

Draft Planning Board Draft White Flint Sector Plan

June 2009

Planning Board Draft White Flint Sector Plan

ABSTRACT

This White Flint Sector Plan focuses on land use, appropriate density and mobility for a 430 acre land area around the White Flint Metro station. This Plan contains the text and supporting maps for a comprehensive amendment to the approved and adopted 1992 *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan*, as amended. It also amends *The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland –Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties*, as amended, the *Master Plan of Highways within Montgomery County*, as amended, and the *Master Plan of Bikeways*, as amended. This Plan makes recommendations for land use, zoning, and urban design, transportation, and community facilities.

SOURCE OF COPIES

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bi-county agency created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission’s geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties; the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission is charged with preparing, adopting, and amending or extending *The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland –Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties*.

The Commission operates in each county through Planning Boards appointed by the county government. The Boards are responsible for preparing all local plans, zoning amendments, subdivision regulations, and the administration of parks.

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The White Flint Sector Plan

Prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Department

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

8787 Georgia Avenue

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

Approved by the Montgomery County Council

Date

Adopted by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

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The Plan Process

A plan provides comprehensive recommendations for the use of public and private land. Each plan reflects a vision of the future that responds to the unique character of the local community within the context of a countywide perspective. Together with relevant policies, plans guide public officials and private individuals when making land use decisions.

The **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT PLAN** is the formal proposal to amend an adopted master plan or sector plan. Its recommendations are not necessarily those of the Planning Board; it is prepared for the purpose of receiving public testimony. The Planning Board holds a public hearing and receives testimony, after which it holds public worksessions to review the testimony and revise the Public Hearing Draft Plan as appropriate. When the Planning Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Planning Board Draft Plan.

The **PLANNING BOARD DRAFT PLAN** is the Planning Board's recommended Plan and reflects its revisions to the Public Hearing Draft Plan. The Regional District Act requires the Planning Board to transmit a sector plan to the County Council with copies to the County Executive who must, within sixty days, prepare and transmit a fiscal impact analysis of the Planning Board Draft Plan to the County Council. The County Executive may also forward to the County Council other comments and recommendations.

After receiving the Executive's fiscal impact analysis and comments, the County Council holds a public hearing to receive public testimony. After the hearing record is closed, the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee holds public worksessions to review the testimony and makes recommendations to the County Council. The Council holds its own worksessions, and then adopts a resolution approving the Planning Board Draft Plan, as revised.

After Council approval the plan is forwarded to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for adoption. Once adopted by the Commission, the plan officially amends the master plans, functional plans, and sector plans cited in the Commission's adoption resolution.

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The Vision

This Sector Plan's vision is transformational. The Plan explores how a suburban development pattern can be reconstituted into an urban place. An urban place is dependent on people and activity. People walk from their homes to work, shops and, transit; offices and plazas are full of workers during the day. At night and on weekends people attend the theater, visit galleries, and eat out. In the summer, people are out enjoying evening activities. This is a place where different lifestyles converge to make urban living interesting, challenging, and exciting. The proposed cultural and retail destinations in and around the civic core, the open space system, and walkable street grid unite to energize White Flint. From this energy, White Flint will become a vibrant and sustainable urban center that can adapt and respond to existing and future challenges.

There are few locations remaining in Montgomery County where excellent transit service and redevelopment potential coincide. The MD 355/I-270 Corridor is a historic travel and trade route that links communities in Montgomery County to those in Frederick County. In the last 30 years the corridor has emerged as a prime location for advanced technology and biotechnology industries with regional shopping and cultural destinations. White Flint fits squarely into Montgomery County's General Plan and long range policies as the place to accommodate a substantial portion of the region's projected growth, especially housing. This Plan recommends adding more residential capacity near existing transit facilities to balance land uses in the MD 355/I-270 Corridor. A substantial housing resource at White Flint is well situated to support the planned expansion of federal facilities in White Flint (National Regulatory Commission) and Bethesda (National Institutes of Health/Base Realignment and Closure) and provide a sufficient supply of housing options to serve county residents throughout their stages of life.

White Flint was first proposed as an urban, mixed-use community at the center of North Bethesda more than 30 years ago with the extension of Metro Rail service. The envisioned transformation from a suburban, car-oriented series of strip shopping centers into an urban, transit-oriented mixed-use area has begun, but slowly and in scattered pockets. The automobile still dominates, especially along Rockville Pike and the pedestrian experience in most of White Flint is barely tolerable. Recent projects, such as the Conference Center, The Sterling and the North Bethesda Center have created urban block patterns with buildings oriented towards the streets, provided destination uses, and an improved pedestrian experience. More needs to be done to connect these urban pockets, to introduce civic functions and open space, and to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.

