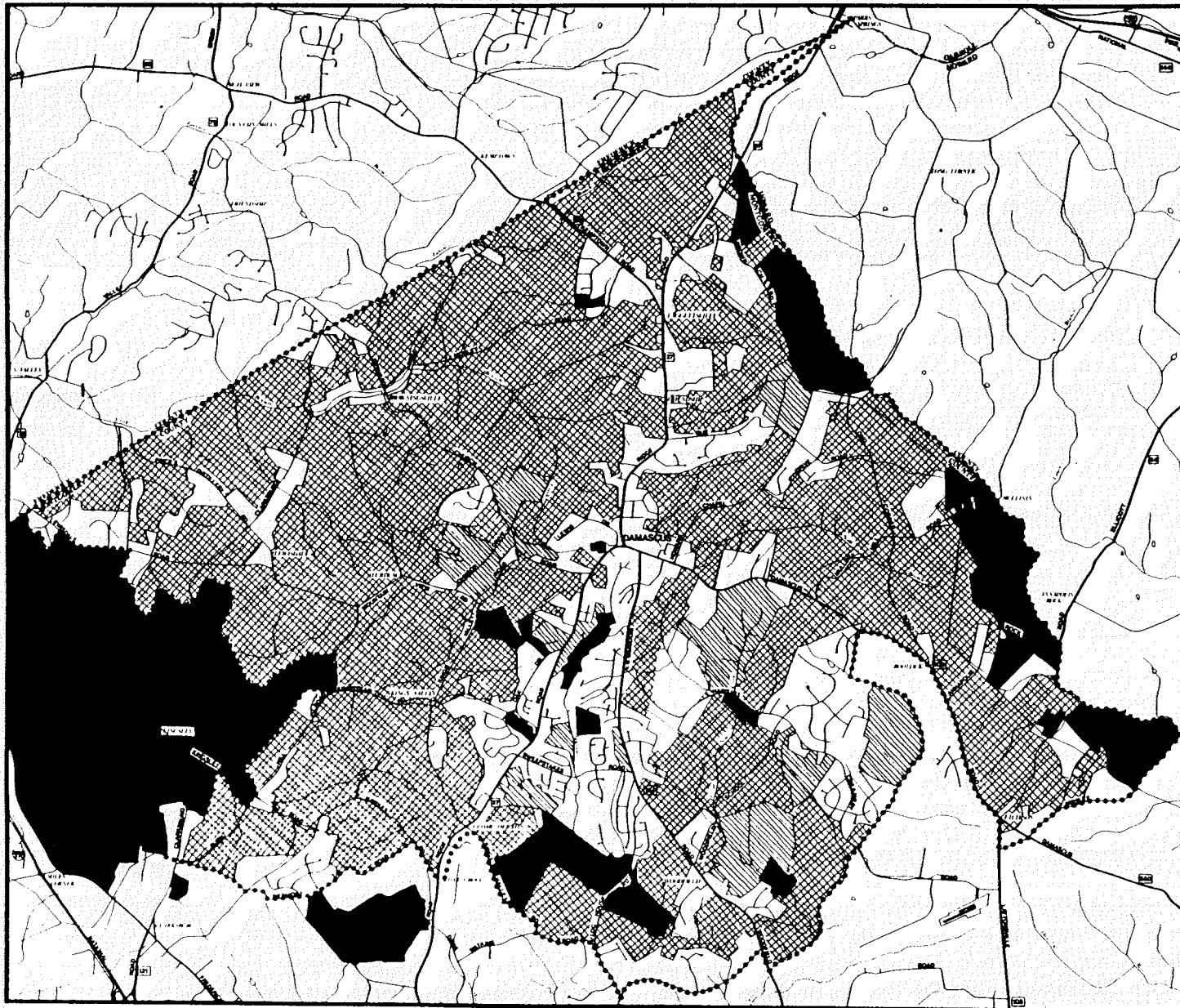
TABLE 7

Damascus Housing Completions  
1971-1980

Number of Completions	<u>Year</u>										Total
	'71	'72	'73	'74	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80	
Damascus (P.A. II)	25	59	85	39	8	37	51	163	29	149	645
Damascus Vicinity	<u>49</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>571</u>
Total	74	107	144	123	43	77	108	232	119	189	1,216

Source: Montgomery County Planning Board Staff





## AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE



WORKING FARMS



PUBLIC OWNED LAND  
(STATE; M.N.C.P. & P.C.)



SUBDIVISION ACTIVITY

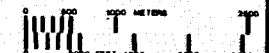


EXISTING RESIDENCES

Approved and Adopted: June 1982

## DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland





One of the objectives of this Plan process is to determine what land should be included in the County-wide Agriculture Reserve and what land, upon closer examination, should be excluded from the Agriculture Reserve area. Many working farms are operating in Damascus but this Plan recommends for preservation only those farms which can be considered part of the larger, County-wide agricultural community. Presently, all the farms in Damascus (P.A. 11) are zoned for half-acre residential lots. This density is generally unrealistic given soil and bedrock constraints. More importantly, however, designating farmland as residential fails to recognize that:

- Farming is a viable industry and a reasonable use of the land;
- Preservation of farmland is in the public interest;
- The need to preserve regional food supplies close to primary markets has become vital to energy conservation;
- Preserving farmland in Montgomery County is important to maintaining a viable local and regional agricultural community;
- Damascus is in close proximity to active farming areas in adjacent counties.

