






Rock Spring Master Plan: Briefing and Preliminary Staff Recommendations

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Completed: 07/21/2016

Description

Staff will update the Planning Board on the Rock Spring Master Plan, including preliminary recommendations for land use and zoning; transportation and connectivity; sustainability; community facilities; and parks and open space.

Staff Recommendation: Discussion

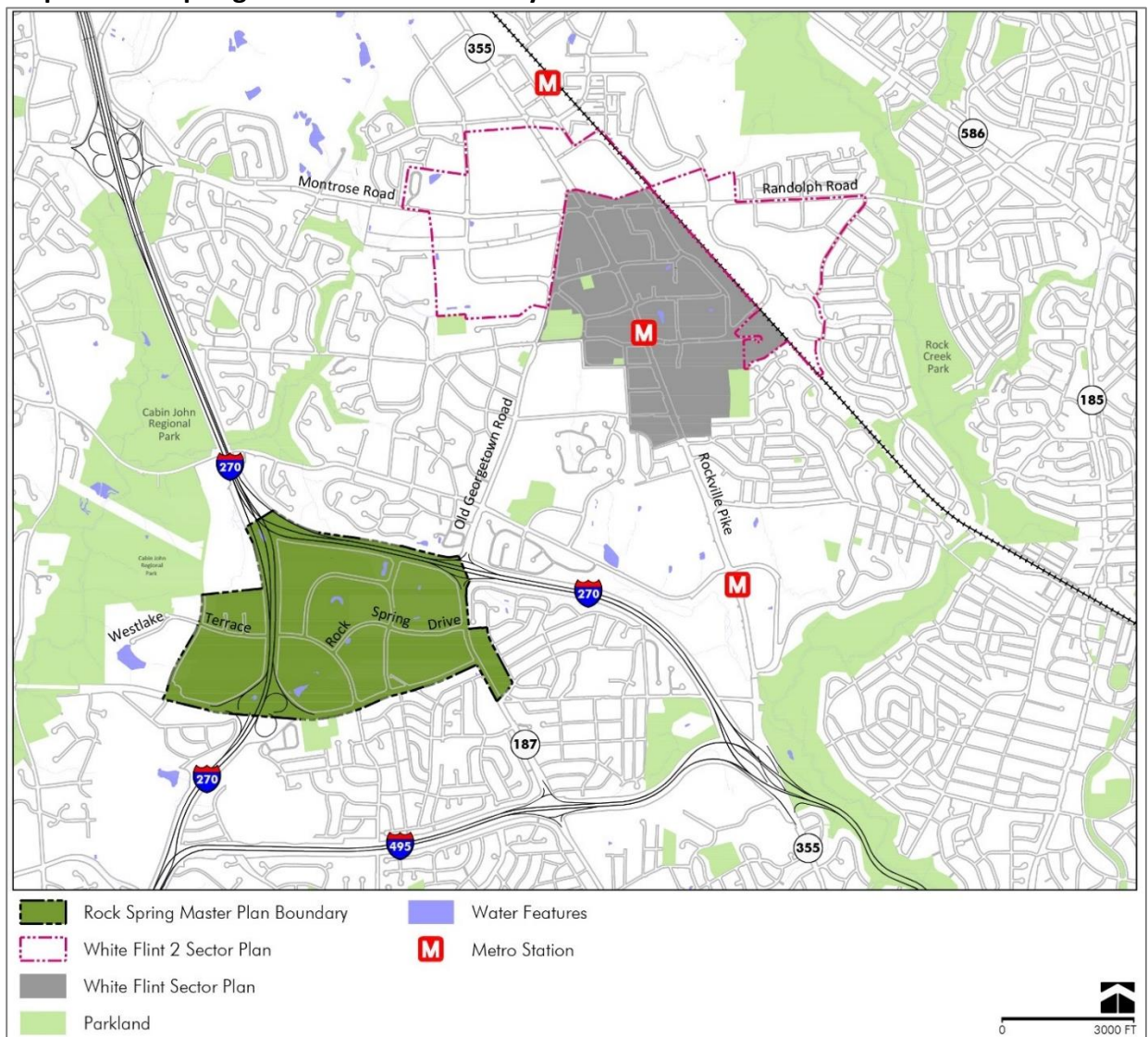
Summary

The Rock Spring Master Plan began in June 2015 and the Planning Board approved the Scope of Work on October 8, 2015. A community kick off meeting was held on September 1, 2015. Since that time, there have been seven additional community meetings as well as various individual and small group meetings. On May 26, 2016, Planning staff provided the Board with a briefing on the status of both the Rock Spring Master Plan and the White Flint 2 Sector Plan. Presentation of the Working Draft to the Planning Board is scheduled for September 15, 2016.

INTRODUCTION

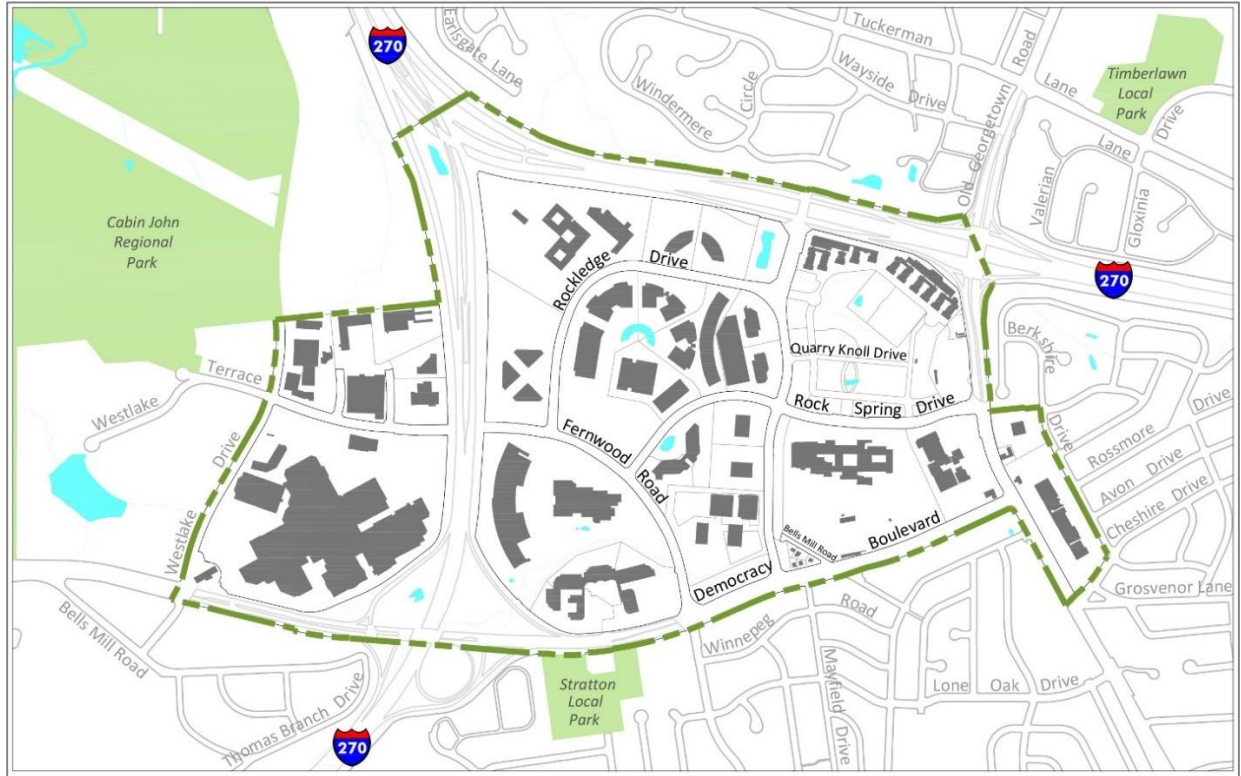
In accordance with the work program established by the County Council, the Planning Department initiated the Rock Spring Master Plan in June 2015, and the Planning Board approved the Scope of Work on October 8, 2015. At the Semi-Annual meeting on April 5, 2016, the Council aligned the schedules for the Rock Spring Master Plan and the White Flint 2 Sector Plan so that they are essentially concurrent. The plans are geographically close to one another (less than two miles apart; see Map 1) and the issues in the two areas are similar. Community members in both plan areas expressed a desire that the Planning Department take a holistic view of potential development impacts, particularly regarding schools. Both plans are within the Walter Johnson cluster.

Map 1: Rock Spring and White Flint 2 Study Areas



The boundaries for the Master Plan are I-270 to the north, Old Georgetown Road to the east, Democracy Boulevard to the south, and Westlake Drive to the west (see Map 2). Rock Spring has direct access to the I-270 spur via Democracy Boulevard and I-270 via Rockledge Boulevard. The area also has access from Democracy Boulevard and Old Georgetown Road. Roads through the Master Plan area include Rock Spring Drive, Fernwood Road, and Westlake Terrace.