Given the reality of future energy constraints and the effects of climate change, growth must take advantage of existing infrastructure, especially transit, to create compact new communities where reliance on the automobile is unnecessary. Growth should be directed to those places where a reduction in the carbon footprint is possible, like White Flint, and where the infrastructure can support a sustainable, culturally diverse urban center outside the well-established central business districts.

County-wide Land Use and Transportation Policies

This vision is consistent with the County Council's April 2003 10-year Transportation Policy Report, which supports a land use policy promoting new opportunities for living closer to work, especially near Metrorail stations. Furthermore, this vision is consistent with regional planning efforts to improve the job to housing ratio. The proposed target for jobs to housing in the 10 year Transportation Policy Report is 1.18 jobs to 1.00 units for an area smaller than the Sector Plan area. The current job-housing ratio in White Flint is about 9 jobs to 1 unit, based on the approved and existing development. This Plan recommends the approval of 9,800 new units, which is a substantial increase in housing resources in the I-270 Corridor.

Figure 1: I-279/MD 355 Corridor

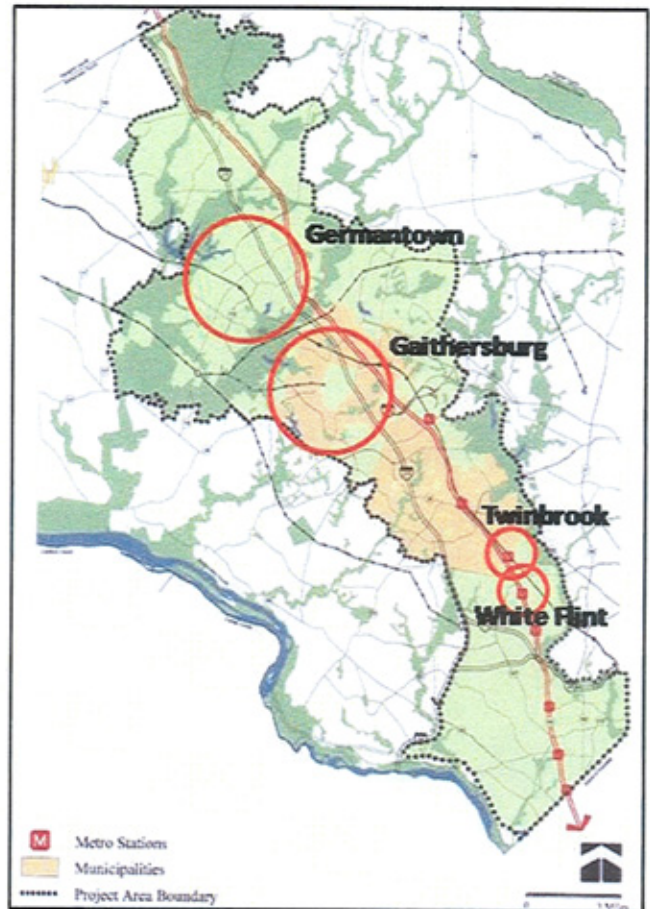


Table 1: Proposed Development and Jobs Housing Ratio in the White Flint Sector Plan area				
	Existing	Approved	Proposed	TOTAL
Residential Units	2,321	2,220	9,800	14,341
Non-residential SF	5.0 M	1. 8M	5.69M	12.98 M
Non-residential SF converted into jobs	22,800	6700	19,100	48,600
Jobs/Housing Ratio	9.85/1	3.03/1	1.9/1	3.2/1

