



1995 Master Plan

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INTRODUCTION; PURPOSES OF THE PLAN

- To preserve the integrity of the Town and its way of life
- To enhance the Town's destiny through planning
- To create an awareness in adjacent jurisdictions of Washington Grove
- To support planning requirements throughout the State

This Plan is a guide to public and private actions and decisions adopted by the Town and is based on recommendations of volunteer study groups. The process involved open working sessions of the Town Planning Commission, public discussion over the back fence between neighbors, and formal public hearings before the Commission, the Mayor and Town Council. The Plan speaks to areas outside of Town boundaries as these relate to the responsibilities of the Town's Planning Commission. Notification and participation by Grove residents and by other jurisdictions and interests have been encouraged to insure the common good as development of public and private properties occurs.

Grove citizens are intent upon preserving the integrity of The Grove and a way of life to which its founders gave direction. Change is inevitable, but in the same fashion as our forebears, we can direct the Town's destiny through thoughtful planning.

This document is the vehicle for that purpose. This Plan should guide the Town for the next 10 years, even though review within six years is required.

The Plan also is intended to make adjacent jurisdictions aware of the purposes and plans formulated by the citizens of Washington Grove and to be part of the total fabric of a diverse and thoughtfully planned county. The State of Maryland, the Montgomery County Planning Board and The City of Gaithersburg reviewed the draft plan and provided thoughtful comments and advice, much of which has been included in the final plan.

This Plan will aid the Town, as an integral part of the State of Maryland, in supporting the visions of the State:

- concentrate development in suitable areas
- protect sensitive areas
- direct growth to existing population centers and protect resource areas
- protect the Chesapeake Bay and the land as a universal ethic
- conserve resources; reduce resource consumption
- encourage economic growth and streamline regulatory mechanisms to help achieve the previous five visions
- seek various sources of funds to achieve these visions

We who live in Washington Grove enjoy the fruits of those who planned for us. It is our intention and our legal responsibility to do the same for future Grovers. This Plan is constructed on the provisions and requirements of [Article 66B](#) of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Section 1: Land Use and Zoning

Recommendations:

- Acquire the last privately-owned lot on the east side of Grove Road north of Gazebo Park for public use
- Prepare updated listings of all Town-owned parcels, rights of way, easements, and abandoned alleys. Sell parcels, when found to be surplus, to the contiguous property owner(s) if it is determined that there is no potential for Town need

Section 2: Maximum Expansion Limits ; Boundary Demarcations

Recommendations:

- Pursue four adjacent areas as annexation goals. Monitor the Oakmont neighborhood for zoning/rezoning activities and determine future action as required
- Complete an accurate survey of Town properties as soon as possible
- Enhance the entrances to the Town with landscaping and signs. Seek assistance from the property owner, Montgomery County and state sources to screen the industrial areas bordering the Town at Ridge Road and Railroad Street

Section 3: Transportation Plan

Recommendations:

- Continue a maintenance program that stabilizes walkways within the developed areas of Town
- Develop a plan for putting all utilities underground so that whenever repairs or significant work is done along Town walkways and streets, utilities will be moved underground
- Standardize street lights in design and to reflect the historic aspect of the Town
- Implement the Parking policy
- Request installation of a south-side shelter to protect waiting railroad commuters during inclement weather. Seek additional south-side parking for the Washington Grove stop
- Retain any existing transit easement on the south side of the railroad corridor, for land use planning purposes. Oppose heavy rail for extension of mass transit along the railroad corridor, unless the system is completely enclosed below ground. Planning for any mass transit in the corridor must include consideration of the noise impacts upon the Town
- Find a solution to improve safety of pedestrians and vehicles on Washington Grove Lane. Oak and Center Streets should remain closed at Washington Grove Lane. Enforce current prohibitions of "NO LEFT TURN" onto McCauley Street and "NO RIGHT TURN" onto northbound Washington Grove Lane
- Transfer Washington Grove Lane to Town control when feasible. Support completion of the Amity Drive connection to Crabbs Branch Way and completion of Odend'hal Avenue
- Continue to oppose connection of Railroad Street to Crabbs Branch Way