This Plan proposes 1,050 acres in and around Damascus (P.A. 11) be included in the County's Agricultural Reserve Area. The areas are shown on page 83, the Proposed Agricultural Reserve Area map. A more detailed discussion follows:

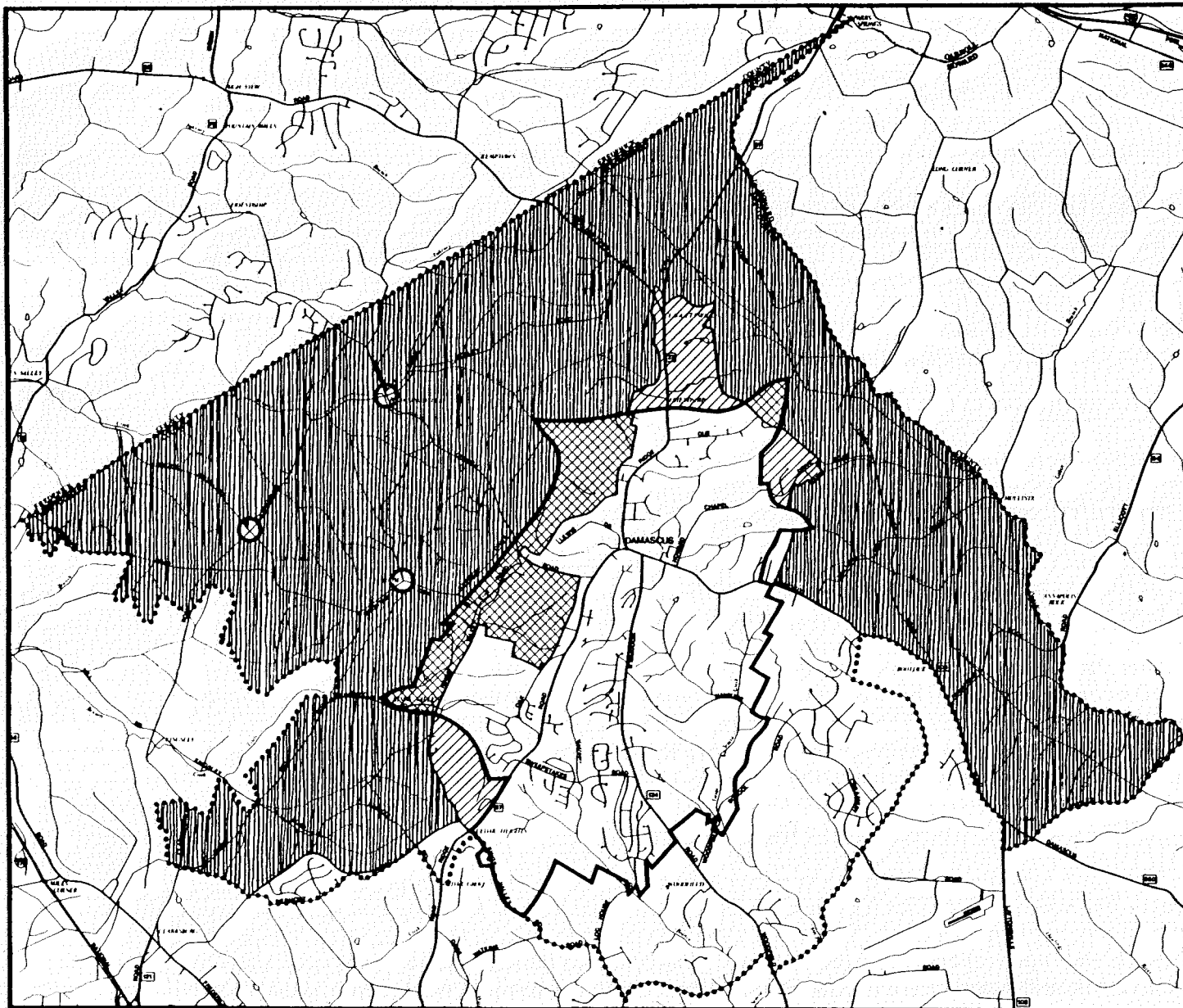
#### Kings Valley Road

This area is heavily wooded and includes a tributary of the Little Bennett Creek, a natural trout waterway.






Because of its long-standing agricultural character, its physical separation from nearby residential development and its common boundary with agricultural land identified in the Agricultural and Rural Open Space as critical, this Plan recommends approximately 325 acres be included in the Agriculture Reserve and 170 acres be designated for Rural Cluster zoning (one house per 5 acres, cluster option).

