






Briefing: City of Rockville Planning Commission Draft Rockville's Pike Plan

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Description

- The City of Rockville Planning Commission has issued its Draft Plan for Rockville Pike (MD 355). This Draft Plan covers approximately 410 acres or 1.98 miles along Rockville Pike. It will update the City's 1989 *Rockville Corridor Neighborhood Plan*.

Recommendation

- Receive the City of Rockville briefing and transmit the following recommendations to the City of Rockville Planning Commission and Mayor and Council:
 1. We support the general Plan vision to transform Rockville's Pike into a more walkable and transit-supportive urban district.
 2. The Plan's vision for a multi-way boulevard with dedicated space for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will complement the Approved and Adopted (2013) Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan.
 3. The City should continue to coordinate with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), the Montgomery County Planning Department, and the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) regarding the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for the MD 355-South Corridor.
 4. The Plan should identify potential BRT station locations within the MD 355 Plan area.
 5. The Plan should increase the proposed building heights within the South Pike district to encourage the redevelopment of commercial properties in this district.
 6. The Plan should permit higher levels of Critical Lane Volumes (CLVs) in the vicinity of the Twinbrook Metrorail Station to support the recommended development in the Draft Plan and further investigate innovative financing mechanisms to implement proposed changes along MD 355.

7. The Plan should incorporate transportation policy recommendations, such as reduced parking standards at the Twinbrook Metro Station area and the creation of a Transportation Management District with Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) goals.
8. The Plan should consider additional evaluation of turning movements from MD 355 to the access roads be examined to ensure operational safety and efficiency, and consistency with the MD 355 design.
9. The Plan should consider cycletracks for East Jefferson Street and Business District Class I streets.

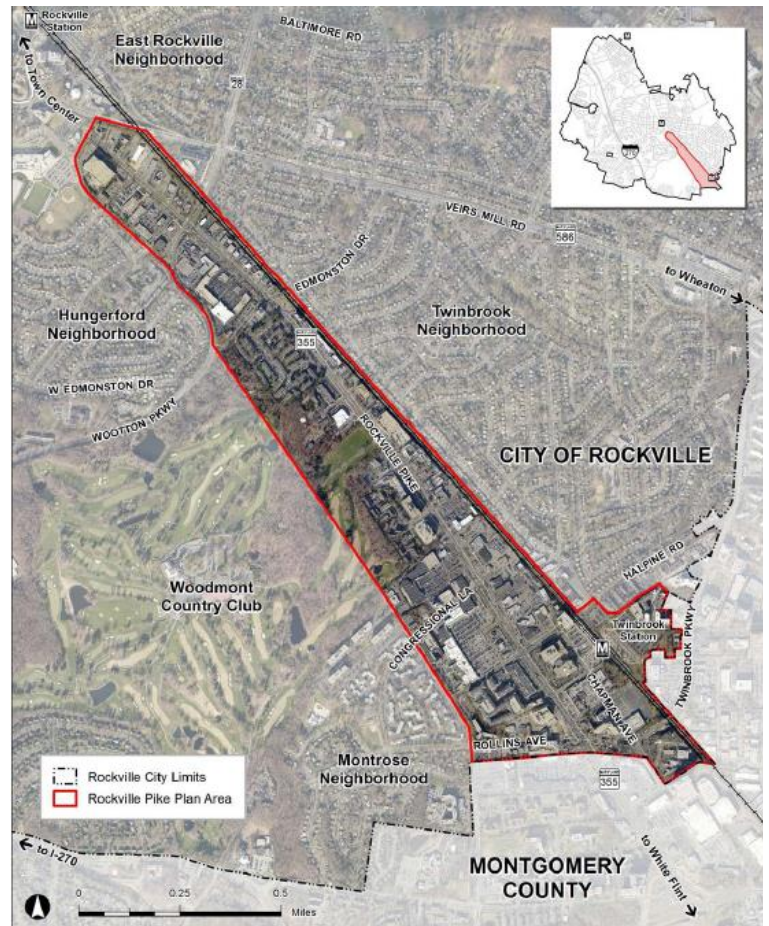
PURPOSE

This briefing will provide the Planning Board with an overview of the City of Rockville Planning Commission draft of *Rockville's Pike Plan* (June 2014). Staff recommends the transmittal of the recommendations listed at the beginning of this memorandum to the City of Rockville Mayor and Council and the Rockville Planning Commission.

