



**MCPB**

Item No.

Date: December 6, 2018

**Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan Draft Preliminary Recommendations**

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**Description**

Planning Board Update – Draft Preliminary Recommendations

**Staff Recommendation:** Discussion

**Summary**

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan extends along Georgia Avenue and follows the MD 97 corridor between Dennis Avenue and Spring Street. This memorandum presents the approach and the draft recommendations that are proposed for the Sector Plan. Staff will additional analysis undertaken along with draft land use, zoning, environmental, design, parks and open space recommendations.

**CONTENTS**

Outreach and Engagement ..... 4

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN ..... 5

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 6

    Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Market Analysis..... 6

    Land Use and Zoning..... 6

        Housing ..... 8

    Transportation ..... 9

        Traffic Safety ..... 10

        Uncomfortable Walking Conditions..... 11

        High-stress Bicycling Conditions ..... 12

        Main Street Walkable Grid..... 13

        Beltway Interchange ..... 14

    Urban Design and Placemaking ..... 17

    Parks, Open Space and Trails ..... 19

        Create Civic Gathering Spaces ..... 19

        Create a new Gateway Urban Recreational Park..... 20

        Enhance Existing Urban Parks..... 20

        Create and Enhance Trail Connectors..... 20

        Create Temporary/Interim Public Open Spaces ..... 20

    Environment ..... 21

    Community Facilities..... 23

        Schools ..... 23

        Fire, Safety and Rescue ..... 25

PLAN SCHEDULE ..... 25

STAY CONNECTED ..... 25

    Staff Contacts ..... 25

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Plan Area is a roughly 230-acre corridor plan along Georgia Avenue. It acts as a connector between the Silver Spring and Wheaton CBD and its amenities include the Forest Glen Metro Station, a planned BRT line and an existing health and wellness node comprised of numerous medical office complexes. The Holy Cross Hospital, while not in the Plan area is located minutes away within the East Forest Glen neighborhood and represents the primary employer within the area.

The area is diverse in income, race and ethnicity which is reflected in the aging but still relatively successful Montgomery Hills Commercial District. It is home to several unique, locally owned small businesses. There is an expansive park system (Capital View Homewood Park, McKenney Hills Neighborhood Park, Capital View Open Space Urban Park, Forest Glen Neighborhood Park, Birch Drive Neighborhood Conservation Area, Montgomery Hills, Neighborhood Park, General Getty Neighborhood Park, Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park, Woodside Urban Park and Fairview Urban Park), government-owned facilities (PLD parking lots #12 and #48 and the WSSC Woodside Water Tank) varied housing stock and numerous religious institutions which act as community anchors.

There are however several issues impacting the community including but not limited to: poor connectivity, heavy through traffic, unattractive and inhospitable streetscape and storm water management systems. These combined with the physical barriers created by Georgia Avenue and I-495 have resulted in a fractured community dominated by car-centric development patterns.

#### PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This Sector Plan follows the Georgia Avenue corridor from Spring Street to Dennis Avenue and includes the Woodside, Montgomery Hills and Forest Glen communities. As a result, Staff needed to review the following Master Plans for insight: the *1989 Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan*, the *1996 Forest Glen Sector Plan* and, the *2000 North and West Silver Spring Master Plan*. The *1989 Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* encouraged the protection of existing single-unit residential neighborhoods from intrusive uses and noted that development should be concentrated within a high intensity core. Only a small portion of the Sector Plan is within the *Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan* area.

The *1996 Forest Glen Sector Plan* area is identified in the 1993 General Plan Refinement as being located within the Urban Ring. The Urban Ring is defined as an “older, well-established and densely developed area characterized by a diversity in income, ethnic and racial composition.” These communities are characterized by the ability to live in a “suburban” setting within proximity of a CBD or a more urban environment.

The Sector Plan strongly encouraged the preservation and strengthening of existing residential communities but also allowed for potential redevelopment particularly in Forest Glen West which contains the Forest Glen Metro Station. Forest Glen East is home to the Holy Cross Hospital Campus and the recommendations focused on maintaining neighborhood stability limiting the impact of any potential expansion of the hospital.

Other general recommendations focused on moving traffic efficiently and safely through the Plan area, improving community facilities, and strengthening environmental protections to improve the overall quality of life for residents.

The *2000 North and West Silver Spring Master Plan* sought to improve aesthetics, connectivity and economic stability of the Georgia Avenue commercial node identified as Montgomery Hills. The older commercial area is roughly 18 acres and provides for both commuter and neighborhood serving uses within the North Silver Spring area. This commercial center is surrounded by stable, residential communities.

The Master Plan envisions Montgomery Hills and the adjacent neighborhoods as a multi-modal community with an attractive, easily accessible commercial center. This was to be accomplished by transforming Georgia Avenue into a boulevard that balanced the needs of residents, commuters, and other stakeholders.

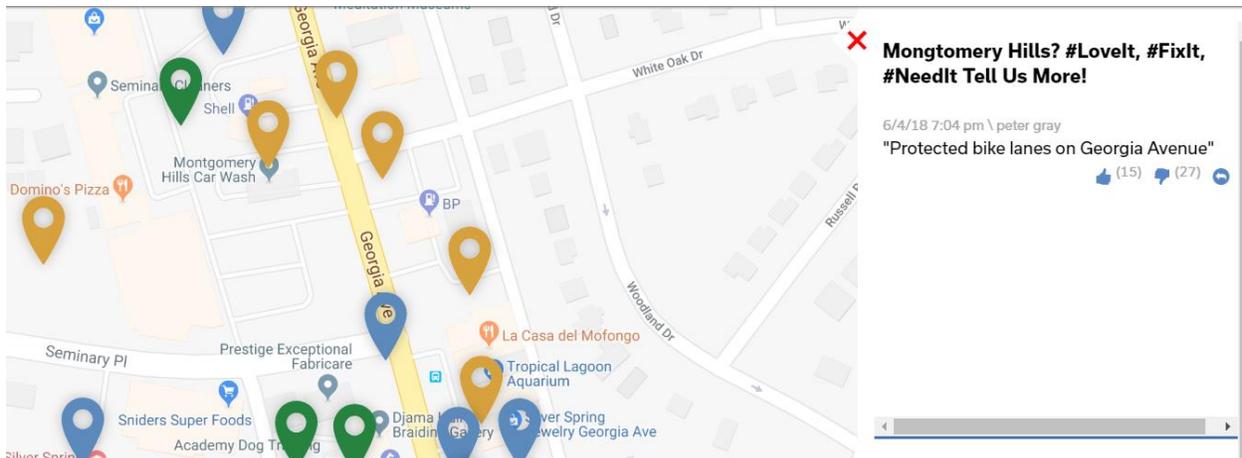
Additional, related planning efforts include the following:

- Master Plan of Highways and Transitways
- Countywide Park Trails Plan Amendment
- Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan
- Master Plan for Historic Preservation
- Georgia Avenue Corridor Urban Design Study
- Montgomery Hills Georgia Avenue Study
- Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan
- Energized Public Spaces Functional Park Master Plan
- The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District within Montgomery and Prince George's Counties – 1993

## **OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**

Outreach within the Plan area included a combination of low-tech and hi-tech engagement tools including but not limited to, mailers, flyers, one on one sessions with community stakeholders, signage at Forest Glen Metro and select bus stations and the MC React Map virtual outreach tool. The interactive mapping tool was the most successful of all the engagement tools receiving over 300 comments.