- Support continued operation of the humpback bridge and the at-grade crossing until an acceptable engineering solution can be found for crossing over or under the railroad tracks
- If vehicular access is provided to Washington Grove Hills through the Casey-Ridge Road/Mill Creek development, close Ridge Road at Town limits
- Ensure that a 35-foot buffer strip along the Town's portion of Ridge Road and the Casey property is conveyed to the Town as a forest conservation area
- Base all Town road construction on a standard right-of-way total width of 30 feet to accommodate traffic needs and public improvements
- Continue restriction of vehicular access on Center Street between Maple Avenue and the maintenance area. As vehicular use of Cherry Avenue ceases (as provided in the 1976 resolution), restore that portion to conform with other walkways in Town

Recommend following actions to appropriate Federal, State, and County officials:

1. Construct corrective noise abatement structures along the present course of I-370 to ameliorate its impact on the pre-existing Town
2. Construct no new freeways in the ICC study area
3. Drop consideration of the western loop of proposed Alternate G between I-370 and Mid County Highway
4. In conjunction with improvements in traffic management and safety along existing roadways, promote better east-west transportation via the Mid-County Highway
5. Encourage use of public transportation whenever new expenditures for transportation are planned
6. All transportation planning must support the quality of life in existing communities

Section 4 - Community Facilities

Recommendations:

- Consider additional space for the Town Garage.
- Schedule replacement of the tennis shed with a larger, multi-purpose recreational equipment storage shed

Section 5 - Active Recreation and Parks

Recommendations:

- Support a consistent policy for use and maintenance of the active recreation areas within Woodward Park
- Install a volleyball court and a fitness course within the park in appropriate locations. When the next major resurfacing of the hard tennis court is planned, reorient the court and solve the underlying drainage problem
- Maintain all small parks as open space

Section 6 - Environmental Concerns; Sensitive Areas

Recommendations:

- Compile a three-year inventory of plants, animals, soil, and water of both woods. Consider revitalizing the drainage systems through both woods
- Increase maintenance where needed to ensure that woods paths remain accessible throughout the year and to maintain a variety of habitats for birds and vegetation
- Schedule regular trash removal from the woods
- Restore names of walkways in the forest preserves
- Any actions related to the future of Washington Grove Lane must mitigate existing and potential runoff and erosion in the West Woods
- Update the 1970 survey of mature trees in residential areas and develop a program for their health and replacement
- For Maple Lake, continue water testing and appropriate use of safe herbicides and algacides to protect and maintain this headwater of Great Seneca Creek
- Increase plantings on the west side of the Lake for screening, to prevent erosion, and to clearly mark the Town boundary
- Compile a data base of water, plant, animal and fish characteristics to monitor for signs of degradation of the Lake's ecology
- Schedule the dredging of Maple Lake to prevent future eutrophication. Determine if aeration or artificial circulation devices can maintain or improve water quality. Extend the sand beach from its present location to the island bridge
- Restore the spring box and erect a raised boardwalk nature trail up to and around Maple Spring. Include Maple Spring within the present Maple Lake compound
- Annually, clear rampant growth around Whetstone Spring to enhance its use for passive recreation while safeguarding its natural qualities
- Extend existing woodlands in Morgan Park to the present footpath running diagonally from Brown Street to Railroad Street. Consider increasing wooded growth as a shield along the remainder of the Brown Street Park corridor
- Maintain the ditch in Morgan Park to ensure drainage of both residential and wood areas and to safeguard the quality of water draining into Muddy Branch. Consider the use of Town equipment contrasted to contracted excavation. County officials should correct drainage flow problems under Railroad Street to support the Town's efforts
- Petition the county to include the Casey property as part of the County Parks system to maintain water quality of headwaters for Rock Creek and for recreation needs as the greater Shady Grove corridor employment and county services become fully developed
- Assess and evaluate the area that includes the newly acquired Emmons property east of Grove Road north of the Gazebo. Develop a plan to convert some or all of the study area to a managed area, resulting in a greater diversity of plant and animal life

Section 7 - The Commercial Corner

Recommendations:

- Acquire the commercial property, using State grants, Federal funds, and/or set-asides. Convert the property to a public use. Seek funding sources for restoration of the area
- Until this objective is met, allow no change in the permitted uses within the commercial zone
- Regularly review the commercially zoned property for compliance with Town ordinances, in coordination with the Town attorney
- Consider beautifying Railroad Park west of the humpback bridge. Invite adjacent property owners and businesses to join in the effort. Clearly mark boundaries and install a historic marker or appropriate sign depicting the railroad's connection with the Town's history. Include the front area in the Town's regular maintenance schedule, with assistance from the county around the bus stop

Section 8 - Economic Growth and Resource Protection

Recommendations:

- Continue to recycle materials in the Town's daily operations and to promote recycling by Town residents. Continue the Town's commitment to curbside pick up of recyclable materials
- Continue the Town's commitment to preserve its unique historic architectural and landscape features.

Section 9 - Interjurisdictional Issues

Recommendation:

- As an integral part of Montgomery County and the state, continue to work with neighbors and local and state officials during the life of this Master Plan to move successfully into the twenty-first century

Section 10 - Implementation Priorities

The highest priority for the Town are the most critical perimeter and interjurisdictional actions by state, county, and neighboring jurisdictions. These are: the future status of Washington Grove Lane, amenities associated with development of the Casey property, buffering from adjacent non-residential zones, noise abatement steps for I-370, and long term planning for transportation in the area of the railroad corridor.

Within town confines, efforts for the next six years should be directed towards:

1. completing a survey of town lands
2. establishing a plan to place utilities underground

3. seeking grant funds and beginning a set-aside for eventual purchase of the commercial corner
4. dredging of maple lake
5. developing a detailed inventory of lake and woods data
6. establishing a health program and replacement schedule for trees within the residential area of town
7. increasing active recreation opportunities in the Town

BACKGROUND

Physical Setting

The Town of Washington Grove is, roughly, a triangle of about three-tenths of a square mile. The Town contains two forest preserves along its northern limits and one contains a small manmade lake. Headwater tributaries of three critical watersheds begin in the Grove: Rock Creek, Great Seneca, and Muddy Branch. All these eventually empty into the Potomac River.

North of the Town's boundary, land is zoned Residential for single-family homes, apartments, and townhouses. East of the Town are county lands zoned for Light Industrial and Residential use. The historic Baltimore and Ohio Railroad line forms the Town's southern boundary. The land south of the railroad right-of-way is zoned Residential or Commercial. Within the southeast area beyond the Town's boundaries are the dense employment areas connected to the Shady Grove Sector Plan. The Town's western boundary is contiguous with the east boundary of the City of Gaithersburg.

The Town limits of Washington Grove encompass approximately 201 acres. There are 12 walkways in the residential areas and 15 roads. Avenues on which most of the homes face are wide walkways, graveled or grassed, planned for and restricted to pedestrians. Access roads for vehicles are laid out to the rear of the residences. This system of pedestrian and traffic control, dating from the Town's beginning more than one hundred years ago, is considered a model of contemporary town planning.

Washington Grove Lane, presently a state highway, bisects north-south through the western part of the Grove and separates Town residences and one forest preserve containing Maple Lake from the remainder of the Town. This road is heavily used by fast-moving cars and trucks. Railroad Street, also heavily traveled, is on the southern boundary and is county-maintained. Ridge Road is a quiet local dead-end road on the Town's eastern boundary. Major roadways beyond the Grove (Mid-County Highway, Shady Grove Road, I-370) have been constructed or enlarged since the 1975 Master Plan was adopted and have had a dramatic noise impact on the Town environs.

Governance

The government of the Town is close to a true democracy, vested in the citizenry assembled in Town Meeting with legislative and administrative authority exercised respectively by a six-member elected Council and an elected Mayor. The Town employs a part-time Clerk-Treasurer and a full-time Groundskeeper, plus additional seasonal employees. The Mayor appoints a Planning Commission, a Board of Zoning Appeals, and a Board of Election Supervisors. The Grove has provided public waste collection and disposal service since the inception of the community more than a hundred years ago. The Town, through volunteer efforts, was one of the first communities to enthusiastically support Montgomery County's move toward recycling of trash.