A long-standing family farm operation (the King Dairy Farm) is located south of Oak Ridge special park and spans both sides of Kings Valley Road. The dairying operation itself lies west of Kings Valley Road; this portion of the farm is recommended for Agriculture Reserve. Part of the farm does lie within the proposed boundaries of Little





## PROPOSED AGRICULTURE RESERVE AREA

-  AREA DESIGNATED AGRICULTURE BY: AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE PLAN
-  AREAS PROPOSED TO BE EXCLUDED FROM AGRICULTURE RESERVE
-  AREAS PROPOSED TO BE INCLUDED IN AGRICULTURE RESERVE
-  RURAL COMMUNITIES
-  P.A. 11 (DAMASCUS BOUNDARY)

Approved and Adopted: June 1982

## DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland





Bennett Stream Valley Park. This Plan recommends alternatives to fee-simple acquisition of this farmland be explored as a means of balancing park development and farmland preservation goals (see Parks and Recreation section for further discussion).

To the east of Kings Valley pond, the land is heavily wooded and only a small portion is easily farmed. The Rural Cluster zone is recommended here to allow limited residential development on the non-agricultural portions of the land. Homes should be located away from Kings Valley Road and away from land best suited for farming.

#### West of Ridge Road, North of Lewis Drive

This area (about 400 acres) is dominated by farmland. Steep slopes along Little Bennett Creek are heavily wooded but the more gently rolling slopes are planted in corn. Some residential development in this area is recommended by the Plan on properties fronting Ridge Road and Lewis Drive. However, interior parcels are better suited for agriculture and open space and should be included in the Agricultural Reserve.

#### Howard Chapel Drive

Farms operate to the north and south of Howard Chapel Drive. The major farms in the area are 238 and 104 acres respectively. The northern portions of these two farms abut residential development (.5 to 2 acre lots) along Gue Road but the southern acreage (340 acres) is undeveloped and adjoins farmland in the Agriculture Reserve area. Two acre densities (with a cluster option) are recommended north of Howard Chapel Drive. Rural Cluster zoning is recommended south of Howard Chapel Drive to provide a transition from 2 acre residential development to the Agriculture Reserve.

This Plan also recommends that 860 acres be excluded from the Agriculture Reserve area. Damascus is characterized by a great many working farms. However, not every farm should be preserved. There are working farms in Damascus which, because of their proximity to existing and pending development, should be designated for low-density rural residential rather than for Agricultural Reserve. They are:

#### Cedar Heights Area, West of Route 27 - 220 acres

This area forms part of the rural entry into Damascus. Due to the proximity of built and recorded subdivisions (Spring Garden Estates, Kings Valley Manor), the Agricultural Reserve Zone is inappropriate. Two acre densities are recommended to provide a mix of residences and open space. To encourage clustering of homes away from the Little Bennett Creek and wooded areas, the Plan recommends the extension of public sewer and



public water. A pump station already serves this area and can accommodate the amount of development generated by 2 acre densities.

#### North of Damascus along Ridge Road - 390 acres

In accord with Plan policies to allow limited residential expansion along the ridge tops, this Plan recommends densities of one house per 5 acres and one house per 2 acres along Ridge Road north of Damascus. This policy only applies to properties fronting Ridge Road; interior parcels should remain in Agriculture Reserve.

A small area (10 acres) at the intersection of Gue Road and Howard Chapel Road is recommended for exclusion from the Agriculture Reserve because of subdivision activity (Watkins Village and linear residential development). The Agriculture Reserve designation would only preserve a 47 acre tract already surrounded by residential development.

#### RURAL OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS

East of Woodfield Road and south of Route 108, extensive development has occurred on 1 to 2 acre lots. This Plan continues the rural residential character of this area.

The only density change involves land to the east of Great Seneca Creek. Most of the remaining vacant land adjoins the Creek; Rural Cluster (one house per 5 acres) rather than 2 acre lots is recommended to reflect environmental constraints to development and to encourage clustering away from Great Seneca Creek.

This Plan recommends that subdivision applications already on file in this area be permitted to proceed through the subdivision process when proposed development is generally in accord with Rural Cluster densities.

#### AGRICULTURE RESERVE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The preferred use in the Agricultural Reserve area is agriculture. Only one residential lot may be subdivided for every twenty-five acres. The owner of a one hundred-acre farm in the Agricultural Reserve, for example, may subdivide only four lots:

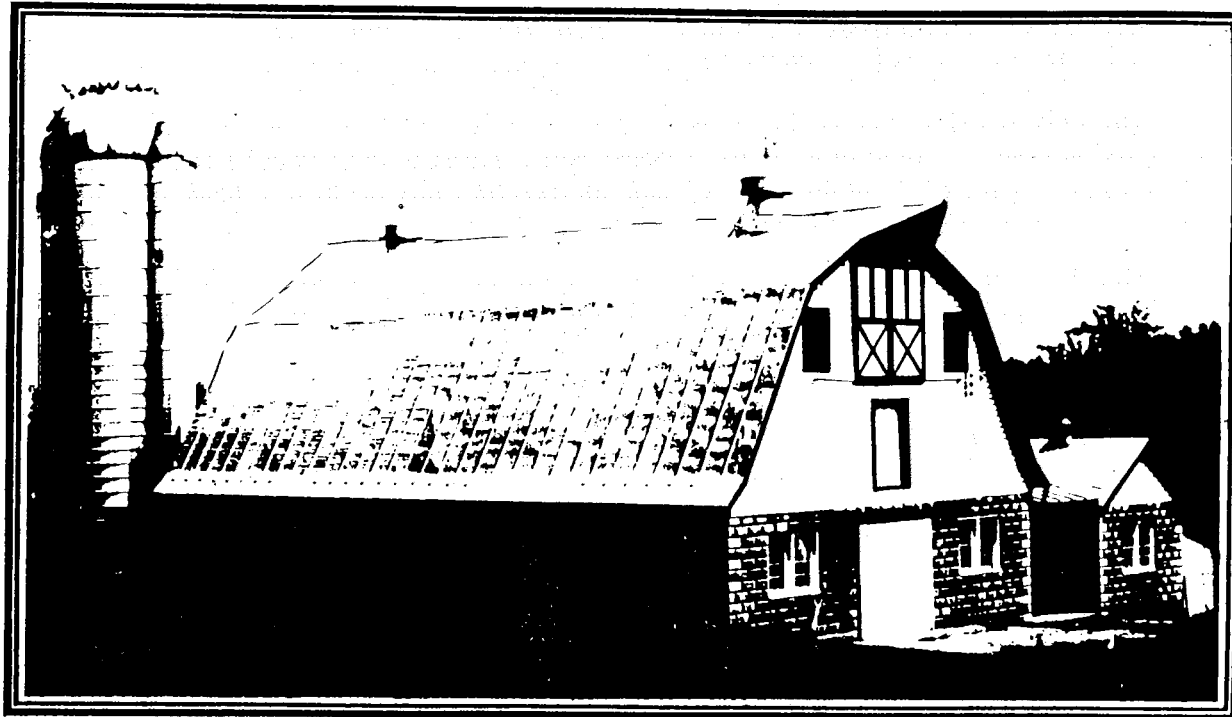
$$\frac{100 \text{ acres}}{1 \text{ lot per } 25 \text{ acres}} = 4 \text{ lots, each of which may be as small as one acre, soils permitting.}$$



Landowners in Agricultural Reserve area also have another development option: they may sell development rights from their land at the rate of one development right per five acres after deducting for any new or future houses on the property. A short pamphlet entitled Plowing New Ground, published by the Montgomery County Planning Board, explains the Transferable Development Rights (TDR) program in more detail.

Development rights can be most easily compared to coupons: each coupon (or development right) allows the purchaser to build one additional house in certain places ("receiving areas") outside the Agricultural Reserve. Who would buy development rights? Developers would because they could build more homes and realize more profits with development rights "coupons."

The TDR program attempts to give farmers some return on the development value which has accrued on their land over many years. By shifting development from farm areas to more urban and suburban areas, the TDR program preserves farmland while providing equity to the farmer.





## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The major comments at the Community's Issues and Alternatives Forum regarding community facilities were as follows:

- provide more recreational development (walkways, bikepaths) in Magruder Valley;
- provide more soccer fields;
- provide some local recreation facilities at Damascus Regional Park;
- provide better pedestrian access in town;
- expand library but keep it in the Damascus Shopping Center;
- explain impact of new development on school needs.

The proposed plan offers the following responses:

## PARKS AND RECREATION

The Magruder Valley, a wooded stream valley between the Damascus Regional Park and the business area, offers a unique opportunity for a hiker-biker pathway system. About 162 acres of the Magruder Stream Valley (which also extends south of the regional park) are already owned by M-NCPPC; another 249 acres will be dedicated to M-NCPPC as subdivisions are developed.

This Plan endorses the development of the Magruder Branch Stream Valley Park and recommends that the proposed Magruder Valley Park be extended to the edge of the Damascus business district (possibly to the theater parking lot) to provide the opportunity for a continuous trail from the town to the regional park.

Although County-wide hiker-biker funds are available, trails in more densely populated areas have higher priority. New priority lists, which could include the Magruder Branch Stream Valley Park, will be developed by Parks Department staff and the Planning Board with adequate representation by residents through the Citizens' Bike Committee and Recreation Advisory Board Committee.

There are a number of equestrian trails in the Damascus area which have been established and maintained by user groups on an informal basis. Additional equestrian trails are proposed in the Magruder Stream Valley Park and in the Damascus Regional Park (see Magruder Branch Stream Valley Park Design Concept Map, page 91). These trails will also be established and maintained by their user groups (including Trail



Riders of Today) and would be in the form of narrow dirt paths, separate from the hiker-biker trails that will be built when the Stream Valley Park is developed.

A need for more local parks was raised by citizens at the community forums. Although two neighborhood parks are located in Damascus (Damascus and John Haines Neighborhood Parks), they provide only playground equipment and a small basketball court. Citizens stressed the need for ballfields that the community can use (fields at nearby Damascus Regional Park are available only to teams by permit).

