



Scope of Work for the Westbard Sector Plan



John Marcolin, Planner/Coordinator, john.marcolin@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495-4547



Robert Kronenberg, Chief, Area 1, Robert.kronenberg@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495-2187



Marc DeOcampo, Supervisor, Area 1, Marc.deocampo@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495-4556

Fred Boyd, Planner/Coodinator, fred.boyd@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495-4654

Melissa Williams, Queen, Melissa.williams@montgomeyplanning.org 301 495-4642

Paul Mortensen, Senior Urban Designer, paul.mortensen@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495-4523

Rick Liu, Economic and Development Specialist, rick.liu@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 650-5641

Matt Folden, Planner/Coordinator, matthew.folden@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495-4539

David Anspacher, Planner/Coordinator, david.anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495-2191

Katherine Nelson, Planner/Coordinator, Katherine.nelson@montgomeryplanning.org 301 495-4622

Marco Fuster, Senior Planner, marco.fuster@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495-4521

Mark Wallis, Planner Coordinator, mark.wallis@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 650-4389

Susanne Paul, Senior Planner, Susanne.paul@montgomeryplanning.org, 3011 650-4392

Completed: 10.22.14

Description

The attached Scope of Work defines the Plan's boundaries and area to be studied. It discusses the Plan's context, the planning framework, the outreach effort, the plan vision and goals and the project timeline.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed Scope of Work

Introduction

The Westbard area is located within close commuting distance to Washington, DC, Friendship Heights and the Bethesda Central Business District and connected by the Capital Crescent trail, Little Falls Parkway and River Road.

Commercial Development

Westbard is a mid-20th-century mixed-use district that developed initially as industrial land bisected by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad's Metro Southern or Georgetown Branch. Construction of the rail line began in 1892, but the section west of Connecticut Avenue to Georgetown wasn't completed until 1910. The Georgetown Branch was part of a B&O effort to create a new southern gateway into Virginia. Ultimately, that plan for the route to cross the Potomac River (along a bridge that would have been near today's Dalecarlia water treatment facility off MacArthur Boulevard) was abandoned when a competing railway made their bridge over the Potomac River available. The rail line supported industrial uses in Washington, supplying coal to a power plant in Georgetown as well as the light industrial uses in the Westbard area that could take advantage of rail proximity. The B&O Railroad originally intended the line to have passenger service, but this use never materialized, and the line was used exclusively for freight, thus spurring Westbard's initial development as an industrial center.

Residential Development

The first significant residential development in the Westbard area did not arrive until the 1920s, when the Kennedy-Chamberlin Development Company created the Kenwood County Club and constructed the adjacent Kenwood subdivision. Extreme demand for development in the post-World War II era led to the transformation of greater Bethesda from farmland to more populated subdivisions. The County's population grew from under 90,000 in 1946 to nearly 580,000 by 1974. Surrounding Westbard are the suburban neighborhoods of Springfield, Sumner and Massachusetts Avenue Hills that date largely from the 1950s.

Within 15 years during the 1950s and 1960s, Westbard was transformed into a mixed-use center. Dating from the 1950s are the public facilities on Westbard Avenue of Western High School (1951) (now Westland Middle School) and Little Falls Library (1959), and a cluster of churches along Massachusetts Avenue: Little Flower Catholic Church (1952), Pilgrim Lutheran (1957), and Saint Dunstan's Episcopal (1958). In the 1960s came apartment buildings, including Park Bethesda (1965) and commercial businesses with Westwood Shopping Center (1960), Bowlmor (1965) and Westwood Manor Care (1965).

Original African Community – post Civil War era

In the years following the Civil War, an African American community resided near the Little Falls Branch and River Road during Westbard's early years. One of the oldest buildings in Westbard, the Macedonia Baptist Church (1920) at 5119 River Road, may be among the only extant buildings associated with this community.

Neighborhood Context

The most significant change since the present Sector Plan was approved in 1982 has been the abandonment of the freight rail line that bisected the community and its replacement with the Capital Crescent Trail, which now includes a bridge over River Road. The trail is one of the lower County's most attractive amenities, allowing hikers and bikers to travel for leisure or commuting from Bethesda to points in the District of Columbia.