MD 355: NORTH BETHESDA

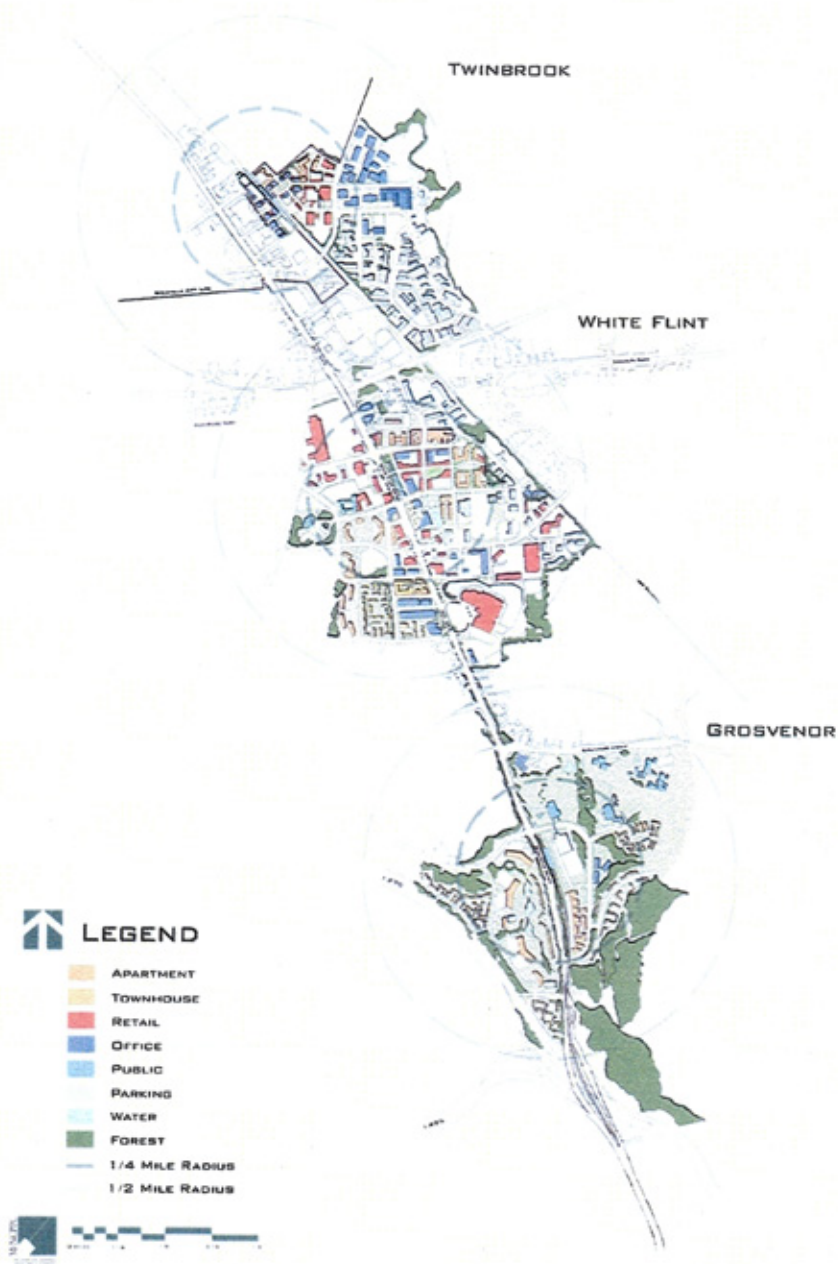


Figure 2: MD 355: North Bethesda

Background

High-density land uses were first considered in the White Flint Area when the Montrose Road/Nicholson Lane area had been identified as a mass transit line/station primary impact area during the planning stages for the Metro rail system. By 1978, the planning concept evolved into a mixed-use center concept within a 200 acre area at the Metro station. At that time, approximately 63 percent of the 200 acre study area was zoned R-90, a low-density residential zone. Mid-Pike Plaza was the E. J. Korvettes Shopping Center and the high-rise Forum was the only residential development. The 1978 Plan recommended transit mixed use floating zones (TS-R and TS-M) at a 2.0 FAR density within a half-mile radius of the Metro station and the C-2, I-1, and OM zones for those properties not recommended for mixed-uses.

The 1992 re-examination of the same 200 acres added a street grid, extended the use of the TS-R and TS-M zones to C-2 zoned properties, and rezoned I-1 properties to I-4 to limit the development of industrial zones with office uses. Five years later, in 1997, the County Council approved an amendment to advance the development of the Conference Center on the west side of Rockville Pike across from the Metro station as a centerpiece public/private partnership. These planning efforts established the framework for the urban center concept and placed an important public resource at the core.

What has triggered this Sector Plan evaluation? The 1978 and 1992 plans recommended floating zones to accomplish mixed-use development. Several property owners pursued rezoning, most did not. There was little incentive for property owners to seek a change from the existing C-2 zoning. The C-2 zone, although it has a 42-foot height limit, has few development standards and allows many uses. Market forces must remain strong for developers to risk a lengthy rezoning development process that typically takes at least a few years. A recent C-2 zone text amendment allowing residential development with taller building heights underscores the interest in achieving mixed uses without requesting rezoning. When a zone intended for a single purpose, such as the C-2 zone, evolves into a mixed-use zone, redevelopment may yield desired uses but undesirable development patterns as a result of the few development standards.