The interactive mapping tool ([mcatlas.org/forestglen](http://mcatlas.org/forestglen)) allowed stakeholders to make comments and suggestions about what they would like to see happen in their community.



*MC React Map*

In the future, they can utilize this tool to provide feedback on sector plan recommendations. The SMS interactive signage was also rolled into the virtual mapping tool. These signs allowed stakeholders to use their mobile devices to note community concerns and provide immediate feedback to staff. To improve meeting accessibility, all meetings were livestreamed and ASL and foreign language interpretation was available. The interactive map, signage and printed materials were also translated or made available for translation.

Since the inception of the Plan, Staff has held the following meetings:

- Scope of Work Briefing – October 17, 2017
- Preliminary Analysis Update (Economics and Transportation) – December 18, 2017
- Business and Property Owners Forum – February 20, 2018
- Alternative Modes of Transportation – February 27, 2018
- Concept Framework Plan Briefing – June 4, 2018
- Finding from Economic Study of the Plan Area – September 17, 2018
- Technical Transportation Update – October 23, 2018

Staff also met with Montgomery County agencies, elected officials and presented at meetings for local civic associations and attended the community driven Friends of Forest Glen, Montgomery Hills and Dale Drive Charette (June 13, 2018) and the Montgomery Hills Neighborhood Street Fest (September 29, 2018).

On December 4, Staff will present draft preliminary recommendations to the community for feedback. Staff continues to evaluate stakeholders' concerns and will refine recommendations based on feedback and the results of pending analysis.

### **PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan provides an opportunity to reassess the plan area and analyze alternative redevelopment and connectivity opportunities. Staff has considered the existing land use, zoning and development pattern and the potential for change, as a response to the Maryland State Highway Administration MD 97 Georgia Avenue study and

the WMATA Metro Station Feasibility Study for the Forest Glen Metro. The Plan will also respond to stakeholders' concerns, determine unmet community needs and the viability of residential and commercial development opportunities along the corridor, while introducing new measures to improve/mitigate (multimodal safety and access) traffic and connectivity issues to allow for pedestrian friendly, mixed-use development.

The following goals were identified:

- Balancing the regional traffic demands with the needs of enhancing and protecting the existing residential neighborhoods.
- Evaluate existing conditions and provide recommendations to guide future land uses along the Georgia Avenue corridor.
- Develop recommendations that improve the compatibility between the land uses adjacent to and along Georgia Avenue and the Forest Glen Metro Station property.
- Develop recommendations to promote health and wellness while also improving pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, connectivity and safety within the plan area.
- Explore opportunities for redevelopment and reinvestment at strategic locations to provide walkable, neighborhood-serving development.

## **PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Market Analysis*

Staff commissioned a study to assess the retail and housing market within the sector plan study area. The assessment examined the following factors: surrounding area demographics, real estate market conditions, overall economic conditions, future supply and demand, and the potential impact of disruptive trends.

Following the economic and market study presentation to the Planning Board on September 20, as well as discussion with property owners and staff analysis, Staff intends to primarily pursue two strategies related to economic development of the corridor. The first is identifying and facilitating reinvestment and new property improvements (whether they be infill or redevelopment) on opportunity sites. Opportunity sites are selected based on their market potential and support, interest from property owners, and their ability to achieve Sector Plan and County objectives. It is important to note that Staff expanded the list of opportunity sites beyond the initial list provided in the market assessment.

The second is to preserve and enhance existing businesses, which we plan to adopt the principles and approaches of a "Main Street" Program for the commercial center. Such approaches aim to improve the built environment through streetscape improvements, signage and façade upgrades as well as encouraging placemaking initiatives along with coordinated marketing such as events programming, branding and promotion.

### **Land Use and Zoning**

The Plan seeks to facilitate reinvestment within the Plan area while also capitalizing on the planned infrastructure improvements. Staff has evaluated different land use and zoning alternatives while also noting that less than 50% of the available development capacity is

currently being utilized by property owners. Furthermore, many property owners reported as part of the Market analysis that they have no plans or didn't feel incentivized to make improvements or build additional density.

Given this context, Staff has initiated a comprehensive review of the land use and zoning to target strategic opportunities that will capture the area's market potential and spur private investments through revitalization and redevelopment. However, there is also a need to propose zoning change due to existing land uses and structures. As such, the proposed rezoning of Opportunities Sites can be classified into two categories: (1) Redevelopment-driven rezoning of sites to yield increased density and public infrastructure near transit and the commercial center; and (2) Technical-driven rezoning of sites with R-60 special exceptions or structures exceeding the development standards of the current zone.

The Map illustrates proposed zoning changes with some expressed in ranges. As these are preliminary recommendations, they are meant to initiate discussion with the Planning Board and other stakeholders for further refinement as the process continues.



concentrated near transit, including at the WMATA site, the existing Montgomery Housing Partnership Forest Glen Apartments, and the Forest Glen Medical Office site. The preliminary recommendations also explore the opportunity for townhouse development project on appropriate sites along the corridor. These sites will have 15 percent Moderately Priced Dwelling Units as the highest priority Public Benefit Points. Preservation of existing market-rate affordable housing will be concentrated at the multi-unit residential complexes in the Forest Glen section including Americana Finnmark, the Fields of Silver Spring and the Belvedere Apartments.

