

LAND USE PLAN

GOAL: Fulfill the vision of Damascus as a community with a mixed-use center, connected with its residential neighborhoods and surrounded by rural open space.

INTRODUCTION

The physical focus of Damascus is its elevated location at the center of major watersheds emanating from the center of the town. This geographic reality has strongly influenced the development patterns for this community. The land use recommendations for the Damascus Master Plan protect these water systems while advancing other important goals of connectivity, housing, and community building. The intent of the land use recommendations is to fulfill the vision expressed by the residents of Damascus and the General Plan for Montgomery County for a rural town with a mixed-use center, intimately connected with its adjoining residential neighborhoods, surrounded by rural land.

Land use in Damascus is characterized by a core of greatest density in the commercial center surrounded by moderate density residential neighborhoods, especially in the Magruder Valley; progressively lower density transitional residential areas accessing the primary roadways (Ridge Road, Woodfield Road, and Damascus Road); and rural land surrounding the residential areas, primarily in the Rural Density Transfer Zone.

Major Issues

The primary issue for the Plan is to ensure the identity of Damascus as a cohesive town. Issues include connectivity, strengthening local retail opportunities and residential opportunities within and near the Town Center, enabling growth appropriate for the town vision, and protecting the surrounding rural areas.

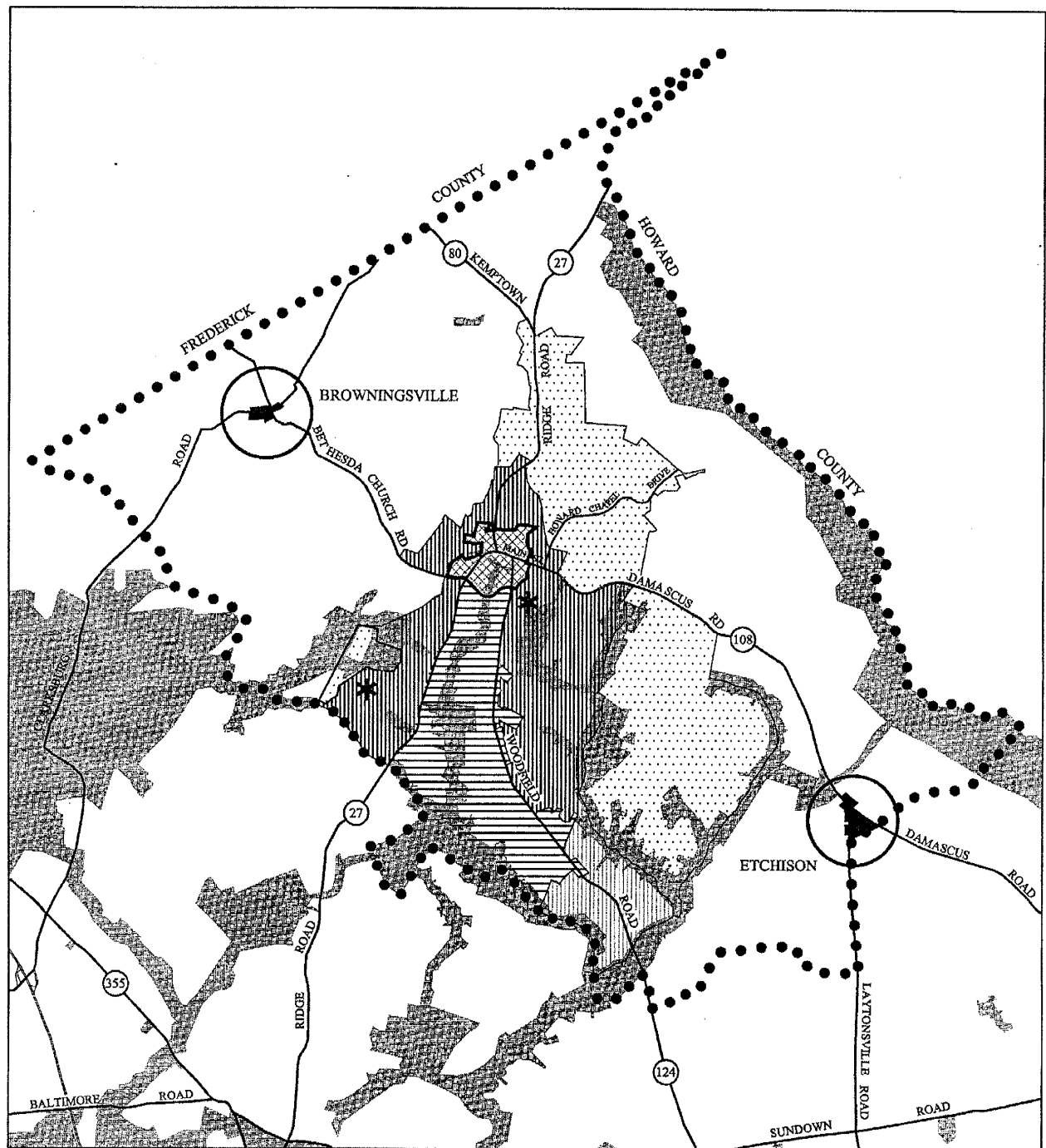
Proposed Land Use Concept

The recommendations in this Plan maintain and augment the existing land use patterns and enhance their ability to evolve within the framework of the vision as an attractive small town with an identifiable core and livable neighborhoods surrounded by agricultural uses and rural open space. The major development tiers in this Master Plan reflect decreasing intensity of land use. They include the Town Center, Transition Areas, and Rural Areas.

This Plan recommends a significant change for the Town Center bringing true mixed-use potential without increasing the allowed intensity of commercial development. This proposal will enhance its potential to evolve with more locally based retail amenities and a greater variety of housing opportunities. The Plan recommends adjustments to the land use patterns in the transitional residential areas to encourage the use of clustering, decreasing density on some properties in the Rural Transition Area, and greater protection of some existing rural crossroad villages.

Housing opportunities will be enhanced, although very limited change to overall existing residential density in the Master Plan area is contemplated. Rural areas will be more strongly protected. The evolution toward sustainable agricultural practices is encouraged.

Land Use Vision and Development Areas



- Master Plan Area Boundary
- Existing / Proposed Parkland (Includes State and WSSC)
- Town Center
- Town Neighborhood
- * TDR Receiving Sites
- Neighborhood Transition
- Rural Transition
- Agricultural Reserve
- Rural Village



TOWN CENTER AREA

The land use patterns in the Damascus Town Center reflect the town patterns and design elements of traditional Maryland small towns. Although in recent years, the term “town center” has been synonymous with conventional suburban commercial development, Damascus has a real “center of town,” containing a variety of uses that primarily serve the residents of the community. While land uses in the center are predominantly commercial, there are mixed uses, and a belief that a balanced mix of uses creates a more sustainable heart for the community.

Community Vision

The vision for the Town Center was developed by community residents at a visioning charrette held near the beginning of the master plan process. The community identified the following:

The community vision for the Damascus Town Center is a viable, walkable, human-scaled town easily identifiable as the heart of the surrounding community. The Town Center should reflect the compact urban forms of traditional Maryland rural towns and provide a vibrant quality of life for its residents. The Town Center should respect the legacy of the past and its agrarian context while maintaining a framework for the market needs of future generations anchoring the northern borders of Montgomery County.

This vision reflects a strong community desire to strengthen the town’s sense of place as a true town core, not allowing a diffused suburban pattern. The vision reflects a desire for a sustainable future of compact development patterns and protection of the surrounding rural environment. It calls for renewing the town’s former retail vitality and addresses the quality of life needs for current and future residents.

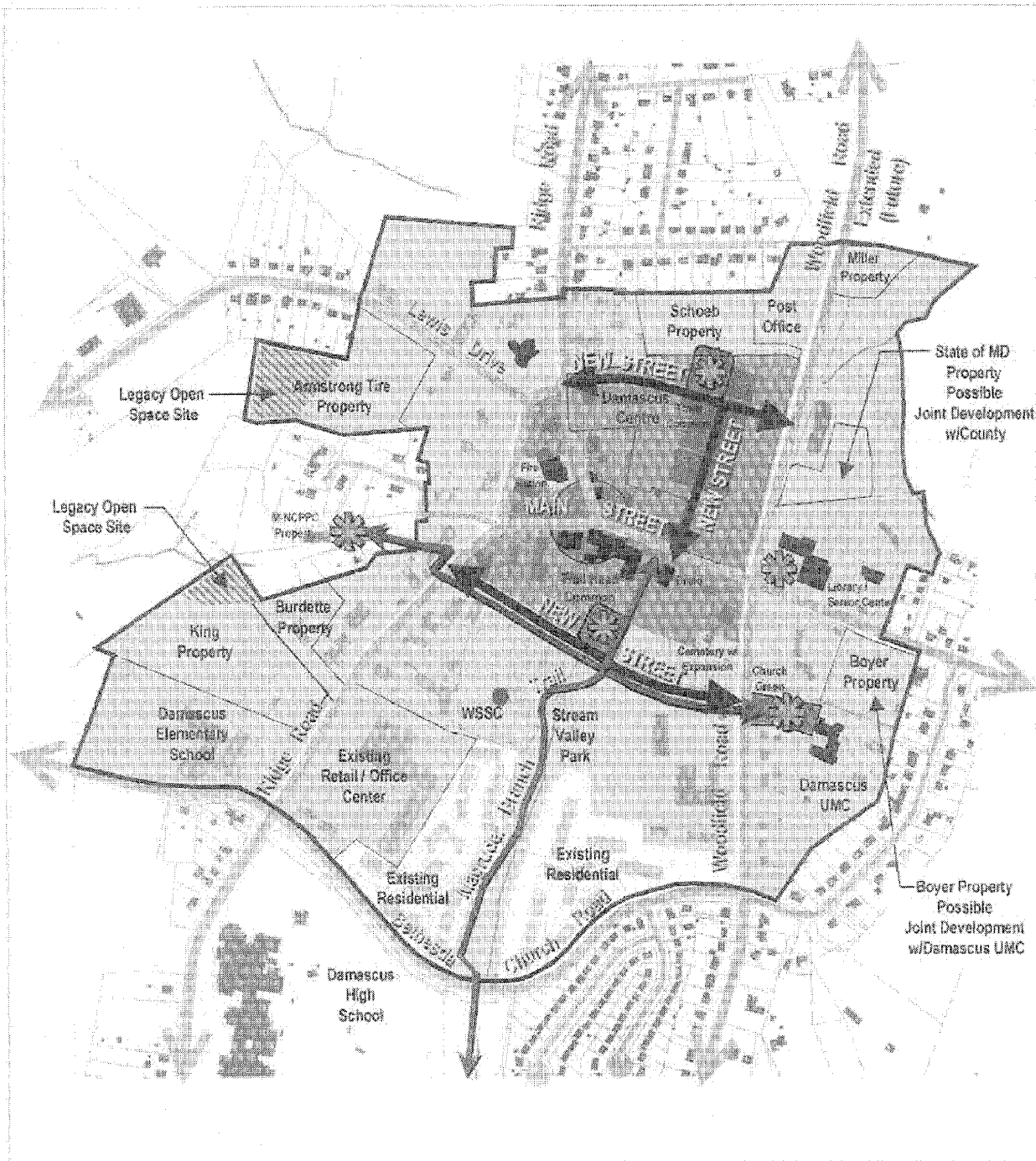
Framework

This Plan concentrates densities within the Town Center, improves mobility, encourages mixed-use development (including more residential opportunities), and provides additional green spaces within the town core. The framework concentrates commercial densities within the historic core of Damascus near the vicinity of Main Street, while allowing a broad range of appropriate commercial, office, residential and light industrial uses. This Plan promotes compressing commercial uses along Main Street and at major downtown intersections, which creates additional opportunities for residential development that supports retail and service businesses in the core.




