

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan Scope of Work

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Description

Scope of Work for the Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the proposed Scope of Work and a Sector Plan Boundary.

Summary

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan extends along Georgia Avenue and includes the complete Sector Plan area of the 1996 Forest Glen Sector Plan and the Montgomery Hills commercial center and adjoining communities as identified in the 2000 North and West Silver Spring Master Plan. This memorandum presents the Scope of Work for the Sector Plan, including the proposed Plan boundaries and purpose; the context and background of the planning area; issues to evaluate; an outreach strategy and the Plan schedule.

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Plan Area

Staff identified a study area that utilizes the census block groups covering 1996 *Approved and Adopted Forest Glen Sector Plan* and the Montgomery Hills commercial district and adjacent neighborhoods found in the 2000 Approved and Adopted North and West Silver Spring Master Plan. The Montgomery Hills commercial district is loosely defined in the Master Plan as stretching along Georgia Avenue from Landsdowne Way to Luzerne Avenue and providing a gateway into the Silver Spring CBD. The study area (see Figure 1) is centered around Georgia Avenue with the north-western most boundary touching a portion of Plyers Mill Road to include Oakland Terrace Elementary School and the adjacent Capitol View-Homewood Park. The north-eastern most boundary follows Dennis Avenue to Sligo Creek Park which also serves as the eastern boundary along with Colesville Road. Spring Street along the edge of the Silver Spring Central Business District is the southern boundary and the eastern boundary follows the CSX right-of-way.

A total of 400 acres (exclusive of public-rights-of-way), the study area covers the Forest Glen Metro Station, Holy Cross Hospital, a large portion of Sligo Creek Park, and the proposed BRT stations along the Georgia Avenue corridor. There are roughly twenty civic and homeowner's associations in the area representing single-unit residential neighborhoods, townhouses and some multi-unit residential buildings.

Previous Planning Initiatives

Georgia Avenue (MD 97) is a state road that serves as a primary North/South connector and access to Interstate 495 and centers such as Silver Spring CBD, Wheaton CBD and points beyond. Georgia Avenue offers access to public transportation including the Forest Glen Metro Station and several bus routes provided by Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) Metrobus and Montgomery County's Ride On service. It remains a heavily traveled commuter route with high level of traffic congestion occurring throughout the day often beyond the traditional rush hour. Properties along the corridor accommodates a variety of uses producing conflicts between motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

The most recent master plan efforts included: *1996, Approved and Adopted Forest Glen Sector Plan and the 2000, Approved and Adopted North and West Silver Spring Master Plan.* These efforts took a comprehensive approach and offered recommendations that addressed land use, zoning, urban design, parks and open space, environment and historic preservation in addition to proposing improvements to the transportation systems. Staff will utilize these plans in our current efforts and the implementation or lack thereof these previous recommendations will provide a framework for improving Georgia Avenue and the surrounding communities.



Figure 1: Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Study Area

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

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. This is true of the Forest Glen East and Forest Glen West neighborhoods identified in the

Plan. Georgia Avenue serves as primary transportation route and as the dividing line for the neighborhoods.

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, maintaining community identity, improving community facilities, strengthening environmental protections and improving 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 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
- 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

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

There has been limited development activity within the immediate Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan area. Development was primarily within the community identified as Forest Glen West which is located nearest the Forest Glen Metro Station. The Freeman property and Auxier property development (adjacent to the WMATA parking lot and Forest Glen Metro) were both proposed in the 1996 Forest Glen Sector Plan. Lastly, the Holy Cross Hospital recently completed a seven-story, 232,000 square-foot building, the hospital's largest expansion in more than 50 years. The expansion received the Building & Site Award for the Montgomery County Planning Department 2017 Design Excellence Awards.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Forest Glen and Montgomery Hills Sector Plan will produce an approved sector plan and subsequent sectional map amendment for the General Plan that responds to the Maryland State Highway Administration MD 97 Georgia Avenue study, the WMATA Metro Station Feasibility Study for the Forest Glen Metro, and input from the stakeholders. The Plan will seek to determine unmet community needs and the viability of residential and commercial development opportunities, while also introducing new

measures to improve/mitigate (multimodal safety and access) traffic and connectivity issues to allow for pedestrian friendly, mixed-use development. Staff identified the following goals of pursuing this update:

- 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 improve pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, connectivity and safety within the plan area.
- Explore opportunities for redevelopment at strategic locations to provide walkable, neighborhood-serving development.