BACKGROUND

In December 2007, the City of Rockville began the public engagement process that included workshops, stakeholder interviews, and design charrettes culminating in the 2011 Draft Plan, *Rockville's Pike-Envision A Great Place*. The Planning Board reviewed the 2011 Draft Plan on February 24, 2011. *Rockville's Pike Plan* is the latest update to the 2011 Draft Plan and it will amend the City's 1989 *Rockville Corridor Neighborhood Plan*.

The Plan area consists of approximately 410 acres along a 1.98-mile stretch of Rockville Pike (MD 355). The area is bounded by Bou Avenue to the south, Richard Montgomery Drive to the north, Metrorail right-of-way to the east, and properties adjacent to Woodmont Country Club to the west.



Rockville's Pike Plan Area

DRAFT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The June 2014 Draft *Rockville's Pike Plan* creates a new vision for approximately 1.98 miles of Rockville Pike (MD 355) with a new street network, new parks and open spaces, and a multi-way boulevard for Rockville Pike. The Plan promotes mixed-use development, complete streets, mid-rise and some high-rise buildings near the Twinbrook Metro Station. The Plan recommendations are framed by four districts: South Pike; North Pike-West; Middle Pike-West; and Middle/North Pike-East. These districts are illustrated below.



Districts within the Plan Area

The Draft Plan states that the South Pike “has the greatest potential to receive the bulk of the population growth within the corridor, as well as a significant portion of the City’s population growth, over the next few decades. This area also has the most potential to transform from a commercial suburban development pattern into an urban center, complementing Rockville Town Square to the north. Much of the growth and increased

density in the South Pike is expected to be east of Rockville Pike for the near future” (p.1-7). Chapman Avenue is proposed to be extended in this area from its current terminus at Halpine Road, thereby improving local circulation.

The Middle Pike-West district, north of the South Pike and west of Rockville Pike, has a key transportation recommendation to extend East Jefferson Street northward to Wootton Parkway. However, the Plan “does not have an explicit goal of encouraging development of any portion of the Club’s golf course” (p.1-10).

The North Pike-West district is north of Wootton Parkway and west of Rockville Pike. A key recommendation for this district is the extension of Fleet Street south to Wootton Parkway.

The Middle/North Pike-East district is adjacent to the Metrorail/CSX rail tracks. The Plan states that “redevelopment here is expected to be limited by the size and configuration of the lots” and in the near and intermediate term, the area is likely “to remain more auto-oriented than the rest of the corridor because it is less accessible to Metro and there is very little opportunity to create the type of street grid that encourages pedestrian and bicycle activity” (p.1-13).