The mix of residential, office and industrial uses that characterized Westbard at the time of the 1982 Plan remains in place today. River Road is devoted largely to residential and retail uses, including Whole Foods and American Plant Food. Interior properties along the trail right-of-way are used for auto service, light industrial and other services. The Westwood Building on Westbard Avenue, used as offices when the 1982 Plan was completed, has been converted to residences, and has been used for student housing in recent years. The Westwood Shopping Center remains a neighborhood shopping destination.

Planning Framework

The Westbard Planning Area is included in the larger Bethesda –Chevy Chase Sector Plan. It reiterates five important policies of the Westbard Sector Plan:

1. Reaffirm and strengthen the residential character of the neighborhoods surrounding Westbard. The Sector Plan reserves park use on the eastern border and ensures that other peripheral and transitional uses are compatible with the adjacent communities.
2. Reduce commuter traffic that cuts through residential neighborhoods. The Sector Plan supports the extension of traffic controls, such as those established by Somerset and Kenwood, provided they do not create greater problems. Improved

traffic operations on River Road and improvements at the intersection of Ridgefield Road and Little Falls Parkway are supported.

3. Prevent spillover parking by area employees within neighborhoods. If a problem develops, the Sector Plan suggests two-hour parking limits and the creation of residential parking permit districts as possible remedies.
4. Improve pedestrian circulation and make it less hazardous. The Sector Plan calls for an Urban Boulevard and Gateway Improvement Project along River Road to improve pedestrian movement and to make the area more attractive.
5. Establish measures to abate noise emanating from the commercial/industrial area that affects nearby residents. The Sector Plan suggests several ways that this goal might be accomplished.

The 1982 Westbard Sector Plan was prompted by citizen concern that incompatible land use changes could take place under the existing zoning designations in the late 1970s. The main issue was that changes to land uses under the heavy industrial zoning designation would pose a threat to the already overburdened roadways. The prevailing heavy industrial zoning (I-2) appeared to threaten otherwise sound residential areas with incompatible land uses. The heavy industrial zoning would limit the kinds of uses that landowners felt were justified and marketable under private redevelopment (1982 Westbard Sector Plan, page 2).

The Plan's goal of eliminating incompatible heavy industrial uses adjacent to the existing single-family homes and encouraging the types of uses that better served the residents and landowners of Westbard have been largely fulfilled over the 32-year life of the Plan.

The design concepts focused on improving the public realm, as depicted below, were for the most part, unfulfilled. These design recommendations involved the following:

1. Streetscape improvements on River Road and side streets;
2. Gateway features into the Westbard area;
3. Improving the existing Willett Branch stream valley that runs through the Sector Plan area;
4. Creating an urban park at the corner of Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road; and

5. Creating a major commercial/retail development on Westbard Avenue.

The fundamental reasons that these improvements did not occur is that they were mostly non-funded County Capital Improvement Projects and/or the market did not make major redevelopment feasible.

Community Snapshot

The Westbard summary study area, an approximately one-mile radius area around Westbard, has a population of 19, 960 and 9,300 households. The largest part is made up of persons 55 year and older (42.7%), followed by persons in the 35 - 49 year old age group

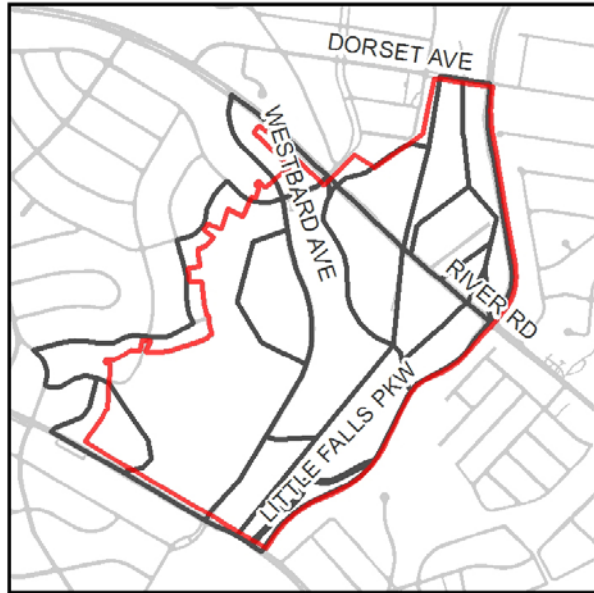
Population and Households (2010)

Source: US Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, Summary File 1; Research & Special Projects, Montgomery County Planning Department.