Historic Preservation

The Forest Glen Sector Plan contains a historic district and several properties that were designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery county, Maryland*. Staff will review these designations as a part of the Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan process.

Land Use and Zoning

The communities identified within the study area boundary are primarily single-unit residential with some multi-unit residential buildings near major intersections and easily accessible to transit. Commercial centers are located primarily along the Georgia Avenue corridor and are low-density, strip-shopping centers. These centers provide services to both residents and commuters. Holy Cross Hospital located in Forest Glen East is the largest employer in the area and is located largely within a single-unit residential neighborhood. It is currently operating as a special exception within the R-60 zone and expansion is limited to its existing property.

Montgomery Hills is the primary commercial center and consist of small, narrow Commercial Residential Town (CRT) zoned parcels. Many of these parcels still have available density that could be utilized. Staff will work with economic and transportation consultants to evaluate the center's potential to maximize the current zoning envelope in the commercial center.

There are several large multi-family developments operating within the Plan area. The Belvedere Apartments are in Forest Glen West and were recently purchased by Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP). This development provides for affordable housing units and is a needed resource within the area. MHP has expressed an interest in redeveloping the property to increase the number of affordable units on the property.

Forest Glen Montgomery Hills Zoning



Forest Glen Montgomery Hills Land Use



Demographics

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Study Area is characterized by a relatively older population. 29 percent of the study area's population is between the ages of 45 and 64 (compared to 29 percent countywide), 15 percent is over 65 (compared to 13 percent countywide), while 24 percent is under 20 (compared to 26 percent countywide). Families comprise approximately two-thirds of the study area's households, with married couple-headed families accounting for approximately half of all households. Twenty-eight percent of study area households are single individuals living alone.

Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills population is comprised of individuals from a wide array of racial and ethnic backgrounds: African American persons are 20 percent of the population while Hispanics and Asian or Pacific Islanders represent about 16 and 7 percent of the area population respectively. Meanwhile, non-Hispanic Whites make up just over half of the population with a 52 percent share. Twenty-nine percent of study area residents speak a language other than English at home, although this is lower than the countywide average of 40 percent.

The median household income in the study area is \$125,148 (2015 Dollars), slightly lower than the countywide average of \$133,543. The study area population is economically diverse, with 15 percent of households earning below \$35,000 per year, 33 percent earning between \$35,000 and \$100,000, 35 percent earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000, and just under 17 percent earning above \$200,000. Of the study area's working population, a disproportionately high number of individuals commute via public transportation (34 percent compared to 16 percent countywide), while a markedly lower amount drive alone to work (51 percent compared to 65 percent countywide). The study area is also highly educated: 40 percent of the population over 25 years old holds a graduate or professional degree, compared to 31 percent throughout the county.

Commercial and Nonresidential Properties

The commercial and nonresidential properties within the vicinity of the Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills area were analyzed (which includes nonresidential properties within the 1996 Forest Glen Sector Plan boundary, and nonresidential properties on Georgia Avenue south of I-495 and north of 16th Street). Based on information from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation, approximately 1.65 million square feet of nonresidential space is in this area, which includes Holy Cross Hospital as well as smaller office, retail, industrial and community/institutional uses. Roughly 75 percent of this space is comprised by Holy Cross Hospital. The remainder of the space is generally characterized as service or convenience oriented retail, health and medical related offices, and community facilities such as churches and schools. Most of these properties are older, with a majority built between 1940-1970. A consultant has been retained to conduct an economic study that will assess market opportunities in this area, and identify challenges and opportunities for redevelopment or reinvestment through interviews with property owners and businesses.