#### How Can Local Recreation Needs of the Community be met

The Planning Board is recommending two park areas to provide additional local recreation.

- (1) Develop a local park at Moyer Road. This 25-acre park is owned by M-NCPPC but is undeveloped. A key advantage of this park site is that it is adjacent to the Magruder Valley and could be an integral part of any pathway system developed in the Valley.

A 10-acre vacant school site adjacent to the Moyer Road Park will be considered for acquisition, if declared surplus by the Board of Education.

- (2) Develop local recreation areas at Damascus Regional Park. This would include an informal softball field for community use. Soccer fields currently programmed for the park will be available to the community when not in use.

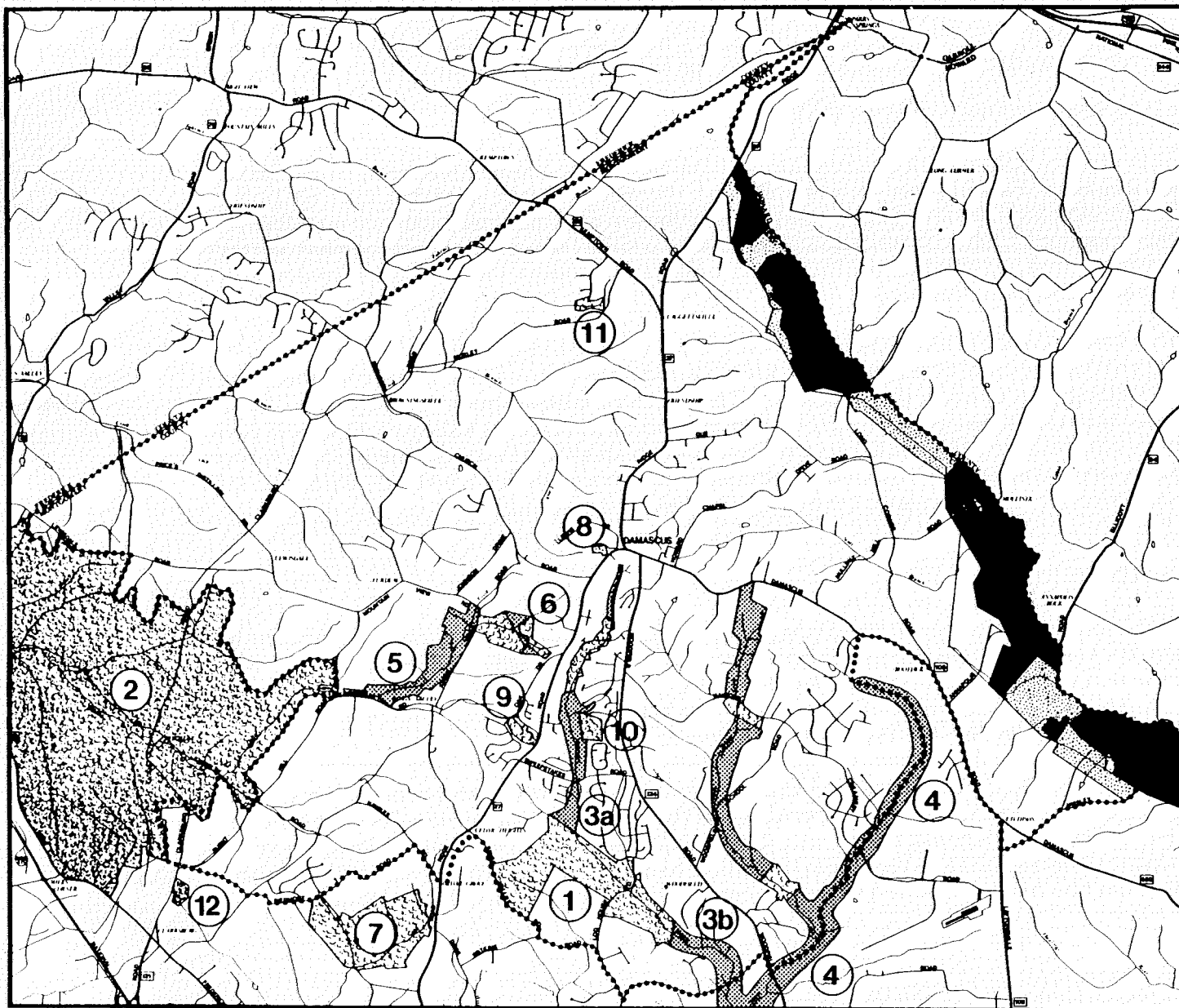
#### Proposed Changes to the 1966 Parks and Recreation Plan

The 1966 Master Plan proposed five local parks and recreation centers. Since population growth is not expected to reach levels anticipated by the 1966 Plan, it is unlikely this many parks and recreation centers will be needed or funded.





This Plan recommends that local recreation centers and parks proposed on the outskirts of Damascus by the 1966 Plan be eliminated and that future local park development focus on close-in sites like Moyer Road.