## **Transportation**

The proposed transportation-related, public infrastructure improvements represent the greatest opportunity within the Plan area. While the Plan cannot eliminate congestion, it can support recommendations that could allow for increased mobility options and improved safety

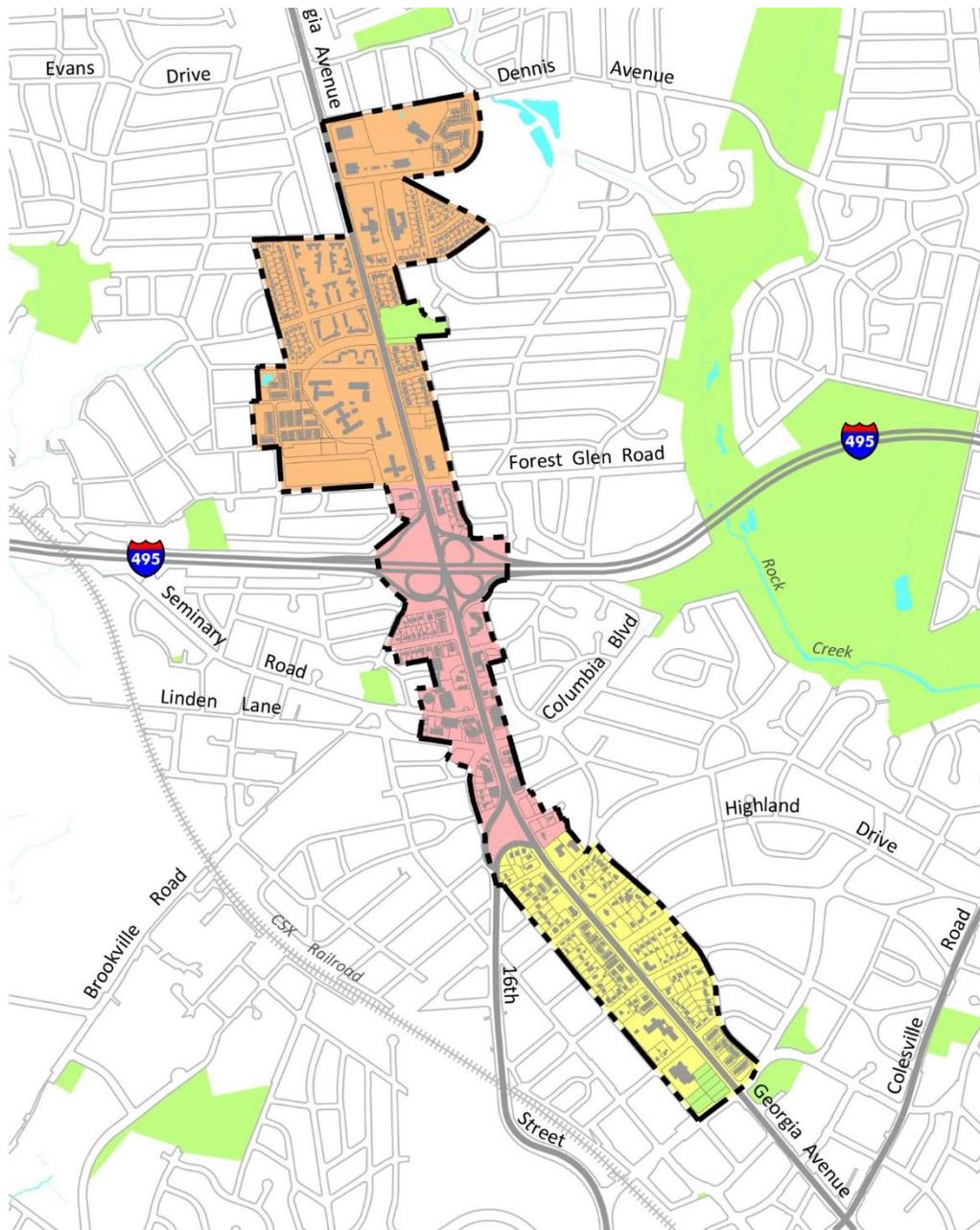
The transportation goals of the Sector Plan, in priority order to:

1. Eliminate all traffic-related deaths and severe injuries
2. Improve the comfort, safety and overall traveling experience for non-motorized transportation modes (walking biking, transit)
3. Reduce single-occupancy car travel within and through the corridor, and
4. Improve the efficiency of travel for all transportation modes.

The emphasis above all else is on transportation safety. This approach aligns with the Council's Vision Zero Initiative (2016) and the Executive's Two-Year Action Plan (2017). Connectivity and travel efficiency are important goals for the Sector Plan, but recommendations to achieve these goals should not undermine safety for all modes of travel.

Through community outreach, data analysis, and field observation staff identified three key issues that are pervasive throughout the plan area; traffic safety, uncomfortable walking conditions and high-stress bicycling conditions. Staff is studying these conditions and has preliminary recommendations that can be applied throughout plan area.

The Montgomery Hills section of the corridor, which falls between Forest Glen Road, just north of the Beltway interchange, to 16<sup>th</sup> Street, has a distinct character from the northern and southern ends of the corridor. This segment includes the Montgomery Hills commercial center, a clustering of non-residential buildings with low-density office and neighborhood retail uses, where the northern and southern segments of the corridor are predominantly residential in character. This section also shares its boundaries with the Maryland State Highway Administration's MD 97 Montgomery Hills Project. Given its unique character and its distinct opportunities in the short or medium term from MDSHA's involvement, recommendations for this area will be discussed separately from the rest of the corridor.



*Neighborhood District Map*

### *Traffic Safety*

Given the high traffic volumes reported on Georgia Avenue between the plan area boundaries, it is no surprise that transportation safety for all users is a major concern. On Georgia Avenue between Forest Glen Road and Plyers Mill (outside the Plan area's northern boundary of Dennis Avenue) the state's most recent Annual Average Daily Traffic counts (AADT) estimates 67,651. Planning staff commissioned traffic counts on the segment of Georgia Avenue just south of the Beltway interchange and estimates over 75,000 cars per day.

As a point of comparison, there are only three roadways in the county that experience higher rates of congestion<sup>1</sup>. With high motor vehicle volumes traveling up and down the corridor, it can be difficult for all travel modes to access important neighborhood destinations on either side of Georgia Avenue including religious institutions, neighborhood retail, parks, schools, bus stops, offices, residences the Metrorail station and Holy Cross Hospital without the aid of a traffic control device.

