October 25, 2007

#### **MEMORANDUM**

TO:

Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA:

John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division

Sue Edwards, I-270 Team Leader, Community-Based Planning Division

FROM:

Nancy Sturgeon, Planner Coordinator (301-495-1308)

Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Master Plans for Gaithersburg West and Gaithersburg East

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Transmit memo to the County Council regarding the change in scope from one Master Plan for Gaithersburg Vicinity to two Master Plans -- Gaithersburg West and Gaithersburg East -- to be updated sequentially.

### DISCUSSION

On October 16, 2007, the Planning Board met with the County Council to discuss the Semi-Annual Report. Several County Council members had questions about the Department's requested change in scope and the approach to move forward with two sequential Master Plan updates, Gaithersburg West, followed by Gaithersburg East. Council President Praisner requested that the Department's rationale for the change in scope be explained in a memo to be circulated to Council members for their review and comment.

At a Planning Board "Roundtable" on April 5, 2007, staff presented the idea and justification for maintaining the two existing master plans, rather than combining them, and the Board fully supported this approach. Prior to the April Planning Board meeting, staff had begun to discuss this approach with the community, particularly Montgomery Village. meeting (of the Montgomery Village Foundation's Transportation, Development, and Public Facilities Committee) on October 3, 2006, the item was on the agenda and staff presented the idea and answered questions. Subsequent to the April 5 Planning Board meeting, there was written correspondence from the Montgomery Village Foundation to the Planning Board and County Council and a response from Chairman Hanson (see Attachments 1-4).

The two existing Master Plans for the Gaithersburg area are: the 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan and the 1990 Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan. The Shady Grove Life Sciences Center and surrounding area was the subject of its own Master Plan, as recommended by the Staging Plan in the 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan, which identified the need for more in-depth future study (i.e., a separate Master Plan). In 1988, work began on what was referred to as the "Shady Grove West Plan," and culminated in 1990 with the approval of the Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan.

When the Planning Department initiated updates to the 1985 and 1990 Master Plans, the original intent was to combine the two plans into one, creating a large land mass spanning both sides of I-270, stretching from the Agricultural Reserve to the Potomac Subregion, and comprised of fragmented areas separated by the City of Gaithersburg in the center (see Attachment 5). As staff became more familiar with the wide-ranging issues in this area, it was clear that the idea of combining two plans into one was not the best approach. The issues, land uses, zoning, and stages of development in the western portion of Gaithersburg are distinct and uniquely different from the eastern area. In addition, there are two ongoing regional transportation studies that affect the areas – the Mid-County Corridor Study directly impacts Gaithersburg East. The I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study, including the Corridor Cities Transitway, affects Gaithersburg West.

The Department has recognized the importance of coordinating a Master Plan update for the Gaithersburg East/Montgomery Village area with the Facility Plan for Mid-County Highway (M-83), as has been indicated on the Master Plan schedule in the Semi-Annual Report. In 2004, the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) initiated Phase 1 of the Facility Plan for Mid-County Highway, a proposed six-mile extension of this major road from its current terminus at Montgomery Village Avenue to Ridge Road in Germantown (see Attachment 6). The Facility Plan for the Mid-County Corridor Study (previously called the Mid-County Highway/Middlebrook Road Study) has experienced significant delays. The current schedule for completion of Phase 1 is mid-2010. Phase 2 of the Facility Plan has not been funded (see Attachment 7).

As shown on Attachment 6, the proposed alignment of Mid-County Highway west of Montgomery Village Avenue would have significant impacts on the southernmost portion of Montgomery Village, including Watkins Mill Elementary School, South Valley Park, as well as Great Seneca Park. The scope of the Mid-County Corridor Study has been expanded to include a number of alternatives to the Master Plan alignment (including a no-build option). Because the proposed extension of Mid-County Highway is integral to Montgomery Village, the results of the study are an essential component for a Master Plan update. If a Master Plan for the Gaithersburg East area was prepared prior to the completion of the Mid-County Corridor Facility Plan, there would be no change from the current Master Plan recommendation regarding this road because the study is ongoing and no decisions have been made to remove M-83 from the relevant Plans.