Land Use and Design

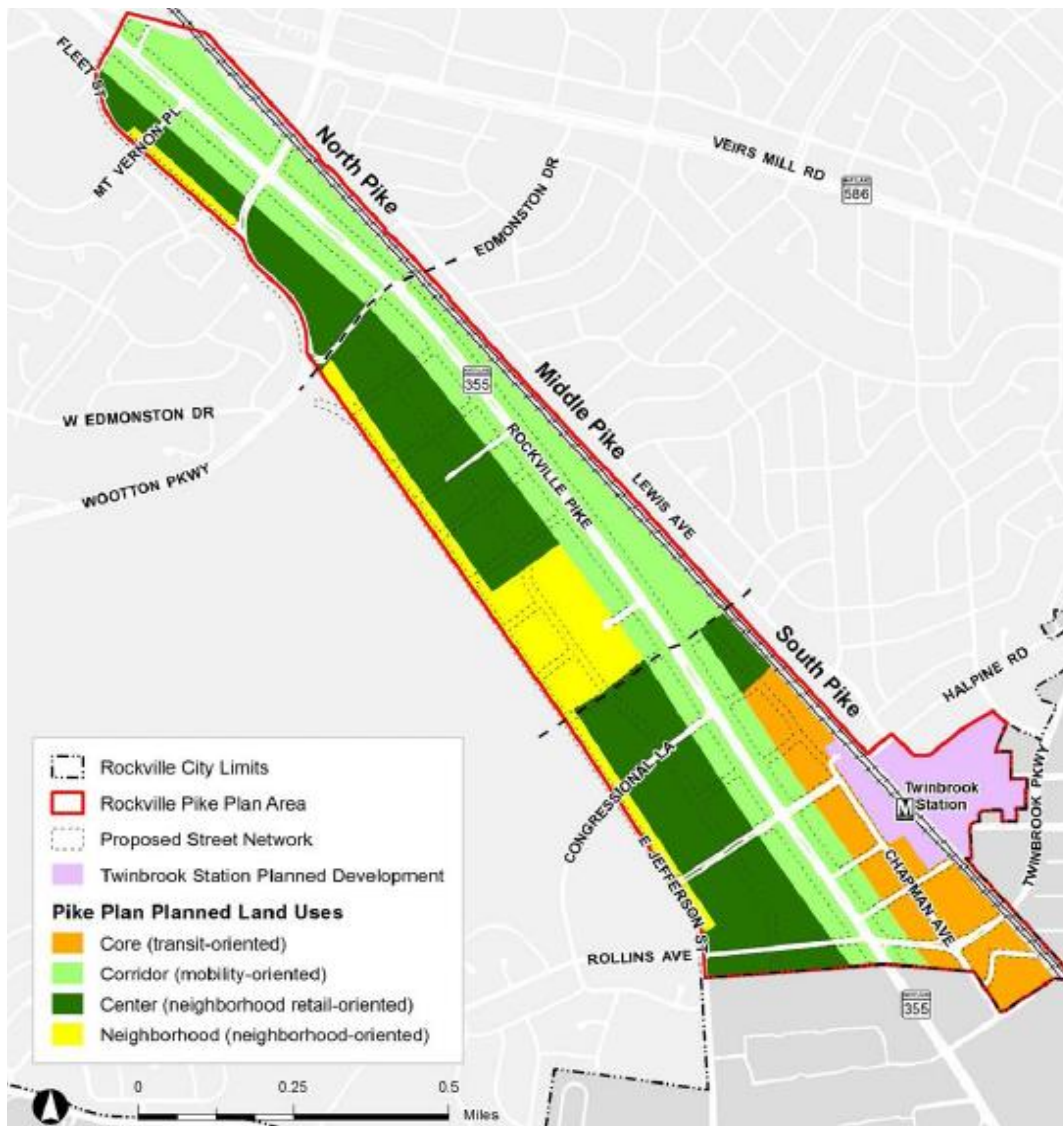
The Draft Plan land use policies are to:

1. Ensure a comfortable and functional relationship between public infrastructure and the private built environment;
2. Require buildings to be adjacent to sidewalks;
3. Regulate building height by location;
4. Create smaller blocks;
5. Provide wide sidewalks;
6. Enhance the pedestrian environment overall and especially at strategic intersections and on strategic streets;
7. Ensure a mix of uses;
8. Encourage human-scale architecture that has visual interest;
9. Provide parks;
10. Require the creation of public use space through redevelopment; and
11. Strategically locate and right-size parking (p.4-21).