As noted by Page Milburn, an early resident, in his "Washington Grove, A Reminiscence", the Town had its beginning in 1872 because of actions of the Methodist Church. A Methodist camp meeting on the grounds of what was then the Cook property aroused enthusiasm for the purchase of the site because of its elevation, natural drainage, wellsprings, abundance of woods and not least because a new railroad passed close by. An association was formed, and in 1874 the Maryland Legislature granted a charter. Many church-related activities swelled the ranks of those who visited The Grove, and while the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad helped by granting a rebate to the Association on excursion tickets, it helped even more significantly by shipping lumber free-of-charge when the first permanent structures began to replace tents on the campground. In 1926, a house was built for the pastor and year-round residents began to winterize their cottages.

In 1937, the Association was replaced by a municipal form of government. The Town was incorporated and elected its first Mayor and Council. With the arrival and then the passing of World War II, the population rose and fell. Although railroad passenger service declined in the early 1960s, modern highways appeared to provide access to this retreat.

Two sections of woods, about 50 acres each, provide citizens with a continuing bond with the natural world and a shield from encroaching development. Until the 1950s, the Town also received revenue from selected timber cuts. Town philosophy on growth, as expressed in its volunteer standing committee documents and in Council and Town meetings, has been to limit further development and to preserve open spaces and the woods as forest preserves.

The importance of the integrity of the Town has been supported, consistently, through the town meeting form of government with issues of consequence debated by the residents before final approval. The Town Meeting is held annually in June, and at other times throughout the year as the citizenry deems necessary, following provisions of the Charter. Working volunteers remain the chief source for getting things done in Washington Grove. The thrust of our efforts as we embark on the Town's second century must be for continuous renewal of the importance of individual efforts to maintain the quality of Grove life. Further, we must be vigilant against merely maintaining the status quo when thoughtful and creative action can allow the Town to preserve and improve upon our natural resources.

1. LAND USE AND ZONING LIMITS

In accordance with State law, this Plan recognizes the need to encourage the following:

1. Streamlined review of applications for development within the areas designated for growth in the Plan
2. Use of flexible development regulations to promote innovative and cost-saving site design and protect the environment
3. Economic development in areas designated for growth in the Plan through the use of innovative techniques

The existing zones and total acreage of each zone within the Town limits are as follows:

	Zone	Acres	Coverage
RR-1	Rural Residential-1	80.0	39.7%
RR-2	Rural Residential-2	12.0	6.0%
RR-3	Rural Residential-3	1.5	0.7%
C-L	Commercial-Local	1.0	0.5%
FR	Forest & Recreation	107.0	53.1%
	Total	201.5	100.0%

A zoning map (Exhibit A) and the Washington Grove Zoning Ordinance (hereinafter referred to as Zoning Ordinance and included by reference), are incorporated into this Plan.

1.1 RR-1 Zone

The RR-1 zone contains 141 single-family homes and one church. The minimum lot size, specified by the Zoning Ordinance, is 11,250 square feet, and most homes within the zone occupy parcels composed of more than one of the historically designated lots . This Plan does not recommend any changes to the permitted land uses, or the existing standards for minimum lot size, building coverage, setbacks, and heights for the RR-1 zone. ([see section 3.4](#) for parking issues)

1.2 RR-2 Zone

The RR-2 zone contains 49 single-family homes. The minimum lot size, specified by the Zoning Ordinance, is 7,500 square feet, reflecting the historic siting of homes in the area of the Circle and its radiating avenues. This Plan does not recommend any changes to the permitted land uses, or the existing standards for minimum lot size, building coverage, setbacks, and heights for the RR-2 zone. ([see section 3.4](#) for parking issues)

1.3 RR-3 Zone

The RR-3 zone contains one parcel owned by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and designated as a future site for a water storage facility. Some interest in a cemetery for Washington Grove has identified this parcel, should it become available to the Town, as having potential for that function. The minimum RR-3 lot size, specified by the Zoning Ordinance, is 20,000 square feet and is reflective of the character of the nearby Washington Grove Hills subdivision that developed under Montgomery County's R-200 zoning designation. This Plan does not recommend any changes to the permitted land uses, or the existing standards for minimum lot size, building coverage, setbacks, and heights for the RR-3 zone, although availability and implications for use other than as a water storage facility should be studied.