Montgomery Village has expressed concern that proceeding with Gaithersburg West and delaying Gaithersburg East will adversely affect their ability to influence decisions on Mid-County Highway as well as other matters. They are concerned that a smaller geographic area will reduce the size of their "voice," that the stakeholders in Gaithersburg West will dominate, and that the level of attention and consideration given to their area and issues will be diminished (see Attachments 1, 3,and 4). The process for analyzing the viability of -- and potential alternatives to -- Mid-County Highway extended is outside the realm of any one Master Plan. Public outreach and comment are an important element of DPWT's Mid-County Corridor study and the decision-making process. Public workshops will be held (one is scheduled for December 12) and, at the appropriate time, the Planning Board and the County Council will schedule public sessions as well. In addition, at the completion of Phase 1 of the Facility Plan, the County Council will decide whether to fund Phase II of the study.

The Planning Department believes that coordinating the Gaithersburg East Master Plan with the Facility Planning study will improve, not degrade, the ability for citizens to engage in a plan update that is relevant, timely, and informed by the results and decisions that are yet to be made about Mid-County Highway. In addition to Mid-County Highway, there are issues related to the Town Sector Zone that are not imminent but that will require time, attention, and community engagement. All Master Plans, regardless of the geographic size, receive the same level of attention, consideration, public participation, and public review and comment. Planning staff will make sure that interested Montgomery Village residents are informed about and invited to public meetings for the Gaithersburg West Master Plan update. The Department will include a proposed schedule for the Gaithersburg East Master Plan update in the next Semi-Annual Report.

The Planning Department must move forward in a timely manner to address issues west of I-270, including the planned transit stations along the Corridor Cities Transitway, the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center, and the Johns Hopkins University/Belward Campus (see Attachment 8). The Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) is currently being studied by the Maryland Transit Administration as part of the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study. Updated land use recommendations for the CCT stations, including any proposed changes to the alignment, should be incorporated into the State study as soon as possible. The State prefers that land use, density, and zoning recommendations that could affect the CCT be provided through the County's approved and adopted Master Plans.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Planning Department feels strongly that maintaining the geography for the two existing Master Plans (with some adjustments) and updating them sequentially and in coordination with the relevant transportation projects is the best way to move forward. This approach is in keeping with the current Department practice of preparing Master Plans for smaller areas with a focused, cohesive set of issues that can be delivered in a timely manner. The large, scattered geography created by combining two plans is unwieldy, unmanageable, and laden with divergent, complex issues that deserve the separate focus and attention of individual Master Plan updates. Staff understands the concerns raised by Montgomery Village residents and will endeavor to involve all interested parties in the Gaithersburg West Master Plan update. At the same time, there are constituencies in Gaithersburg West, including Johns Hopkins University and property owners in the Life Sciences Center, who are seeking a streamlined planning process with a focused set of issues that can be delivered on schedule. The Department seeks the County Council's concurrence with the approach outlined herein.

NS:ha: g:\sturgeon\PB Roundtable (10-29-07)Final

### **List of Attachments**

Attachment 1:
April 24, 2007 Letter from Robert Hydorn to Chairman Hanson
May 18, 2007 Letter from Chairman Hanson to Robert Hydorn
Attachment 3:
Attachment 4:
Attachment 5:
Attachment 5:
Attachment 6:
Attachment 6:
Attachment 7:
April 24, 2007 Letter from Robert Hydorn to Council President Praisner
Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan Area (one large plan)
Mid-County Corridor Study Area/Master Plan Alignment
Mid-County Corridor Study Process and Schedule



## MONTGOMERY VILLAGE FOUNDATION, INC.

10120 APPLE RIDGE ROAD MONTGOMERY VILLAGE, MARYLAND 20886-1000

(301) 948-0110 FAX (301) 990-7071 www.mvf.org

April 24, 2007

Dr. Royce Hanson, Chairman Montgomery County Planning Board 8787 Georgia Avenue Silver Spring, MD 20910 DEGEIVE MAY 02 2007

> OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Dear Dr. Hanson:

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery Village Foundation Board of Directors to seek clarification regarding the Planning Board's consensus agreement to divide the Gaithersburg Vicinity Masterplan into two segments: East and West.