Another park that is being re-evaluated as to need is Oak Ridge Conservation Park. About 64 acres are in public ownership; another 12 acres are proposed for acquisition (this compares to 132 acres proposed in the 1966 Plan). Oak Ridge is primarily forested and includes a tributary of Little Bennett Creek. Development would be conservation oriented





## PARKLAND MAP

-  EXISTING MNC.P.P.C. PARKLAND
-  PROPOSED MNC.P.P.C. PARKLAND
-  EXISTING STATE & WSSC PARKLAND
-  PROPOSED STATE & WSSC PARKLAND

## MNC.P.P.C. PARKS

### REGIONAL PARKS

1. DAMASCUS REGIONAL
2. LITTLE BENNETT REGIONAL

### STREAM VALLEY PARKS

- 3a. UPPER MAGRUDER BRANCH
- 3b. LOWER MAGRUDER BRANCH
4. GREAT SENECA EXTENSION
5. LITTLE BENNETT

### SPECIAL PARKS

6. OAK RIDGE
7. OVID HAZEN WELLS

### LOCAL USE PARKS

8. DAMASCUS NEIGHBORHOOD
9. JOHN HAINES NEIGHBORHOOD
10. MOYER ROAD POTENTIAL LOCAL PARK
11. NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION AREA NORTH POINT
12. KINGS LOCAL PARK

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## DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

Montgomery County, Maryland





with primarily passive recreation facilities (hiker-biker and nature trails; picnic and playground areas). Oak Ridge would provide a park link between Damascus and Little Bennett Regional Park. The need for this park will be explored in more detail in light of the final recommendations of the Master Plan for surrounding land use.

#### Little Bennett Stream Valley Park

This stream valley park follows Little Bennett Creek and lies upstream from Little Bennett Regional Park. This is a significant natural resource area because of Little Bennett Creek's high water quality and its attributes as a natural trout stream (brown trout reproduction). All efforts should be made to protect the natural environment in this stream valley area, as well as protecting the migration routes for wildlife in and out of Little Bennett Regional Park.

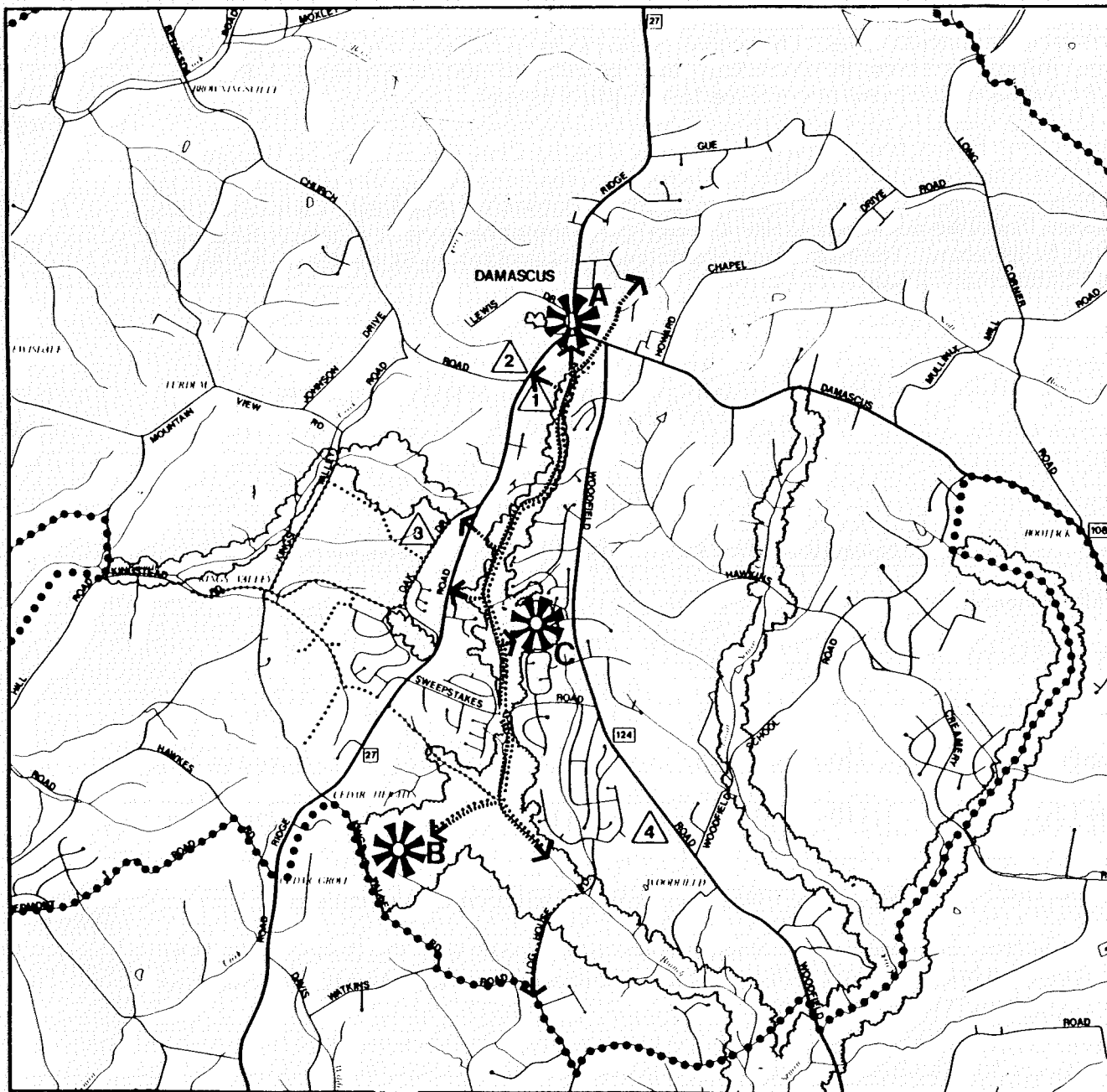
The Land Use Plan identifies approximately 115 acres in this stream valley park. A sizeable portion of this acreage in the park taking line is from one property, the King Farm, totalling approximately 75 acres. Every effort will be made to negotiate for a scenic easement, without public cost, on this portion of the stream valley park area if two objectives can be met: (1) public access for future trail system through the property, and (2) the conservation criteria usually associated with stream valley parkland, which should also provide for protection against over grazing and over cropping.

