

# Plan Introduction

## *An Overview of the Process*

### Overview

The Silver Spring/Takoma Park community-based planning area covers the portion of Montgomery County that is generally located between the Capital Beltway and the District of Columbia, east of Rock Creek Park and west of Prince George's County. It encompasses several community master plan areas: East Silver Spring, Four Corners, North Silver Spring, the Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD), Takoma Park, and West Silver Spring (see Map 5). All master plans in the Silver Spring/Takoma Park planning area have been updated. Keeping the master plan updates on parallel schedules allows planners to share information and make recommendations that are consistent among plans. It also enables County staff and community groups to focus their energies on the shared issues in this part of the County.

The *North Silver Spring Sector Plan* was adopted in 1978 and the *Master Plan for the Western Portion of the Silver Spring Planning Area* was adopted in 1972. While North and West Silver Spring have previously had two separate master plans, this update combines the planning for these communities into one document. In this way, the issues that are common to both areas, including the commercial centers, the industrial areas, transportation, parks, and pedestrian and bikeway connections, can be addressed collectively.

Issues that are specific to either North or West Silver Spring are also addressed in this Plan, thereby reflecting the unique aspects of the diverse Silver Spring neighborhoods. In the chapter on Commercial Preservation, Stability, and Character,

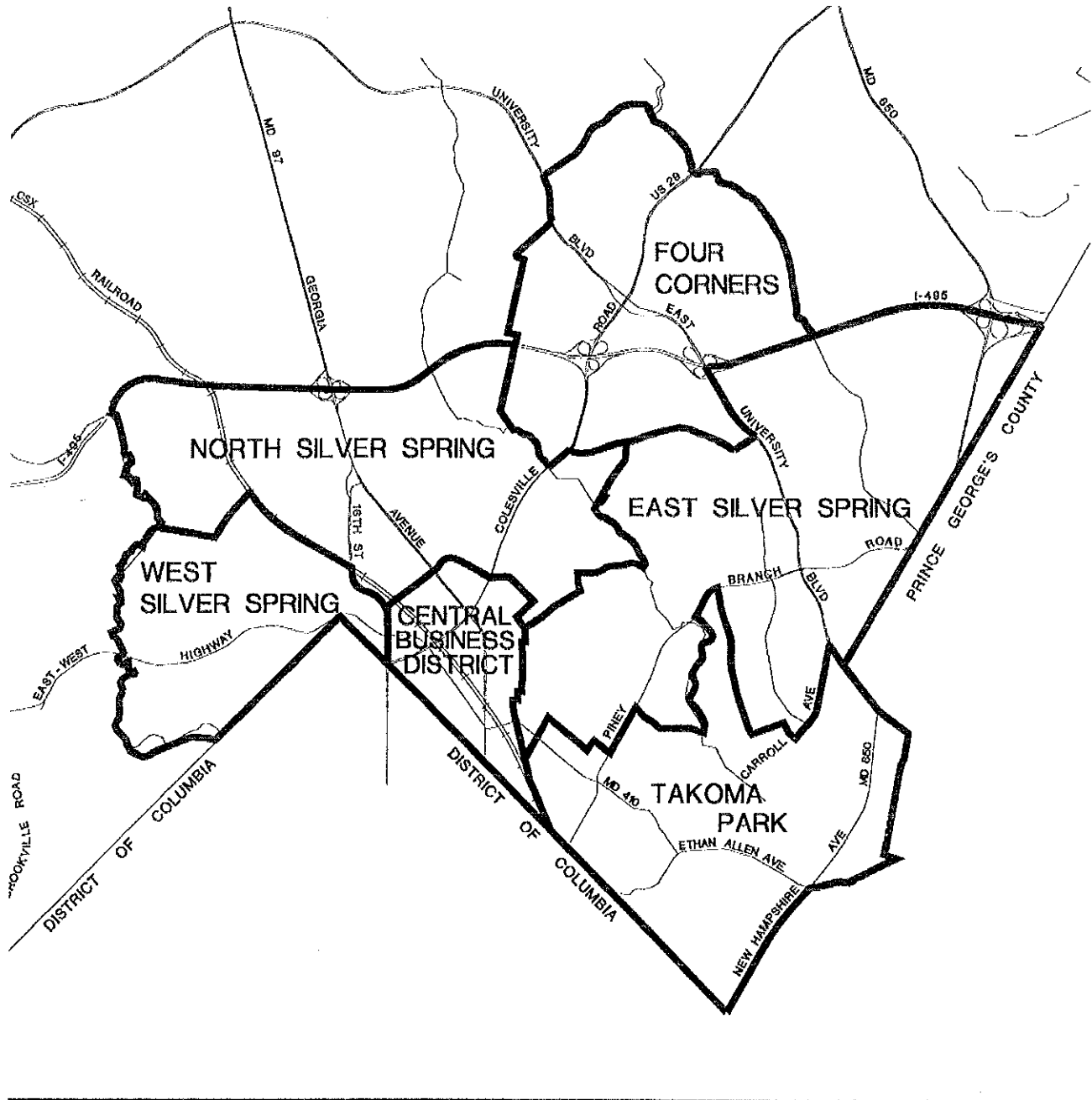
there are two community plan sections—one for North Silver Spring and one for West Silver Spring. Other sections of this Plan also address the special character and issues in each community to strengthen neighborhood identity.