Following a presentation on April 11th by Park and Planning staff during the Planning Board's roundtable discussion on the Gaithersburg Vicinity Masterplan, the Planning Board seemed to agree with the rationale provided by staff that creating two plans for Gaithersburg is a good idea, although no formal action was taken. We understand that in order to accommodate this goal, the two existing plans, the 1990 Shady Grove Area Masterplan and the 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Masterplan, will be retained for now, but with some adjustments.

We have been told that the County Council does not typically comment on masterplan boundaries and geography, but that as part of the Planning Department's semi-annual report to the County Council on its entire work program, a schedule of the masterplans is included in this report. We understand that during this process, Council members discuss the timing of masterplans, but they are not required nor do they typically comment on boundaries.

The Montgomery Village community has not yet taken a position on dividing the Gaithersburg Vicinity Masterplan, but we would wish to be able to provide input on such important a matter.

We ask that you please confirm that what we have been told is accurate information. As a community, we want to participate in a formal decision as to whether to divide the Gaithersburg Vicinity Masterplan into two segments: East and West.

Thank you for your help with this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert Hydorn, President MVF Board of Directors

Council President Marilyn Praisner

CC:



### OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

May 18, 2007

Mr. Robert Hydorn, President Montgomery Village Foundation **Board of Directors** 10120 Apple Ridge Road Montgomery Village, Maryland 20886-1000

SUBJECT: Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan

Dear Mr. Hydorn:

I am writing in response to your April 24, 2007 letter requesting clarification of the Planning Board's decision with regard to the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan. The Planning Department is updating a series of master plans in the I-270 Corridor, including the completed 2000 Shady Grove Sector Plan (covering the area east of I-270 around the Metro station), and the White Flint, Twinbrook, Gaithersburg, and Germantown plans. All of these plans are being comprehensively coordinated through the MD 355/I-270 Technology Corridor Project.

There are two existing master plans for the Gaithersburg area: the 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan and the 1990 Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan. The 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan recommended that the Shady Grove Life Sciences area be the subject of a more in-depth future study (i.e., a separate master plan amendment). In 1988, work began on the Shady Grove Plan and culminated in 1990 with the approval of the Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan.

When the Planning Department initiated updates to the 1985 and 1990 master plans. the original intent was to combine them into one large area, spanning both sides of I-270, with the City of Gaithersburg (which has its own planning and zoning authority) in the center. This fragmented geography, however, forced together areas that have unrelated and distinct land use characteristics, that are impacted by different regional transportation projects, and that are at different stages of development. The Planning Department believes that any master plan update for the Montgomery Village area should be closely coordinated with the M-83 (Mid-County Highway) Facility Plan currently being undertaken by the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation. As you know, that Facility Plan has experienced significant delays. At the same time, the areas west of I-270 are at a point in time where a master plan update is essential. Due to approved and pending development in and around the Life Sciences Center, including the Johns Hopkins University Belward Campus and the planned Corridor Cities Transitway, the Planning Department must move forward on a timely update of the 1990 Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan.

Mr. Robert Hydorn May 18, 2007 Page Two

On April 5, 2007, as part of a series of updates on master plans, staff provided a status report on the Germantown and Gaithersburg Master Plans during the Planning Board's "Roundtable Discussion." During the Roundtable, the Planning Board takes up administrative matters as well as substantive items, which may include staff briefings and worksessions. The Planning Board does not take formal votes on issues presented and discussed as part of the Roundtable.