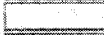



The proposed density of development in the core is envisioned to reflect the moderate intensity and scale of traditional towns in Maryland. Appropriately compact density in a town core creates vitality and a sense of sociability. This Plan for the Town Center places emphasis on human comfort and safety, with pedestrian activity enhanced by the design of the streets, buildings and public spaces. The town-scale envisioned for Damascus will enhance opportunities for human interaction at community gathering places.





Another major element in building a framework for the Damascus Town Center is to increase the interconnectivity of both vehicular and pedestrian access. This Plan recommends changes that will result in a town that is more easily and safely accessed by pedestrians and bicyclists, and a street network that allows more opportunities for residents to access the retail areas. Finally, this Plan recommends creating new green spaces within the Town Center that serve as community gathering places and as thresholds for access to the surrounding neighborhoods and rural areas using trails and pathways.

Town Center Framework Plan



Legend:

-  Mixed-Use (Retail Emphasis w/Office)
-  Mixed-Use (Residential Emphasis w/Commercial)
-  Center of Town
-  Existing Residential
-  Civic/Institutional
-  Park Land, Formal Open Space and Other Open Space
-  Potential Legacy Open Space

-  Existing Streets
-  Proposed Framework Streets
-  Proposed Hiker/Biker Trail
-  Existing Buildings



This mixed-use vision brings the community closer to its legacy and history, as healthy small towns have always been mixed use. The development regulations proposed in this Plan focus on appropriate standards for scale and intensity and design, rather than separation of uses. They will give Damascus the opportunity to evolve over time and adjust to changing market realities, while retaining and enhancing its rural town character. Specific Land Use Recommendations for the Damascus Town Center include:

Enhance Town Center Identity

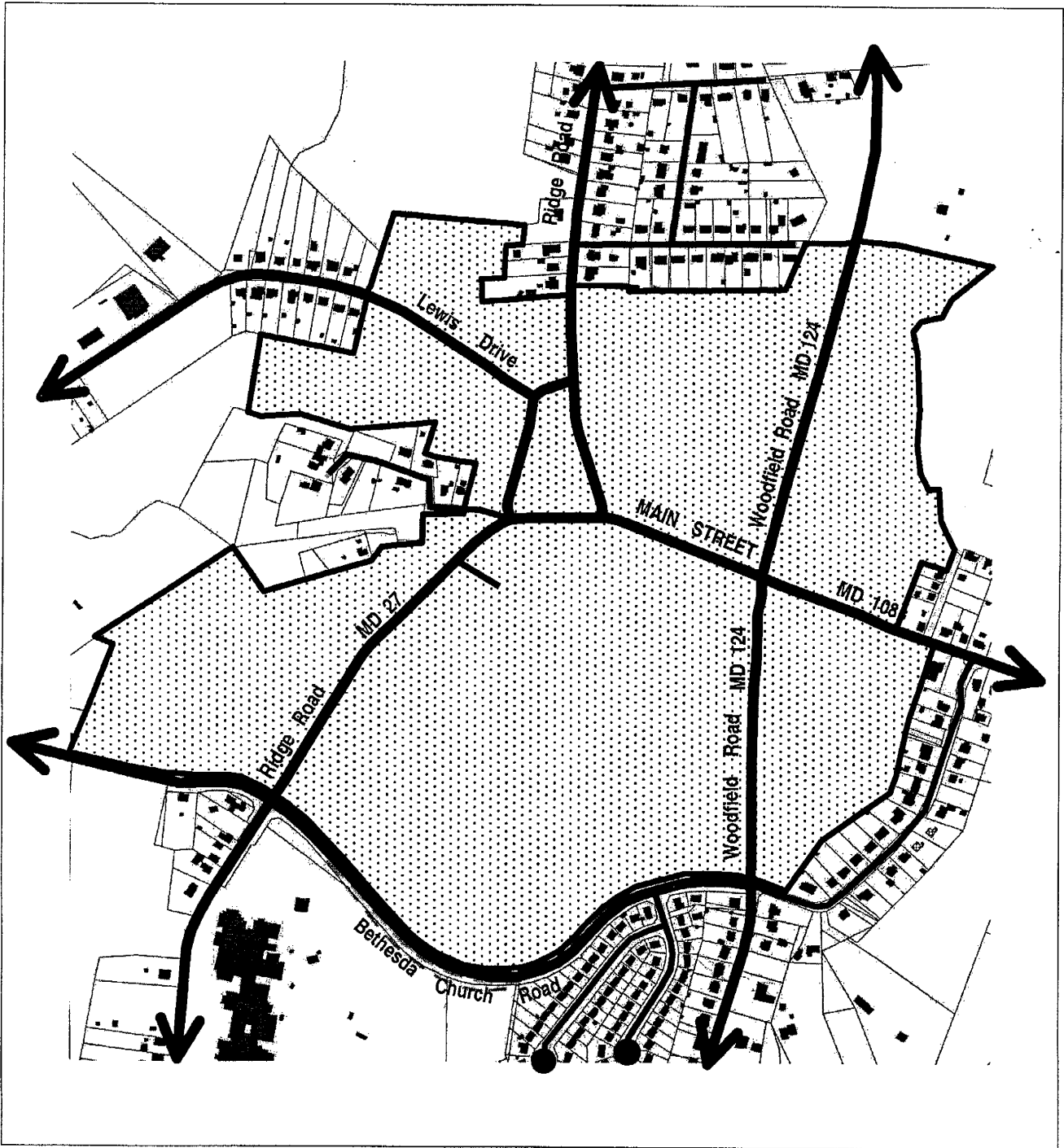
The Town Center should “belong” to the residents of Damascus. It is the place that identifies the larger community economically, culturally, and politically; and it should contain places that reflect a common identity and shared experiences. The perceived image of the Damascus Town Center as a place needs to be strengthened. The boundaries of the Town Center are not clear and need to be visually defined. The vacant storefronts and retail spaces can provide a framework for re-establishing the primacy of the Town Center by implementing creative and imaginative policies and regulations.

There are distinct focal points within the Town Center. The steeple on the Damascus United Methodist Church and the water tower are highly visible community icons that identify the Town Center from a distance. Local retail institutions such as Tom and Ray’s Restaurant, the former Druid Theater (Rite-Aid) and Jimmie Cone provide a sense of place for the Town Center because they reflect its history and shared town traditions.




Although streetscape improvements such as street trees, ornamental lighting and special concrete paving have been implemented along the major streets (including Ridge Road, Main Street and Woodfield Road), there are no easily accessible public open spaces. This Plan proposes additional “placemaking” tools that build on what is good as well as creating opportunities to strengthen the sense of place. Recommendations to achieve this goal include:

- **Enhance the experience of transition prior to entering the Town Center**
The feeling of transition from rural to neighborhood to town character on approaches to the Town Center needs to be enhanced using tools discussed below and in the Transportation Chapter.
- **Provide town identification features at the Town Center gateways**
Attractive and distinctive gateway features are needed to mark the thresholds of entry to the Town Center that define its boundaries. Features such as freestanding monuments or signs are commonly used to identify the entrances into neighborhoods and towns.
- **Protect or enhance views of Town Center focal points and public spaces**
Preserving certain views toward and away from the surrounding countryside will enhance the experience of living and working in a town that is surrounded by the rural vistas of the Agricultural Reserve. Views of important focal points (such as the Damascus United Methodist Church steeple) must be maintained from various vantage points throughout the town core and from the major street approaches. New streets should terminate with a view to an important building, or other architectural feature.