### Location

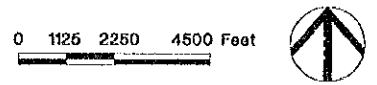
North and West Silver Spring are located inside the Capital Beltway (I-495) in the southeast corner of Montgomery County, adjacent to the Silver Spring Central Business District and the Washington, D.C. border. The Silver Spring CBD forms the southern boundary of North Silver Spring and the eastern boundary of West Silver Spring. Washington, D.C., forms the southern boundary of West Silver Spring.

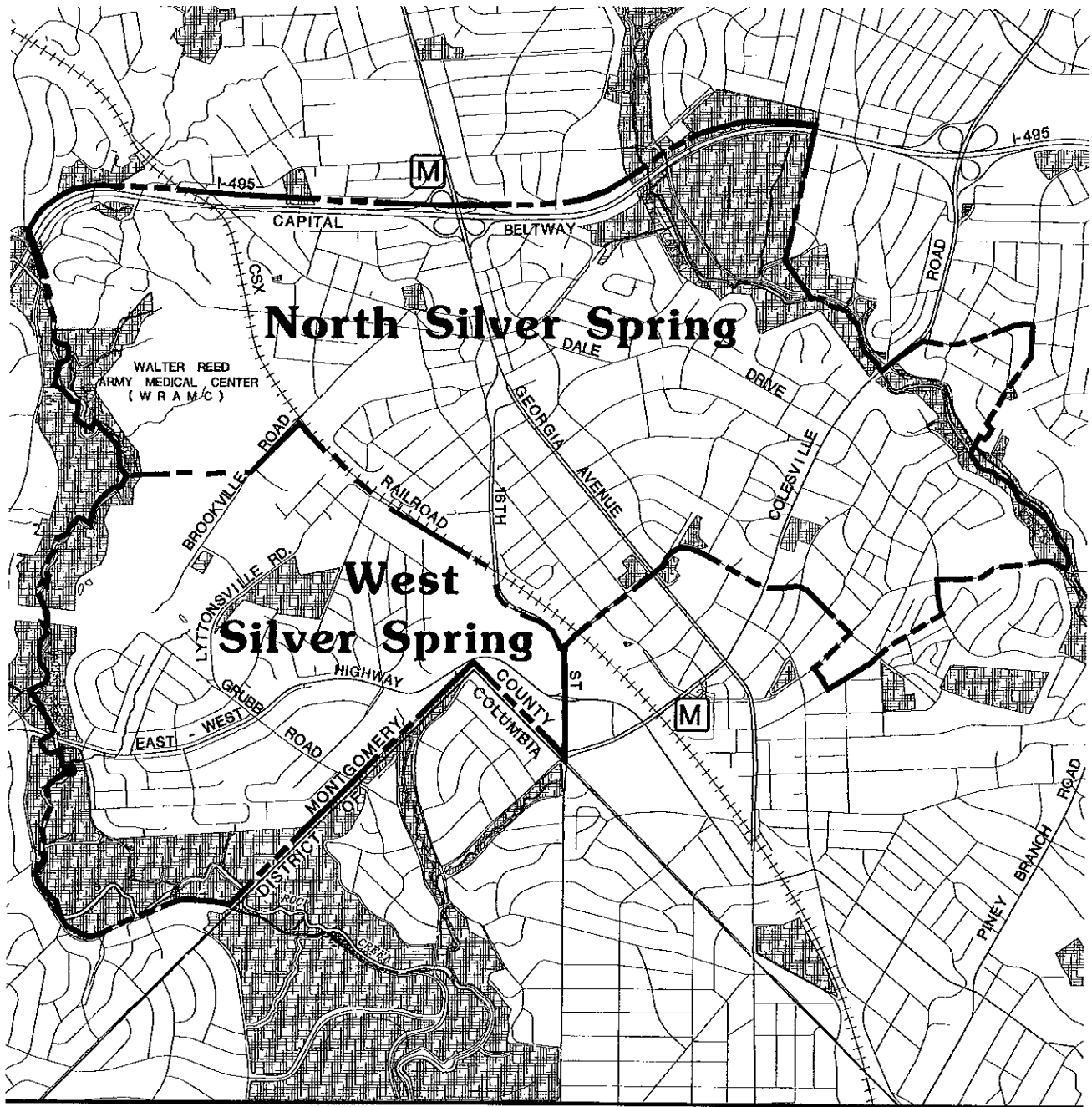
North Silver Spring is generally bounded on the north by the Capital Beltway; on the east by Sligo Creek Park; on the south by Wayne Avenue, Bonifant, Cedar, and Spring Streets, the CSX railroad tracks, and the southern property line of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC); and on the west by Rock Creek Park. West Silver Spring is bounded on the north by the CSX railroad tracks and the southern property line of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center; on the east by 16<sup>th</sup> Street; on the south by the District of Columbia boundary; and on the west by Rock Creek Park (see Map 6).