At the Roundtable on April 5, the Planning Board and staff discussed the issues outlined above, including the challenges of a large, fragmented geography, the need to coordinate the master plan updates with other ongoing studies, and the different stages of projects and development that result in one area that is ready to move forward with a master plan update (Gaithersburg west of I-270) and the other area (Montgomery Village/Gaithersburg east I-270) that should be coordinated with the M-83 Study, which has been delayed. The Planning Board agreed with staff that the best way for the Department to respond to these varied issues is to maintain the two existing master plans for the area and revise them sequentially (an amendment and update to the 1990 Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan followed by an amendment and update to the 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan). The Department will maintain the two existing planning areas with two separate master plan updates and processes. And, as mentioned in your letter, there will likely be some minor adjustments to the geography. In addition, at the appropriate time, staff will establish a Master Plan Advisory Group for each master plan update.

With regard to your letter's reference to the County Council's role in master plans, the Council discusses and sets the M-NCPPC work program twice a year (fall and spring) as part of the Commission's Semi-Annual Report. That report includes a master plan schedule. The County Council members may comment on any aspect of the master plan program they care to, including priorities, timing, work years allocated, or boundaries. The Council members' comments focus on the timing and delivery of master plans to the County Council, but occasionally boundaries are discussed as well.

We appreciate your interest in the master plan program and hope this letter has provided the requested clarification. We believe that the course of action outlined herein provides a logical, responsive approach to moving forward on the master plan updates for this area. We look forward to our continuing work with Montgomery Village. If you have any additional questions or comments, please contact Sue Edwards, Team Leader for the I-270 Corridor, (301-495-4518) or Nancy Sturgeon, Lead Planner for the Gaithersburg Master Plan (301-495-1308).

Sincerely,

Royce Hanson

Chairman

RH:ns:ha 2007-0493

PAGE 02/03

C.C. GO

# WHETSTONE HOMES CORPORATION

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June 28, 2007

029284

RECEIVED ROUTY COUNTY

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The Honorable Marilyn Praisner Montgomery County Council Stella B. Werner Council Office Building 100 Maryland Avenue Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Ms. Praisner:

On behalf of the Whetstone Homes Corporation Board of Directors, I am writing to express concern about the proposal that the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan be divided for planning purposes.

Our community strongly supports an expedited effort to review and update the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan, particularly as it is already several years overdue for review. We believe that further delay in initiating the review process for our area will be detrimental to our community and our residents. We do not see the proposal to divide the master plan area as a positive development for Montgomery Village, and specifically oppose the proposed division for the following reasons:

- 1. Development in the western portion of the master plan area will have a significant impact on the Village and other areas in the eastern portion of the master plan area. As we have experienced, the Planning Board does not consider nonresidents of a master plan area to be "stakeholders" in important discussions about these issues. We are concerned that our neighborhoods will be specifically excluded from meetings and conversations about the development in this area of the county, despite its potential impact on the Village.
- 2. The division of transportation impacts and costs potentially associated with the division of the master plan area could lead residents and planners to believe that costs and impacts are smaller than they actually are. The Watkins Mill Extended/I-270 Interchange study is an example of recent planning work that minimizes or hides development impacts in areas beyond the study.
- 3. Gaithersburg city is not controlled by the master plan, which is an even more urgent reason why our community desires a voice in the development levels of the property to the west.
- 4. The formulas for determining mass transit benefits and transportation needs may incorrectly conclude that existing community roads in our area need to be widened to provide transportation facilities for development. At this point, plans for mass transit place the majority of those facilities on the western side of 1-270—reducing the apparent

- 5. The pace of development should be driven by community needs rather than developer schedules. There is a perception that development to the west of I-270 is driving the need for M-83 and the push to divide the master plan area because developers do not want to wait for the M-83 studies to be completed before their developments move forward. We support the removal of M-83 from the master plan.
- 6. Division of the master plan area without approval by the County Council denies residents valuable input into the process of development and planning. County Executive Leggett has stated his opposition to dividing the master plan, as well, on the grounds that it could negatively impact the transportation balance in this portion of the county.

In conclusion, the Whetstone Homes Corporation Board of Directors supports the prompt review and update of the entire Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan as presently constituted. Your consideration of this request and response is appreciated.