Town Center Boundary

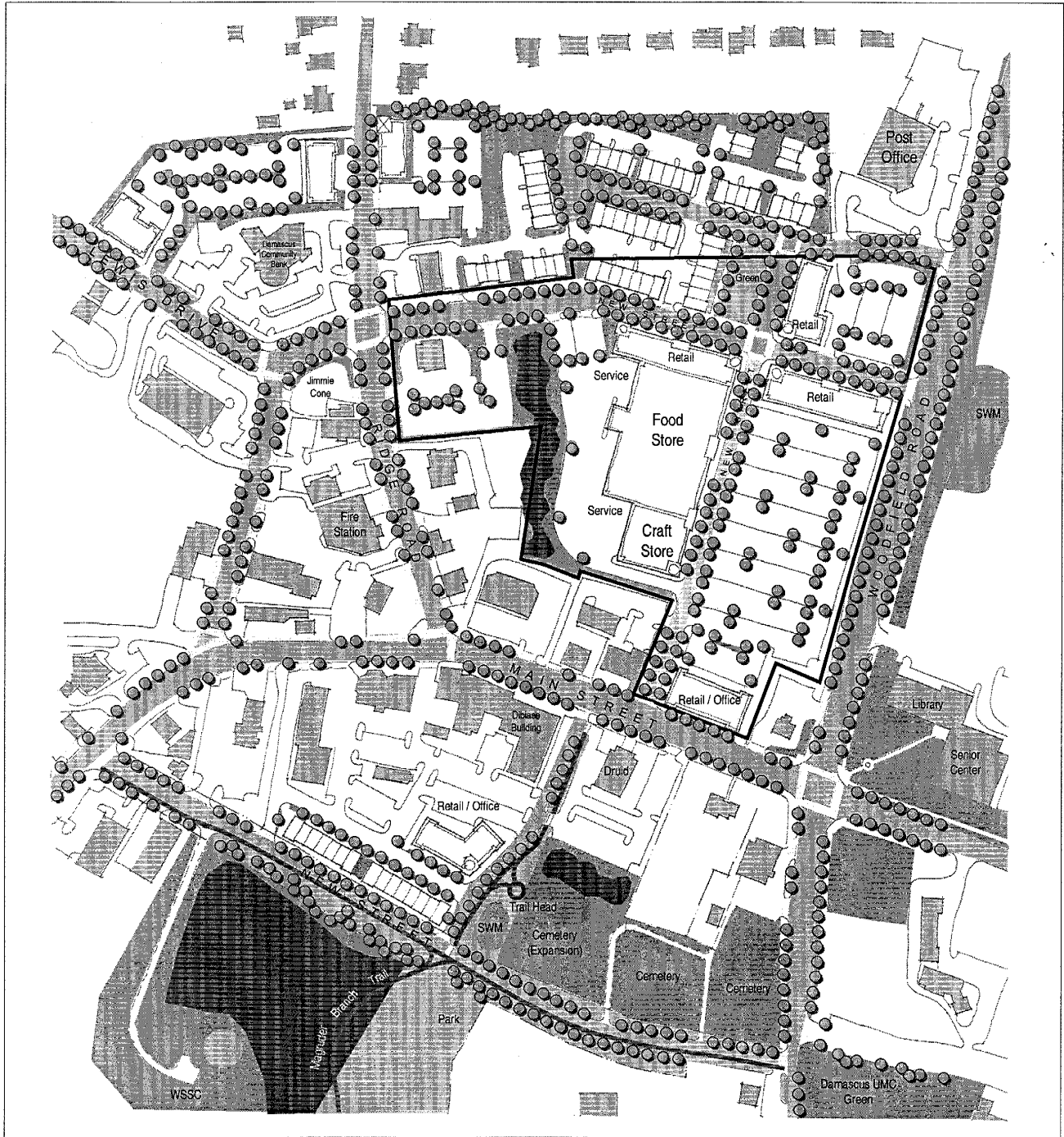


Legend:

-  Limits of the Town Center
-  Existing Streets
-  Existing Buildings



Town Center Core Area Illustrative



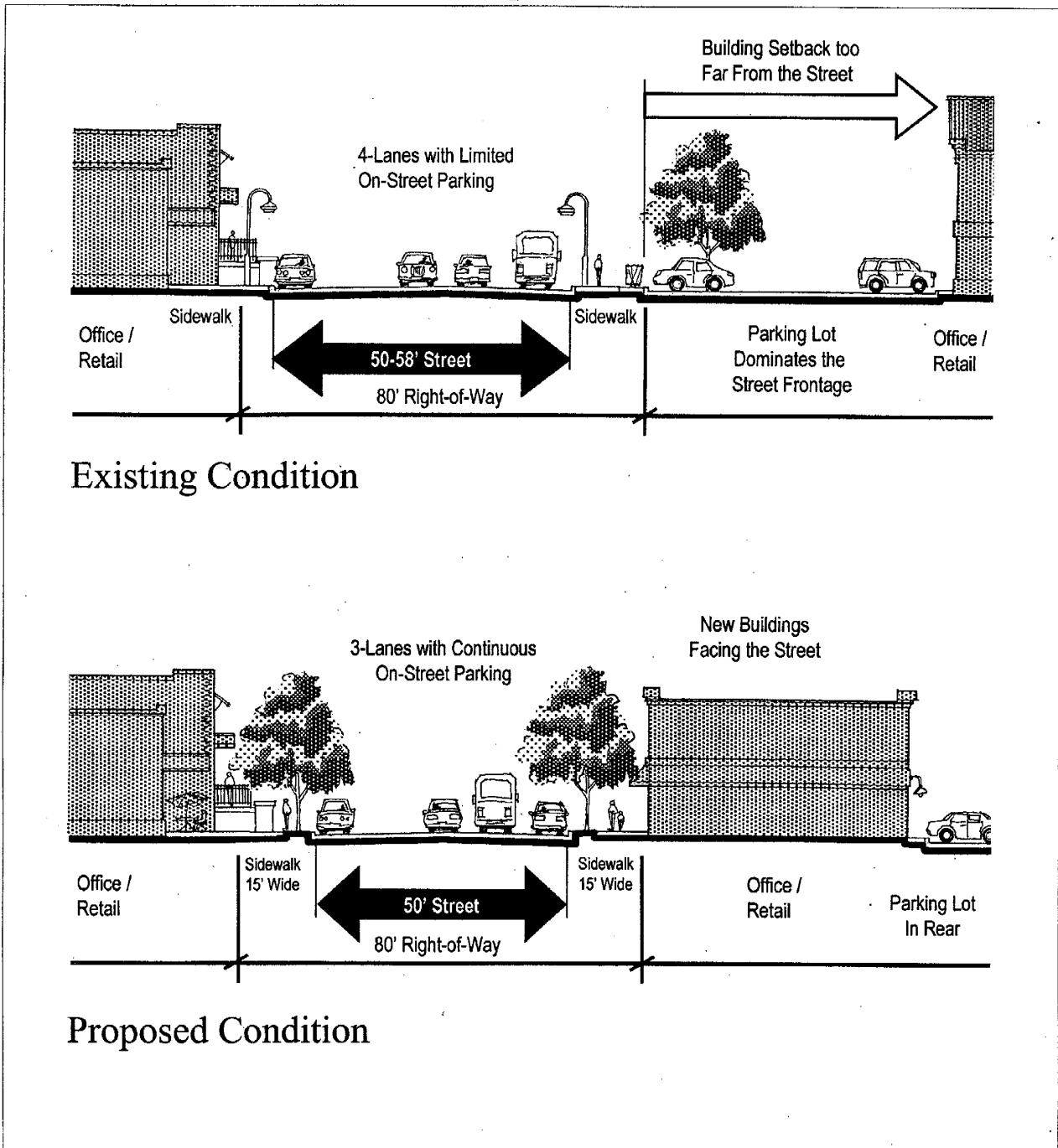
Not to Scale

Enhance Main Street Identity

Historically, the American concept of Main Street remains a powerful symbol of a community's shared experience. Main Street is an icon for Damascus residents and should be easily recognizable as the heart and soul of the Town Center. The remnants of the past remain in the form of several street-oriented buildings located on the south side of the street. Although Main Street has lost some of its traditional identity from redevelopment based on conventional suburban trends, this Plan recommends policies and regulations to rebuild that identity. Much of the lost spatial definition can be recreated by orienting building fronts toward the street, and enhancing the pedestrian realm. The envisioned town-scale proportions of buildings that edge a street form street definition. Recommendations to achieve this goal include:

- **Encourage street facing buildings on Main Street**
Buildings with entrances along Main Street will enhance the street's spatial definition. Traditional main streets have building fronts and massing along the street. The physical urban forms created by buildings edging a street create a human-scaled street wall and define the public realm.
- **Provide continuous on-street parking where possible**
Some on-street parallel parking exists along Main Street. Convenient on-street parking adds to the viability of the local businesses as well as providing a buffer between the vehicular travel lanes and the pedestrians on the sidewalks. This Plan encourages adding more parallel or angled on-street parking in the future.
- **Encourage through traffic to utilize future Woodfield Road Extended**
The amount of through traffic along Ridge Road should decrease after the completion of Woodfield Road Extended (A-12). This should alleviate some of the traffic congestion in the Ridge Road to Main Street segment and allow a more pedestrian friendly environment along Main Street between Ridge Road and Woodfield Road.
- **Consider a redesign of Main Street after completion of Woodfield Road Extended**
The design of Main Street can be greatly enhanced if there is less through traffic. If diverting traffic to Woodfield Road Extended reduces the traffic volume on this street segment as anticipated, there will be an opportunity for redesign. Desirable features that might be considered include more on-street parking, streetscape treatments, and a dedicated center turning lane. The best combination of features should be determined through a facility planning study or in a redevelopment review process.
- **Encourage the continuing implementation of the existing streetscape treatment**
Improvements to the pedestrian areas such as street trees, ornamental lighting and special paving greatly enhance the Town Center. A continued commitment to the implementation of the Damascus streetscape treatment should be extended to all streets within the Town Center. New treatments should be explored as new street types are created and implemented.

Town Center Main Street Concept



Not to Scale

Support Guidelines for Development and Redevelopment

Future development and redevelopment will provide an environment that reinforces the entire range of activities and uses for a desirable town center. Guidelines to promote positive and enriching future development in the Town Center include:

- **Encourage a variety of housing types that accommodate a variety of lifestyle choices**
This Plan recommends single-family opportunities outside the Town Center. The heart of the community should offer opportunities for multi-family housing, including affordable housing options. Flexibility that allows varied housing types is needed to accommodate future housing within a town-scale framework. Additional residential opportunities in the Town Center will add vitality and a stronger market for locally oriented commercial activity.
- **Encourage opportunities for senior housing**
This Plan recommends consideration of two parcels of land located near the Damascus Library and Senior Center that offer prime locations for age restricted housing. Residents at either of these sites would be within walking distance to the stores and services located on Main Street as well as transit, and the amenities in the Senior Center.

The property located adjacent and north of the Library is currently owned by the State and might provide the opportunity for a joint development. The Boyer property, a vacant site located on the south side of Main Street at the eastern gateway to the Town Center, would also be appropriate for senior housing. The Boyer property is adjacent to the Damascus United Methodist Church property immediately to the south. Joint development of the Boyer property and the church may be mutually beneficial to both.