	Westbard						Westbard						
	SUMMARY PLAN		SUMMARY STUDY		COUNTY		SUMMARY PLAN		SUMMARY STUDY		COUNTY		
	AREA	AREA	AREA	AREA	COUNTY	AREA	AREA	AREA	AREA	COUNTY	COUNTY		
POPULATION (2010)	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent	HOUSEHOLDS (2010)	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent
Total population (% of County)	1,967	0.2	19,960	2.1	971,777		Housing units (% of County)	1,188	0.3	9,299	2.5	375,905	
Age Distribution							Households (% of housing units)	1,065	0.3	8,723	2.3	357,086	95.0
0-4 years	76	3.9	1,061	5.3	63,732	6.6	Tenure						
5-19 years	231	11.7	3,684	18.5	188,825	19.4	Owner-occupied	436	40.9	5,873	67.3	241,465	67.6
20-24 years	165	8.4	821	4.1	54,031	5.6	Renter-occupied	629	59.1	2,850	32.7	115,621	32.4
25-34 years	331	16.8	1,793	9.0	132,393	13.6	Households by Type						
35-49 years	374	19.0	4,080	20.4	218,387	22.5	Family households	424	39.8	5,211	59.7	244,898	68.6
50-64 years	326	16.6	4,322	21.7	194,640	20.0	Nonfamily households	641	60.2	3,512	40.3	112,188	31.4
65 years and older	464	23.6	4,199	21.0	119,769	12.3	Household Size						
Race and Hispanic Origin Combined							1-person	529	49.7	2,929	33.6	89,264	25.0
Not Hispanic:	1,752	89.1	18,631	93.3	806,379	83.0	2-persons	331	31.1	2,900	33.2	108,694	30.4
White	1,250	63.5	16,062	80.5	478,765	49.3	3-persons	128	12.0	1,157	13.3	60,216	16.9
Black	144	7.3	571	2.9	161,689	16.6	4 or more persons	77	7.2	1,737	19.9	98,912	27.7
Asian or Pacific Islander	278	14.1	1,386	6.9	135,104	13.9	Average household size	1.80		2.28		2.70	
Other race	80	4.1	612	3.1	30,821	3.2	Owner-occupied	1.76		2.45		2.81	
Hispanic or Latino (<i>may be of any race</i>)	215	10.9	1,329	6.7	165,398	17.0	Renter-occupied	1.83		1.95		2.47	

The 2010 US Census data is compiled from block level data aggregating 19 blocks for the WestbardSector Plan 1982 Boundary and 259 blocks for the Study Area.

Westbard Summary Plan Area Boundary -
Census Blocks for 2010 Data



Westbard 1982 Plan Boundary Census Blocks

Westbard Census Block Data for 2010

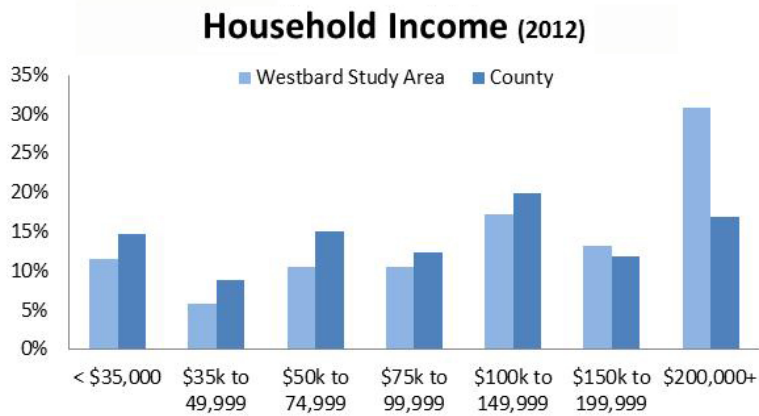
Summary Study Area with
259 Census Blocks