The proposed land use plan is guided by the following categories: ‘Core’, ‘Corridor’, ‘Center’ and ‘Neighborhood’. Most of the Core area is close to the Twinbrook Metro Station, while all of the properties that front onto Rockville Pike are identified as the Corridor. The intent of the Core is to provide the highest densities and tallest building heights. The Corridor “should be refined to reflect the different characteristics of the South, Middle, and North Pike and the east and west sides. Maximum building heights should allow for a coherent look along the length of the boulevard. Lower heights should be mandated on the east side of the Middle and North Pike where parcels are located proximate to existing Twinbrook houses on Lewis Avenue” (p.4-23).

The Plan also states that “taller buildings are acceptable in the Core, close to the Twinbrook Metro Station, particularly if occupied by non-residential uses that could complement the multifamily units that are currently planned near the Metro station, and where strong potential exists for creating the type and intensity of uses that serve and promote transit” (p.4-25). Staff recommends that the Plan’s recommended maximum height of 10 stories be increased, especially for the South Pike district, to increase the redevelopment potential and provide an incentive for properties to redevelop near the Metro station.

The Plan classifies most of the western side of Rockville Pike as a Center and Neighborhood areas. The Center designation “is appropriate for locations where a similar, but less intense, development character to the Core and Corridor is desirable” (p.4-23). Neighborhood areas are “more conducive to serving residential uses of varying scales, styles, and densities, with some inclusion of business services” (p.4-23). The proposed land uses are shown below.



