

ITEM #3: SCHOOLS

Plan Vision and Challenges

The Plan envisions creating a new community at the Metro station with a new elementary school located away from Metro traffic congestion within the existing community. The level of new development can be accommodated by one new elementary school and part of a new high school. Existing and future schools outside the Shady Grove planning area will serve middle and high school students.

Staff Recommendations

- Provide an elementary school site within the planning area on the Casey at Mill Creek site.
- Provide needed middle and high school capacity outside the planning area's boundaries.

Testimony

Residents support the Casey at Mill Creek site for the proposed elementary school, calling it a crucial element of the Plan. MCPS staff accepts this location with a condition that the stormwater management will be accommodated off site in order to ensure adequate space for the school program. If stormwater management cannot be accommodated off site, MCPS staff will seek another site such as Blueberry Hill.

Analysis

Existing Capacity

The Planning area is served by three high school clusters: Magruder, Richard Montgomery, and Gaithersburg. At all levels except middle school, projected school capacity is insufficient to accommodate the proposed development within the planning area. Therefore, the Plan's proposed new development will require a new elementary school and contribute to the need for a new high school. Middle school students can be accommodated in the Magruder High School Cluster or in the future middle school slated for the King Farm.

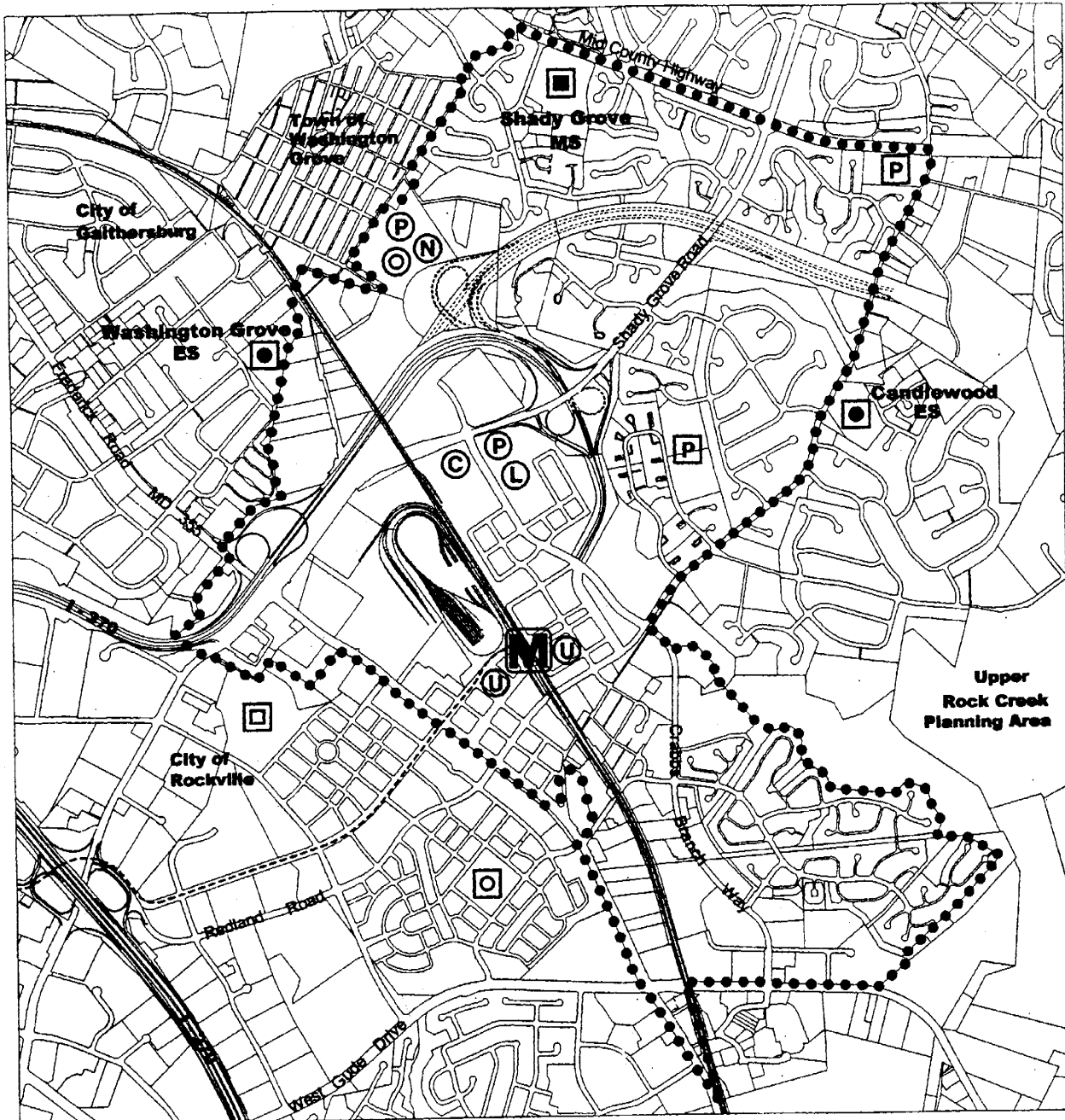
Existing School Capacity is Limited

School Cluster	Elementary School Student Capacity	Middle School Student Capacity	High School Student Capacity
Magruder	+37	+278	-20
Richard Montgomery	-20	+64	+31
Gaithersburg	+34	+187	+43

*Source: Enrollment Projections by Montgomery County Public Schools, October 2002

The Montgomery County Public Schools staff have requested that recommended development not maximize capacity of a 640 student sized school leaving some available capacity for case enrollment. The proposed amount of housing development will stay under the 640 students within an elementary school.

Existing and Proposed Public Facilities



	Proposed	Existing	Future	
Elementary Schools	⊙	●	○	●●●● Shady Grove Sector Plan Boundary
Middle Schools		■	□	----- Corridor Cities Transitway
Local Parks	(P)	(P)		
Neighborhood Parks	(N)			
Urban Parks	(U)			
Library	(L)			
Community Centers	(C)			



Projected Student Generation for 5495 Units (not including 300 elderly units)

Number of Units	Elementary Students	Middle School Students	High School Students
5495	618	258	228

Recommended Elementary School Site