North and West Silver Spring have tremendous locational advantages for those seeking a close-in residence or business site that is convenient to Washington, D.C. or Baltimore. Georgia Avenue



 Master Plan Boundary





----- Master Plan Boundary

 Parkland

 Metro Station

0 575 1150 2300 Feet



and Colesville Road provide access to the Capital Beltway and 16<sup>th</sup> Street provides access to Washington, D.C. Metrorail stations in the nearby Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD) and at Forest Glen link the communities with major employment centers and resources such as the United States Congress, Union Station, the Smithsonian Institution, federal government offices, the MCI Center, and Reagan National Airport.

## Planning Context

Montgomery County, Maryland, is one of the most prosperous jurisdictions in the country. The County offers an excellent public school system, extensive park resources, proximity to cultural amenities in Washington, D.C., and a wide variety of employment opportunities, including the federal government, high-tech and bio-technology firms, as well as major corporate, education, and research organizations.

North and West Silver Spring are part of the County's Urban Ring, which also includes the Silver Spring CBD and the central business districts of Bethesda, Friendship Heights, and Wheaton. The Urban Ring, a concept first established in the 1964 *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District Within Montgomery and Prince George's Counties* and reconfirmed in the 1993 *General Plan Refinement*, is the more intensively developed area of Montgomery County nearest Washington, D.C.

The General Plan is based on a "wedges and corridors" concept of regional land use development. Six corridors of urban development radiate like spokes of a wheel from the existing land use patterns in Washington, D.C. The corridors of development are separated by wedges of open space, farmland, and lower-density residential uses. This concept has shaped the County's land use pattern for more than three decades by channeling growth into development and transportation corridors, with the Urban Ring in lower Montgomery County as the most densely developed area.

The Urban Ring communities inside the Capital Beltway in Montgomery County have been designated as part of the State's Smart Growth initiative, a program that focuses development funds and incentives in appropriate growth areas and limits development in agricultural and other resource areas.

### Smart Growth Program

#### *What is Smart Growth?*

Smart Growth is a State program that was enacted in 1997 to support growth in appropriate areas and limit development in agricultural and other resource areas. The program includes five initiatives: Designation of Smart Growth (Priority Funding) Areas; Live Near Your Work Program; Rural Legacy Program; Brownfields Redevelopment; and Job Creation Tax Credits. The priority funding areas are based on land use, residential density, and water and sewer service and include existing communities and areas where industrial or other economic development is desired.

The State of Maryland is moving forward with short- and long-term solutions to improve specific locations and is developing a comprehensive approach to balancing the demands of growth, traffic, and quality of life.

#### *Why use Smart Growth?*

Using public funds to encourage private investment in urban areas preserves rural and suburban open space, and maximizes investments already made in urban infrastructure such as roads, transit, water and sewer.

#### *How can it work in Silver Spring?*

The Silver Spring Central Business District and the surrounding neighborhoods are ideally positioned to become premier Smart Growth communities by providing a mix of land uses—housing, retail, jobs, transit access, and civic opportunities—that will support, sustain, and enliven community life.

## The Role of a Master Plan

A master plan provides comprehensive recommendations and guidelines for the use of land within its boundaries. Each master plan reflects a vision of future development that responds to the unique character of the local community within the context of County-wide policies. It addresses physical planning issues, such as land use, zoning, transportation, parks, community facilities, and bikeway and pedestrian connections. Master plans are updated every 10-20 years, recognizing that circumstances change and that the specifics of a plan may become less relevant over time.

Master plans include text, design guidelines, graphics, and maps. Generally, graphics in an adopted master plan are for illustrative purposes and are intended to convey a general sense of desirable future character rather than a specific commitment to a particular detailed design.