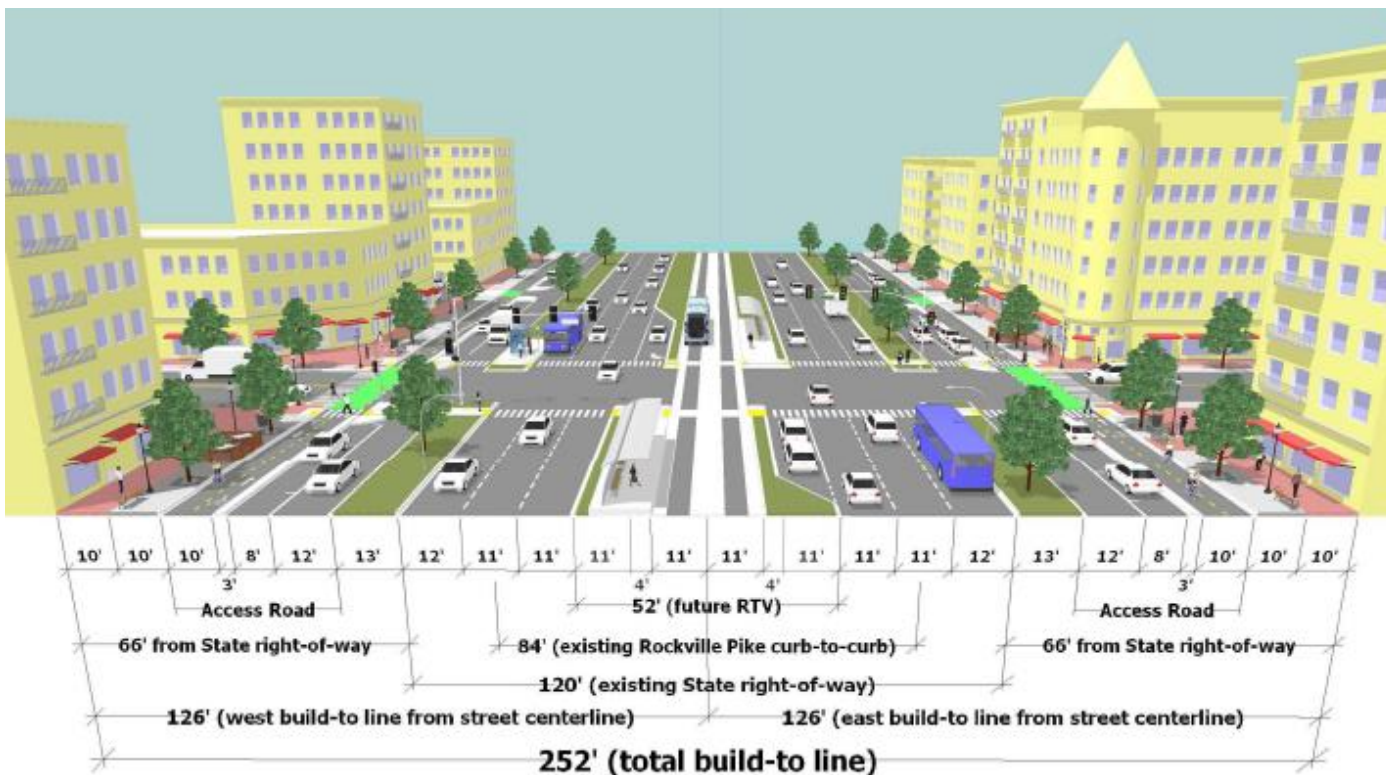
Proposed Pike Plan Land Uses

Multi-Way Boulevard

The transformation of 1.98 miles for Rockville Pike into a multi-way boulevard is a key recommendation in the Plan, which notes: “Rockville Pike serves a dual transportation role in terms of mobility and access. It is part of a regional corridor through Montgomery County, as well as a local road for drivers trying to reach local land uses. A “multi-way” boulevard design will allow the Pike to serve both functions better” (p.4-2). For several decades, the City has required access easements for properties along Rockville Pike and these easement areas will serve as the framework for future access roads for the multi-way boulevard.

A multi-way boulevard, according to the Plan, “can handle a large volume of relatively fast-moving through-traffic on central travel lanes as well as slower local traffic within the same corridor, but on separate yet adjacent and parallel roadways. Through traffic and local traffic are separated by attractively landscaped medians. The combination of medians, local access lanes flanked by on-street parking, bicycle paths, and wide sidewalks together create extended, comfortable pedestrian areas where movement is at a slow pace” (p.4-2).

The Approved and Adopted (2013) *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan* identified this segment of MD 355, Corridor 4: MD 355 South, as suitable for dedicated median BRT lanes. As proposed in the Rockville’s Pike Plan Draft, the multi-way boulevard will allocate 52 feet for future BRT in the middle of Rockville Pike.