To address the traffic safety concerns, staff is employing the lens of Vision Zero, which key tenets are to decrease crash frequency and decrease crash severity. Strategies to reduce crash frequency include reducing conflicts and designating space for different users (cars, pedestrians, bicyclists). Separating users along the roadways with buffered sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and even shared use paths gives pedestrians and bicyclists comfortable places to travel. This separation is also important at intersections with high volumes of motor vehicles. In most cases providing ample queuing space, designated crossing space and traffic control devices is enough; however, grade-separated crossings may be appropriate at some locations. To reduce crash severity, the most effective strategies aim to reduce motor vehicle speeds to increase the potential for motorists to react and to reduce crash impact. Streetscape design that encourages motorists to drive slower are being explored as part of this project. Additionally, speed enforcement and a review of the posted speeds on Georgia Avenue and the intersecting roadways are being studied by Planning staff in coordination with MDSHA and MCDOT.

#### *Uncomfortable Walking Conditions*

Several of the comments on MC React Map were focused on the walking conditions along and across the Georgia Avenue Corridor. Although the sidewalks along both sides of Georgia Avenue are continuous, their narrow widths and lack of buffers from the motor vehicle traffic make them uncomfortable or uninviting for most pedestrians. Nearly all the sidewalks along Georgia Avenue within the plan area are between four and five feet wide without any protection from adjacent cars. Passing someone on the sidewalks can be nearly impossible if walking with a stroller or a walking assistance device. Staff also observed multiple vertical obstructions such as utility poles that block the path of travel. All these elements make for an unpleasant and in some cases unsafe walking experience.

Crossing Georgia Avenue is separate but equally challenging issue. Within the two-mile corridor, there are nine traffic signals, and of those nine only seven provide protected crossings for bicyclists and pedestrians. The greatest distance between protected crossings is over 3,000 ft, or 15-minute walk for a pedestrian. If a pedestrian is mid-way between both signals that person would have to walk over seven minutes out of their way to cross with a traffic signal. For many people who are trying to access a bus stop, it is more likely they will simply wait for a gap in traffic and cross at an unprotected intersection. In fact, Staff has observed several people dashing across Georgia Avenue during fieldwork.

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<sup>1</sup> 2017 Mobility Assessment Report

To identify specific sidewalk and crossing improvements, and apply recommendations consistently throughout the plan area, Planning Staff is piloting the Pedestrian Level of Comfort (PLoC) analysis tool developed by Functional Policy and Planning Staff. The approach is analogous to the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress Analysis tool that was applied to the Bicycle Master Plan, and it has already been vetted once with the Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan. Staff recommends applying the PLoC to this Sector Plan to identify pedestrian safety improvement projects and prioritize specific segments and crossings using the same metrics that were studied with the Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan.

### *High-stress Bicycling Conditions*

The Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress analysis tool developed for the Bicycle Master Plan indicates the stress level for bicycling on and across Georgia Avenue is very high with existing conditions. Yet, the bike racks at the Forest Glen Metrorail station are near full every day, and bicyclists are consistently observed on the bicycle and pedestrian bridge. There are many residences located within two miles (what is generally considered a comfortable distance for a bike trip) of neighborhood retail, the Metrorail station, bus stops, and other local destinations. Staff recommends confirming the recommendations made within the recently approved Bicycle Master Plan which includes a segment of the Glenmont to Silver Spring Breezeway route through the plan area on neighborhood greenways adjacent and parallel to Georgia Avenue and separated bicycle facilities on Georgia Avenue, 16<sup>th</sup> Street, and Forest Glen Road in the long-term.

MD SHA Preferred Alternative For this Sector Plan, the Montgomery Hills commercial center consists of neighborhood shopping centers on either side of Georgia Avenue. Unique to the corridor, this segment of Georgia is undivided (without a median) and spans seven lanes wide. In the off-peak hours, the center lane operates as a center turn lane. During the peak hours that lane is repurposed as a peak direction travel lane, and all left turns are restricted on Georgia Avenue. This traffic operation creates many potential safety issues for all travel modes.

Although the lanes are individually marked overhead, motorists are often confused by the reversible lane configuration during peak hours. Motorists have been observed driving in the wrong direction and attempting to make left turns when restricted. The lack of median separation is also problematic for pedestrians who must cross seven lanes of traffic without a center refuge.

MD SHA is refining a preferred alternative for the MD 97 Montgomery Hills Project which aims to improve traffic safety and accessibility within the project limits. This project began in 2011 and has made significant progress towards a final Preferred Alternative. In 2016 MD SHA presented several design alternatives for the project to the public and the Planning Board. In response, the Planning Board provided written support for Alternative 5b, specifically for the following design elements in that alternative:

- Removal of the reversible lane operation on Georgia Avenue
- Installation of a raised median down the center of Georgia avenue
- Restoration of left turns at the intersections of Seminary Place, Seminary Road, and Forest Glen Road

- Buffered sidewalks on both sides of Georgia Avenue
- A designated, buffered bicycle facility on the west side of Georgia Avenue between Seminary Road and the bicycle/pedestrian bridge
- Removal of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street southbound lane and reorientation of 16<sup>th</sup> Street southbound to the existing 16<sup>th</sup> Street northbound T-intersection

Planning Staff is coordinating with MD SHA staff to develop a final alternative that achieves the original goals of the project while balancing other considerations such as project cost and feasibility. MD SHA staff is targeting a release of the final concept in winter of 2019, which will provide an opportunity for the public and the Board to comment on the design. Staff recognizes that as this is a public project that will be funded with public dollars, MD SHA's final Preferred Alternative may not realize what could be the long-term vision for Georgia Avenue in Montgomery Hills. As a compromise, and to encourage MD SHA to move forward with further design and construction of the MD 97 Montgomery Hills project, Staff expects to recommend the MD SHA Preferred Alternative in the short-term and identify a long-term vision should redevelopment or other opportunities for a further improved for a further improved bicycle and pedestrian experience occur.

#### *Main Street Walkable Grid*

Building on Alternative 5B there may be prospects with redevelopment of some of the opportunity sites to further improve traffic safety, access, and circulation in Montgomery Hills by studying a concept for a more walkable street grid. Staff proposes studying the potential benefits and impacts of a parallel roadway to Georgia Avenue that could connect Seminary Road to the south and the northern boundary of the Seminary Place shopping center parcel to the north. Cross streets could align with Flora Lane and White Oak Drive. Staff recommends studying the potential for adding protected intersection treatments where these new cross streets and Georgia Avenue intersect to create a main street feel and traffic operation.