1.4 C-L Zone

The C-L zone contains a 1-acre commercial shopping center located in the southwest corner of the Town. The uses permitted now as a matter of right, or by special exception, reflect the Town's efforts in the 1980's to promote commercial uses more compatible with the historic and residential nature of the Town. The resulting permitted uses are characterized by offices, limited personal services, and other commercial uses that are intended not to significantly burden the Town with increased noise, litter, or pedestrian or vehicular traffic. This Plan contains recommendations that could affect the permitted uses. The existing standards for minimum lot size, building coverage, setbacks, and heights for the C-L zone remain.

1.5 FR Zone

The Town contains 107 acres of forest and park sites, and for the most part, the latter are scattered throughout the residential areas. The FR (Forest/Recreational) zoning designation is assigned to the two sections of woods, approximately 50 acres each. Park sites are not within the Forest/Recreation Preserves. The East Woods is located in the northeast corner of the Town. Blocks 28 and 33 contain Town-owned lands adjacent to the East Woods and to residences. These properties should be recorded as part of the Forest/Recreation Preserve, to complete actions already taken by the Town. The West Woods lie to the west of Washington Grove Lane, along most of the Town's northwest boundary with the City of Gaithersburg. The latter contains Maple Lake. This Plan does not recommend changes to the permitted land uses for the FR zone. ([see section 6.1](#) for forest/recreation preserve issues)

Recommendation:

- Record, as part of the Forest/Recreation Preserve, the Town-owned lands contained within Blocks 28 and 33, removing lot and block demarcation and dedicating them to public use contrasted to Town ownership in fee simple.

1.6 Parks

The largest Town park area, Woodward Park, extends north from Pine Avenue to Boundary Street. This park and the many others within the Town have been secured through original

designation, dedication, and through Town acquisition of privately-owned parcels when possible. Only one intrusion into Woodward Park of privately-owned land remains – lot 22, block 9.

Recommendations:

- The Town should acquire lot 22, block 9 as soon as economically feasible
- Two Town-owned lots within that same park land (designated lot 8, block 23 and lot 8, block 24) should be officially dedicated by the Town as park land and incorporated into the green area without lot or block designation

1.7 Town-owned land in Residential areas

There are some parcels of publicly-owned land in residential areas(see [section 3.4](#) Internal Streets and Roadways).It is recommended that these plots be analyzed for Town needs such as parking or offered for sale to adjacent property owners at fair market value where this would not create additional buildable lots. The proceeds from any such sales would be deposited in the Improvement Fund. Any sale of public land would be considered only after analysis and determination that such sale would not violate the Open Space Philosophy, as adopted by Council resolution of 2/28/73, "...to preserve all existing green space, whether public or private within Town borders."

Recommendation:

- Identify all Town-owned land in residential areas. Determine their potential need by the Town and whether sale could violate the Open Space Philosophy of the Town. If sale to adjacent property owners is considered, it is not the intent to create additional buildable lots

1.8 Permits and Enforcement Issues

It is important that the Town exert its control for conformance with Town ordinances. Article VII, Section 14 of the Washington Grove Code of Ordinance, empowers the Mayor to investigate and order any necessary corrective actions. Residents and absent land-owners are expected to comply with Town ordinances and to secure required permits such as those to operate a business or to build. This may require regular reminders that the Planning Commission, charged with processing of such permits, can be consulted when assistance is needed. ([See section 7](#) for compliance issues at the commercial corner)

2. MAXIMUM EXPANSION LIMITS (MEL); BOUNDARY DEMARCATIONS

2.1 MEL

To control and coordinate the physical development of areas near the Town's boundaries with Montgomery County and adjacent jurisdictions, the Town adopts Maximum Expansion Limits (MEL) for the Town through the master planning process. The MEL identifies areas with potential for annexation into the Town's corporate limits.

Consideration has been ongoing and should continue toward adjacent property which could or should be included in Washington Grove. This revision of the Town's Master Plan is very cautious in its approach to annexation, as was the direction taken in the 1975 Plan. More of the Town's borders are permanently defined in 1995, however, enabling the areas of concern to be more focused.