#### **DAMASCUS LIBRARY**


The Damascus Branch of the Montgomery County Library Department is located in the Damascus Shopping Center, in a leased storefront. Although the library owns a site for a new building at the corner of Woodfield Road and Route 108, completion of a new library is not programmed until 1990. Until that time, the County Department of Public Libraries is recommending expansion of the storefront facility.

The Library Department may consider alternate sites to the property at the corner of Woodfield Road and Route 108 depending on future growth patterns. As part of Plan Implementation, the Planning Board will work with Department of Public Libraries staff to evaluate other locations which may be linked to the future Magruder Valley Park trail and which may be better oriented to future commercial and residential development.





# **MAGRUDER BRANCH STREAM VALLEY PARK DESIGN CONCEPT**

-  **MAJOR OPEN SPACE  
& PARKLAND AREAS**
-  **HIKER-BIKER PATHS**
-  **EQUESTRIAN TRAILS**
-  **PLANNING AREA  
BOUNDARY**

## **MAJOR ACTIVITY CENTERS**

- A** DAMASCUS TOWN  
CENTER
- B** DAMASCUS REGIONAL  
PARK
- C** PROPOSED MOYER  
ROAD LOCAL PARK

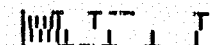
## **SCHOOLS**

- 1** DAMASCUS HIGH  
SCHOOL
- 2** DAMASCUS ELEM.  
SCHOOL
- 3** BAKER JUNIOR  
HIGH SCHOOL
- 4** WOODFIELD ELEM.  
SCHOOL

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## **DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN**

Montgomery County, Maryland





## SCHOOLS

Damascus residents cite the school system as a source of community pride. Generally, all the schools in Damascus are at or just below capacity. Five-year projections indicate this trend to continue (see Table 8 below).

The School Board has prepared a 15-year Master Plan for schools in Montgomery County. This Plan recommends that the Hawkins Creamery Road, Moyer Road and Oak Drive future elementary school sites be retained, but that the Magruder Elementary site (Sweepstakes Road) be conveyed to the County government because it is poorly located to future growth patterns. The Plan also recommends modernization of the Cedar Grove and Woodfield Elementary Schools.