- **Redevelop the Damascus Centre shopping center**
This Plan recommends redevelopment of the Damascus Centre using a “main street” retail approach in the redesign of the center. The 15-acre Damascus Centre site is the largest parcel under single ownership within the Town Center. This shopping center has long suffered from poor visibility and dated design. The property has excellent potential to redevelop into an attractive grocery store anchored retail center with mixed-use potential incorporating a significant green space as well as housing.
- **Include the western half of the “Miller” property in the Town Center**
This Plan recommends a split approach to the zoning of this property. A three-acre portion (immediately north of the Damascus Library) was recently conveyed to the State of Maryland. The portion of the property east of the tributary stream is discussed in the Transitional Areas section of this Chapter. The residual eight-acre portion west of the tributary stream is proposed for inclusion in the Town Center boundary. The majority, approximately (80 percent), of this portion of the property is severely restricted for development by stream buffers. A small area near the Post Office is potentially developable.
- **Concentrate commercial uses along Main Street or at major intersections**
This Plan recommends compressing commercial uses and focusing them along Main Street or at major arterial intersections. This will allow a greater chance of success for these businesses. The commercial property owners between these optimal locations can redevelop as mixed-use or residential as well as commercial uses.

- **Consider forming a Town Center parking district or provide for shared parking within the Town Center boundary**
 A well conceived parking district or shared parking that provides and manages public parking opportunities would help achieve the vision for the Town Center. Parking for cars has greatly influenced the placement of buildings in conventional suburban development, as the availability and convenience of parking is usually an important component of where people will shop. A Town Center based on street facing buildings and mixed-use demands a new way of dealing with the automobile. Businesses with different peak demands for parking can mutually benefit by shared parking.
- **Locate parking lots in the rear of buildings**
 Parking lots can be located behind buildings or in limited situations on the side of buildings in a safe and convenient way. Rear entry access still allows special accommodation for handicapped motorists. The emphasis has been on convenience for motorists, neglecting pedestrians. Other than on-street parking, street frontages along the major Town Center streets should be given to buildings and the pedestrians.
- **Buildings within the Town Center should be street oriented**
 Buildings with a street side orientation with highly visible entrances are desirable. Long, windowless building walls prohibit the visual connection between the inside of a building and the sidewalk. Storefronts should be placed to make the uses inside visible from the sidewalk. Residential buildings should have entrances facing the street in order for visitors to know where to enter, to encourage social interaction among town residents, and to promote natural surveillance and safety.
- **Encourage evening activities within the Town Center**
 Providing wide, well-lit sidewalks, seating and people gathering spaces are critical in creating the physical environment for evening activities. Evening activities such as eating at restaurants, strolling between community open spaces, or going to a recreation center create vitality in the Town Center beyond the daytime activities.
- **Encourage development in mixed-use buildings**
 Mixed-use buildings promote a compact town form and encourage walking and less dependency on the automobile. Damascus is fortunate to already have a variety of mixed-use buildings within the Town Center.

Enhance Mobility and Connectivity

Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity are critical issues. Although adequate sidewalks exist within the core and all destinations in the Town Center area are within a ten-minute walking distance (one half mile), pedestrian activity is minimal. The reasons for this lie in the dearth of safe pedestrian access to neighborhoods. There are limited sidewalk connections to the surrounding neighborhoods and schools adjacent to the Town Center.

Because of limited sidewalks and bicycle lanes, vehicle travel on the major roadways serve as the primary means of mobility within the Town Center. This auto-oriented environment is further exacerbated by though traffic of trucks and peak hour commuters. The primary street framework lacks a secondary street network to serve local businesses and patrons.

This Plan recommends modifications for interconnectivity that will create new access points, ease congestion by providing a more grid-like street pattern, and provide more visibility for underutilized land

resources or land in need of redevelopment. The Town Center needs an interconnected street system providing a legible circulation for pedestrians and motorists. Recommendations to achieve these goals include:

- **Add new streets parallel, north and south of Main Street from Ridge Road to Woodfield Road**

A road connection through the Damascus Centre site on the north will provide additional access to that site and the Post Office, enhancing retail potential and improving mobility options for residents. The new street will provide alternative access between Ridge Road and Woodfield Road.

Adding a small street behind the buildings on the south side of Main Street will provide access to these underutilized areas behind the buildings. This street is envisioned as a small access road. It will also provide access to a planned “trailhead” park for the Magruder Branch Trail. This street should integrate a bikeway and sidewalks, and be designed to be as narrow as possible due to environmental and topographic constraints. It is perceived as a “lane” rather than a boulevard.

- **Provide adequate sidewalk widths for all streets in the Town Center**

Optimum sidewalk width for areas of the Town Center with street facing buildings is 15 feet, an appropriate size to accommodate walking traffic. Pedestrians need an environment that is safe, pleasant and interesting.

- **Provide clear and distinctive pedestrian crosswalk markings at all intersections**

Use traffic calming and context-based design methodologies to ensure that local streets have a design speed that is close to the desired traffic speed limits. Increased pedestrian activity will require clearly marked, safe street crossings.

- **Provide sidewalk connections to existing residential neighborhoods outside the Town Center boundary**

An extended sidewalk system will encourage more pedestrians from adjacent neighborhoods into the Town Center and help activate the streets.

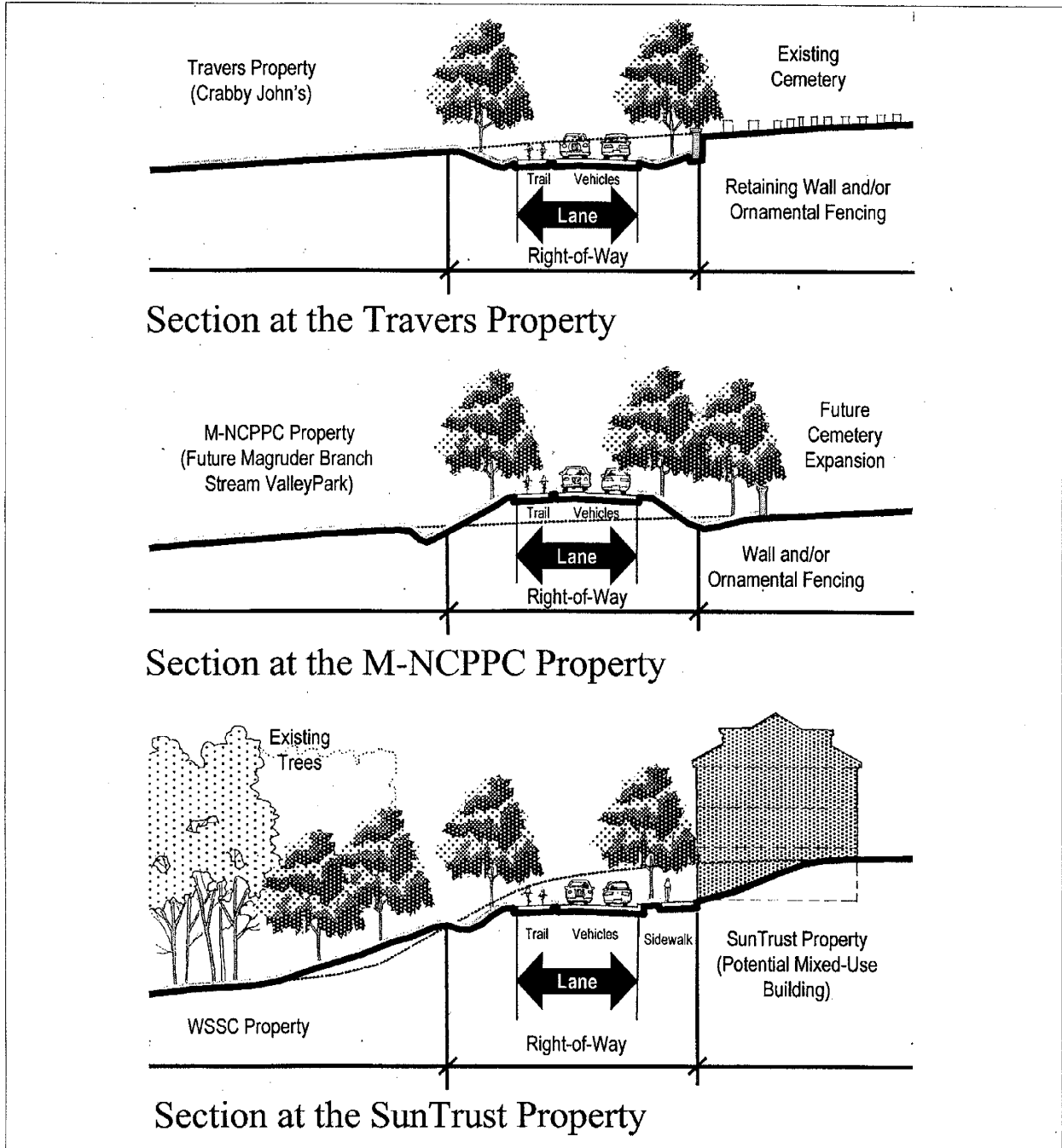
- **Extend the Magruder Branch Trail from Bethesda Church Road to the proposed Magruder Branch Trailhead Park south of Main Street**

Bicyclists and hikers need trail connections into Damascus. Providing this extension as part of the stream valley park will allow safe access to the Town Center.

- **Implement appropriate traffic calming and context-based design measures particularly at the gateway points**

Slower vehicle speeds make streets safer for pedestrians. Context-based street design and traffic-calming tools encourage slower speeds and added awareness of the presence of pedestrians. This Plan recommends tools that provide visual cues at the gateways into the Town Center such as narrower vehicle travel lanes, reorganized travel lanes, and street trees.

**Town Center Lane Concept
(Former Name Damascus Boulevard)**



Not to Scale

Expand and Enhance Community Open Space

This Plan encourages a compact town-scale intensity of uses within the Town Center in order to reduce development pressures in the rural areas. Recommendations to meet these goals include:

- **Provide adequately sized green islands for trees to offset heat effects**
The Town Center, particularly the large paved parking areas, would benefit from green islands in parking areas sized sufficiently to accommodate shade trees. Trees improve air quality, reduce storm water runoff, promote urban wildlife opportunities, and provide cooling from urban heat island effects.
- **Create a significant green space or town commons**
A new public space or town commons will provide a place for people to gather, sit and interact as well as providing a green focal point for the Town Center. The commons should be appropriately scaled and contained by a combination of building edges and street frontage. The space should be designed for a diversity of functions and must be clearly perceived as public. The preferred location for this facility would be at the redeveloped Damascus Centre.
- **Provide an appropriate green space or small park along the proposed new street behind Main Street (Town Lane, formerly Damascus Boulevard) to serve as the trail head for the Magruder Branch Trail**
A landscaped open space along the new street will not only demarcate the beginning of the trail, but will encourage more activity in the Town Center.
- **Enhance and enlarge the Damascus Neighborhood Park adjoining the Town Center on Locust Drive**
This Park should be enhanced as demand for park space increases to provide a pleasant oasis in immediate proximity to the central business area.