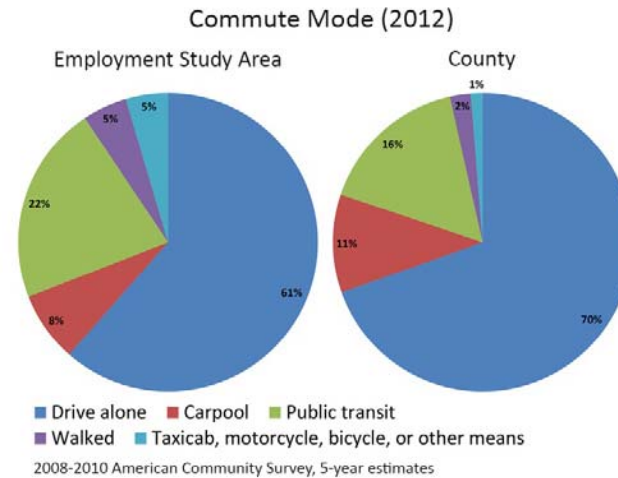
Westbard 1982 Plan Boundary Census Blocks

Summary Study Area with 259 Census Blocks

(20.4%). The annual median income is \$199,598, which is approximately \$69,000 higher than the County average. The community is approximately 81% white, 7% Hispanic or Latino with the remaining 12% being Black, Asian or other. The number of people commuting to work within one mile radius of the Sector Plan via public transit, or who walk, bike or use other means is 61% and 39% respectively.



2008-2012 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates



2008-2010 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates

Outreach

Meeting	When	Where
Zoning and Sector Plan Primer	Thursday, June 12, 2014	Unitarian Church, River Road
Information Table	Saturday, Sept 6	Giant Food Store - Westbard
Information Table	Saturday, Sept 13	Wholefoods - Westbard
Food Truck Rally	Saturday, Sept 20	Giant Food Store - Westbard
Kick-off and Opportunities and Constraints meeting	Tuesday, Sept, 23	Walt Whitman HS Cafeteria
Meeting with WMCCAB	Monday, October 6, 2014	Regional Services Center
Meeting with CCCFH	Thursday, October 9, 2014	Somerset Town Hall
Brief Community on Scope of Work	Thursday, October 21, 2014	Walt Whitman HS Cafeteria

Future Meetings

Meeting	When	Where
Charrette	November 10-14	Westbard II Shopping Center
Presentation of PlanWestbard Charrette findings	Tuesday, November 18	Westland Middle School
Brief Planning Board on Charrette and Outcomes	Thursday, December 18	Planning Board, Silver Spring, MD

Why are we doing this?

The Planning Department is addressing the demand for infill development in the inner ring urban areas of Montgomery County by commissioning smaller area plans that are more fine-grained and detailed to focus on the demands and opportunities within the specific area. They look at opportunities afforded by the large open areas that are characteristic of the strip mall developments that predominate in many of these older urban areas. These areas are typically auto-oriented places that are not pedestrian-friendly.

Vision

The Sector Plan vision looks to transform these auto-oriented suburban development patterns into urban centers of residences and businesses where people walk and bike to work, shops and community services.

The Big Picture

- Preserving the smaller scale
- Low Density
- Mixed Use
- Diversity
- Affordability

Specific Goals

1. Embrace the community character of Westbard and Improve the sense of place

- Create a plan framework that will support development at a small town scale
- Identify potential historic or cultural resources that can strengthen the identity of the Westbard area

2. Maintain and enhance neighborhood oriented commercial character

- Maintain existing locally serving retail establishments
- Maintain access to community serving light industrial uses
- Study the commercial needs in Westbard to determine the market needs
- Explore areas in the retail demographic that are underserved

3. Ensure the infrastructure meets current and future demands

- Consider the impact that additional housing units will have on traffic and school capacity in the Westbard area
- Analyze the effects of additional housing through County and State agencies as well as the Planning Department's Research and Transportation divisions
- Work with the Montgomery County Public Schools to assess existing school capacity
- Explore potential school sites if found warranted

4. Address environmental issues and promote sustainable growth

- Address environmentally sensitive resources and areas
- Explore ways to mitigate noise impacts and air pollution
- Discover incentives for new developers to maintain existing business establishments as they grow

5. Improve Pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic connections

- Evaluate ways for making River Road and Westbard multi-modal means of transportation
- Explore pedestrian and bicycle connections linking residential areas with the Capital Crescent Trail, existing and future commercial areas and existing private and public schools.