Sincerely

Linc Perley.

President, Whetstone Homes Corporation Board of Directors

cc: Royce Hanson, Planning Board



# MONTGOMERY VILLAGE FOUNDATION, INC.

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July 9, 2007



OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

The Honorable Marilyn Praisner, President Montgomery County Council 100 Maryland Avenue Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Ms. Praisner:

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery Village Foundation Board of Directors to express opposition to splitting the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan for planning purposes. As you may be aware, in early April 2007 the Planning Board held a Roundtable discussion and reached a consensus agreement to maintain and revise sequentially two existing master plans: the 1990 Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan, which will represent **Gaithersburg West**, and the 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan, which will represent **Gaithersburg East**.

We believe this action will negatively impact Montgomery Village because it will reduce the geographic size of our master plan area and will, thus, reduce the size of our voice. The intent is to *remove* the following areas from the our master plan (**Gaithersburg East**): NIST, Londonerry, Oakmont Light Industrial, Rosemont, Washingtonian Light Industrial, residential areas west of Quince Orchard Road/Longdraft Road and east of Great Seneca Park, and the McGown Tract and place them *all* in the Shady Grove Area Master Plan (**Gaithersburg West**).

The revised Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan (Gaithersburg East) would be bounded by Great Seneca Park on the west, Warfield Road on the north, Woodfield Road on the east, and the northern boundary of the city of Gaithersburg on the South and would include Montgomery Village, Airpark, Webb Tract, Flower Hill, Hadley Farms, Hunters Woods, Mill Creek Town, Goshen Overlook, Sharon Woods, Goshen Run III and several other small residential neighborhoods.

The existing Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan currently includes the Life Sciences Center, Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, the Banks Farm, the Public Service Training Academy, and Washingtonian Residential. The combination of all the land parcels planned to be added to the existing Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan (Gaithersburg West) would create a geographically huge master plan.

We are concerned that there would be a significant difference in the level of attention and consideration the various interest groups in **Gaithersburg West** and **Gaithersburg East** would receive because **Gaithersburg East** residents would not be considered stakeholders in the **Gaithersburg West** plan. The powerful interest groups in the **Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan (Gaithersburg West)** would surely dominate the less powerful interest groups that would remain in the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan (**Gaithersburg East**).

The proposed changes would impact us in the following ways:

We would not have equal standing with property owners in the Shady Grove

Study Area Master Plan (Gaithersburg West) to comment on pending projects in that planning area.

- We would not have the transportation facilities available for alternatives to Highway M-83 if we have such a geographically small master plan.
- Our opinion and comments on M-83 and alternative public transportation improvements west of I-270, including the Corridor cities Transitway and Great Seneca Highway widening, would carry less weight.
- The adjacent city of Gaithersburg is controlled only by its own masterplan, which
  gives us even more reason to be concerned about our lack of standing in the
  two master plan areas that lie adjacent to the Village.
- The formulas for determining mass transit benefits and transportation needs may incorrectly conclude that county roads in our area need to be widened to provide transportation facilities for development.
- The master plan to the west would be primarily commercial, while the plan to the
  east would be primarily residential. Division of the existing Gaithersburg Vicinity
  Master Plan could easily evolve into overdevelopment on the west and place an
  unfair share of the burden of roads infrastructure on the east.