TRANSITION AREAS

The Transition Areas are the primarily residential areas between the Town Center and the Agricultural Reserve areas of the Master Plan. The majority of residential development in Damascus is located in these areas. As outlined in the Land Use Vision and Development Area map, they include the Town Neighborhood, Neighborhood Transition, and Rural Transition areas – each defined by declining intensity of use and increasing open space.

For many years, the primary growth area has been in the Magruder Valley, along Ridge Road north and south of town, and along Woodfield Road. Few developable properties of significant size remain in these areas. The most extensive residential development in the Damascus area in the 1990's was low-density (two and five acre) neighborhoods in the eastern side of the Master Plan area. Smart Growth policy and limited access to public sewer are the major impediments to proposing any significant increase in residential growth in this Master Plan area.

Framework

The major land use issues in the Damascus Transition Areas include connectivity, access to public sewer, and environmental concerns. These concerns are addressed, where feasible, by the use of smaller lot cluster development on public water and sewer but little additional density. The recommendations to address these concerns will reduce imperviousness, protect scenic vistas, allow greater connectivity to activity centers, and result in “small town” design patterns rather than larger lot suburban design patterns. The recommended changes will allow a few additional neighborhoods, located in close proximity to the Town Center, with an emphasis on internal connectivity. They will provide external pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the Town Center and to the recreational opportunities of the Countywide Trail system via paved sidewalk pathways and trails into the area's stream valley park systems. This pattern will create neighborhoods that open into preserved rural vistas and protected stream valleys.

Guidelines for Cluster Development

This Plan recommends the use of clustered development on most developable sites in the Transition Areas. Wherever clustered development is recommended in this Plan, the following development guidelines are recommended:

- Preservation of views to protected open space areas
- Protection of sensitive environmental features
- Minimizing development impact on sensitive environmental features
- Protection and preservation of important historic or archeological sites and their setting
- Development design that creates a defined “edge” clearly separating the developed neighborhood from the rural open space that is preserved
- Internal and external connections for easy non-vehicular access using trails, sidewalks, and bicycle paths
- Development design that replicates the scale, design and pattern of historic small town residential neighborhoods
- Development design with at least three-fourths of the lots in the clustered small lot portion of the development unless the Planning Board finds that fewer clustered lots would better protect the goals of the Master Plan
- Clear definition of the specific areas of open space and the mechanism for protection of the defined open space clearly specified

Transition Areas – Developable Sites Evaluated



Developable Site Ownership

● ● ● Master Plan Area Boundary

▭ Developable Sites

① CASEY

② SOUDER

③ STANLEY / LEISHEAR

④ BURDETTE

⑤ MILLER

⑥ WARFIELD

⑦ RICE

⑧ SMART / MINER

⑨ KINGSTEAD / LEISHEAR



NOT TO SCALE

General Land Use Recommendations

Limited changes to existing density patterns are contemplated in this Master Plan. Some additional density through the use of TDRs is recommended for two properties.

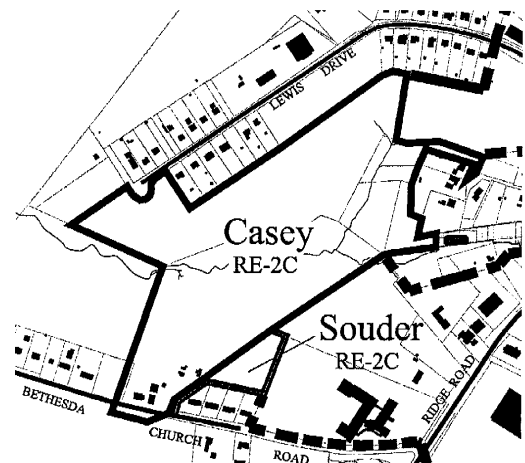
- **Town Neighborhood Area** - The largest area of neighborhood growth in Damascus for many years has been the Magruder Branch valley between Ridge Road and Woodfield Road. Few developable parcels now remain. This Plan does not recommend any changes to the land use policy in this area.
- **Neighborhood Transition Areas** - These areas are comprised of neighborhoods of somewhat lower density located adjacent to Ridge Road and Woodfield Road, north and south of the Town Center. Land located along the planned route of Woodfield Extended (Road A-12) will also be a part of this area. The traditional development pattern for much of the older development in Damascus was described in the 1993 Damascus Master Plan Amendment as "linear residential neighborhoods." This pattern, with homes stretched out along the frontages of the major roadways, evolved from the realities of the area geography. In Damascus, most roads are located on ridgelines and land often falls sharply away from the roads into stream valleys leaving limited flat or easily accessible land available for building.

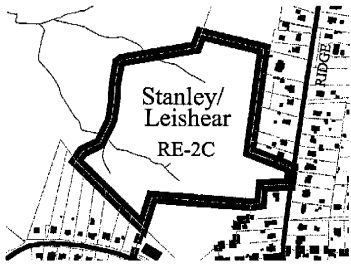
Most of the developable parcels along these major roadways have been developed. This Master Plan evaluated a few remaining properties. Where change is recommended, smaller lot cluster development for environmental and vista protection, neighborhood design goals, and enhanced connectivity via pedestrian and bicycle access is proposed.

Properties in the Neighborhood Transition Areas face limited development potential due to a combination of County water and sewer policy and environmental considerations. Land north and east of the Town Center is within the area of the Functional Master Plan for the Patuxent River Watershed that establishes a high threshold for protection of lands that drain to the Patuxent River drinking water reservoirs. Limited development with limited imperviousness is encouraged in these areas. Neighborhood Transition Area properties evaluated for land use modification include:

Casey Properties - Two adjoining properties collectively known as the Casey properties were evaluated for future development potential. They are located within and adjoining the Town Center. The larger property (48 acres in the RE-2C Zone) was not recommended for Town Center development densities due to environmental, topography, and access constraints. No land use change is recommended for this property. The smaller property (7.25 acres in the I-1 Zone) is recommended for the Town Center Zone.

Souder Property - This small (approximately two-acre) property located just behind the Damascus Elementary School along Bethesda Church Road in the RE-2C Zone was evaluated for possible sewer access. This was found to be technically difficult and too expensive to be feasible unless it was authorized for significantly higher density. Higher density is not recommended as the property is very small and not appropriate for cluster development. It is recommended for access to public water, but no change of land use.

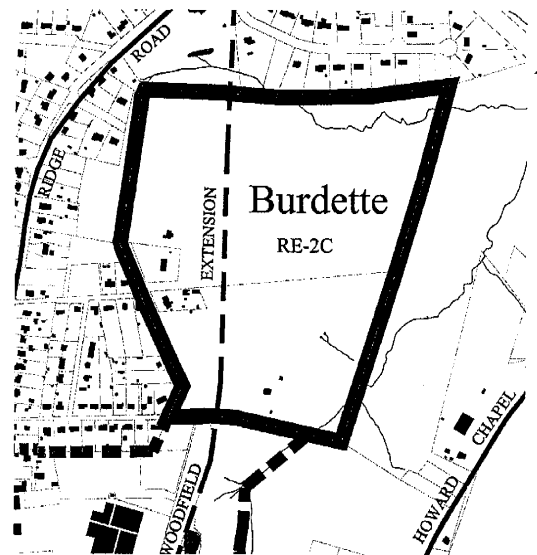




Stanley/Leishear Property - This 22-acre property in the RE-2C Zone located adjacent to the Town Center was evaluated for higher density land use and possible sewer access. Sewer access is economically infeasible without a recommendation for significantly higher density; and additional density was considered inadvisable for access and community character reasons. The property is recommended for access to public water, but no change in land use.

Burdette Property - The 81.67-acre Burdette property is located between the Damascus Town Center and Ridge Road. It is bisected by the planned route of Woodfield Road Extended (A-12).

The property is currently zoned RE-2C with public water service recommended. A change to the Rural Neighborhood Cluster Zone (RNC) is recommended. Due to limited sewer access and to support the Patuxent Functional Master Plan goals, no additional density is proposed. Clustering will preserve more vistas and create a sense of proximity to the rural heritage in Damascus.

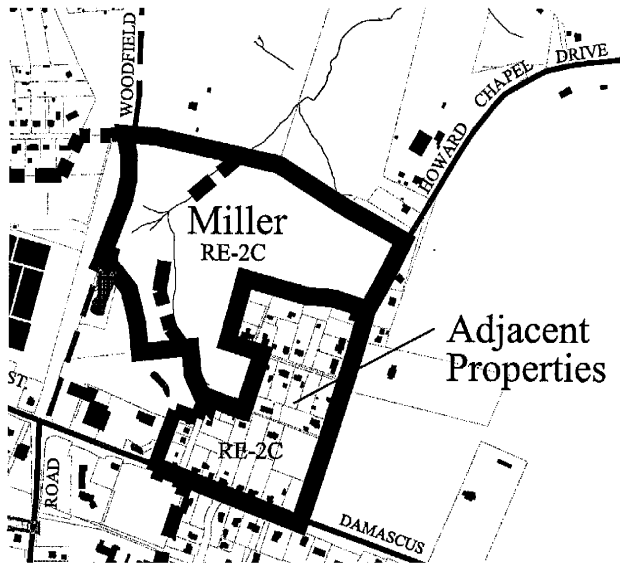


This property is currently in agricultural use with some forested areas. It contains streams with large associated wetlands, seeps and springs that contribute to the high quality water in the Upper Patuxent watershed. The 23 acres of existing forest should be maintained except as required for construction.

This Plan concludes that a small-lot cluster allowing approximately the same number of lots as would be achieved in the existing RE-2C Zone would be appropriate at this location immediately adjoining the Town Center. Smaller lots with a large area of protected open space would be protective of the Patuxent River Watershed; and a development with lots clustered away from the headwater tributaries in the eastern portion of the property (with concurrently shorter streets) would result in less imperviousness than could be created within the RE-2C Zone, which does not allow lots smaller than 25,000 square feet.

Although the property is immediately adjacent to the Town Center, it has limited sewer access as gravity flow service only is recommended. At the existing location of the pump station, the potential service area may be very small – limiting development potential below the land use recommendation. However, the sewer pump station that would serve this property is proposed for relocation by the WSSC. If the pump station were to be relocated closer to this property, the gravity flow area would be larger. Given the property’s immediate proximity to the Town Center, some limited additional density achieved through the use of TDRs may be warranted, if that density can still meet the imperviousness goals of the Patuxent Functional Master Plan.