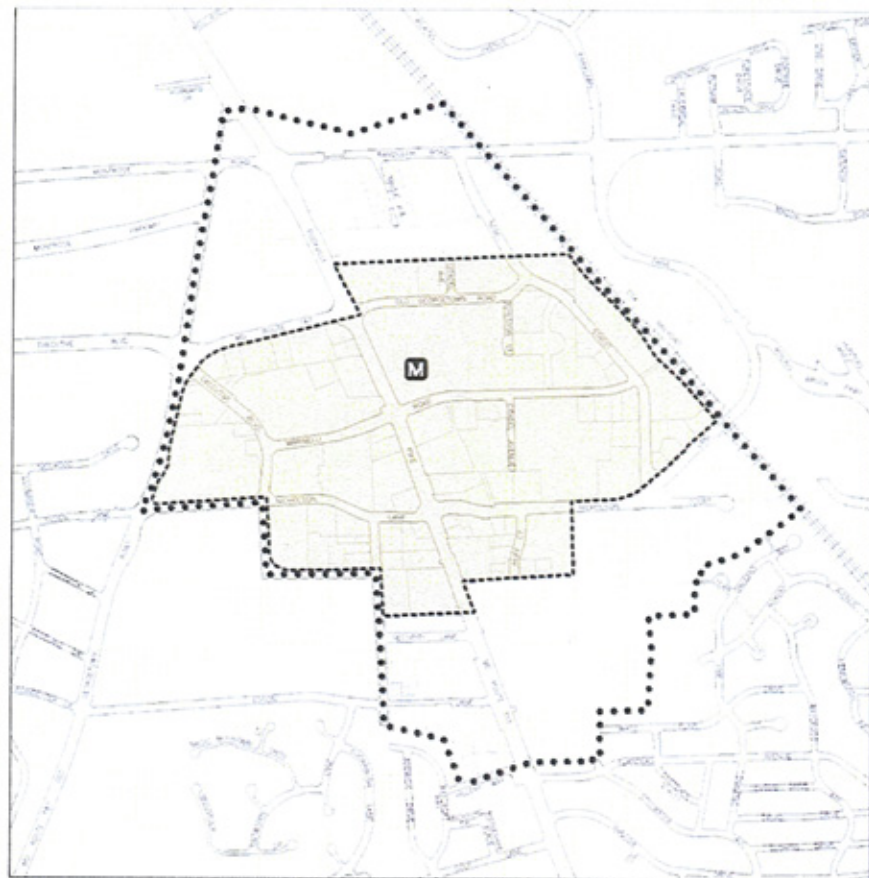
This Plan expands the original study area to 430 acres bounded by the CSX tracks, Montrose Parkway, Old Georgetown Road and the White Flint Mall. Even though the study area has doubled, all of it lies within a ¼-mile radius of the Metro station, which, in an urban context, is a walkable distance. This Sector Plan examines whether more, if not all, of the Plan area should be zoned for mixed uses. There is ample space to establish edges and to ensure that new development transitions are compatible with adjoining residential communities.

The Sector Plan area is split by Rockville Pike, which follows a ridgeline dividing the Cabin John (west) and Rock Creek (east) watersheds. The topography east and west of the Pike descends about 25 feet from the ridge line. Since there is more contiguous underdeveloped land area east of Rockville Pike than west, the east has greater potential for the creation of new neighborhoods. Development constraints include a large water main and 80-foot wide safety zone underneath Nicholson Lane and the

50-foot WMATA tunnel easement along Rockville Pike. Both these facilities pose problems for building placement.