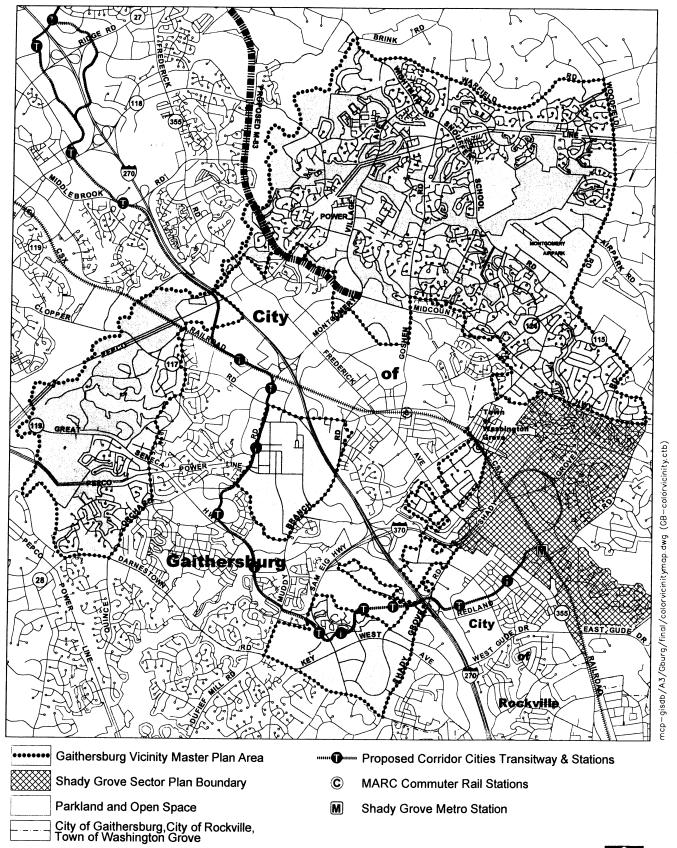
We believe the full Council should be involved in something as important as dividing a master plan and that there should be input from the citizens of Montgomery Village before so momentous a decision is made. Thank you for carefully considering our input on this matter.

Sincerely,

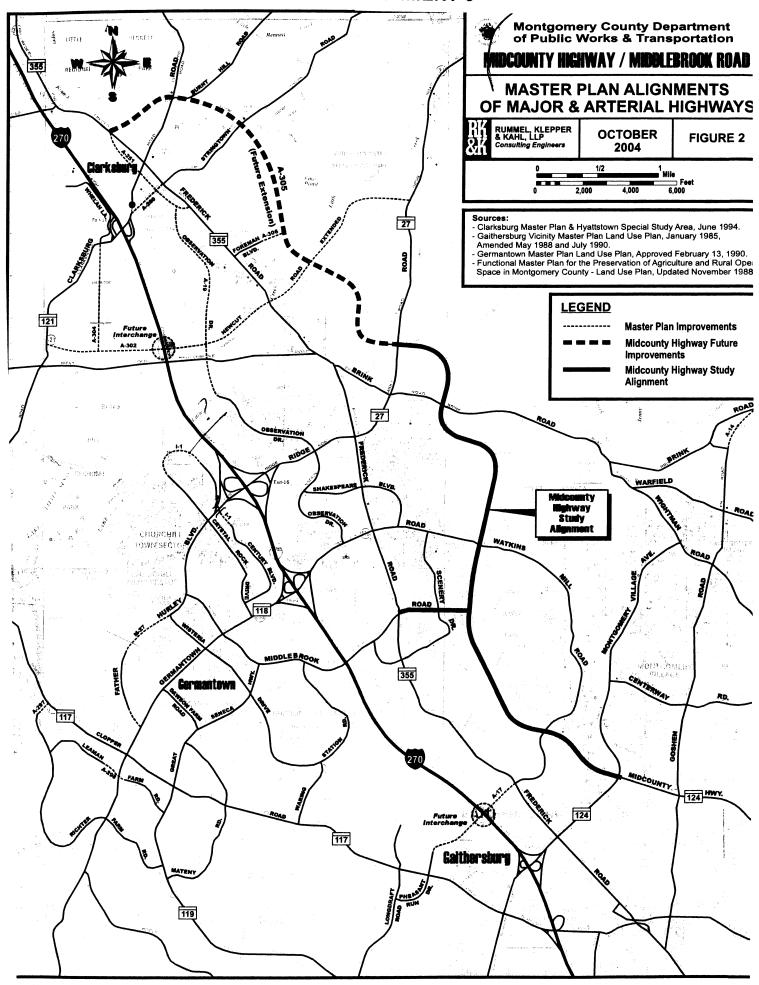
Robert Hydorn, President MVF Board of Directors