At-Place Employment and Industry

At-place employment and businesses were also analyzed within the vicinity of the Forest Glen-Montgomery Hills area (using the same boundaries as that of the commercial and nonresidential property analysis). Based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 5,100 jobs exist across nearly 100 businesses or institutions on the nonresidential properties analyzed. However, employees at Holy Cross hospital account for roughly 85 percent of employment and 30 percent of businesses. Out of the remaining employees, nearly 40 percent continue to be in health and social services (such as doctor or dentist offices), 30 percent in retail or food services, and 20 percent in business and household services. Most business establishments in this area are small; over 70 percent employ 10 or less employees.

Placemaking and Streetscape Design

The Sector Plan along with the proposed MD 97 SHA Study allows for a unique opportunity to fulfill the goal of the North and West Silver Spring Master Plan which envisioned a "future" Georgia Avenue as a boulevard. By transforming the streetscape and providing guidelines for the design of potential redevelopment along the corridor, the Plan can create the potential for a safe, attractive connection that carries large volumes of traffic but still allows for multi-modal use. Additionally, Staff will work with stakeholders to create opportunities for improved streetscape, enhanced safety and placemaking opportunities throughout the Plan area.

Transportation

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan area is defined by the segment of Georgia Avenue (MD 97) that connects the I-495 Beltway with 16th Street (MD 390); each of these roadways serve as major commuter corridors for the County. In 2008, the Maryland State Highway Administration (MD SHA)

identified this segment of Georgia Avenue as having recorded the highest average daily traffic volumes on a non-interstate roadway in the state of Maryland. More recently, the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan forecasted that two intersections within the proposed Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan Transportation Study Area, Seminary Road/ Georgia Avenue and Seminary Place/ Georgia Avenue, would exceed the Subdivision Staging Policy congestion standard in the year 2040. In this part of the County, the road network has low connectivity, and few north/south connections, compared to the demand. With the addition of turning restrictions on Georgia Avenue, regional vehicular traffic is largely confined to Georgia Avenue/ 16th Street. While these restrictions offer some protection from cut-through traffic in the neighborhoods, the trade-off is a local dependency on Georgia Avenue and 16th Street, further adding to the high traffic volumes.

Proposed Transportation Study Area

The transportation study area is centered on Georgia Avenue, stretching from Dennis Avenue to Spring Street. Using Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ's)¹ with boundaries defined by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), the study area boundary was formed with the intent of covering the northern and southern extents of Georgia Avenue. To keep the inputs simple and transparent for traffic modeling, the TAZ boundaries were not augmented when creating the transportation study area boundary. Fourteen total TAZs are included in the study area.

Traffic Analysis

To improve mobility along the Georgia Avenue corridor, the Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan will evaluate multi-modal improvements for the corridor² that will contribute to safe, comfortable, and efficient streets for all transportation modes. In support of this evaluation, staff proposes a transportation analysis to better understand the current and estimated travel demand along within the Sector Plan area and surrounding vicinity.

Vehicular Traffic Analysis

Recognizing the importance of Georgia Avenue to the regional vehicle network, staff identified 28 intersections for traffic analysis. Many of the intersections to be studied are located on the Georgia Avenue Corridor, which is the spine of the proposed plan and study areas. Given the limited north/south and east/west connections, Colesville Road, 16th Street, University Boulevard, Dennis Avenue and Spring Street were included as secondary corridors for the study area. Gateway intersections located at the borders to the Wheaton CBD, Silver Spring CBD, and Four Corners boundaries were also included.

Staff is taking a new approach³ with this plan by conducting a preliminary traffic analysis at the very start of the planning process. The analysis will include two scenarios to be modeled for the Plan's horizon year of 2040: first, a "no-build" scenario that assumes no properties within the study area will redevelop under the current zoning; and second, a "previous plan vision" scenario, that assumes properties that can achieve a higher density with their underlying zoning as envisioned by the previous Forest Glen Sector Plan and North and West Silver Spring Master Plan redevelop. Exploring the outcomes of these two analyses will help staff understand the potential travel demand associated with future development and regional growth, and identify possible infrastructure needs to meet the future travel demand. Upon completion of the initial transportation analysis, described above, staff will evaluate additional future land

¹ Traffic Analysis Zones are units of geography based on census blocks, which are used for setting parameters for traffic modeling.