Proposed City of Rockville MD-355 Multi-Way Boulevard

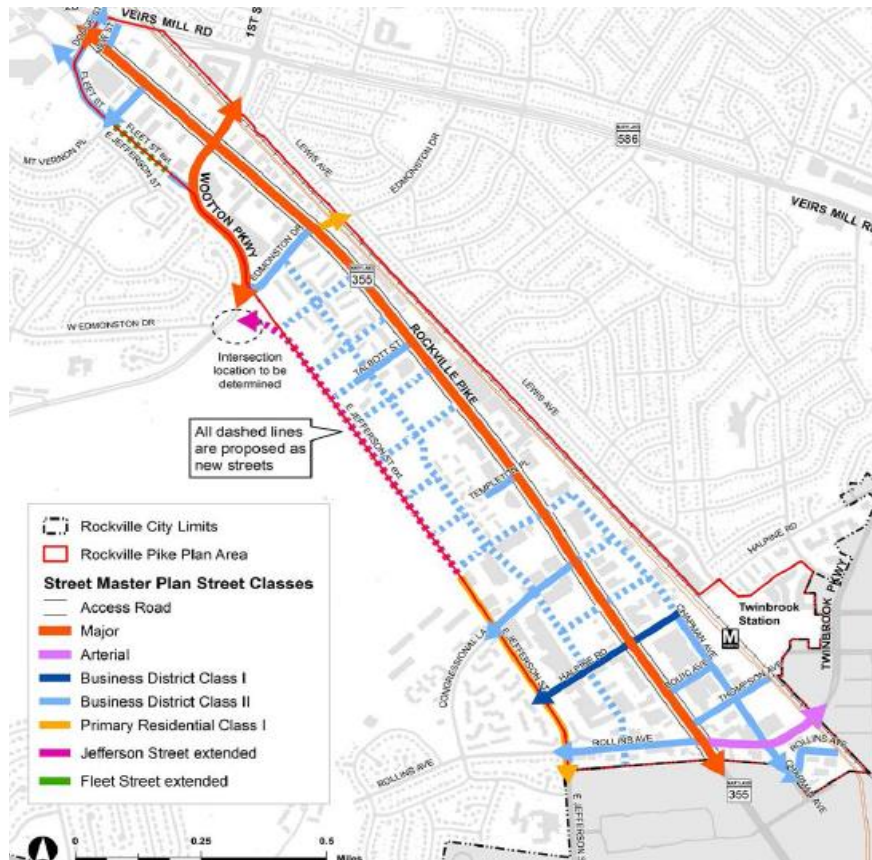
MD 355

The Plan also states that the “central main lanes of Rockville Pike and parallel side access roads together form the envisioned multi-way boulevard with a distance between building faces of approximately 252 feet... This cross-section is possible because there are currently very few buildings on the land where the boulevard would be built. Building setbacks created in the 1970s, and refined by the 1989 Plan, have been establishing the build-to-line at 135 feet from the centerline of the Pike, for a total distance of 270 feet from building face to building face” (p.4-3).

The Plan recognizes that there are challenges with segments of the multi-way boulevard concept. It provides alternative options for right turns from Rockville Pike to the access roads. The feasibility of these alternatives will require subsequent study with the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and the coordination with County’s BRT study. Staff recommends that additional evaluation of turning movements from MD 355 to the access roads be examined to ensure operational safety and efficiency, and consistency with the MD 355 design.

Street Network

The Plan recommends a new network of streets. These new streets provide greater pedestrian, bike and vehicular connectivity within the corridor. The proposed street classification, Business Street Class I and II, is analogous to the County’s Commercial Business Streets that provide on-street parking, augmented streetscape, and widened sidewalks.



Proposed Street Network for the Plan Area

Two key street network recommendations are the northern extensions of Chapman Avenue on the east side of Rockville Pike and East Jefferson Street on the west side of Rockville Pike. The Plan states that the “extension of Chapman Avenue will improve circulation and provide an alternative to using the Pike for local trips. The extension does not continue north through the entire corridor because of the dimensional constraints on properties on the east side of the Pike. Instead, it would end at a new east-west street that would cross the Pike and connect to East Jefferson Street” (p.4-11).

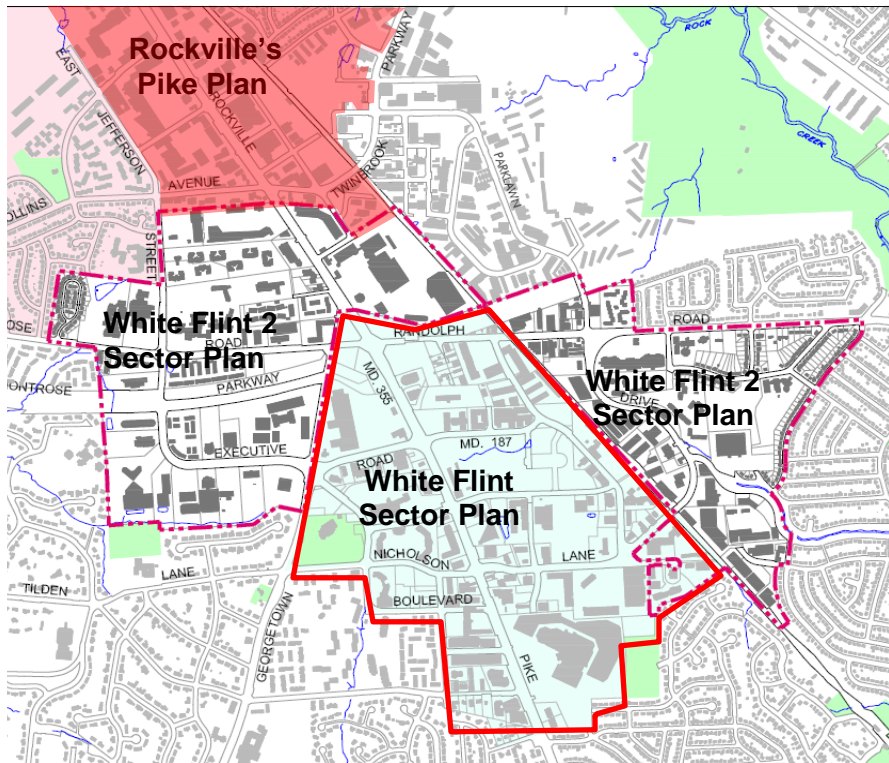
The Plan also notes that the East Jefferson Street “extension would alleviate some of the congestion on the Pike, such as at its intersections with Congressional Lane and Twinbrook Parkway, both of which are highly congested at peak times. The East Jefferson Street extension should be considered in conjunction with any development or redevelopment project(s) that produce (s) a significant impact on these intersections” (p.4-13).