Map 2: Rock Spring Master Plan Area



The majority of the proposed Rock Spring Master Plan area was included in the 1992 *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan* (the 1992 Plan). The 1992 Plan covered a large geography and focused on the areas around the Twinbrook, White Flint and Grosvenor-Strathmore Metrorail stations, as well as the office park at Rock Spring. Communities that were previously part of the 1992 Plan are now the subject of separate, smaller area plans, including the 2009 *Twinbrook Sector Plan*, the 2010 *White Flint Sector Plan*, and the plans currently underway for Rock Spring and White Flint 2. The portion of the Rock Spring Master Plan west of the I-270 Spur was part of the 2002 *Potomac Subregion Master Plan* (the 2002 Plan).

PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Rock Spring Master Plan builds on the goals and objectives of the 1992 *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan*. The 1992 Plan describes Rock Spring Park as “one of the East Coast’s premier office parks” with a campus-style setting, green lawns, and lush landscaping that attracts tenants who wish to “enhance their corporate image.” At the same time, the Sector Plan notes that the office park consists of somewhat homogeneous, unrelated

sets of buildings centered on sites with no particular relationship with each other and no unifying urban design features other than generous landscaping. Several goals from the 1992 Plan continue to be relevant today, including:

- Add residential and retail uses.
- Preserve publicly accessible open space.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle paths linking the open space with other areas in the office park, with public facilities and with adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- Integrate transitway stations and right-of-way into future development (page 94).

In addition, the 1992 Plan recommended the North Bethesda Transitway to link the Metrorail Red Line with Montgomery Mall via Old Georgetown Road and Rock Spring Drive. The Transitway is included in the approved 2013 *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan* (CTCFMP), which outlines alternative routes to either the Grosvenor or White Flint Metrorail stations.

The 2002 *Potomac Subregion Master Plan* had few detailed recommendations for the commercial areas west of I-270 in the Rock Spring Master Plan. However, it did support recommendations to connect the area to the Metrorail Red Line by way of the North Bethesda Transitway and recommended a “multi-modal transit center at the western terminus of the planned North Bethesda Transitway near Montgomery Mall” (page 129 of the 2002 Plan).

The 1993 *General Plan Refinement* includes the Rock Spring Plan areas east of the I-270 Spur within the Urban Ring and the areas west of the I-270 Spur as part of the Suburban Communities (see Map 3). The Rock Spring Plan will address the following challenges identified by the General Plan Refinement, including:

Within the Urban Ring:

- Accommodating selective additional development and redevelopment;
- Emphasizing development, including housing, in appropriate transit station areas;
- Expanding transportation options, while accommodating pedestrian needs;
- Enhancing park and recreation linkages (page 25 of the General Plan).

Within the Suburban Communities:

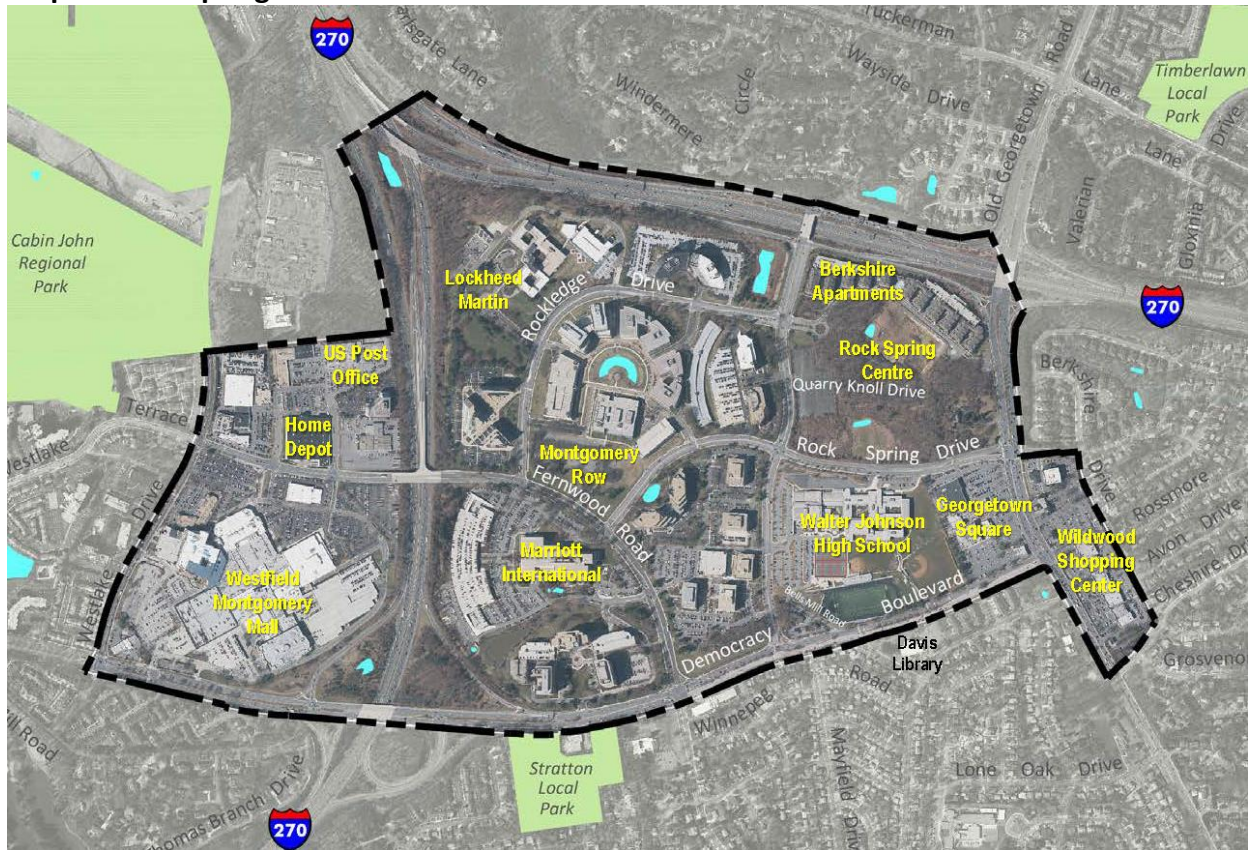
- Enhancing park and recreation linkages;
- Increasing transportation options and efficiency;
- Providing compact, geographically contained centers.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The central portion of the Rock Spring Master Plan is a conventional suburban, auto-oriented office park, with the majority of office buildings built in the 1980s and 1990s. The office park has a large percentage of Class A space (87 percent, compared to 50 percent Countywide) and much of it has been consistently renovated and upgraded. Office buildings in Rock Spring are substantially larger than other areas; on average, they are twice the size of office buildings elsewhere in the County. Major tenants include Marriott International, Lockheed Martin Corporation, IBM, Host Hotels and Resorts, and the National Institutes of Health. Several

buildings contain mostly medical offices. The area’s office buildings include insurance, real estate, and financial companies. Rock Spring Park is part of the North Bethesda/Potomac office submarket. It accounts for 48 percent of the office inventory in North Bethesda and 7 percent of office space Countywide. The current office vacancy rate in Rock Spring is 22.3 percent, higher than the Countywide vacancy rate of 15 percent. Rock Spring’s office vacancy rate has remained above 19 percent since 2009.

Map 3: Rock Spring Master Plan Context



Marriott International, which occupies about 800,000 square feet at their headquarters in Rock Spring, has expressed that it is contemplating relocation to a more urban location with good access to transit; the planned relocation would boost the office park’s vacancy rate to 39 percent, if there are no other changes. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) vacated approximately 160,000 square feet of leased office space in Rock Spring for a new headquarters in Twinbrook. IBM has reduced its Rock Spring footprint from 168,000 square feet to 59,000 square feet. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) currently leases over 700,000 square feet in several locations in Rock Spring. Lockheed Martin has 275,000 square feet of space in a secured and gated site on Rockledge Drive.

An Office Market Assessment Report, prepared for the Planning Department by Partners for Economic Solutions (PES) and released in June 2015, states (on page 1): “The Washington, DC metro region is currently experiencing unprecedented challenges in its office market...Montgomery County is suffering along with the rest of the region, performing better

than other jurisdictions on some indicators and worse on others. The region and county have experienced recession-driven office market downturns for decades. What is different this time is a major realignment as tenants reduce their office space even as they expand their workforce. That trend will impact local and regional office markets for many years into the future.” Some of the trends impacting the County’s office market include: an increase in telecommuting; federal budget cuts and shrinking workspace footprints; regional competition from the District of Columbia and Tysons; and changes in preferences as prospective tenants seek transit-served and amenity rich locations.

Once considered a premier office location, Rock Spring has been particularly hard hit by these current trends. Single-use business parks without direct access to transit, like Rock Spring, are struggling with the highest office vacancies. However, there is indication that Rock Spring may be better positioned than other areas when it comes to recovery and repurposing. As noted on page 2 of the 2016 Adaptive Reuse Study prepared for the Planning Department by Bolan Smart Associates: “Location, value pricing, and parking convenience, are still marketable. The Rock Spring location is highly viable, convenient to a broad base of employees served by a regional road network near a range of retail and lodging amenities, and most of the non-special purpose buildings have substantial continued economic life.”

With its location adjacent to I-270 and near I-495, Rock Spring is well served by roadways that provide regional access to the area. Two major infrastructure projects greatly improved vehicular access to and around Rock Spring: the interchange at the I-270 spur and Rockledge Boulevard and the Westlake Terrace bridge over I-270. Multiple existing bus routes and shuttles run throughout the area and the Grosvenor Metrorail Station is approximately 2.5 miles from the center of the office park. The 2013 *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan* included the North Bethesda Transitway and its four proposed stations within the Rock Spring Master Plan area. Furthermore, the office park is surrounded by well established, in demand neighborhoods and is anchored by high performing retail centers which draw from both the surrounding communities and the region.