Similarly, to the south there may be a potential to connect the east and west sides of Georgia Avenue at Luzerne Avenue. Currently Luzerne Avenue stretches across Georgia Avenue in the east-west direction but is closed on the western side. Staff shared the idea of opening the west side and studying the effects of a full traffic signal with the public and the reaction was mixed. Staff received supportive comments from residents living on the eastern side, who are interested in improved accessibility to the businesses on the west side of Georgia Avenue and Woodlin Elementary School, has frontage along the western end of Luzerne Avenue. Residents who are cautious about this proposal live on the western side and are very concerned about the potential for increased motor traffic volumes that will be attracted by this new connection.

There appears to be consensus on exploring a protected bicycle and pedestrian only crossing at this location. Staff recommends studying this proposal further.



*Main Street Walkable Grid*

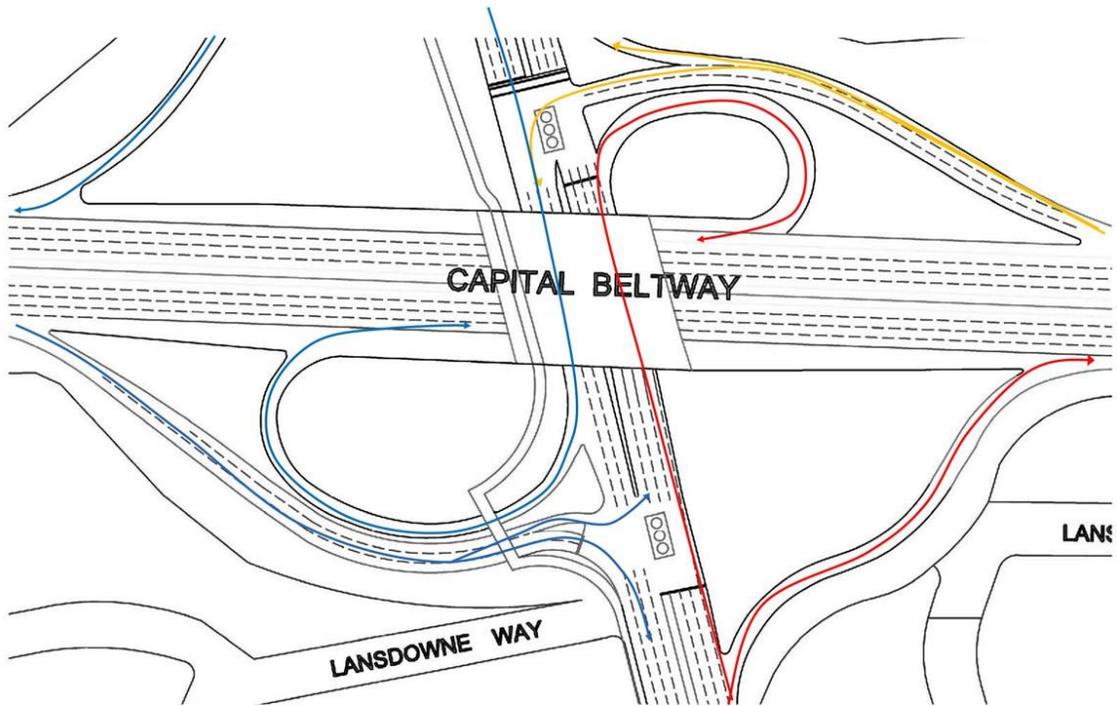
*Beltway Interchange*

Another important safety issue within this segment of the corridor is the Beltway Interchange. The clover leaf design that exists today creates several conflict points where cars are weaving to get into position to access the Beltway (in either direction) or to get off the Beltway. The area with the highest potential for conflicts is northbound lanes where the inner loop off-ramp northbound and the outer loop on-ramp westbound intersect. Staff proposes studying two potential reconfigurations of the Beltway Interchange that would improve existing motor vehicle safety and could improve lane utilization and vehicle throughput in the intersections south of the Beltway.

One option is a reconfiguration of the Beltway ramps which would include the following:

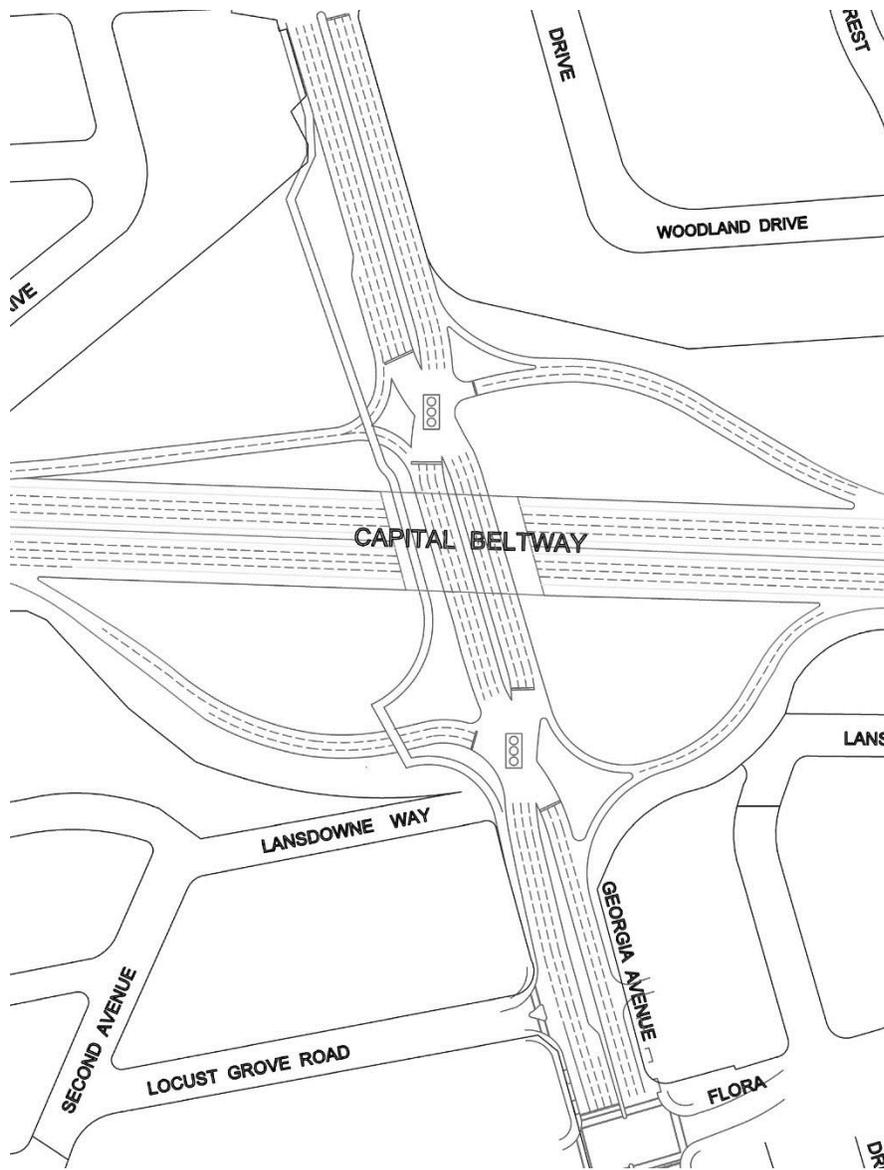
- Remove the inner loop off-ramp
- Re-route the inner loop off-ramp northbound alongside the inner loop off-tramp south bound
- Provide a dedicated lane for motorists accessing the outer loop on-ramp westbound to bypass the traffic signal