Miller Property and adjoining lots to the south– The Miller property consists of 28.35 acres, located between Howard Chapel Road and Woodfield Road Extended. It is in the RE-2C Zone with a Master Plan recommendation for the PD-5 Zone. The Miller property contains the headwaters for and is bisected by the “Town Spring” stream tributary, a Use III stream requiring maximum protection of



streams and wetlands. The approximately 21-acre portion of the Miller property located east of the Town Spring stream, fronting on Howard Chapel Drive, is discussed in this section. The residual portion of the Miller property, west of the Town Spring Tributary, is recommended to be included in the Town Center.

A 2003 rezoning request to PD-5 for the property recommended in the 1982 Master Plan was denied by the County Council, due in large part to environmental considerations related to the recommendations of the Patuxent Functional Master Plan. Given the regulatory history of the property, this Plan proposes to change the land use recommendation for the property.

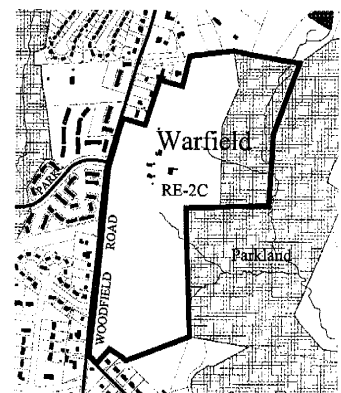
The extensive size of the interior wetlands on this property makes them valuable for water quality and wildlife habitat. The site also contains forest, although much of it is poor quality. To protect these resources, development should be low density and limited to those areas currently unforested. Forest enhancement should also be a part of any development plans.

Although clustering would be helpful in addressing environmental goals, sewer is needed for a viable cluster development. Community sewer is not recommended for this property, as the low density land use recommended would not justify the expense of extending sewer. Yet this property is close to the Town Center (approximately one-half mile). Because of its location and the regulatory history, this Plan recommends limited additional density (up to 1 dwelling per acre), with access to public water for the portion of the Miller property east of the Town Spring Tributary. This density requires use of Best Management Practices in the Patuxent Functional Master Plan. This recommendation aligns any development on the Miller property with the development pattern and lots along Howard Chapel Road to the north and Pleasant Plains Road to the south.

The lots to the south of the Miller property, also west of Howard Chapel Drive, east of the Town Spring Tributary headwaters, and north of MD 108, are in the RE-2C Zone. This is a small neighborhood of older homes, with lots of approximately a half-acre to one acre in size. These older lots reflect the R-200 zoning in the 1966 Master Plan.

This Plan recommends the one-acre density for this neighborhood, which is more reflective of the existing lot pattern and a more logical land use for this area immediately adjacent to the Town Center. This will give these properties greater conformity between their size and their zone.

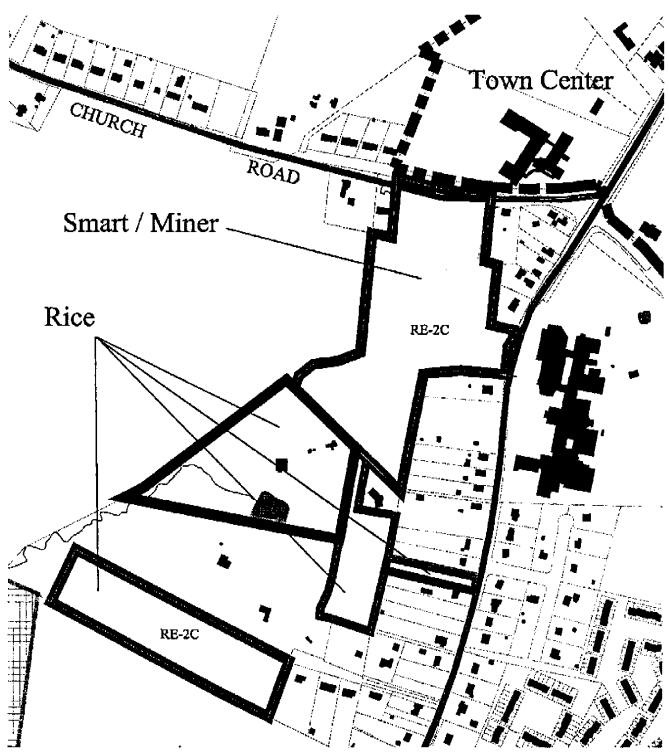
Warfield Property - The 78-acre Warfield property is in the RE-2C Zone. This former dairy farm is located on the east side of Woodfield Road, just south of the Town Center area. It is the largest and most visually significant developable property in close proximity to the Town Center. The property contains historic structures and presents one of the more important remaining vistas along the approach to Damascus on Woodfield Road.



Small lot and cluster development confront this property on the west side of Woodfield Road, and the eastern portion of the Warfield property descends into the valleys and woodlands of the headwaters of Great Seneca Creek.

This property is largely open with two unforested tributary streams, including their headwaters. Along the northern primary stream there is a spring or seep covered with concrete. Any development will need to include restoration of wetlands, removal of the concrete, and protection of other wetland and stream buffer areas. Seven acres of very high quality forest are located along the northeastern edge of the property connected to a much larger forest stand on adjacent parkland. This forest should be protected and extended as a part of any development proposal. The stream valleys just beyond this forest are high priority for reforestation.

For these environmental and vista preservation reasons, smaller lot cluster zoning is recommended for this property. To achieve housing objectives, this property is appropriate for limited additional density because it does not face the environmental constraints of properties in the Patuxent watershed. To achieve agricultural preservation goals, this Plan recommends the use of TDRs to achieve limited additional density. This property is one of two in the Master Plan area that are particularly appropriate for additional density through the use of TDRs, an important goal for this Master Plan.



Rice Property – This approximately 20-acre property in the RE-2C Zone was evaluated for possible sewer access. As with the Stanley-Leishear property, sewer access was found to be technically difficult and too expensive to be feasible unless it was authorized for significantly higher density. Additional density was considered inadvisable due to environmental constraints. No change is recommended for this property.

Smart/Miner Property - The 15.55-acre Smart/Miner property is located in the RE-2C Zone just west of Ridge Road on Bethesda Church Road, directly across from the Damascus Elementary School. It contains a headwater tributary of Little Bennett Creek. Its proximity to sewer and the Town Center, with environmentally important headwaters (of Little Bennett Creek) at the rear of the sloping property make it a preferred location for clustering. Smaller lot cluster is recommended for this property, with access to public water and sewer, but no additional density.

Environmental issues on this property include stormwater runoff and wetlands. Stormwater runoff from Ridge Road and adjacent farmland flows through a wooded swale towards an open meadow and then to the larger contiguous stream valley. Stormwater management and reforestation is needed to reduce the level of soil deposits entering the headwaters of Little Bennett Creek. There are multiple springs and seasonal wetlands connected to the wetlands along the rear portion of the property where Little

Bennett Creek begins. Protecting the wetlands along this property border will provide further protection from sediments entering the stream valley.

- **Rural Transition Areas**

Lands between the Neighborhood Transition Areas and the Agricultural and Rural Open Space areas comprise the Rural Transition Areas of this Master Plan. There are four primary Rural Transition Areas in this Master Plan within primary stream systems: Bennett Creek Watershed (northwest quadrant), Great Seneca Creek Watershed (southeast quadrant), Patuxent River Watershed (northeast quadrant), and Little Bennett Creek Watershed (southwest quadrant).

These areas contain agricultural uses interspersed with subdivisions. County policy encourages a mix of residential and agricultural uses in these areas. For environmental reasons, this Plan recommends enhancement of the existing policy of low-density residential uses in these areas. Most of this area allows five-acre density although there are some areas of two-acre density (often reflecting older subdivisions). Evaluation of these major quadrants follows.

Northwest of Damascus is a small area with little transition between the Town Center and the Agricultural Reserve. There is a small area of two-acre zoning north of Bethesda Church Road, and a somewhat larger area of two and five-acre density on the north side of town, near the future intersection of Woodfield Road Extended and Ridge Road. These areas have many important natural resources within the Bennett Creek watershed, and several properties in the Bennett Creek stream valley are recommended for protection within the Legacy Open Space Program. No land use changes are recommended.

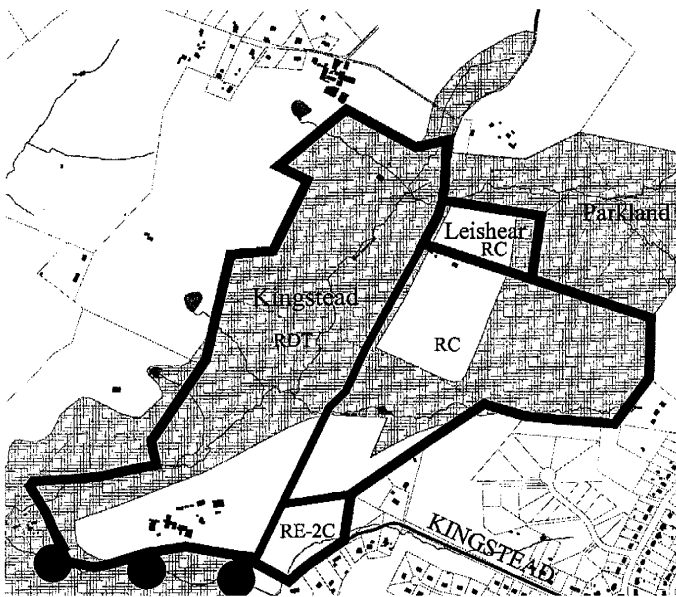
Northeast of Damascus is a large transitional area. The recommendations of this Plan reflect the enhanced environmental considerations of the Functional Master Plan for the Patuxent River Watershed. This Plan recommends that most of the two-acre density in the area north and east of Ridge Road (MD 27) beyond Gue Road, and along the west side of Howard Chapel Drive be changed to a five-acre density, with cluster allowed. Putting these properties in this agricultural zone will increase their potential eligibility for conservation easements. And because of several older subdivisions with failing wells or septic systems, this area is recommended for extension of public water.

Southeast of Damascus is a large transition area recommended for two or five acre development. Much of this area has already been developed. Development patterns here reflect environmental constraints and encourage clustering away from Great Seneca Creek, although many open rural vistas have been lost and views of large homes on large lots predominate. This Master Plan recommends no land use policy changes to this area due to the continuing environmental and community character concerns. The area provides luxury low-density housing opportunities for the Master Plan area.