The retail clusters that bookend the office park draw a consistent stream of consumers to the Rock Spring area from the region as well as from the surrounding community and neighborhoods. Westfield Montgomery Mall and the commercial areas north of Westlake Terrace and west of I-270 are regional draws to the area. The Mall opened in 1968 and underwent a significant renovation in 2014, which included ArcLight Cinemas, gourmet restaurants, and a dining terrace. To the east, along Old Georgetown Road, the Wildwood Shopping Center, built in 1958, and Georgetown Square, built in 1973, are busy community- and neighborhood-serving centers.

While attention has been focused on the changing office market, and there is general agreement that to remain competitive a greater mix of well-connected uses needs to be introduced within the Plan area, school capacity in the Walter Johnson School Cluster must also be addressed. The Subdivision Staging Policy indicates that the Walter Johnson Cluster is close to a moratorium for all school levels. Additional residential development and the pace of its

delivery will impact the Walter Johnson cluster, as well as the adjacent Downcounty Consortium secondary schools. This Plan assesses the impact of proposed development in the Rock Spring area to determine whether additional facilities are needed.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Several properties in the Rock Spring Master Plan area have been developed, renovated, or have been approved and are in the pipeline waiting development (see Image 1) since the 1992 *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan*. The first residential use was introduced into the Plan area in 2004. The Berkshires of Rock Spring, a 386-unit multi-family residential building (formerly known as Avalon Bay) was completed on the northern portion of the Davis-Camalier property along I-270. The Berkshires is part of a larger approved pipeline project for the entire Davis tract that was originally approved by the Planning Board in 1999. The proposed, multi-phase project for the Davis parcel, the only vacant site in the Plan area, has been amended several times and the approved development includes nearly 1 million square feet of offices, retail, a hotel, as well as over 800 additional dwelling units in high-rise and mid-rise residential buildings. Once built, the Rock Spring Centre, north of Georgetown Square, will bolster the presence and identity of this area and will be a catalyst to draw additional activity into the office park.

As noted on page 66 of the PES report: “Property owners and developers are beginning to rethink and redesign conventional office parks to accommodate a mix of uses.” In the heart of the Rock Spring office park, residential builder EYA is currently constructing a 168-unit townhouse development on the northwest corner of Fernwood Road and Rock Spring Drive, across from Marriott’s headquarters. Montgomery Row is being constructed on a site previously planned for another office building, indicating that the market is starting to respond to change by introducing residential use into a heretofore single-use office park. A 340-unit multi-family high-rise residential building with ground floor commercial space has been approved on a parcel on the north side of Westlake Terrace across from Westfield Montgomery Mall at the site currently occupied by Ourisman Ford. The fourth pipeline project is a 58-unit multi-family building approved on the southern portion of the property where the Aubinoe office building is currently located and north of the Wildwood Shopping Center.

Image 1: Rock Spring Approved Pipeline Projects



Westfield Montgomery Mall has undergone significant renovations, including a new food court, movie theatres, and the Cheesecake Factory (relocated from White Flint Mall). A new transit center at Montgomery Mall, at the northeast corner near Westlake Terrace and the bridge over I-270, had its grand opening on May 1, 2016. Additional redevelopment may be contemplated by the mall’s owners in the future, but at this time, plans have not been submitted to the Planning Department.

OUTREACH

A community kick-off meeting was held on September 1, 2015 at Walter Johnson High School (WJHS) to launch the planning and public engagement process. Since that time, seven lively community meetings have been held, in addition to individual and small group meetings with civic associations, Parent Teacher Associations, and property owners. All of the following meetings were held at WJHS, with the exception of the June 6 meeting at Luxmanor Elementary:

- September 17, 2015: Schools
- October 28, 2015: Pipeline Projects
- December 14, 2015: Placemaking
- February 25, 2016: Parks and Transportation
- May 23, 2016: Plan Concepts, Land Use Scenarios, and Transportation Modeling
- June 6, 2016: Schools Follow-up
- July 18, 2016: Preliminary Recommendations

VISION: ROCK SPRING DISTRICT

The image of Rock Spring Park as a mixed-use Urban Village was introduced by the 1992 *North Bethesda/Garret Park Master Plan*. The 1992 Plan also emphasized the potential of focusing Rock Spring Drive/Fernwood Road/Westlake Drive as a unifying “axis” or central spine for the district. Although the office market is currently struggling and the single-use suburban office campus has lost some appeal, Rock Spring still has many positive attributes, and the vision from the 1992 Plan remains relevant. Rock Spring’s office buildings are valuable and the commercial centers that anchor the east and west boundaries are thriving. Furthermore, the area is centrally located, with prime access to major highways and relative proximity to the Grosvenor and White Flint Metro stations. The residential neighborhoods that surround the Plan area are well established and highly desirable.

The 1992 Plan set the stage for Rock Spring’s future by encouraging “the gradual evolution of the entire area from Wildwood Shopping Center to the Westlake housing area into a single district.” Twenty-five years later, Rock Spring is just beginning to evolve from being yesterday’s cluster of disparate uses into tomorrow’s holistic, cohesive community. The recent emergence of new residential development within the office park further signals the readiness of the area for repositioning as a well-integrated, amenity-rich district for existing employers and future residents.

The approved pipeline projects have the potential to create a more connected, walkable, mixed-use place. New development and redevelopment should focus activity nodes along the central spine that connect the retail clusters that bookend the Plan area. The Master Plan seeks to build upon the goals of past plans and leverage the inherent strengths of the Rock Spring area through a measured, form-based approach by:

- Establishing a redevelopment framework that provides greater amenity options and mixes of uses for companies and their employees, as well as residents, both in the short and long term.
- Elevating the North Bethesda Transitway to a high-priority transit corridor.
- Concentrating new activity, both public and private, along the central spine to:
 - establish a greater sense of place and an identity for the Rock Spring area
 - reduce the real and perceived distances between the east and west sides of the plan area by unifying activity nodes along the spine
 - provide areas of interest for future residents and commercial employees.
 - encourage a safe and inviting pedestrian and bicycle street environment on both sides of the spine, and in particular around future transitway stops.
- Enhancing connectivity between the Rock Spring Plan area and surrounding residential neighborhoods, adjacent parks, and nearby community facilities.
- Creating linkages between existing trails and green spaces, and establishing new open spaces through redevelopment.

LAND USES, ZONING, AND DESIGN

Area Descriptions

Based on established development patterns and the existing road network, the Plan area is organized into three cluster areas that present different challenges and opportunities for growth and improvement (see Image 2). Today, these areas are generally isolated from one

another and do not yet work together to establish a unified Rock Spring community. The areas are:

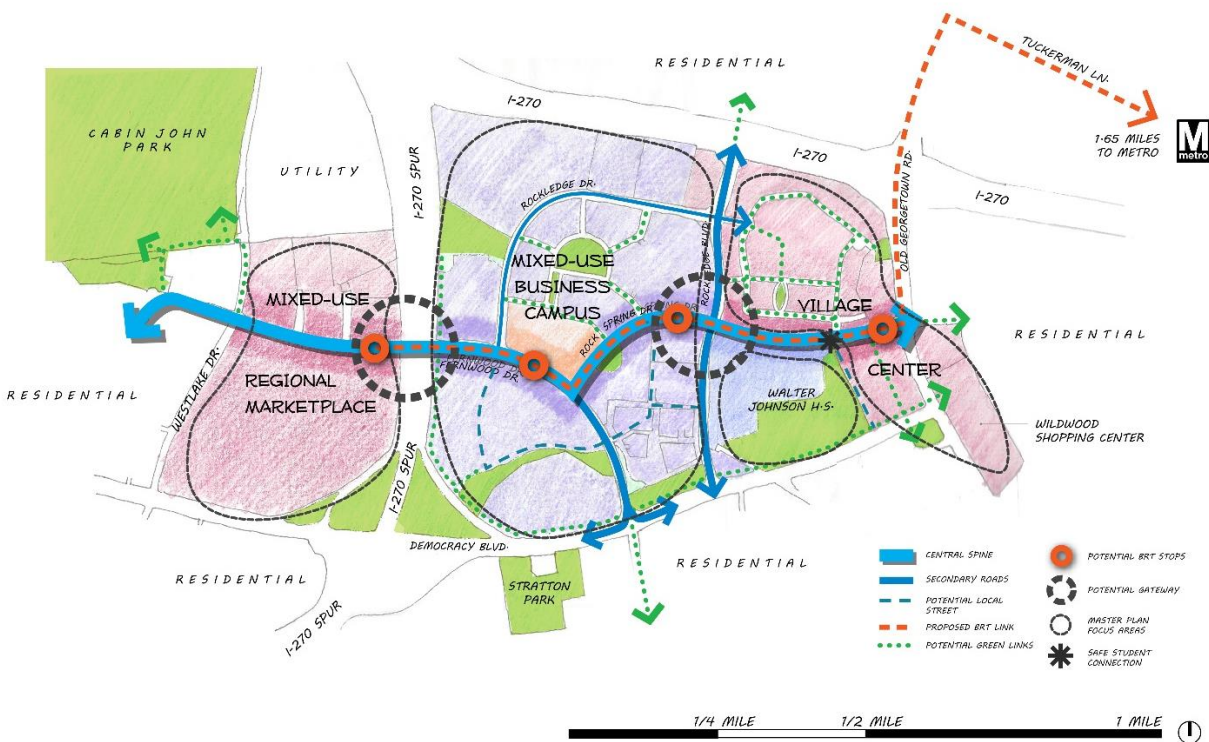
- Rock Spring East/Village Center, which includes the properties east of Rockledge Drive and Rockledge Boulevard;
- Rock Spring Central/Mixed Use Business Campus, which includes the office park; and
- Rock Spring West/Mixed Use Regional Marketplace, which includes the commercial cluster west of I-270 and north and south of Westlake Terrace.