Clearly, what is in the Town's best interests is the lessening of bordering impacts with the continuing goal of preservation of this historic Town. There must be analysis of any potential annexation action and, as well, careful analysis of the impact of lack of action. Lack of some actions in the past has led to missed opportunities to reduce the adverse impact of some adjoining property uses.

The Master Plan extends a vision toward the future preservation and protection of the Town, and the establishment of possible future boundaries toward that end.

We would be remiss not to explore all options in this regard. The Town must step back and visualize the big picture of constraints that surround us in 1995 if we are to weigh the options left as far as the establishment of our final borders.

The five areas (see map, Exhibit A) to be included in the MEL are:

1. EAST – Washington Grove Hills: Washington Grove Hills contains several large lots accessed by Ridge Road north of Center Street. A standing offer has been made to the residents to include their properties into the Grove on certain conditions. (Transportation considerations related to Washington Grove Hills are found in [section 3](#))
2. EAST – Casey Property Buffer: The Casey property is proposed for development within the next few years. The Planning Commission has proposed that a 35-foot buffer along the entire eastern length of Ridge Road be dedicated to the Town as a green buffer. This would extend from the recent annexation of lots on Brown Street (extended) to the termination of Ridge Road. The buffer would run to the proposed new residential lot lines and skirt the WSSC property at the dogleg in Ridge Road that already has been annexed into the Town. Another lot, appropriate in this discussion, would round out the eastern residential boundary: the cottage facing Ridge Road between the new Brown Street extended lots and the industrial zone that borders Railroad Street.

3. WEST – Residences on Western Side of Washington Grove Lane: A standing offer should be made to the three residences remaining between the Town’s corporate limits and the limits of the City of Gaithersburg.
4. SOUTH – Land Up to and including the Railroad Tracks: These lands should be sought for inclusion in the Town. These are the single-family residence between Railroad Street and the tracks abutting Aitchison Crossing, and the industrial parcels located east of the City of Gaithersburg limits and west of the humpback bridge on either side of the Town-owned Railroad Park.
5. SOUTH – Portion of Oakmont: It is logical that the Town, with its historic relationship to the railroad, embrace the associated tracks rather than relegating them to the status of an artificial barrier or edge. It would be beneficial to the Town to have the elementary school, the nursery school, and the restaurant(the Town’s old post office) adjacent to the railroad embodied within the Town boundaries, along with the residences contained in this defined area.

There are valid concerns about impact on city services, road maintenance and recreation facilities. Like Washington Grove Hills (1 above), there are larger lots within the few blocks enclosed in this scope of possible annexation: either side of Oakmont Street from Oakmont Avenue along Chestnut Street to Central Avenue and both sides of Central Avenue back to the Humpback Bridge. Lots in Washington Grove Hills, similar in scale, already have been extended an annexation offer by the Town. This area would abut the existing “edge” created by County streets accessible only from Md. Route 355, and the properties on East Deer Park Drive, already within Gaithersburg limits.

The prospect of this area being adversely zoned or more densely subdivided may well outweigh the drawbacks of not considering this portion of Oakmont for inclusion within the Town boundaries. While not a definitive recommendation to extend the Town boundaries in this area, inclusion of this area within our MEL reserves the discussion for consideration at a later time if and when circumstances warrant such action or if the residents of this Oakmont area wish to enter into such a discussion.

It is the Town’s intent to assert its interest in the MEL in order to forecast the future needs for Town and County services, and to establish responsibility between the Town and the County governing bodies for developing and maintaining these public services. The Town will work on a cooperative basis with the County Council, the County Executive, the City of Gaithersburg and other public agencies in the development of plans and programs that affect parcels within the MEL.

It is also the Town’s intent to provide notice to owners of properties within the MEL that annexation will be pursued when annexation is deemed in the public’s best interest to further the goals and objectives of this Plan.

Recommendation:

- Monitor the Oakmont neighborhood for zoning/rezoning activities and determine future action as required. Pursue the first four areas noted above as definite annexation goals as

outlined in the 1991 Maximum Expansion Limits submitted by the Town Planning Commission.