Removing the inner loop off-ramp eliminates weaving for the motorists accessing the outer loop on-ramp westbound, creating a safer path of travel for people accessing the Beltway. Realigning the inner loop off-ramp northbound alongside the inner loop off-ramp south bound with the existing signal will provide protected access to northbound Georgia Avenue.



*Beltway Interchange Ramp Reconfiguration – Option 1*

Another option would require replacing the existing clover leaf configuration with a diverging diamond interchange (DDI). The DDI isolates the northbound and southbound movements with traffic signals thereby protecting these movements which increases safety and could improve throughput. Staff is interested in this option because it would distribute traffic across the roadway more evenly than what occurs today. Motorists traveling eastbound on the Beltway would occupy the rightmost lane, motorists traveling northbound beyond the interchange would stay in the middle lane, and motorists traveling westbound on the Beltway would use the left lane. Signage and pavement markings further south in Montgomery Hills would reduce lane changes and could improve lane utilization.



*Divergent Diamond Interchange – Option 2*

It is important to note that DDIs have been criticized for how they accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. Some applications of the DDI have funneled non-motorized transportation users down the center of the interchange. Staff recommends keeping the existing pedestrian bridge on the west side and studying potential pedestrian improvements with either additional pedestrian-activated signals or a grade separated crossing on the east side.

Staff recommends studying these two interchange improvements further to determine potential impacts on the capacities of intersections north and south of the Beltway interchange.

## **Urban Design and Placemaking**

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan area is a primarily residential community with local serving retail such as gas stations, a car wash, small grocers, nail salons, phone stores and medical office buildings. Most of the commercial buildings are dated, with many being over 50 years old. Several of these structures have seen very little upgrades over the years and are located on shallow lots within limited parking and egress. Additionally, the streetscape along Georgia Avenue is characterized by narrow sidewalks, no pedestrian refuges or medians, and very long crosswalks, making it inhospitable to pedestrians and cyclists.

The Montgomery Hills commercial center is filled with unique locally owned businesses and is relatively successful despite the limited reinvestment. Less than 50% of the development capacity (total FAR allowed by the zone) within the area is being utilized and many property owners (in interviews conducted as a part of the Market analysis) stated that they have no plans or didn't feel incentivized to make physical improvements or seek increased density.

Based on this information, Staff needed to revisit the concept of opportunity and realized that the catalysts for change will likely be public realm investments or public infrastructure projects. These opportunities will provide for improved mobility, transit access and open space. The quality of life improvements can attract additional residents and businesses to the area while also providing for much needed amenities.

There are several opportunities in the public realm. The first is the renovation of Georgia Avenue by MD SHA to include a consistent tree lined median with wide pedestrian refuges at the crosswalks, wide sidewalks setback from the curb and buffered from the travel lanes by a 5' wide planting strip with shade trees and groundcovers and pedestrian scale lighting. Adding dedicated on-road or off-road bike lanes or trails will improve connectivity and provide for safe and efficient access to existing public gathering and commercial areas within the sector plan. The Plan will also encourage placemaking initiatives to further strengthen these connections.

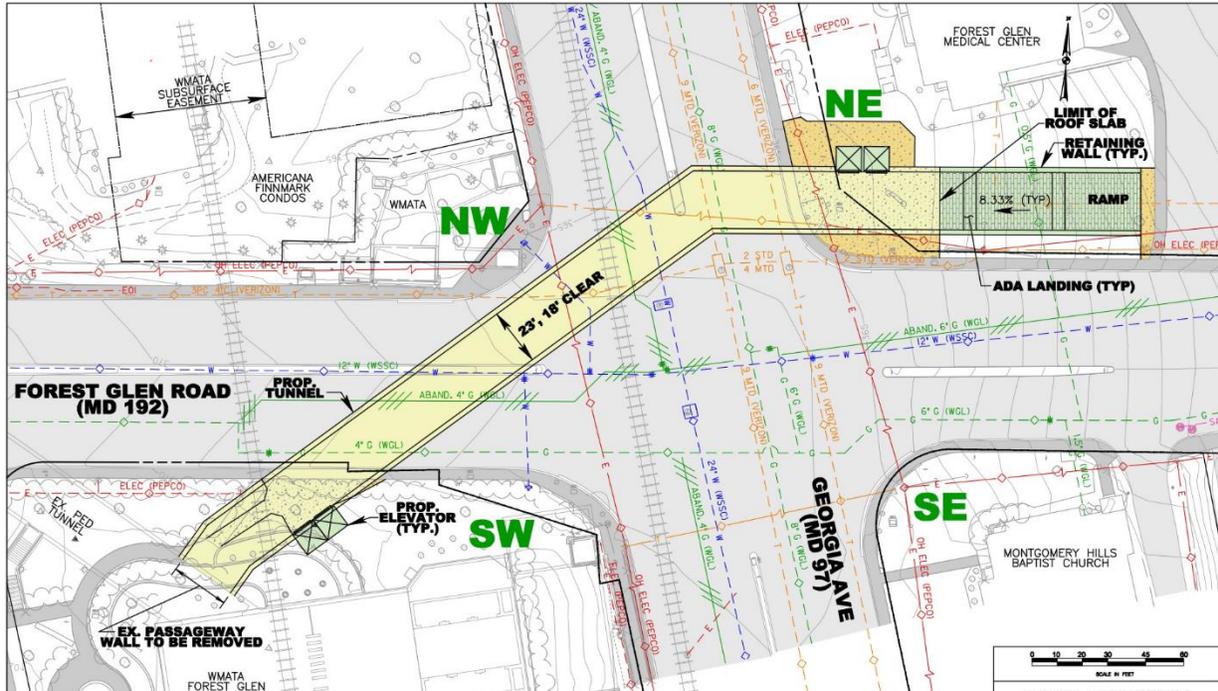
The second opportunity in the public realm is the land between 16<sup>th</sup> street and Georgia Avenue. This 3.2-acre parcel of land is presently a Right-of-Way owned by the State Highway Administration. The Montgomery County Parks Department is evaluating the potential to create a modern park space that could provide for informal sports, outdoor entertainment, skate park, dog park, public garden and other related functions.