The following design guidance and zoning recommendations seek to strengthen the viability of existing uses within these areas and provide opportunities for complementary new development to contribute to the reshaping of a well-integrated Rock Spring District.

Design Framework

The 1992 Master Plan described the future Rock Spring Park as a “large, high quality, mixed-use Urban Village,” and placed emphasis on the Rock Spring Drive | Fernwood Road | Westlake Terrace “axis as the main visual organizing element” (page 135-136). More recently, two separate Urban Land Institute (ULI) studies (2013 and 2016) supported and elaborated on this idea, confirming that the recommendation of the 1992 Plan remains relevant. Building on this, the central “axis” or “spine” concept provides the foundation for this Plan’s design discussion about the future of Rock Spring (see Image 2). The following design and zoning recommendations highlight the unique character of the three cluster areas while providing guidance that encourages unification of the Plan area from Wildwood Shopping Center to Westfield Montgomery Mall.

Image 2: Rock Spring Concept



The central spine includes the proposed North Bethesda Transitway, with four potential transit stops that will create nodes to concentrate activity and thread together the east and west sides of the Plan area. Four pipeline projects (three approved and one under construction) have frontage along the spine; those developments bring a mix of uses and improvements to the public realm that will start to reshape the Plan area into a more pedestrian and bicyclist friendly place.

Promoting the long-term transformation of Rock Spring's central core, the office park, through the implementation of the recommended floating zones is a priority of this Plan, particularly for properties that have direct access to the central spine. In the near-term, the recommendations in this Plan support revitalization strategies that promote infill development consolidated primarily along the central spine, as well as within existing commercial clusters east and west of the core to support future transit and create pedestrian-friendly clusters. Overall, the transformation of this area should:

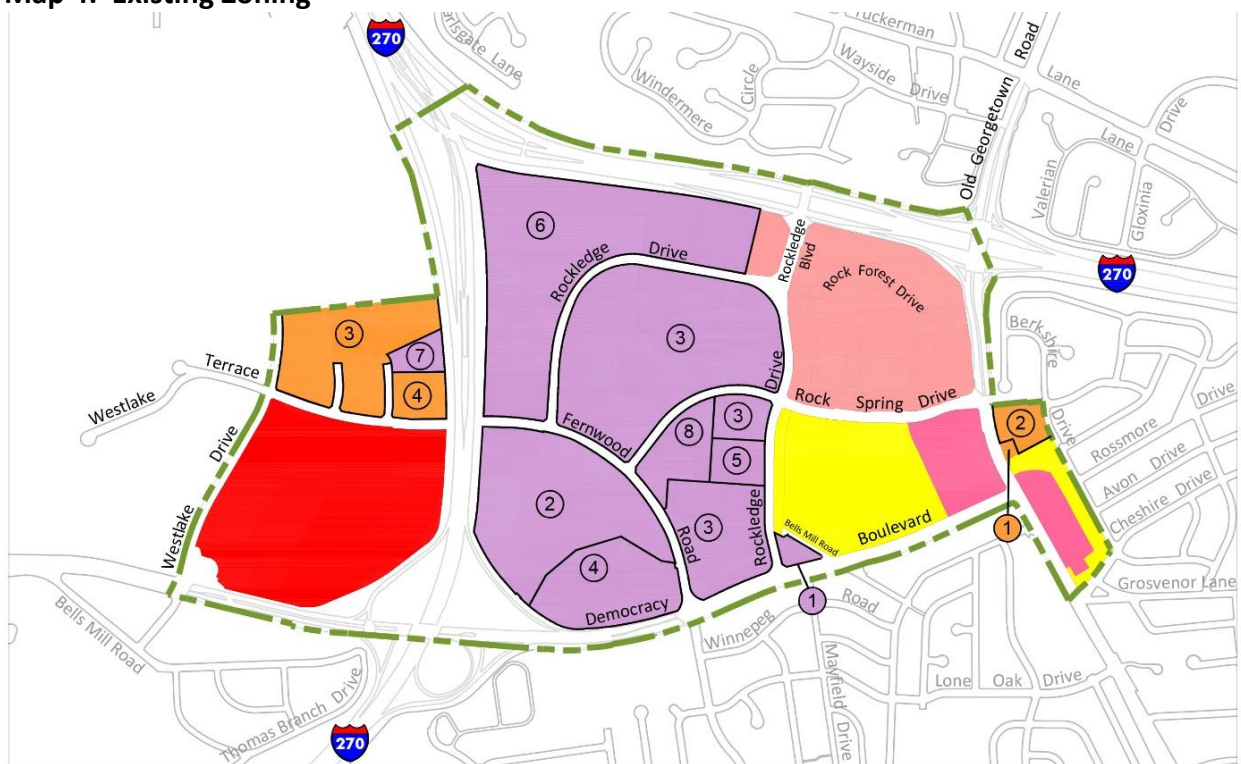
- Prioritize framing the central spine, either through building design and placement, public realm enhancements, or a combination of both.
- Establish neighborhood-accessible, mixed-use centers on commercial clusters at both east and west ends of the spine.
- Promote compatibility between new infill development and existing uses to remain.
- Ensure appropriate transitions between new high-density development and adjacent low-density residential communities.
- Enhance connectivity between the Plan area, adjacent residential communities, and nearby public amenities.
- Create a network of public open spaces integrated with the emerging community structure.

Land Use and Zoning Recommendations

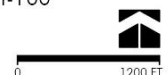
The existing zoning map (Map 4) illustrates the variety of zoning within the Plan area. The Employment Office (EOF) Zone is prominent within the central portion of the Plan, reflecting the existing office park. The shopping centers on the west and east ends of the Plan are zoned General Retail (GR) and Neighborhood Retail (NR), according to the current scale of the developments. Several properties have also been designated with the Commercial Residential (CR) Zone and the Commercial Residential Town (CRT) Zone, which are mixed-use zones. The Single-Family Detached (R-90) Zone is designated on the Walter Johnson High School site and the parking areas for the Wildwood Shopping Center.

The proposed zoning recommendations (Map 5) in this Plan are twofold for several properties within the office park/Mixed Use Business Campus cluster: increasing FAR maximums to provide greater flexibility under the existing EOF Zone; and the utilization of a mixed use floating zone for property owners proposing comprehensive change to their properties. The CRT Zone is recommended for the existing shopping centers on the east side of the Plan area.