2.2 Survey of Town Properties

There is a need to complete the survey work required to replat certain of the original Town blocks, public rights of way, and public parks near the Circle and radial avenues and to record the Town plat which was last done in 1981. Most of the original block corners near the Circle have already been resurveyed over the past few decades. Surveying and recording these last unsurveyed block corners would enable the Town finally to have an accurate public land record and allow future title transfers to proceed without such issues.

Recommendations:

- Budget and complete an accurate and current survey of Town properties as soon as possible.
- Maintain an automated cross-reference file of these Town records
- Obtain photogrammatic map of the Town showing topographic and cultural details
- Place aesthetically pleasing markers at significant points of Town zones

2.3 Boundary Demarcations

As increased development “blurs” the boundaries and historic nature of the Town, a plan for enhancing the entrances to the Town and delineating its borders needs to be developed and implemented. The visual impact of abutting and totally unscreened I-1 use at the Railroad Street entrance and of abutting Commercial use at the East Diamond/Washington Grove Lane entrance degrades the very essence of “The Town within a forest”. Research should be undertaken to determine the original structures and locations of the Town’s gateways. Post-hung signs that include the Town seal or logo need to be installed on public streets at entrances to the Town. The signs should be integrated with landscaped areas which would identify entrances to Washington Grove. Intersections would include: Washington Grove Lane at Daylily Lane, Railroad Street at its intersection with the Commercial Corner and Washington Grove Lane; the Humpback Bridge crossing on the Oakmont side; and the Oakmont Avenue/Railroad Street grade crossing.

The effort should be to provide quality but low maintenance landscaped entrances at these Town boundaries to reflect the historic nature, scale and significance of the Town. A general Town policy toward eliminating unnecessary signs both at the boundaries and within the Town should be encouraged.

Recommendations:

- Enhance the entrances to the Town with appropriately designed landscaping and signs at the Town entrances.
- Vehicular speed limits should be incorporated.
- Approaches should be delineated with aesthetically appropriate markers

- Seek assistance from the property owner, Montgomery County and state sources to screen with plantings and aesthetically acceptable fencing the industrial areas bordering the Town at Ridge Road and Railroad Street

3. TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The original subdivision plan for Washington Grove, developed by its founders in the late 19th Century, established a concept of pedestrian walkways separated from vehicular way, and interspersed with numerous parks and open spaces. Only in recent years has this model found widespread use by planners of other communities.

In order to have our network of walkways and roads continue to serve us well for an ideal residential environment, we must have a plan that maintains our existing strengths while recognizing and meeting the needs of an area-wide transportation system. At the same time, any adverse impacts of that system on the Town must be minimized.

3.1 Walkways

One of the most unique attributes afforded to residents of the Town are the internal walkways. These walkways offer residents and visitors an opportunity to stroll through a bucolic setting not normally found in a metropolitan area. As tract after tract of surrounding woodland falls prey to development, the preservation of these walkways becomes an increasingly important part of that which defines the character of Washington Grove.

Within developed areas of Town, the walkways require regular maintenance. Although these walkways include partially graveled areas, a few sections remain with grass only or attempts to grow grass. Gravel along Town walkways helps to convey a sense of public access, an invitation for pedestrian use, and year-round access for emergency vehicles. With the density of Town homes and our house numbering system (most houses front on walkways) as well as the location of fire hydrants, the walkways within developed areas of Town also provide essential emergency vehicle access. (Note: Resolution 6-82 designates all Town walkways as Fire Lanes.) The periodic complaints of excessive vehicular use of walkways must be handled with increased public education on the proper use of walkways, not with any barrier that would impede an emergency vehicle. Also, all walkways should be reviewed on a periodic basis to assess needs for trimming to maintain usable widths and to identify barriers or encroachments into the public rights of way.

Recommendations:

- Continue use of gravel for walkways in need of stabilization within the developed areas of Town to allow a sense of public ownership, invite pedestrian use, and insure year-round access for emergency vehicles.