- Seek ways to improve pedestrian safety

6. Add public gathering spaces

- Research ways that additional parks and recreation spaces can be included in the Westbard Sector Plan area.
- Provide a centrally located community gathering space(s)

7. Provide a variety of housing options

- Affordable housing
- Age-restricted housing and age-in-place housing
- Young Adults
- Workforce housing

Sector Plan Boundaries

The 1982 Sector Plan Boundaries included the commercial and light industrial areas within the Westbard area, as well as the multi-family buildings located there. It excluded the surrounding single family neighborhoods. After reviewing the 1982 Sector Plan and the existing conditions on the ground today, the planners determined that the boundaries should not be enlarged to include single-family homes nor should they be decreased in a way that would exclude any of the commercial or multi-family residential areas. The 1982 Westbard Sector Plan boundaries were well selected and will be maintained in the current Sector Plan update. Specifically:

- The current boundaries (1982 Sector Plan) exclude existing neighborhoods of single-family homes.
- To enlarge the boundaries would necessarily include properties currently zoned R-60, creating the concern that those properties might be rezoned.
- The current boundaries follow the natural demarcation that exists today between commercial and residential uses. The present Sector Plan effort does not intend to change that boundary.
- To shrink the existing boundaries would create areas that would not be covered by a Sector Plan and could require an update to the larger Bethesda –Chevy Chase Sector Plan.



Sector Plan Boundaries

Project Timeline

Initiated in July 2014, the Westbard Sector Plan is scheduled to be transmitted to the County Council and the County Executive at the end of July 2015. The work schedule and products are outlined below. Staff will continue to work with the community, civic leaders, business and land owners, and public agencies in the coming months. These meetings will be essential to ensuring that all the stakeholders have been engaged in the planning process.

Planning Board Review March 2015 - July 2015

Planning Board Public Hearing May 2015

Conduct the Planning Board's public hearing to receive public testimony.

Planning Board Worksessions and Planning Board Draft June 2015 – July 2015

Planning Board worksessions to review testimony and discuss issues raised during the public hearing. Prepare the Planning Board Draft for transmittal to the County Council and the Executive at the end of July 2015

County Executive Review August – September 2015

The Executive will review the Plan's recommendations, prepare a fiscal analysis, and transmit comments to the County Council.

County Council Review, including Public Hearing and PHED Committee and County Council Worksessions

October - December 2015

The County Council tour of the Plan area and public hearing on the Planning Board Draft followed by the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) committee work sessions. The PHED committee will make recommendations to the full Council on the Planning Board Draft. County Council worksessions to review the PHED Committee's recommendations, amend the Planning Board draft as needed, and approve the Plan through a Council Resolution, delineating changes to the Planning Board Draft Plan.

Implementation Spring 2016

Full Commission Adoption of the Planning Board Approved Plan
Spring 2016

Sectional Map Amendment

Summer 2016

Prepare and file the Sectional Map Amendment to implement the Plan’s zoning recommendations and obtain County Council’s approval after public hearing and review by the Planning Board and the County Council.

	2014				2015						2016						
	Summer		Fall		Winter		Spring		Summer		Fall						
Kickoff Meeting/Opportunities and Constraints Workshop			23-Sep														
Scope to Community				21-Oct													
Scope of Work to Board				30-Oct													
4 Day Charrette					Nov 10-14												
Report to Board					18-Dec												
Prepare Preliminary Recommendations																	
Preliminary Recommendations to Board																	
Staff Draft to Board																	
Public Hearing																	
Work Sessions																	
County Council & County Executive																	

Project Timeline