cc: Dr. Royce Hanson

# **Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan Area**

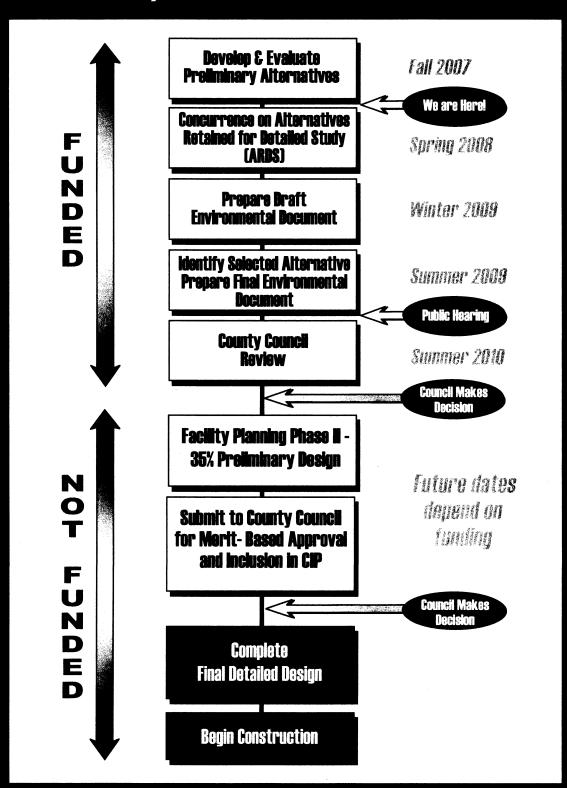


**IIIIIIIIII** Proposed Extension of M-83

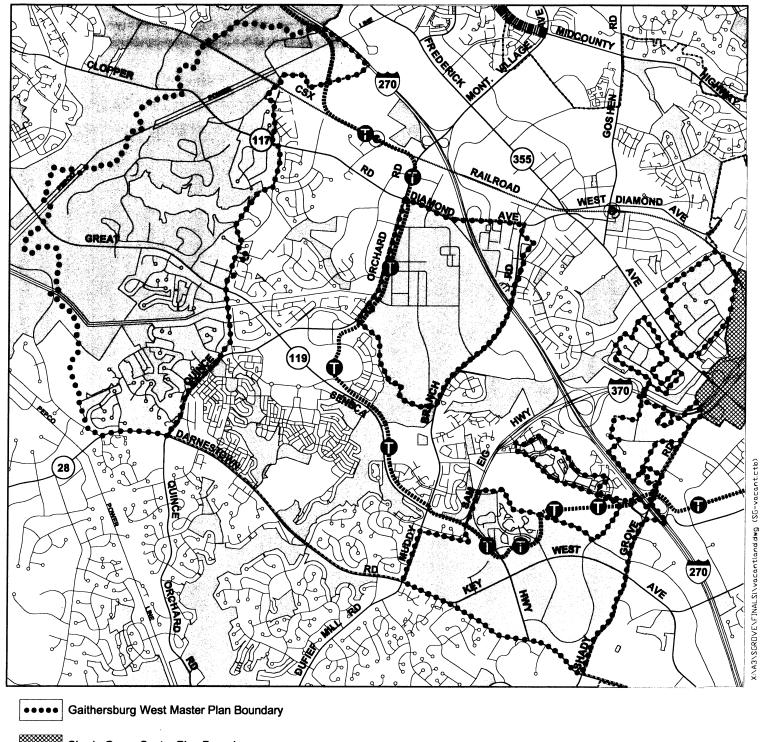


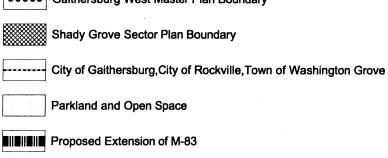


# Midcounty Corridor Study Study Process and Schedule



### **Gaithersburg West Master Plan**







MARC Commuter Rail Stations

**(c)**