Southwest of Damascus the Little Bennett Creek headwater tributaries begin south of Bethesda Church Road and west of Ridge Road. Most of the areas bordering Ridge Road are developed, and considered within the Neighborhood Transition Area. There is little sewer service available beyond immediate proximity to Ridge Road, with the exception of the triangle between Kings Valley Road, Kingstead Road, and Ridge Road. The area is predominantly rural and agricultural in character.

Kings Valley Road provides an alternate spine road along the west side of Damascus, connecting from Bethesda Church Road back into Ridge Road beyond the border of the Master Plan. Within this area, two properties were considered appropriate for a new land use recommendations:

Kingstead/Leishear Properties – The largest developable area considered in this Plan is the Kingstead Farm, comprised of three properties in three zones along Kings Valley Road, and the adjoining Leishear Property. The Kingstead Farm is located north of the intersection of Kingstead Road and Kings Valley Road. It includes 174 acres in the RDT Zone, almost 103 acres in the Rural Cluster Zone, and almost 10 acres in the RE-2C Zone. The adjoining 13.23-acre Leishear property in the Rural Cluster Zone is evaluated for joint development with the Kingstead Farm. The land use recommendation for these properties replicates the cluster pattern recommended in other transition areas.



The Kingstead Farm was a major dairy farm for many years, and the family still operates a dairy cow breeding operation there. The property contains open pasture and large areas of extensive forest and forested stream valley. The portion in the RDT Zone includes the headwater tributary of Little Bennett Creek. It is located south of Oak Ridge Conservation Park spanning both sides of Kings Valley Road. The Leishear property similarly contains both field and forest.

Environmental Issues – Because these properties are rich in natural resources, this Plan recommends more than 65 acres of stream valley areas for conservation park acquisition at time of development on these properties (noted in the Parkland

section of the Community Facilities Chapter). Little Bennett Creek, as a Use III stream, already has strong protective measures including stream buffers and wetland buffers applied during the development process. The outstanding 45-acre forested wetland with 14 springs serves a valuable function in maintaining the high water quality in the downstream portions of Little Bennett Creek.

There are also 120 acres of forest on these properties, and approximately 80 of those acres are associated with the large wetland and other riparian areas. Forests on steep slopes and in stream buffers have a high priority for preservation and enhancement. These areas, approximately 40 percent of the site, should remain undisturbed. Forty acres of upland forest are also present, primarily on the eastern portion of the Rural Cluster property. These forests are high quality “Priority 2” forest preservation areas. Because of these important wetland, stream valley, and forest areas approximately 56 percent of the Kingstead Farm is recommended for park acquisition. Protection of this extensive an area will only be achievable through cluster development.

Master Plan History – The Kingstead properties were considered as a TDR receiving site during the 1982 Master Plan and the 1993 Damascus Master Plan Amendment. No change was ultimately recommended in either Plan as discussed below.

The 1982 Plan recommended the Rural Cluster Zone east of Kings Valley Road to allow limited residential development, with homes to be located away from the road and away from land best suited to farming. This area was to serve as a transition between suburban expansion and the Agricultural Reserve. During the worksessions on the Master Plan, the King family requested designation of a TDR receiving area on the east side of Kings Valley Road to permit an internal transfer of the TDRs generated on their RDT property. The County Council decided against this request, citing concern over timing more than concept. Subsequent to the worksessions, the County Council sent the Kings a letter indicating that the property might be suitable as a TDR receiving area in the future and that the issue could be included in the Planning Board's work program at a later date.

The Kingstead properties were again discussed in the 1993 Master Plan Amendment. A TDR receiving site allowing up to 117 lots was evaluated in that Plan. That proposal would have allowed the transfer of 89 TDRs, 61 more than the 28 "transferable" TDRs on the Kingstead RDT property. The TDR receiving site was again not recommended, primarily citing the number of proposed lots, which was felt to be incompatible with adjacent and nearby properties zoned at two-acre densities or lower.

Another factor at that time was the intervening properties along Kingstead Road (between Kings Valley and Ridge Roads) which had not been developed. The proposed Kingstead development would skip this area, creating a "leapfrog" sprawl effect. Most of that intervening property (in the RE-2C and R-200 zones) has now been developed. The 1993 Plan concluded that the issue should be deferred until the next comprehensive review of the Master Plan in order to "*weigh the benefits of additional density with the impact on land use patterns and the implications of extending public services.*"

Recommendation – This Plan believes that the time is now appropriate to create TDR receiving capacity at this location. It is the largest property grouping being considered in the Master Plan for potential development, and potentially an excellent site for the use of TDRs. The question for this Master Plan is what intensity of development is appropriate, what type of design review mechanisms should be established, and what type of zoning should be used. Sewer access is available from the sewer pumping station (built in 1977) just southeast of the intersection of Kingstead and Kings Valley Roads. It can serve a certain amount of development at the southern part of this property.

This Plan concludes that the benefits to be gained from allowing a moderate density development on the Kingstead Farm/Leishear properties located east of Kings Valley Road outweigh the problems the development might create. This Plan recommends allowing moderately more density and a clustered development with additional density achieved through the use of TDRs.

This Plan recommends allowing the use of additional TDRs to achieve up to 71 homes on the 126 acres of developable land east of Kings Valley Road – 46 fewer lots than the 1993 proposal. The rationale for allowing moderately more density here than elsewhere in the Master Plan include benefits gained for environmental protection, parkland, trails, agricultural preservation, housing, and historic preservation that are especially advantageous at this location. Additional density will allow a somewhat more affordable housing product and contribute to the overall goal for

Damascus of being a small town with a diversity of housing types affordable to a broader range of residents.

The advantages of a moderate density cluster development include:

- Allows the most extensive protection of the extensive natural resources including an upland forest and the Little Bennett tributary stream system – an area deemed vital for natural resource protection in the Legacy Open Space program;
- Offers the best opportunity to protect the historic Kingstead Farm core area in its environmental setting;
- Allows the extension of a planned trail through Little Bennett Park serving this portion of Damascus and connecting it through the development to the recreational resources along Oak Drive and through to Magruder Branch Trail;
- Allows a neighborhood design dense enough to provide community amenities such as interior sidewalks connecting to the trail; and
- Protects the RDT Zone to the west, and provides a receiving site for its TDRs.

Other infrastructure elements also support slightly higher density at this location. Portions of the southern portion of this property are within the drainage area of the nearby Spring Meadows pumping station. It is recommended that extensions for future development be limited to the area that can be served by gravity in keeping with WSSC's policy to limit the proliferation of new pumping stations.

Providing housing at this location will not have a detrimental impact on the area transportation grid. These residents will be more likely to use Kings Valley Road as their primary access to the south (or north), rather than Ridge Road. Kings Valley Road (classified as a Primary Road at this location in the Master Plan) will be improved as a part of any development, taking out an offset at the intersection with Kingstead Road.

Design Guidelines for Kingstead/Leishear Properties

For any development on these properties, guidelines for appropriate development are critical. The following guidelines are recommended:

- Concentrate residential development in the southern areas east of Kings Valley Road, using cluster development that will allow the steep slopes, erodible soils, forest cover, and high quality streams on the property to be protected.
- Group the homes on smaller lots in less sensitive areas to reduce negative environmental impacts, preserve existing forest and the stream buffer.
- Use environmental mitigation measures to maintain existing water quality and aquatic habitat of Little Bennett Creek. Limit imperviousness and provide a stormwater management facility to minimize negative thermal and other water quality impacts to the stream.
- Dedicate the portion of the land along an unnamed tributary of Little Bennett Creek traversing the property to the M-NCPPC to become parkland protecting Little Bennett Creek.

- Conduct a Phase II investigation on an archeological site identified on the site to determine its extent and importance. If appropriate, the site should be added to the adjacent area to be dedicated as parkland.
- Preserve trees between the tributary in the eastern portion of the property and Oak Ridge Conservation Park to provide an undisturbed tree canopy; and plant street trees to shade road surfaces.
- Provide a comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle circulation system linking internal areas and linking the development to the Countywide Trails system.
- Design the community so that backyards are not visible from Kings Valley Road, Kingstead Road or adjacent streets.
- Realign Kings Valley Road and Kingstead Road to eliminate the current offset intersection.
- Do not extend sewer north of the tributary crossing Kings Valley Road.

Summary of Proposed Land Use Changes in Transition Areas

The following table summarizes the recommended land use modifications in this Master Plan:

Name	Acres	Land Use Modification	Existing Yield	Estimated Proposed Yield
Neighborhood Transition Area				
Burdette*	82	Two acre cluster to smaller lot two acre cluster	32	32
Miller	21	Two acre cluster with five units per acre recommendation to one per acre	10	15
Warfield	78	Two acre cluster to smaller lot cluster with TDR receiving potential	31	58**
Smart/Miner	15	Two acre cluster to smaller lot two acre cluster	6	6
Rural Transition Area				
Kingstead/Leishear***	126	Five acre and two acre cluster to two acre smaller lot cluster via TDR receiving capacity	26	71**
TOTAL	322		105	182

* Recommendation may change if sewer pump station is relocated. Currently under evaluation.

**Increased density through use of TDRs.

***Recommendation for Leishear contingent on joint development of Kingstead and Leishear properties.

As summarized in the above table, the land use recommendations for this Plan will create approximately 77 more lots than the 1982 Master Plan, but 72 of those lots will be created through the use of TDRs.

RURAL AREAS

Damascus continues to be a community surrounded by agriculture and rural open space, and many active farms operate in the Master Plan area. Damascus links and provides continuity for the western and eastern agriculturally oriented areas of the County.

Framework

Much of the land area within the Damascus Master Plan boundary is within the Agricultural Reserve, primarily within the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) Zone, the focus of the County's farmland preservation policies. Approximately 1,050 acres within the Damascus Master Plan area are protected for agricultural and rural open space uses by use of the RDT Zone. Farms and rural landscapes are interspersed with older subdivisions and historic crossroads communities that include residential and some commercial uses. Lands within the Agricultural Reserve are given special protections from urban and suburban development pressures. Non-agriculturally related commercial, industrial, or institutional uses are discouraged. Farming and agriculturally-related activities are encouraged.

This area also contains historic rural settlements. The County supports limited convenience and agriculturally related commercial activities in these rural settlements.