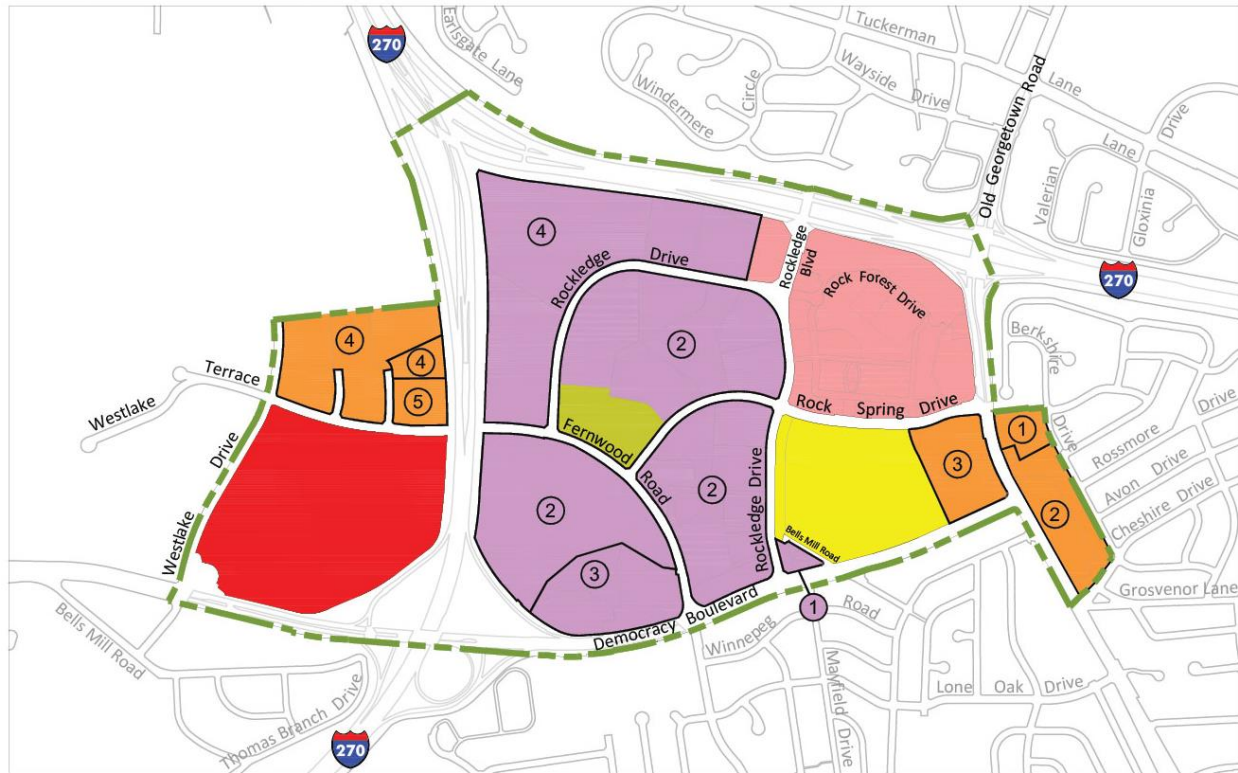
Map 4: Existing Zoning



| | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| Rock Spring Master Plan Boundary | CRT Commercial Residential Town | 3 EOF 1.0, H-100' |
| R-90 One-Family Detached Residential | 1 CRT 0.75, C-0.75, R-0.25, H-35' | 4 EOF 1.0, H-110' |
| GR General Retail GR 1.5, H-45' | 2 CRT 1.25, C-0.5, R-0.75, H-50' | 5 EOF 1.25, H-100' |
| NR Neighborhood Retail NR 0.75, H-45' | 3 CRT 2.25, C-1.5, R-0.75, H-75' | 6 EOF 1.25, H-150' |
| CR Commercial Residential CR 1.5, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-275' | 4 CRT 2.5, C-1.5, R-2.0, H-75' | 7 EOF 1.5, H-75' |
| | EOF Employment Office | 8 EOF 1.5, H-100' |
| | 1 EOF 0.5, H-60' | |
| | 2 EOF 0.75, H-100' | |



Map 5: Proposed Zoning



- Rock Spring Master Plan Boundary
- R-90 One-Family Detached Residential
- THD Townhouse High Density
- GR General Retail
GR 1.5, H-45'
- CR Commercial Residential
CR 1.5, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-275'
- CRT Commercial Residential Town
- 1 CRT 1.25, C-0.5, R-0.75, H-50'
- 2 CRT 1.25, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-50'
- 3 CRT 1.25, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-75'
- 4 CRT 2.25, C-1.5, R-0.75, H-75'
- 5 CRT 2.5, C-1.5, R-2.0, H-75'
- EOF Employment Office
- 1 EOF 0.5, H-60'
- 2 EOF 1.5, H-100'
- 3 EOF 1.5, H-110'
- 4 EOF 1.5, H-150'



Rock Spring East/Village Center

Rock Spring East includes the properties east of Rockledge Drive and Rockledge Boulevard, for which there are a variety of zoning classifications. This Plan recommends maintaining the CR and CRT zoning that exists, and rezoning the Wildwood Shopping Center and Georgetown Square to CRT. The CRT Zone permits a mix of uses at varying densities and heights. The intent of the CRT Zone is to target opportunities for redevelopment of single-use commercial areas and surface parking lots with a mix of uses, while encouraging development that integrates a combination of housing types, mobility options, commercial services, public facilities, and amenities.



- CR** Commercial Residential
CR 1.5, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-275'
- CRT** Commercial Residential Town
 - ① CRT 0.75, C-0.75, R-0.25, H-35'
 - ② CRT 1.25, C-0.5, R-0.75, H-50'
- NR** Neighborhood Retail
NR 0.75, H-45'
- R-90** One-Family Detached Residential
- EOF** Employment Office
 - ① EOF 0.5, H-60'



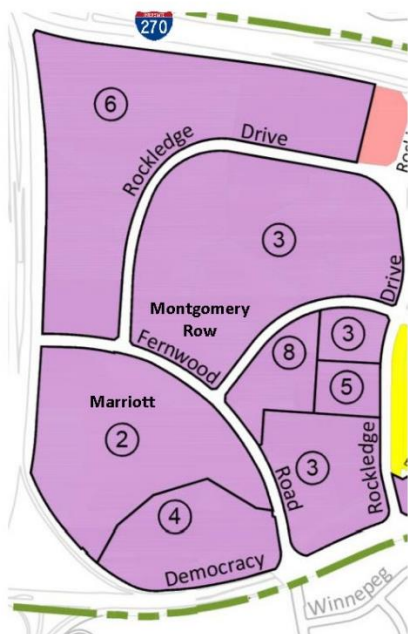
- CR** Commercial Residential
CR 1.5, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-275'
- CRT** Commercial Residential Town
 - ① CRT 1.25, C-0.5, R-0.75, H-50'
 - ② CRT 1.25, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-50'
 - ③ CRT 1.25, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-75'
- R-90** One-Family Detached Residential
- EOF** Employment Office
 - ① EOF 0.5, H-60'

Rock Spring Central/Mixed Use Business Campus

Rock Spring Central includes the properties between Rockledge Drive and Rockledge Boulevard to the east and I-270 to the west. The majority of the office park is zoned EOF, with the exception of a vacant lot zoned CR on the northwest corner of Rockledge Drive and Rockledge Boulevard. The Plan recommends the following:

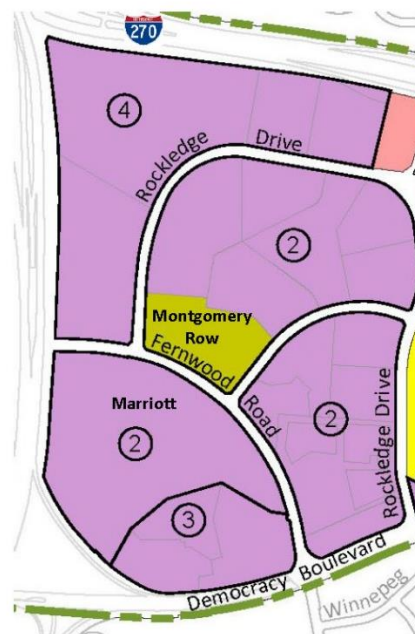
- Confirm the EOF Zone for the properties currently zoned EOF within the office park, with the exception of the Montgomery Row townhouse development.
- Adjust the overall FAR to 1.5 for the EOF Zoned properties within the office park.
- Provide for a floating CRT Zone for the EOF-zoned properties within the office park. It would have an FAR of between 1.5 and 2.5 and a height of up to 150 feet.
- Rezone the Montgomery Row Townhouse site from EOF-1.0, H-100 to THD (Townhouse High Density Zone).

Existing Zoning



| | |
|------------|--|
| EOF | Employment Office |
| ② | EOF 0.75, H-100' |
| ③ | EOF 1.0, H-100' |
| ④ | EOF 1.0, H-110' |
| ⑤ | EOF 1.25, H-100' |
| ⑥ | EOF 1.25, H-150' |
| ⑧ | EOF 1.5, H-100' |
| CR | Commercial Residential CR 1.5, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-275' |

Proposed Zoning

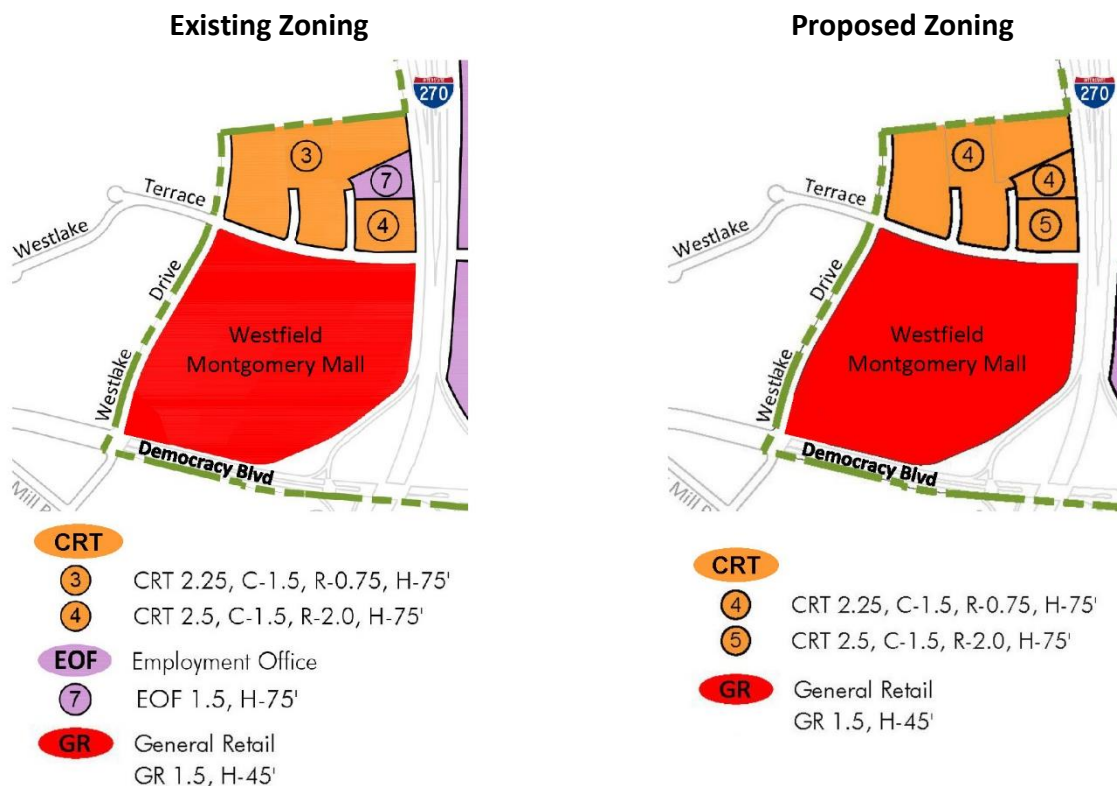


| | |
|------------|--|
| EOF | Employment Office |
| ② | EOF 1.5, H-100' |
| ③ | EOF 1.5, H-110' |
| ④ | EOF 1.5, H-150' |
| THD | Townhouse High Density |
| CR | Commercial Residential CR 1.5, C-0.75, R-0.75, H-275' |