*Illustrative concept for SHA Right of Way*

A third opportunity is the proposed passage to the Forest Glen Metro Station entrance. It will run between the northeast and southwest quadrants of the Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road intersection and provide for a safe pedestrian access to the Metro station for pedestrians living on the east side of Georgia Avenue. This new entrance creates an opportunity for the redevelopment of the Forest Glen Medical Center site and provides direct connection to the proposed redevelopment of the Forest Glen Metro Station Parking lot. That development will be a public-private partnership that could provide for much needed open space and modern building.

Staff is also proposing that a variety of green design initiatives be incorporated, where feasible, into these and other listed opportunity sites.



*Planned Metro Access Passage Way*

## **Parks, Open Space and Trails**

The Plan area and immediate vicinity are well served by parks, open space and trails including the Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park, Sligo-Dennis Avenue Local Park, Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park, Carroll Knolls Neighborhood Park, McKenney Hills Neighborhood Park, Capitol View-Homewood Local Park, Forest Glen Neighborhood Park, Montgomery Hills Neighborhood Park, General Getty Neighborhood Park, Woodside Urban Park and Fairview Urban Park. The Sligo Creek Trail is within the study area, and the Ireland Drive Trail connector to the Rock Creek Trail is relatively nearby. The Capital Crescent Trail is to the West of the study area.

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan will evaluate the accessibility of these parks, explore options to enhance connectivity between park and trail facilities and proposed opportunity sites. The Plan will also determine if any additional parks, open space or recreational facilities are necessary to address the impact of any proposed redevelopment. Staff utilized community input and tools such as the MCR React Map and the Energized Public Spaces application to determine where additional park resources were most needed. Based on this information, and the needs analysis done for the study area, the following is proposed:

### *Create Civic Gathering Spaces*

The public consistently referred to the lack of civic gathering spaces. The plan recommends two opportunities to create these needed spaces. The civic green for the Forest Glen neighborhoods should be located at or near the Metro Station at Forest Glen. The civic green should be

between ½ and 1 acre to accommodate the gathering events and festivals envisioned by the community.

The civic space for the Montgomery Hills neighborhood should be in the center of the community nearest a proposed opportunity site. This civic gathering space should be between ½ and 1 acre to accommodate the gathering events envisioned by the community.

#### *Create a new Gateway Urban Recreational Park*

Although the study area has numerous parks within walking distance from the communities, the existing parks do not have many of the amenities that are lacking in the plan area, namely dog parks, community gardens and playfields. There is an opportunity to create a new park at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> street. This state-owned street right of way is currently a large green area (over 2.5 acre) tree filled space that is underutilized. Its location at the intersection of two major roadways in the plan allows for the gateway concept to be created.

#### *Enhance Existing Urban Parks*

The two urban parks that currently serve the Sector Plan area are the Woodside Urban Park located in Montgomery Hills and the General Getty Park located in Forest Glen. These parks are extremely well used and that will increase with the growth in population expected. These parks should be enhanced with additional land when possible and by refreshing the older amenities with new amenities to meet the changing recreational needs. Both parks could benefit by introducing additional senior serving amenities.

#### *Create and Enhance Trail Connectors*

The plan area has two major trails within its boundaries, the Capital Crescent Trail to the east and the Sligo Creek Trail to the west. New bikeways and sidewalks should make connections to these two trails and link existing and proposed public opens spaces.

As indicated by the EPS analysis, more residents can be better served if the sidewalks in their neighborhoods could be improved and linked to public spaces. Specifically, adding a sidewalk to the full extent of Dale Drive can greatly increase park and open space access.

#### *Create Temporary/Interim Public Open Spaces*

More and more communities are looking at underutilized spaces in their communities and dreaming of what could be in those spaces that would make their communities more enjoyable and welcoming. This plan presents an opportunity to identify those spaces that could accommodate the communities' desires for play spaces, coffee spaces, meeting/civic gathering spaces, etc.



*Montgomery Hills Street Festival*

As previously stated, these along with many of the other proposed amenities and improvements will likely result from public investment rather than private development. As such, Parks staff will continue to seek opportunities where these goals can be incorporated into planned infrastructure improvements and other public/private partnerships.

**Environment**

The Plan area is bisected by Georgia Avenue and the I-495 Highway resulting in large amount of impervious surface with poor tree canopy along the major thoroughfares. Non-residential

properties are dominated by impervious cover lacking in green space and/or tree canopy cover. Additionally, the community lacks stormwater management systems as majority of the sites were built prior to current treatment requirements. Existing buildings were constructed decades ago with poor insulation or energy efficient consideration. These conditions result in high energy demands to heat and cool buildings, unmitigated heat island effect, poor air and water quality, and limited habitat or wildlife value.

The environmental analysis identified existing habitats, total green and canopy cover, and air and water quality. These baseline measurements will enable modelling over time as we see development occur within the study area. We will see an increase in green cover, reduction in impervious surfaces, and stormwater management and energy efficient building construction.

Utilizing new Geographic Information Systems (GIS) we can estimate stormwater runoff improvements for nitrogen, phosphorous, and suspended solids; the three targeted pollutants of the County's stormwater management regulations.

An analysis is underway to evaluate the air quality impacts of extended idling along Georgia Avenue. The assessment will include analysis of the greenhouse gasses and plums caused by the congested flows along the corridor. The Study will allow for seasonal variation in emission levels and provide baseline information for future studies. Staff will utilize the results to determine evaluate the impact of proposed transportation improvements on the air quality.

The following goals are proposed to improve quality of life, air and water conditions within the Plan area:

- Increase tree canopy cover and native species diversity.
- Improve water quality through the reduction of impervious surfaces and the installation of small-scale stormwater management facilities.
- Promote energy efficiency and encourage high performance buildings.
- Include performance metrics for stormwater runoff, energy reduction, and green cover to quantify changes as development occurs over time.