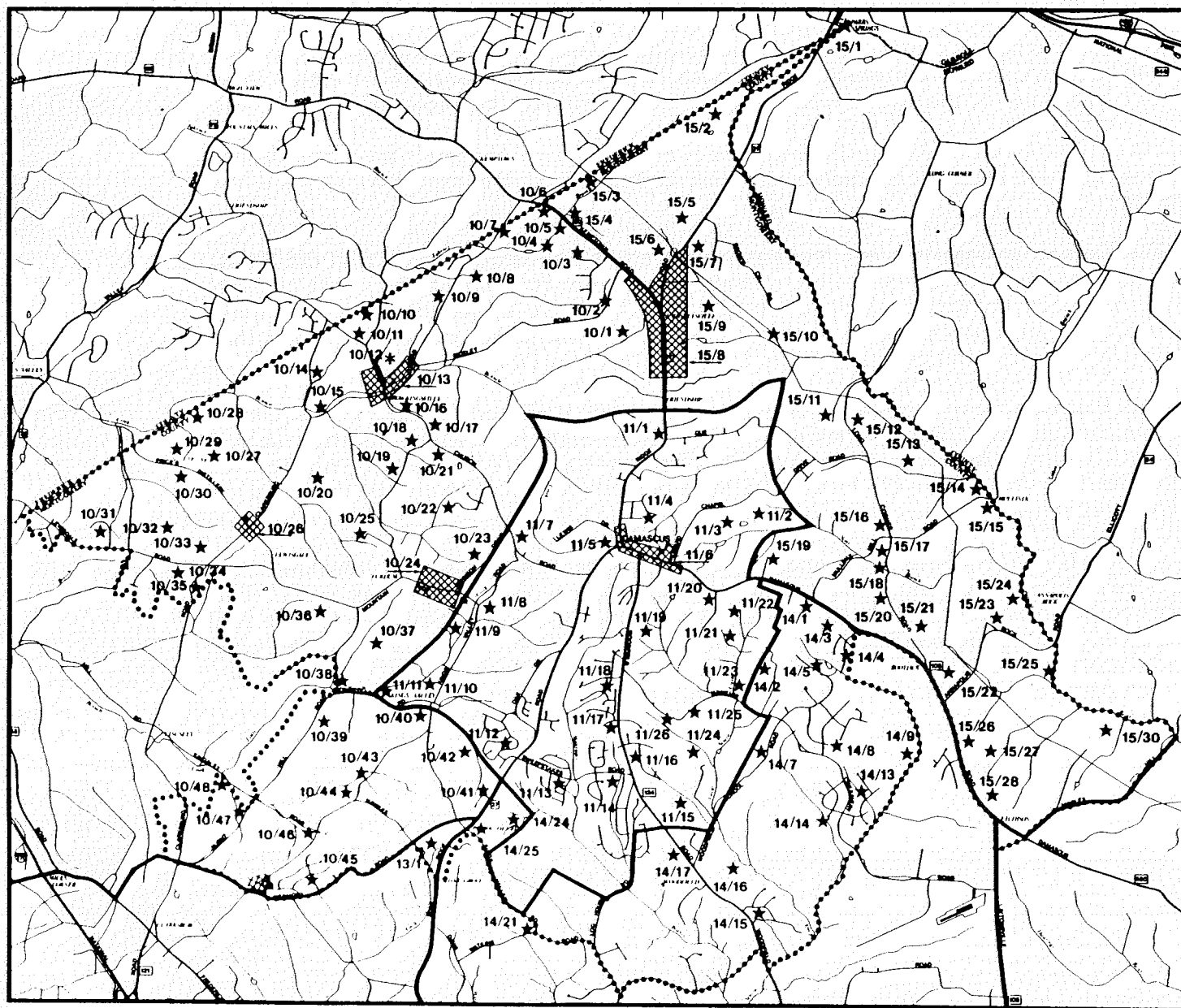
TABLE 8  
CURRENT AND PROJECTED SCHOOL ENROLLMENT: 1980-1996  
DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN AREA

School	Enrollment- Capacity	Enrollment By Year			
		1982-83	1985-86	1990-91	1995-96
Woodfield Elementary	380	431	442	Restudy*	
Cedar Grove Elementary	329	266	295	361	390
Damascus Elementary	593	498	469	509	547
Baker Junior High	730	610	535	463	521
Damascus High School	1,180	1,120	1,148	776	778

\* Restudy for possible boundary changes or building addition if overutilized.

Source: 15-Year Comprehensive Master Plan for Educational Facilities, May 1981, Montgomery County Public Schools, Department of Educational Facilities Planning and Development.





## HISTORIC SITES



HISTORIC DISTRICTS



SITES IDENTIFIED IN  
COUNTY ATLAS OF  
HISTORIC SITES



HISTORIC RESOURCE  
SHOWN ON MASTER  
PLAN FOR HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION [10/12  
MENDELSON TERR,  
BROWNSVILLE]



PLANNING AREA  
BOUNDARY



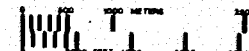
DAMASCUS MASTER  
PLAN BOUNDARY

NOTE: This plan proposes that  
Historic District 11/6  
be removed from the  
Atlas.

Approved and Adopted: June 1982

**DAMASCUS  
MASTER PLAN**

Montgomery County, Maryland





## HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Montgomery County Atlas of Historic Sites identifies five historic districts and 116 historic sites within the Damascus Master Plan Area boundary. (The Atlas is an inventory and many of the sites appear only because they were constructed before 1900). One of these historic districts and 24 historic sites are located within Damascus (Planning Area 11). This abundance of historic locations is illustrative of the small town atmosphere of the area: the deep roots, old family ties and sense of the past that pervade the community.

The Damascus business area itself is identified as an historic district on the Atlas. Renovations to many of the shops along Main Street, the removal of the Hyatt building and the pending renovations and addition to the Bank of Damascus have left little authenticity to the historic nature of the business area. The historic sites and homes that do exist are scattered and generally lie at the edges of the district.

The Planning Board recommends that the Damascus Historic District be removed from the Montgomery County Atlas of Historic Sites. Individual sites presently located within this area may be added to the Atlas, but will have to be recommended on their own merit. The four other districts located within the study area should also be re-examined for historical merit.

Currently only one site in the Planning Area, Mendelsohn Terrace in Browningsville, is included in the Montgomery County Master Plan for Preservation. Listing in this Plan requires an owner to obtain an "historic area work permit" before making any changes to a site or structure. Properties listed in the County Atlas of Historic sites are afforded only limited, interim protection from destruction by demolition because the County will not issue such permits until the significance of the historic site has been reviewed.