Rock Spring West/Mixed Use Regional Marketplace

Properties within this cluster are those located west of I-270 and north and south of Westlake Terrace. They are linked to the office park by Westlake Terrace, which bridges I-270. This area is comprised primarily of destination retailers, with Westfield Montgomery Mall located on the south side of Westlake Terrace and Home Depot to the north. On the north side of Westlake Terrace, all of the properties are zoned CRT, with the exception of a 7-story EOF-Zoned office building located at 10411 Motor City Drive (Site 7, Existing Zoning). In addition to the office building and Home Depot, the area includes a post office and car dealerships. The proposed mixed-use project on the Ourisman Ford site is located at the northeast corner of Westlake Terrace and I-270.

Westfield Montgomery Mall, a regional shopping destination, encompasses the majority of the south side of Westlake Terrace. A small shopping center is located adjacent to the mall at the corner of Westlake Drive and Westlake Terrace and a gas station is located at the far southwest corner. Additional uses, including a residential component, may be considered in the future for the Mall, but at this time, no plans have been submitted to the Planning Department for consideration.



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Most of the Plan area drains to the Cabin John Creek Watershed. A small section on the eastern side of the planning area drains to Rock Creek. Overall, impervious surfaces cover about 55% of the Plan area. Forests occupy about 7% of the Plan area. Thirty-one percent of the land area has tree canopy cover. The office park has much more of the forest and tree cover, while the retail areas contain more of the impervious areas.

Recommendations

Natural Resources

- Preserve the existing forested stream buffer on the Rock Spring Centre site.
- Plant native vegetation that is beneficial to pollinators to provide food sources for declining populations of native pollinator species.
- Establish green connections west to Cabin John Stream Valley Park.
- Incorporate multiple layers of native vegetation in landscaping.

Water Quality

- Prioritize environmental public benefit points for tree canopy cover in the CR, CRT and EOF Zones.
- Promote the use of environmental site design (ESD) techniques to reduce impervious areas.
- Minimize imperviousness/maximize pervious areas where feasible.
- Increase forest and tree cover.
- Use native plants that require less watering and fertilization in landscaped areas and rainwater for watering planted areas.
- Encourage green features (softscaping) in required open space areas and the public realm.

Air Quality and Climate Protection

- Promote energy efficiency and encourage net zero energy site and building design.
- Encourage on-site clean energy generation where possible.
- Improve the urban ecology, including goals to reduce heat island effect and promote Environmental Site Design (ESD) in stormwater management practices.
- Retain existing wooded areas where possible, and provide increased tree canopy throughout the Plan area.
- Include sustainable solutions in the design of an attractive public realm, to integrate green features, enhance mobility options, and promote walkability.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities provide needed services to area residents and help build a sense of community among neighbors. Schools are the cornerstone of many communities, and in this Plan area, have been at the forefront of several meeting discussions. Fire and rescue services ensure safety, and access to parks and open spaces, recreation centers, and libraries are vital to a community's health and well-being. In addition to the Public Schools and Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces sections below, the next phase of the Plan will address police, fire and rescue, libraries and recreation centers.

A. Public Schools

Overview

The Rock Spring Master Plan is within the service areas of Walter Johnson Cluster schools, including Ashburton Elementary School, North Bethesda Middle School and Walter Johnson High School. Walter Johnson High School is located within the Rock Spring Master Plan at 6400 Rock Spring Drive. Enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year was nearly 2,300 students, and is expected to grow throughout the next decade. Enrollment increases have been occurring at all of these schools, and a variety of strategies will be considered to accommodate additional students resulting from this Plan as well as other planning areas within the Walter Johnson Cluster.

Build-out of the Plan assumes that some developed properties will be redeveloped and full build-out is estimated to take 20 to 30 years. Because the full impact of the Plan on school enrollment will not be felt for many years, and some redevelopment may not occur during the life of the Plan, it is not possible to precisely gauge the impact of the Plan on public schools. MCPS enrollment forecasts and associated facility plans and capital projects focus on a six-year time frame—not a 20- to 30- year period. MCPS' forecasts and facility planning also encompass a broader area than the area covered by this Plan.

Facility Planning in the Walter Johnson Cluster

Currently the school system is reviewing the input from a community roundtable discussion group process that explored a wide range of approaches to accommodate near-term and long-term enrollment growth in the Walter Johnson Cluster. It is anticipated that a recommendation will be made for cluster schools in fall 2016 by the superintendent, and the Board of Education will take action shortly thereafter. The following descriptions of options to accommodate additional enrollment reflect alternatives that have been explored by the roundtable discussion group.

Elementary Schools

The following options would be explored for accommodating additional elementary school students from the Rock Spring Master Plan:

- Determine if the capacity of existing schools can be increased. All cluster schools will be at the high end of the range of student enrollment, with capacities ranging from 729 to 881, and no further additions will be considered.
- Because further increasing the capacity of existing elementary schools is not possible, and the magnitude of enrollment growth is considerable, the opening of a new elementary school would be considered. A new elementary school could be provided in one of the following ways:
 - Reopen a former elementary school in the Walter Johnson Cluster. There are several former MCPS elementary schools in the Walter Johnson Cluster that could be reopened, including the former Alta Vista, Arylawn, Kensington and Montrose elementary schools.
 - Construct a new elementary school on a site identified in the Master Plan.
 - Adaptively reuse an existing office building for a school facility.

- Construct a new school on one of the sites identified in surrounding plan areas for example, the Wilgus property in White Flint 2 or the WMAL property.
- If a site is not provided in the Rock Spring Master Plan, and the sites in the 2010 *White Flint Sector Plan* are not considered feasible locations, then purchase of an elementary school site, or collocation with a park, could be considered.
- In addition to considering the opening of a new elementary school, options to reassign students to elementary schools adjacent to the Walter Johnson Cluster with available capacity could be considered.

Middle Schools

The following options would be explored for accommodating additional middle school students from the Rock Spring Master Plan:

- Determine if the capacity of existing middle schools can be increased. At the middle school level, currently planned expansions of North Bethesda and Tilden middle schools will take both schools up to a capacity for around 1,200 students. This will address projected enrollment through 2021–2022. However, these expansions are not expected to be capable of accommodating the full build-out of the 2010 *White Flint Sector Plan*, let alone additional students from the White Flint 2 and Rock Spring plans.
- If increasing the capacities of existing middle schools in the Walter Johnson cluster, above the planned 1,200 capacities, is not feasible or sufficient to address enrollment increases, then consider whether there is available capacity in middle schools surrounding the Walter Johnson Cluster.
- If it is not possible to address middle school enrollment increases through expansion of schools in the Walter Johnson Cluster, or through reassignments to middle schools in adjacent clusters, then the opening of a new middle school could be considered by constructing a new school or collocating a middle school with an existing school facility. The 11-acre Wilgus property in White Flint 2 may be an appropriate location for a new middle school although MCPS typically prefers a larger site.

High Schools

The following options would be explored for accommodating additional high school students from the Rock Spring Master Plan:

- Build an addition at Walter Johnson High School. The high school currently has a capacity of 2,335 students. Long-term enrollment projections for the school show enrollment reaching 3,500 students by the year 2045. This projected enrollment does not include any of the students that would be generated by the White Flint 2 and Rock Spring plans. If the high school capacity was increased to 3,500 students, or more, it may be possible to accommodate the build-out of the White Flint 2 and Rock Spring plans.
- A second approach being considered to address high school enrollment growth in the Walter Johnson Cluster is the reopening of the former Woodward High School.
- Beyond the approaches mentioned above, reassignment of students out of the Walter Johnson Cluster to high schools with available capacity, or with the ability to have their capacities increased, could be considered.

B. Parks, Trails, and Open Space

Existing Conditions

There are currently no M-NCPPC Parks within the Rock Spring Master Plan area. The open spaces that do exist are generally privately owned and consist of plazas and landscaped areas. Two parks, Stratton Local Park and Cabin John Regional Park, sit on the master Plan boundary to the south and west, respectively.