² The Plan will build upon the MD SHA MD 97 Montgomery Hills Project Planning Study. A locally preferred alternative decision for Georgia Avenue is anticipated within the schedule of the Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan.

³ Typically, traffic modeling is not conducted until staff proposes land use scenarios that aim to achieve the plan vision.

use scenarios to determine the Plan's land use recommendations. Traffic modeling will be conducted again to test the impacts of the proposed future land use scenarios.



Transit Analysis

The proposed transportation study area is served by the Forest Glen Station, part of Metrorail's Red Line. Local bus service is provided by RideOn and WMATA. Furthermore, the 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan included this segment of Georgia Avenue as part of a Bus Rapid Transit Route (BRT), with busses running in mixed traffic. Two stations were also identified as part of that plan; one at Forest Glen Metro Station and another at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Seminary Road. This plan looks to assess the existing and planned transit infrastructure, in the context of a multimodal corridor.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Analysis

The Plan will consider the accessibility of neighborhoods surrounding the Forest Glen Metrorail station, proposed BRT stations, and Montgomery Hills Commercial core by alternative means of transportation, such as biking and walking. Building upon the recommendations made in the 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, the Forest Glen and Montgomery Hills Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area (BPPA) boundaries were included in the proposed plan boundaries. The purpose of the BPPA designation is to prioritize the enhancement of bicycle and pedestrian traffic⁴.

Barriers to walkability in the transportation study area include missing or inadequate sidewalks, unsafe crossing conditions along Georgia Avenue, and inhospitable streetscapes. To address these issues staff is launching a pilot for the countywide pedestrian level of stress analysis as a part of this plan. Barriers to bikability in the transportation study area include a lack of low-stress connections from the residential neighborhoods to the existing and proposed transit stations and commercial centers. The recommendations for bicycle infrastructure improvements will largely build on the work completed recently for the public draft of the Bicycle Master Plan.

⁴ Section 8-101(d) of the State's *Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan*



Vision Zero

In February of 2016, the County Council adopted Resolution 18-390 to establish a Countywide Vision Zero initiative. As a result, several county agencies have come together to develop a two-year Vision Zero Action Plan that sets a goal of eliminating all traffic-related fatalities and severe injuries down by the year 2030. This plan will incorporate the tenets and approach of Vision Zero when making recommendations for the transportation network, by prioritizing safety for all modes ahead of other transportation goals, including improving mobility, connectivity, and convenience.

Environment

Sustainability

Goals of the Plan is to create a sustainable community through smart sustainable planning. Sustainable Planning promotes interconnected green space, a multi-modal transportation system, and energy efficient mixed-use development. It promotes human health and well-being by encouraging development that offers rich social, economic, and environmental benefits.

The Plan will improve the welfare of the community by providing safe, linked sidewalks, trails, bikeways and transit stops to improve mobility options and help reduce pollution by reducing vehicle trips. It will expand the range of affordable housing, employment, and housing choices. The Plan will also preserve and enhance natural resources, and promote healthy green buildings and open space. These environmental approaches to design will encourage efficient water and energy use that creates a unique sense of community and place while simultaneously cooling street and air temperatures, reduce energy, and remove air pollutants. In combination, these planning practices create a lasting, sustainable community for generations to come.

Environmental

The environmental goals of the Montgomery Hills Plan are multifold. The overall aspirations are to improve air and water quality, increase habitat, and enhance quality of life. The starting point in older urbanized development is to increase and integrate green elements into the urbanized landscape. Green elements include: expanding tree canopy cover to improve air quality and soil properties; integrate stormwater management using low impact development strategies to improve water quality; and increased green open space to strengthen quality of life and wellbeing.

The environmental objectives require collaboration with multiple disciplines and departments to increase pedestrian friendly, shaded streets that reduce vehicle miles travelled. Reducing vehicles miles travelled will improve air quality through the reduction of carbon emissions. In turn, this will improve the health of residents.