A master plan is created over time with the input and participation of community members—residents and business people—and with discussion among County and State agencies. Developing a plan is a process that educates, prompting thought and self-definition; it culminates in a commitment to the community's future. Once the plan is approved by the County Council and adopted by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), the rezoning process and special studies needed to implement the plan's recommendations are begun.

## The Planning Process

The North and West Silver Spring Master Plan was completed under the streamlined process approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board and the County Council in September 1997 and described in *The Master Planning Process* report published by the Department of Park and

Planning. As part of this process, two Master Plan Advisory Groups—one for North Silver Spring and one for West Silver Spring—were appointed by the Planning Board. The Master Plan Advisory Groups (MPAGs) included residents as well as business and property owners in North and West Silver Spring. The names of citizens who served on the two MPAGs are on page vi.

A Technical Working Group (TWG) composed of staff from relevant County and State agencies, as well as Park and Planning staff, provided valuable input on implementation issues associated with master plan alternatives and preliminary recommendations.

During the development of this Plan, several other initiatives provided valuable information about the North and West Silver Spring communities. A telephone survey conducted in English and Spanish gathered information about the community—the concerns and opinions of Silver Spring and Takoma Park residents—and was presented to the Planning Board as well. Economic health assessments of the Brookville Road Industrial area (prepared by RER Economic Consultants) and the Montgomery Hills Commercial area (prepared by staff) provided valuable information about these employment and service centers. A Transportation and Circulation Report was prepared by the Planning staff to look comprehensively at the overall circulation system and develop informed recommendations in the five Silver Spring/Takoma Park master plan areas. (See the Appendices and Supplemental Resources in the Table of Contents for a list of reference documents, including a Glossary of selected planning terms.)

The Staff Draft was reviewed by the Planning Board and approved for release as the Public Hearing Draft in October 1998. A Planning Board public hearing was held on November 5, 1998. Planning Board worksessions to review the public hearing testimony and the Plan's recommendations began in December 1998.

In February 1999, in response to community concerns, the Planning Board approved a delay of the North and West Silver Spring Master Plan to further analyze options to improve the pedestrian and vehicular environment along Georgia Avenue in Montgomery Hills. From March to June, staff considered various options, analyzed their impacts, and held meetings with residents, businesses, and property owners. In June, staff presented a Proposed Concept for Georgia Avenue in Montgomery Hills to the Planning Board and, since the concept was not included in the Public Hearing Draft, public testimony was taken. As a result of the testimony, the Planning Board directed staff to continue working with the business and property owners on design changes that could mitigate the potential impacts. At a worksession in September 1999, the Planning Board voted to include the Proposed Concept for Georgia Avenue in the Final Draft Master Plan. The Planning Board (Final) Draft Master Plan was accompanied by a Framework for Action that identifies specific short- and long-term actions necessary to implement this Plan's recommendations.

The County Council conducted a similar review process, including a public hearing and worksessions. The County Executive prepared a fiscal analysis of the Master Plan's recommendations. After close scrutiny and recommended changes, the Plan was approved by the County Council and adopted by the M-NCPPC.

### **Next Steps**

Once the Master Plan is adopted, a Sectional Map Amendment is prepared to implement the zoning recommended by the Plan. The special studies and other items necessary to implement the Plan's recommendations, as identified in the Framework for Action, will then be initiated. In addition, a Bi-Annual Master Plan Status Report will be prepared to review the progress that has been

made to implement the Master Plan recommendations.

**The North and West Silver Spring Master Plan Process**

**Phase One**  
Undertake detailed data collection, technical analysis, map preparation, and community information gathering

**Phase Two**  
Develop Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report and form Master Plan Advisory Groups (MPAGs)

**Phase Three**  
Finalize Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report; form Technical Working Group(TWG); undertake Silver Spring/Takoma Park telephone survey

**Phase Four**  
Develop draft Illustrative Concept Plan; meet with MPAGs and TWG, hold community workshops; develop Master Plan recommendations

**Phase Five**  
Prepare and finalize Staff Draft Master Plan; present to the Planning Board; hold MPAG/Community Meeting

**Phase Six**  
Hold Planning Board Public Hearing and Worksessions; transmit Final Draft Master Plan and Framework for Action to the County Council and County Executive

**Phase Seven**  
Receive County Executive comment and fiscal impact analysis on the Final Draft Master Plan and Framework for Action

**Phase Eight**  
Hold County Council Public Hearing and Worksessions; approve Master Plan and Framework for Action

**Phase Nine**  
Plan adopted by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

**Phase Ten**  
Plan implementation monitored through the Framework for Action and Bi-Annual Master Plan Status Report