The environmental preliminary recommendations will focus on three major areas for intervention:

1. Greening of the Corridor
  - Increased tree plantings
  - Increased green cover
  - Links to parklands and stream valley networks
  - Metrics to track performance
2. Stormwater Facilities
  - New treatment facilities with redevelopment
  - New treatment facilities as stand-alone projects
  - Metrics to track performance
3. Energy

- New Energy efficient buildings
- Reduction of vehicular idling
- Metrics to track performance

## Community Facilities

### Schools

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills sector plan falls within the boundary of the Downcounty Consortium. Specifically, the sector plan is served by Albert Einstein HS, Sligo MS, Flora M. Singer ES, and Woodlin ES.

The tables below show the most recently available actual and projected enrollment and capacity data for these schools with actual enrollment for the current school year and projected enrollment through 2024-25 (released by MCPS on October 26, 2018).

School		Actual	Projections					
		'19-19	'19-20	'20-21	'21-22	'22-23	'23-24	'24-25
Albert Einstein HS	Program	1,629	1,629	1,629	1,629	1,629	1,629	1,629
	Capacity	1,762	1,834	1,893	1,912	1,963	2,063	2,119
	Enrollment	(133)	(205)	(264)	(283)	(334)	(434)	(490)
	Available Space							
Sligo MS	Program	920	920	920	920	920	920	920
	Capacity	657	729	699	709	801	912	965
	Enrollment	263	191	221	211	119	8	(45)
	Available Space							
Flora M. Singer ES	Program	680	680	680	680	680	680	680
	Capacity	670	689	684	660	667	707	735
	Enrollment	10	(9)	(4)	20	13	(27)	(55)
	Available Space							
Woodlin ES	Program	489	489	489	489	635	635	635
	Capacity	579	582	577	571	561	569	584
	Enrollment	(90)	(93)	(88)	(82)	74	66	51
	Available Space							

Source: MCPS, Superintendent's Recommended FY 2020 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2019-2024 Capital Improvements Program.

### High School Capacity

As demonstrated in the numbers above, the home school for this area, Albert Einstein High School, is projected to be increasingly over capacity throughout the six-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) period. Einstein is part of the Downcounty Consortium (DCC), which includes four other high schools: Montgomery Blair, John F. Kennedy, Northwood, and Wheaton. Students rank their school preferences in eighth grade but are guaranteed enrollment in their home school. All the DCC high schools, except for Kennedy, which has an addition scheduled to open in 2022, are projected to be over-enrolled by 2024. Einstein, Montgomery Blair and Northwood are all projected to be overcrowded for each of the next six years, by a range of 205 to 707 students. Collectively, the DCC high schools are projected to

have 12,210 high school students, with a combined capacity of 10,504 in 2024. The schools are projected to be 1,706 students over-capacity and have a combined utilization of 116.2%.

Individually, Albert Einstein (opened in 1962 and last renovated in 1997) is projected to be 490 students over capacity for a utilization rate of 130.1%. Einstein's projected utilization for each of the last four years has been high enough to trigger a moratorium under the adequacy thresholds established by the Subdivision Staging Policy. However, the County Council has approved a placeholder project for the school with each capital budget from FY16 through FY19, based on guarantees from MCPS that it was pursuing a timely solution to Einstein's overcrowding. Given that the Superintendent's recommended FY20 capital budget and recommended CIP amendments continue to not address Einstein's overcrowding on a timely basis, it difficult to imagine a scenario in which the Council adopts a fifth consecutive placeholder for Einstein in the FY20 capital budget. As a result, it is likely that the Einstein cluster's service area, including the entirety of the Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan area, will fall into a residential development moratorium on July 1, 2019.

There are two major projects currently under consideration by MCPS that could impact future enrollment at Einstein and thus its moratorium status: the reopening of Woodward High School and the large capacity expansion of Northwood High School. While both projects have construction, funds included in the CIP, neither project is currently expected to be completed within the time frame required for the annual school test and therefore cannot be used to keep Einstein out of moratorium for FY20.

#### *Middle School Capacity*

The sector plan area is served by Sligo Middle School, which opened in 1959 and was last revitalized in 1991. MCPS projections have the school's enrollment under capacity each of the next five years and then 45 students over capacity for the 2024-25 school year. Across the DCC's nine middle schools, Sligo is one of three projected to be over capacity in the sixth year (Argyle MS and Loiederman MS). Collectively, the DCC middle schools are projected to be 102 students under capacity and have a 98.5% utilization rate in 2024-25.

#### *Elementary School Capacity*

Two elementary schools serve the sector plan area: Flora M. Singer Elementary School for the Forest Glen community located north of the beltway and Woodlin Elementary School for the Montgomery Hills community south of the beltway. Opened in 2012, Singer is the third newest school among Montgomery County's 134 public elementary schools. In contrast, Woodlin opened in 1944 (eight oldest elementary school) and has not been revitalized since 1974 (14<sup>th</sup> longest among all the elementary schools). Physically, Woodlin is one of the smaller schools in the county (ranked 110<sup>th</sup>) but is located on a large 11-acre site (26<sup>th</sup> largest among the elementary schools).

Singer's utilization is projected fluctuate over the next six years, though its projected utilization in the sixth year is 108.1%. The Board of Education's approved CIP includes an addition to Woodlin that would open in September 2022.

Across the Downcounty Consortium, there are 29 elementary schools, 16 of which, to varying degrees, are projected to have enrollments over capacity. Collectively, the elementary schools are only projected to be 15 students over capacity in 2024-25.

#### *Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan Impact*

The potential enrollment impact of the Sector Plan will be calculated with the *Working Draft* once the zoning recommendations are established.

#### *Fire, Safety and Rescue*

The area is serviced by Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department 19, this station provides for fire, safety and rescue services for the Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills plan area. It is located on Seminary Lane near Georgia Avenue. Staff has noted this location as an opportunity site due to parcels redevelopment potential and a need for improved access. Rezoning the property for mixed uses opens the opportunity for the station to be redeveloped in place collocated with housing.

#### **PLAN SCHEDULE**

Staff expects to transmit the Planning Board Draft of the Master Plan is scheduled for transmission to the County Executive and the County Council by Spring 2019. The tentative schedule is outlined below.

- December 4, 2018 – Community Briefing
- December 6, 2018 – Planning Board Briefing
- Spring 2019 – Working Draft Presentation
- Late Spring 2019 – Public Hearing
- Summer/Fall 2019 – Planning Board Worksessions
- Fall/Winter 2019 - County Council/County Executive Review
- Spring 2020 – Commission Adoption and Sectional Map Amendment

#### **STAY CONNECTED**

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