Figure 3: Plan Boundaries and Metro Station Policy Area

Plan Boundaries and Metro Station Policy Area



••••• 2008 Sector Plan Area Boundary

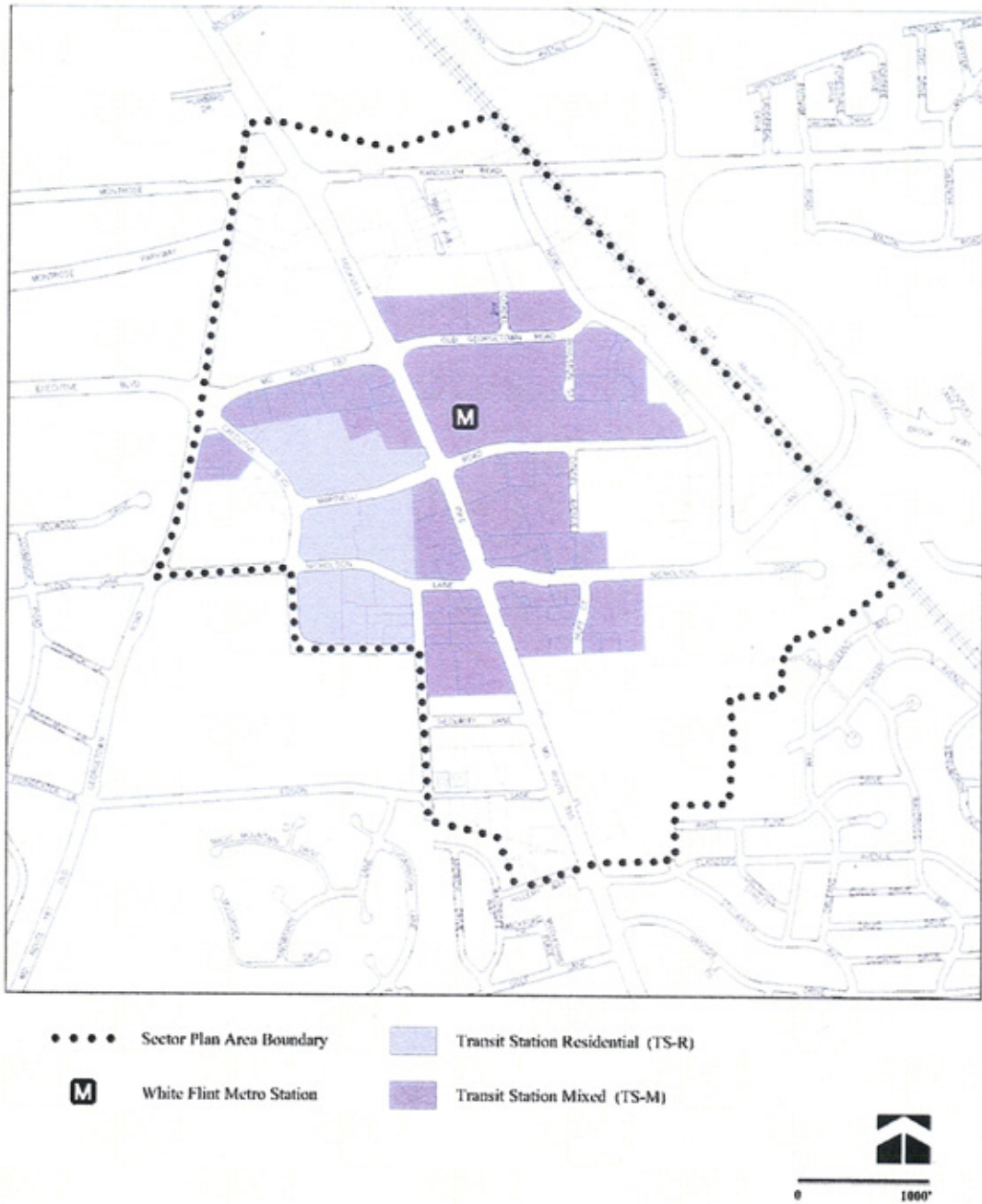
M White Flint Metro Station

--- 1992 Sector Plan Boundary & Metro Station Policy Area



Figure 4: 1992 Master Plan Rezoning Areas

1992 Master Plan Rezoning Areas



Demographic Profile and Housing Resources

Compared to the residents of Montgomery County as a whole, residents of the White Flint Sector Plan are generally older, less diverse, wealthier, highly educated, and more likely to live alone in a rental unit in a multi-family. More than half of the residents of White Flint live and work in Montgomery County, 28 % work in the District of Columbia and more than 20% use transit. Households in White Flint spend 30% of their income on housing, which is less than the 47% countywide. Forty percent of the households do not have families and 38 % live alone. Apartments are in higher demand. There was a 3.5 % apartment vacancy rate in 2006, compared to the county rate of 4.3%. There are no nursing homes or group homes within a half mile of the Metro station

The area for the demographic and housing analysis was twice the size of the sector plan area. Within the analysis area, there are about 18,720 residents, 3,000 detached units, 1,140 townhouses, 2,900 garden apartments and 1,755 high-rise units. Within the Sector Plan portion there are 2,321 existing and 2,220 approved dwelling units, all of which are high-rises. More than 1,000 of the existing units in the sector plan area are rental units. There are 469 existing and approved moderately priced dwelling units.

	Total Existing	Existing MPDUs (for sale and rent)	Total Approved	Approved MPDUs	Total Proposed	Proposed MPDUs (12.5%)	Proposed workforce (10%)	TOTAL Affordable Housing Units
Dwelling units	2,321	211	2,220	258	9,800	1,225	980	2,674