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 (updated data with actual enrollment for the current school year and projected enrollment through 2023-24 will be released at the end of October 2017).

		Actual	Projections					
School		'16-17	'17-18	'18-19	'19-20	'20-21	'21-22	'22-23
Albert Einstein HS	Program Capacity	1,621	1,621	1,621	1,621	1,621	1,621	1,621
	Enrollment	1,755	1,840	1,925	2,021	2,111	2,168	2,244
	Available Space	(134)	(219)	(304)	(400)	(490)	(547)	(623)
Sligo MS	Program Capacity	915	915	915	915	915	915	915
	Enrollment	706	802	801	856	919	985	954
	Available Space	209	113	114	59	(4)	(70)	(39)
Flora Singer ES	Program Capacity	680	680	680	680	680	680	680
	Enrollment	698	702	722	724	710	697	711
	Available Space	(18)	(22)	(42)	(44)	(30)	(17)	(31)
Woodlin ES	Program Capacity	476	476	476	476	476	476	635
	Enrollment	593	614	633	629	630	625	626
	Available Space	(117)	(138)	(157)	(153)	(154)	(149)	9

Source: MCPS, FY2018 Educational Facilities Master Plan and Amendments to the FY 2017-2022 Capital Improvements Program

The Plan will only evaluate limited redevelopment within the Einstein Cluster and will review proposed residential development within the Plan to assess the impact.

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 Forest Glen\Montgomery Hills Sector Plan will evaluate the accessibility of these parks, explore options to enhance connectivity between park and trail facilities and the Forest Glen Metro station, and determine if any additional parks, open space or recreational facilities are necessary to address the impact of any proposed redevelopment.

SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY

When the plan was added to the work program, the focus of study was the Georgia Avenue corridor along with surrounding properties. That work would have resulted in a sector plan boundary that closely follows the corridor between Dennis Avenue and Spring Street (See Sector Plan Boundary 1). Staff discussed whether this effort should comprehensively update the 1996 Forest Glen Sector Plan by including the entirety of the 1996 Plan area in this effort combined with the corridor between Interstate 495 and Spring Street. Expanding to include the entire 1996 plan area would be inclusive of Holy Cross Hospital campus (See Sector Plan Boundary 2). Lastly, Staff considered a sector plan boundary that would include the single-unit residential neighborhoods south of Interstate 495 and within the study area (See Sector Plan Boundary 3). Staff will present pros and cons of each option but recommends Sector Plan Boundary 1.



Sector Plan Boundary 1



Sector Plan Boundary 2



Sector Plan Boundary 3

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Staff views the outreach process as a means of learning about the community and its concerns while also engaging stakeholders in the Plan process. Staff will work with residents, business owners and other stakeholders in the development of recommendations and Plan priorities.

Engagement activities will include both traditional outreach tools along with the use of social media and interactive technology. These methods of communication will be utilized to foster relationships with existing neighborhood and civic associations, and encourage participation at the various outreach events. Because the study area is home to a diverse community, the engagement process will include translation and interpretation services and will utilize both traditional and non-traditional engagement strategies to reach residents and stakeholders where they live, work or play.

The first community meeting was held in the M-NCPPC Silver Spring offices on October 10th and was attended by nearly 80 residents. The meeting was also available via live stream on the Planning Department Webpage and Facebook page. Stakeholders were encouraged to utilize the #GeorgiaAveConnects for all social media posts. Although the meeting focused primarily on existing conditions, Staff did receive two community driven and authored concept plans (See attachment 2) for neighborhoods within the Plan area.

PLAN SCHEDULE

Upon approval of the Scope of Work, Staff will continue with varied community outreach and engagement activities through the Fall. 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.

- November 2, 2017 Request to Approve Scope of Work
- Winter 2018 Planning Board Briefing
- Spring 2018 Working Draft Presentation
- Summer Fall 2018 Planning Board Worksessions
- Winter 2018/Spring 2019 County Council/County Executive
- Summer/Fall 2019 Commission Adoption and Sectional Map Amendment

STAY CONNECTED

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