The Plan recommends that Casey at Mill Creek, located along the extension of Amity Drive, should be developed with an elementary school. The site can physically accommodate a 640 student sized school, is adjacent to a residential community, and is not in a congested traffic area. Environmental concerns such as encroachment into environmental buffers and accommodating stormwater will need to be resolved at the time of preliminary plan review. Other sites discussed in Worksession #4 were considered less desirable due to either congested traffic situations, distance from the community served, or needed for recreational purposes.

No Need for New Middle School

The proposed development can be accommodated by existing capacity within the three high school clusters serving the planning area. The Magruder and Gaithersburg clusters will most likely absorb the additional middle school students generated from new development. In addition, the King Farm's middle school site, located just across MD 355, will provide future capacity when it is funded and constructed.

Need for New High School

The proposed development contributes to the need for a new high school. The existing high school clusters do not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the increase in high school students generated from the proposed growth. Therefore, this Plan depends upon the designation of a new high school outside the planning area.

It is anticipated that a new high school can be located on the Crown Farm within the Gaithersburg Vicinity Planning Area. Staff has coordinated with the Gaithersburg Vicinity planning team and is assured that the Crown Farm can accommodate a high school site. MCPS staff also has evaluated this recommended site and finds it an appropriate location for a high school. This recommendation will be forthcoming to the Planning Board in the Gaithersburg Vicinity Plan.

Blueberry Hill Park as an Alternative Elementary School Site

Casey at Mill Creek is the preferred location for an elementary school. If it is not feasible to accommodate stormwater on Casey at Mill Creek in an acceptable manner as determined during preliminary plan review of the property, the Plan should identify Blueberry Hill Park as a possible alternative.

The Plan does not recommend Blueberry Hill Park as a preferred elementary school site because access is impacted by Metro traffic congestion and is somewhat constrained to one point of access at the intersection of Redland Road and Needwood Road. Also, the park will be most likely needed for expanded recreation purposes as the Gaithersburg Vicinity Plan's recreation needs are evaluated. There are also environmental concerns about the level of imperviousness in the Crabbs Branch Tributary system. These

concerns are not insignificant but could be reconsidered should the environmental issues on the preferred Casey at Mill Creek site be unresolved at the time of preliminary plan review.

Other sites considered for the elementary school included the MCPS Bus Depot within Jeremiah Park, Casey 6, and Emory Grove Lane. These sites were not considered acceptable alternative elementary school sites (see School Appendix for a more detailed discussion of these options).