Preserving farmland in Montgomery County is a means to achieve both economic and environmental goals. Agricultural land preservation in Damascus is important for maintaining the County's agricultural base, and in strengthening the role of Damascus as the rural market focus in this part of the County. This Plan recommends channeling residential development from outlying areas toward the center of Damascus to strengthen the Town Center concept as well as to preserve the surrounding farmland and rural landscapes. Other County programs are working on the important issues related to enhancing and protecting farming as an important business for the County. This Plan reinforces those policies by recommendations to keep this prime farm and forest land open and available for agriculture.

Land Use Recommendations

This Plan reaffirms the designation of the approximately 1,050 acres in the Damascus area in the RDT Zone. Two historic rural village areas are recommended for increased protection. Recommendations include the following:

- Confirm and retain the existing boundaries of the RDT Zone in Damascus, and reaffirm support for agriculture and agriculturally related business.
- Endorse and support the special exception criteria for evaluation of agriculturally related special exceptions which state that when evaluating the compatibility of such uses with surrounding land uses, the impact of an agriculturally related special exception in an agricultural zone does not necessarily need to be controlled as stringently as the impact of a similar special exception in a residential zone.
- Endorse emerging agricultural methods and practices, and agriculturally related businesses as the best – most efficient, effective, and economical – means to maintain a viable agricultural economy and protect the Agricultural Reserve. This Plan particularly supports sustainable agricultural practices that are environmentally responsible.
- Establish Guidelines for Agricultural Conservation Development for residential subdivisions in the RDT Zone within this Master Plan.

- Establish a Special Exception Guideline for Rural Vista Protection in the Rural Areas of Damascus.
- Establish a new zoning category to better protect existing historic rural villages.

Rural Density Transfer Zone - This Master Plan confirms and retains the existing boundaries of the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) Zone in Damascus with minor modifications in two Rural Village areas. This Plan reaffirms support for agriculture and agriculturally related business. Agriculture is evolving in Montgomery County, and this Plan supports policies that encourage emerging and evolving types of agriculture. As stated in the 1993 Refinement to the General Plan:

Agriculture is a dynamic industry whose success depends on ability to adapt to market forces, and transition to non-traditional farming expected. Corn and wheat may yield to fruits, berries, and vegetables to serve the regional marketplace. Greenhouses, hydroponic farms, other intensive farming techniques may become more prevalent in the future as the industry responds to changing market needs, preferences, and policies. These are well within the Refinement's future vision for the Agricultural Wedge.

Guidelines for Agricultural Conservation Development in the RDT Zone -This Plan supports programs, practices and regulatory changes necessary to ensure the continued evolution of sustainable agriculture and agriculturally related uses, and this Plan also supports additional guidance for subdivisions that are proposed within the RDT Zone, an issue of concern from agricultural preservation and rural character perspectives. With creative land use approaches both farmland and beautiful rural vistas can be preserved. But there is currently no mechanism or guidance in place – through a “carrot” or “stick” approach – to give the Planning Board the flexibility and regulatory basis for gaining greater control over the design of residential development in the Agricultural Reserve to achieve both these goals.

Putting a greater priority on the preservation of open, contiguous farmland -- a major goal of the Master Plan for Agriculture – must be a primary goal of any reform of subdivision in the RDT Zone. But in preserving “rural” character – open vistas of farmland and open spaces - lot size is usually less of a determinant than placement of home building sites. With appropriate tools and incentives in place, open land – for vistas or crop production – may be more easily preserved by the creative use of easements or by creating non-buildable “outlots”, than through either clustering or large lot development. To work toward this goal, this Plan recommends subdivision guidelines for RDT Zone properties in the Damascus area, outlined below.

This Plan recommends a set of rural subdivision guidelines for the RDT Zone – using a land conservation approach. The guidelines encourage either small lot clusters, non-buildable outlots, and/or creative homesite placement with overlay easements to preserve contiguous fields, important vistas, or environmentally sensitive features. The guidelines encourage creative development patterns that preserve both open contiguous field and forest, and the preservation of rural character. The guidelines are designed with the intention of preserving substantial contiguous areas of prime and productive farm fields or woodland. This type of land use pattern has the greatest potential for continuing agricultural production. These guidelines are primarily intended for subdivisions creating five or more lots and on properties of 100 or more acres. Proposed guidelines include:

- Use cluster, out-lot, or easement methods provide increased flexibility in lot layout while preserving the density permitted in the zone.

- The location of building sites and roads should consider the preservation of prime and productive farm fields, and the preservation of scenic vistas and rural character to the extent allowed by the need to accommodate waste treatment.
- The development should be designed to reduce the potential for nuisance or conflict between the residential and the agricultural uses both within the tract and in relation to existing uses on adjoining or nearby tracts by providing substantial setbacks or buffers between designated agricultural areas and residential buildings.
- Large lots should be avoided unless conservation or other protective easements are used to protect farm fields, environmental resources, or other open space.
- Development design should first identify important resources and related buffer areas that need to be preserved, including location of prime and productive soils. When determining the location of building sites, the identified resources should be avoided to the greatest possible extent.
- The design of the road network should consider the following:
 - Limit physical impact on the natural and historic environment,
 - Respect the contours of the land, avoid cross slope routes,
 - Avoid extensive cutting through wooded areas,
 - Protect rural vistas by preserving existing woodland buffers to the extent safety considerations allow.
- Areas reserved for conservation may be recorded on the plan of development as either a separate parcel, non-buildable outlot, or easement on the residential lot or lots -- provided that the area is clearly delineated and the easement noted on the record plat in the land records of Montgomery County.
- If common open space is identified for conservation, the preliminary plan must include a description of the intended use and a plan for maintenance of the common open space.
- Placement of building sites should take into account the preservation of rural vistas as well as preservation of contiguous open fields.

Special Exception Guideline for Rural Vista Protection - To ensure careful consideration of this unique aspect of this community, this Plan strongly encourages the protection of the rural vistas that are intrinsic to the character of Damascus vicinity. Damascus is a town set on a hill, and the long vistas outside the Town Center provide the most distinctive visual element for the community. Land uses that impede those vistas should be discouraged.

Rural Village Communities - Montgomery County retains a number of small historic crossroad rural communities, each possessing unique social and physical characteristics. Residents often have historical ties to their communities, and communities are often unified by local institutions like post offices, retail stores, or churches. Some of these villages also provide limited commercial services to area residents.

This Plan supports the continuation of limited convenience retail, agriculturally related commercial activity, or tourism related commercial activity in these rural settlements. This Plan does not support all of the inherent commercial uses that are permitted in the commercial zones that are used in these villages. The existing scale of development should be maintained or enhanced, but not expanded. And

new development should be consistent with the historical character and community lifestyle of rural settlements.

The 1980 Agricultural and Rural Open Space Master Plan identified a need to establish an additional layer of regulatory protection for these communities. One of its stated goals was to “investigate the use of a Rural Village Zone to provide for a mix of residential lot sizes and limited commercial uses.” This has never been enacted for these rural villages. As noted in the 1993 Refinement to the General Plan:

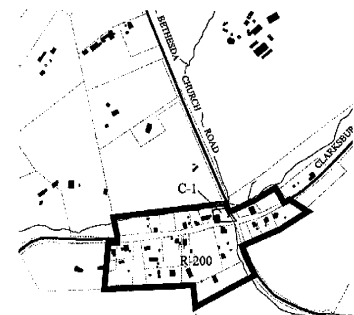
It is essential that the small town appearance and feel of the rural centers be maintained. Reinforcing historic elements of rural centers, confining growth in the centers, and exercising opportunities to cluster development are initiatives that will help further define the Agricultural Wedge in the future.

This Plan recommends a new zone with a mixed-use zone approach appropriate for identified rural communities in order to protect villages that may become subject to potential development pressures. The purpose of this zone would be to maintain the existing scale of development. New development is to be consistent with their historical character and community lifestyles. This Master Plan proposes such a zone to fulfill this vision for the rural villages of Browningsville and Etchison. This zone is not recommended for the Purdum village, which is not located on a highway, and does not face potential development pressure from increasing pass-by traffic. The village of Lewisdale is only partially in this Master Plan area.

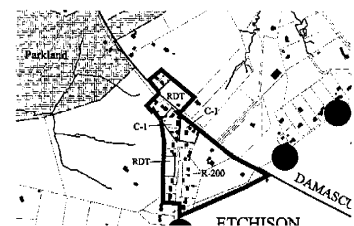
The rehabilitation or replacement of dilapidated structures in these communities should be encouraged, and they should be allowed to evolve with some additional residential, institutional, and commercial uses.

Since many of these villages face problems with aging septic systems or water quality, the use of innovative individual or community sewage disposal systems should be encouraged. This concern was also the subject of one of the goals of the 1980 Agricultural and Rural Open Space Master Plan. This Plan supports the use of such systems to address community health problems in rural villages.

Browningsville - The early community of Browningsville was named for the Browning family who were early settlers. The community grew around a grist mill and saw mill. A post office opened in 1832 and closed in 1899; but during the 19th Century, the town included a general store, blacksmith shop, carriagemaker, and, noteworthy among upcounty communities, its own library. The Browningsville Band, organized in 1884, has remained active into the 21st century. The village is a crossroads of Clarksburg Road and Bethesda Church Road, an area seeing increasing traffic from emerging suburbs in Frederick County.



Etchison – This village is located at the busy intersection of MD 650 (Damascus Road) and MD 108 (Laytonsville Road). The village store is the center of the community. This historic Mount Tabor United Methodist Church is also a center of community life. Etchison evolved as a crossroads community that served the surrounding farming families. In the 1870s, Marcellus Etchison built a store at the intersection of Laytonsville Road and New Hampshire Avenue. Nearby were a school and the Mount Tabor Church. A community grew in the late 1800s and early 1900s to include a blacksmith shop and a cluster of residences.



The Hawkins family built the present store on the site of Etchison's store about 1915. Its bungalow form with wide porch is highly representative of its era. The intersection of MD 108 and MD 650 faces rapidly increasing traffic loads from commuters in Damascus and growth in northern counties headed toward Rockville and the I-270 Corridor.

Purdum - The village of Purdum on Mountain View Road was also evaluated. It is a community of a dozen houses and two farmsteads that includes two late-19th century churches. John Purdum was an early landowner. Purdum had a post office (which operated from 1889 to 1907), a general store (opened in 1912), and a brass band (organized in the 1920s). No changes are recommended for this village, which is located away from commuter roads and less subject to development pressures.