Other Publicly Owned Land

Inside the Rock Spring Master Plan boundary, publicly-owned land consists of Walter Johnson High School, and a small parcel of land along Old Georgetown that was at one time intended to be a Montgomery County Recreation Center. The sidewalks and roadways are the only other publicly owned land inside the Plan area.

Privately Owned Open Space

There are a small number of privately-owned open spaces within the Rock Spring Master Plan area and these are primarily hardscaped, formally landscaped plazas that serve the individual buildings. These spaces provide opportunities to sit and little else.

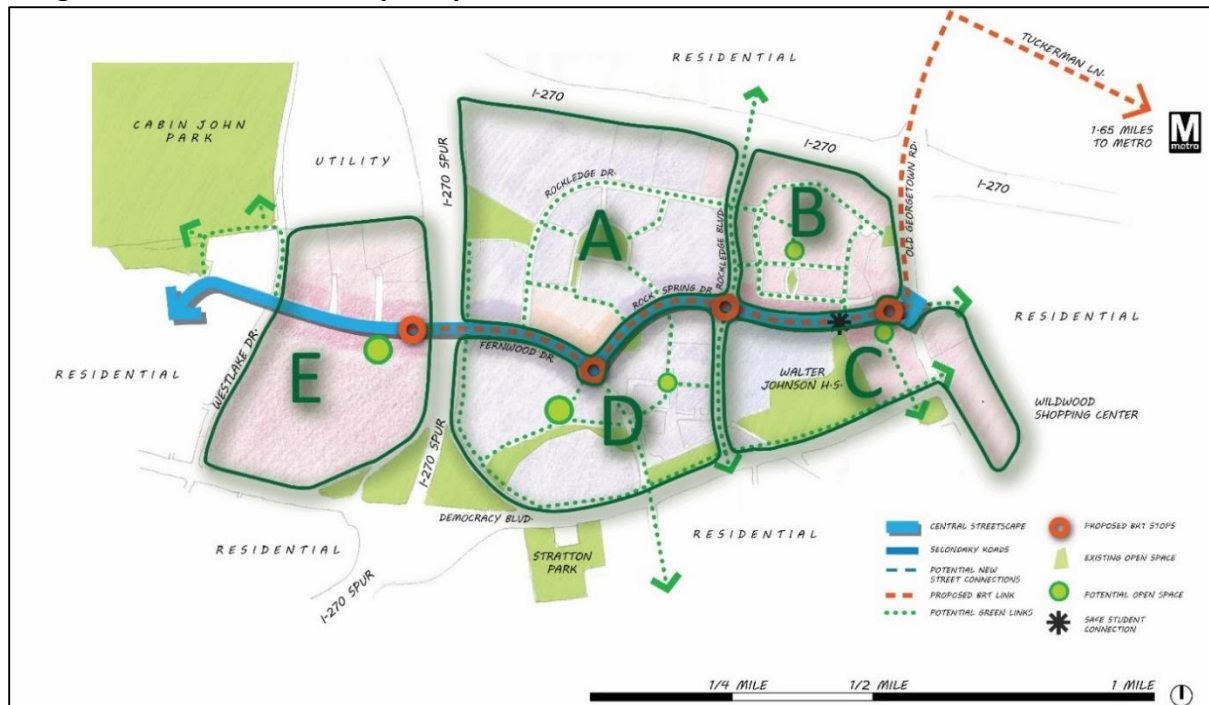
Three privately-owned open spaces differ from these plazas. First, the new EYA Montgomery Row Townhomes will provide a very small open space for residents, including a play structure. Second, in the middle of the Plan area there is a horseshoe-shaped stormwater retention pond with sidewalks and benches around the perimeter of the pond that act as de-facto open space. Daytime office workers use this space to walk during their lunch hour or breaks. Third, along Rockledge Drive in between the Democracy Associates and Lockheed Martin properties there is a large open green space with mature trees, a walking path, and a basketball court. These privately-owned open spaces are disconnected from each other, and there is no clear outdoor gathering place that anchors this Plan area.

Parks, Trails, and Open Space Goals of this Plan

1. Increase the number of publicly accessible green spaces within the Master Plan area.
2. Improve the utility of existing publicly accessible open spaces.
3. Improve pedestrian and cyclist connections to park land and trail networks surrounding the Master Plan area.
4. Improve pedestrian and cyclist connections between existing and proposed open spaces within the Plan area.

For the purposes of the Parks, Trails, and Open Space recommendations the Plan area is divided into five subareas as shown on Image 3:

Image 3: Parks, Trails and Open Space Subareas



Recommendations

M-NCPPC Department of Parks typically acquires parkland in two ways: direct acquisition through fee-simple purchase of property or dedication of land through the regulatory review process. The Rock Spring Master Plan area is bordered by several excellent M-NCPPC parks, and others such as Timberlawn Local Park are located within a short distance. Given the low/moderate increase in residential development outlined by this Plan, the open space recommendations that follow primarily focus on the improvement of privately owned, publicly accessible open space. New open spaces are typically dependent on the redevelopment of private properties in the Plan area.

Goal 1: Increase the number of publicly accessible green spaces within the Master Plan area

Subarea A: Stormwater Pond area

- Central Gathering Place at the Stormwater Retention pond.
- Community Open Space and Active Recreation at the Democracy Associates property (existing greenspace with basketball court and walking trail).

Subarea B: Rock Spring Centre

- Should the site plan be amended, the Plan recommends that Park and Trail Planning staff with the Department of Parks and with the Department of Planning work with the property owner to incorporate the existing publicly owned land at the former recreation center site with the Rock Spring Centre open space to create active recreation opportunities.

Subarea C: Walter Johnson / Georgetown Square

- If the Georgetown Square shopping center redevelops, this is an appropriate location for a public plaza with small recreational features.

- Create a greenway with walking trail and safe road crossings along the existing tributary that starts on the Walter Johnson property and flows west toward Marriott and I-270.
- Walter Johnson High School needs more athletic field space. MCPS should examine the feasibility of acquiring or long-term leasing space across Rockledge Drive and converting existing surface parking lots across the street to athletic field space.

Subarea D: Marriott and Medical Offices

- If and when the Marriott site redevelops, the Plan recommends a civic gathering style green open space, plaza, and active recreation space at this location.
- The Plan recommends creating and continuing a greenway with a walking trail along the existing tributary that starts on the Walter Johnson property and flows west toward the Marriott property and I-270.
- In order to create safer and more efficient connections to surrounding parks, the Plan recommends that M-NCPPC Department of Parks create a pedestrian entrance to Stratton Local Park along Democracy Boulevard. The Department of Transportation should explore ways to make the intersection of Fernwood and Democracy safer for pedestrians. Students at Walter Johnson High School already walk from the school to Stratton Local Park to use the park’s recreation facilities.

Subarea E: Montgomery Mall and North of Westlake Terrace

- Should redevelopment occur in this area, the Plan recommends the inclusion of plaza style open-spaces with shade, landscaping, water features, seating, and play structures for kids.
- The Department of Parks should formalize a pedestrian and cyclist entrance to Cabin John Regional Park to make the park more visible and accessible to people on foot and on bikes.

Goal 2: Improve the utility of existing publicly accessible open spaces

- Programing: Urban Parks Activation initiative / Rock Spring Activation initiative

Goal 3: Improve pedestrian and cyclist connections to existing park land and trail networks surrounding the Master Plan area

- In coordination with the detailed transportation recommendations in this Plan, certain intersections and road segments should be designed to create a safe, accessible, and inviting pedestrian and cyclist environment so that pedestrians and cyclists can better access and move between parks, trails, and open spaces in and around the Plan area.

Goal 4: Improve pedestrian and cyclist connections between existing and proposed open spaces

- The Plan recommends a network of safe and inviting sidewalks, walking paths and trails that connect open spaces and the different segments of the Plan area.

TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

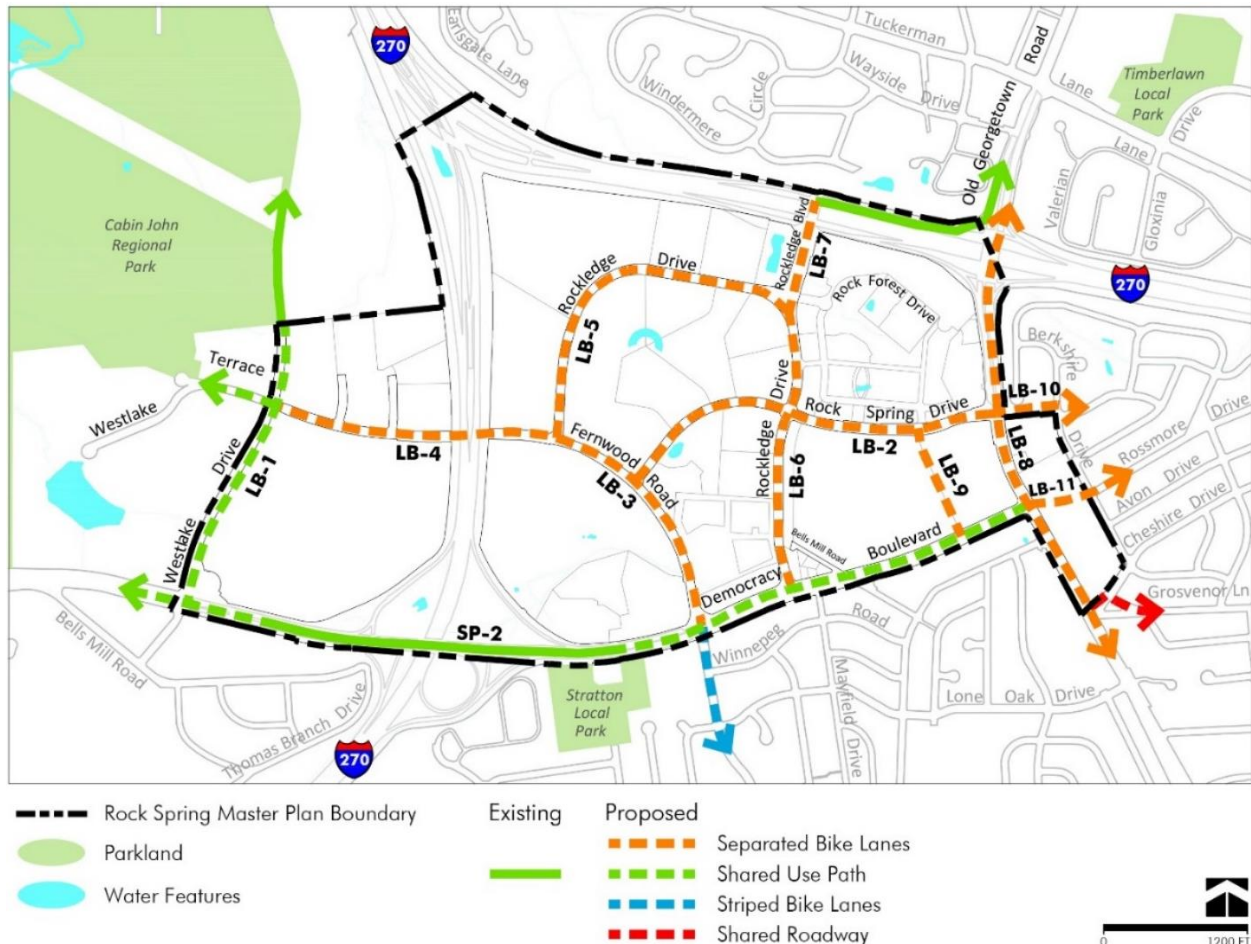
This section provides guidance for transforming the office park from the auto-centric setting previously envisioned in the 1992 *North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan*, to a vibrant bicycle, pedestrian, transit-enhanced environment. Since the 1992 Plan was adopted, the majority of master-planned roadway improvements have been constructed. These include the

I-270 interchange at Rockledge Boulevard, realignment of the Rockledge Drive loop road at Rockledge Boulevard/ Rockforest Drive, and the northern I-270 Spur HOV ramps on the Westlake Terrace bridge. The only remaining unbuilt roadway improvements in the Plan area are the southern I-270 Spur HOV ramps on the Westlake Terrace bridge. This Plan does not recommend any additional major roadway infrastructure projects; instead, it recommends improving connectivity through the existing large blocks by creating smaller local streets and re-allocating space within the existing public right-of-way of major roads throughout the Plan area to accommodate ‘complete streets’ for all users. This Plan also recommends options for improving safety at intersections that will encourage greater connectivity between the Plan area and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Recommendations

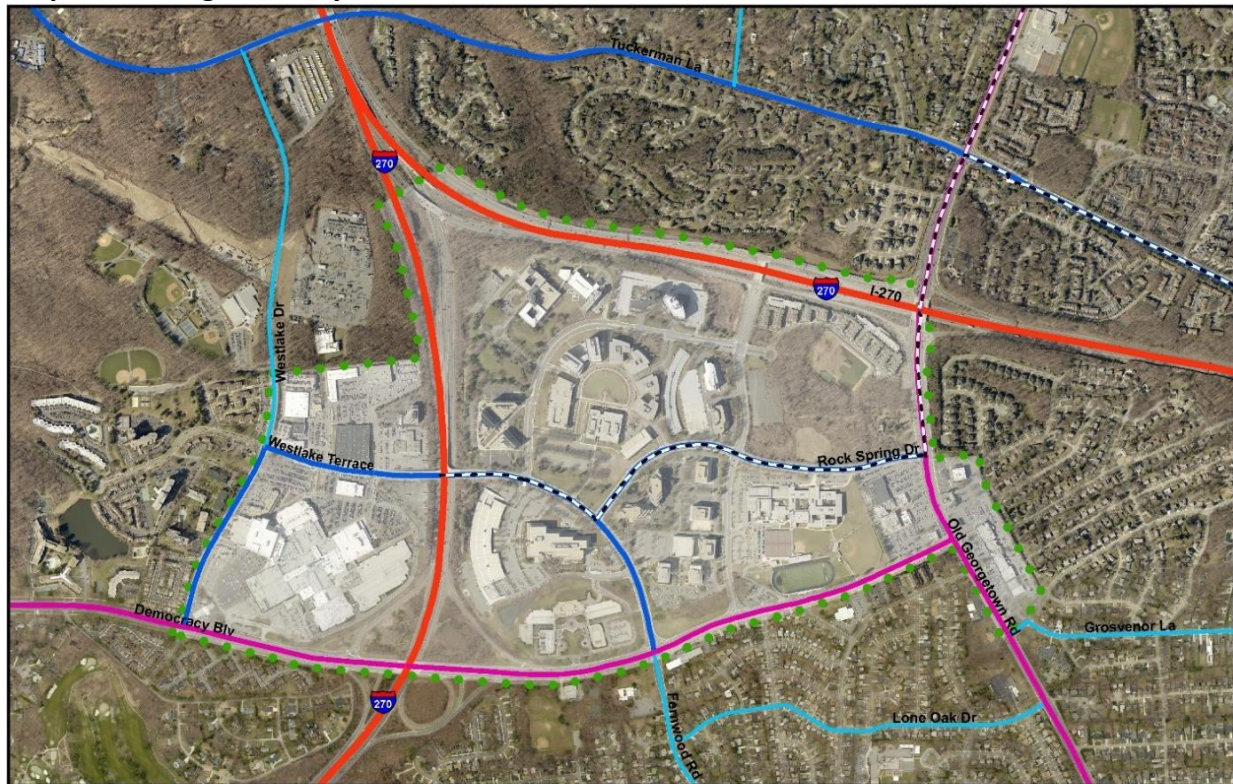
- Create a safe and low stress bicycle network within the office park that connects to existing and planned infrastructure in residential neighborhoods and open space/parks amenities (see Map 6). On several of the internal streets, roads may need to be reduced from four to two through lanes to accommodate bicycle facilities and provide increased separation from traffic for pedestrians. Preliminary analysis shows that there is adequate roadway capacity with only two through lanes to handle projected 2040 traffic.

Map 6: Existing and Proposed Bikeway Classifications



- The following are roadway classification (see Map 7) and lane change recommendations intended to accommodate the planned bicycle facilities and to slow vehicular movement.
 - Westlake Drive (Westlake Terrace to Tuckerman Lane): should be changed from a two-lane primary residential to a two-lane minor arterial.
 - All roads internal to the Plan area should be reclassified from four-lane arterials (and in some cases roads were not previously classified) to two- or four-lane business streets.
 - Construct a new public north-south business street along the western edge of Georgetown Square connecting from Democracy Boulevard to Rock Spring Drive.
 - A 30 MPH speed limit is currently posted for all public roads within the office park. Data collected by the Planning Department show that the 85th percentile speeds (the natural speed of traffic based on the design of the road if there were no speed limit signs posted) range from 32 MPH, in front of Walter Johnson High School, to 40 MPH, in front of the Lockheed Martin building. All roads internal to the Rock Spring office park should have a design speed of 25 MPH.

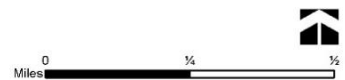
Map 7: Existing Roadway Classifications



- Roadway Classifications**
- Freeway
 - Major Highway
 - Arterial
 - Residential Primary
 - - Transitway (proposed)

••••• Rock Spring Master Plan

**ROCK SPRING MASTER PLAN
Roadway Classifications**



Map Created 5/17/2016 by M-NCPPC. For illustrative purposes only. For the most up to date information, verify with Area 2 planning staff.

- New private roads that break up large blocks throughout the office park, will improve the pedestrian experience, diffuse vehicular traffic, and give more low-speed street frontage for blocks that redevelop. Dashed lines will be shown on graphics in the Plan and policy language will be included.
- Improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists at intersections within the Plan area.
 - Changes involving the removal of right-turn ramps may have a small impact on vehicular delay (under the HCM method) but will not impact an intersection's critical lane volume (CLV) because the CLV method doesn't treat channelized right-turn lanes any differently than traditional right-turn lanes.
 - Create a safer and more prominent crossing for pedestrians at Walter Johnson High School entrance opposite future Rock Spring Centre— consider stop or signal control, raised crosswalks, alternative surface textures when Rock Spring Centre opens.
 - Create a safer and more pedestrian and bike friendly environment at the Westlake bridge over the I-270 Spur to Westfield Montgomery Mall.