Staff supports the general concept of expanding the street network to improve overall access throughout the Plan area. In addition, staff recommends that the City explore the inclusion of cycletracks along East Jefferson Street and for the City’s Business District Class I streets. For instance, the Plan’s proposed 80 foot cross-section for East Jefferson Street illustrates two bike lanes at 12 feet. This area dedicated to bike lanes can be converted into a cycletrack with the same dimension for either the eastern or western side of the street.

Policy

Unlike the 2011 Draft Plan, this Plan does not explicitly recommend new policy initiatives, such as modifying the City’s Critical Lane Volume (CLV) standards for evaluating traffic congestion or reducing parking spaces within proximity to the Twinbrook Metro Station. The City’s CLV standard of the Plan area ranges from 1400 to 1600, whereas the County’s standard for a Metro Station Policy Area is 1800. Staff recommends that the City consider modifications to the existing CLV standard, especially for the area in proximity to the Twinbrook Metro Station as well as the establishment of a Transportation Management District (TMD) in this Plan. Once the TMD is established, the City should link its transportation management activities with the County’s North Bethesda Transportation Management District. These modifications will increase efficiency of the existing transportation system to accommodate future growth without considering major widening or roadway improvements in the area. These policy recommendations are important in setting the stage for future redevelopment along Rockville Pike.

WHITE FLINT 2 SECTOR PLAN COORDINATION



The proposed White Flint 2 Sector Plan area is immediately south of *Rockville's Pike Plan* area. In June 2015, the Planning Department will restart the White Flint 2 Sector Plan, which will examine the area between the White Flint Sector Plan area and the area along Rockville Pike and Executive Boulevard to the Rockville city limits. Staff will continue to coordinate with the City of Rockville for both plan areas.

Rockville's Pike Plan, White Flint and White Flint 2 Sector Plan areas

SUMMARY

The Draft *Rockville's Pike Plan* is another step in transformation of Rockville Pike (MD 355) from an auto-oriented single-use corridor into an urban boulevard with residential and non-residential development. The proposed multi-way boulevard will complement the recommendations in the 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan. It is also consistent with the 2010 White Flint Sector Plan recommendations for Rockville Pike. Transforming the Pike into a multi-way boulevard will require careful coordination between the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), Montgomery County's Department of Transportation (MCDOT), the County and the City.

Staff supports the Draft Plan's recommendation for a new street network that promotes better pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicle movement as well as new public spaces and mixed-use development. Staff recommends that the City include transportation policy recommendations, such as reduced parking standards near the Twinbrook Metro Station; increased levels of congestion; and the creation of a Transportation Management District. Planning staff will continue to collaborate with City of Rockville Planning staff as the Draft Plan moves through the City's approval process and for the upcoming White Flint 2 Sector Plan.