- Grass walkways are not to be graveled unless they fail. Once stabilized, they can revert to grass.
- Review and clarify existing Town ordinances to increase public awareness of limitations on vehicle use of walkways, *e.g.* for temporary unloading of household goods
- Periodically review walkways to assess needs for trimming to maintain usable widths, and to remove any barriers and encroachments that would impede access by emergency vehicles.
- Consider placing benches at intervals along walkways (sites for benches to be determined as benches are donated)

(1) Street Lights and Utilities

The Town has about 100 street lights along its roads and walkways. Most have incandescent bulbs, although a few mercury (blue) and sodium (orange) vapor fixtures have been installed in recent years.

The cost for electricity and maintenance of our street lights is significant (\$12,500 in FY95). This reflects more frequent maintenance and less energy efficient power usage of the incandescent bulbs. PEPCO continues to tell the Town that it will not be able to provide maintenance (*i.e.* replace parts) for the older, incandescent light pole system that comprises the majority of our lighting system. PEPCO cost analysis indicates that the expense of upgrading the Town street light system would be recouped in reduced power costs in about five years. While PEPCO's preferred replacement is sodium vapor bulbs, this Plan endorses full spectrum, energy efficient light. A proactive solution by the Town can be beneficial, for cost and for energy conservation.

The Town often suffers from power outages, particularly from storm damage with tree limbs knocking down power lines.

Recommendations:

- All new development should be conducted with underground utilities.
- Develop a plan for putting all utilities underground so that whenever repairs or significant work is done in Town, utilities will be moved underground.
- Part of this conversion plan needs to identify locations for all light poles, so that as utilities go underground and utility poles are removed, new lighting can be installed without loss of coverage.
- Possible sources of funds to assist with placing utilities underground should be explored, (*e.g.* a Federal energy assistance grant)
- Full spectrum street lights should be standardized in design and reflect the historic aspect of the Town.
- The utilities conversion plan should also consider differentiating lighting for streets, walkways and recreational facilities, *e.g.* use of foot-level lighting along sections of the Town walkways, rather than pole lighting

(2) Parking

Recommendation:

- Implement the parking policy formulated by committee and distributed to the Town (see [Appendix I](#))

3.2 Railroad Corridor**(1) Commuter Trains**

Historically, the Town began with the railroad, linked to the expansion of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company's Metropolitan Line to the northwest of Washington, D.C. The Town is served by a double set of tracks along its southerly border owned and operated by CSX Transportation, successor to the B&O. The tracks are used by numerous daily freight trains and by Amtrak. Washington Grove is an unsheltered stop for morning and evening MARC commuter trains operated for the Maryland Department of Transportation that provide daily transportation for Town residents and others commuting to Rockville, Garrett Park, Kensington, Silver Spring, or Union Station. Parking for 15-18 vehicles is available along the southernmost side of the railroad tracks, opposite the Town, between the tracks and Oakmont Avenue. A dozen or so Town residents walk to and from the commuter stop, as do several residents from the Oakmont and Deer Park areas. Additional parking might encourage more riders to use the Washington Grove stop, and lessen concerns that the stop could be eliminated at some time in the future. The public property dedicated as "Oakmont Park" and the adjacent public right of way used for access to parking behind Hershey's Restaurant could be explored with Montgomery County for expanded commuter parking.

There has been agreement that the Town should pursue recreation of a railroad shelter (see Exhibit B, item G), similar in flavor to the original station, to protect patrons of the MARC commuter train from the elements. The building is envisioned as a roofed masonry structure to act solely to protect riders from rain and wind, but not necessarily to have enclosed space.

Recommendations:

- Explore options for providing additional southside parking for MARC commuters using the Washington Grove stop
- Seek funding and request installation of a southside structure to protect waiting MARC commuters during inclement weather.
- Request repainting of the pedestrian crosswalk across Railroad Street near Grove Road as a regular part of the street's maintenance

(2) Transit Services and Easement

While the Town currently enjoys daily bus service provided by Montgomery County Ride-On, the existing railroad corridor has been studied to determine the need for a right of way along the southern side of the tracks as part of the 1990 Corridor Cities Transit Easement Study. The resulting document recommended further study of this alignment near Washington Grove for

possible extension of Metrorail. The November 1994 Staff Draft for the Gaithersburg Vicinity-Shady Grove Master Plan Amendment also notes retention of the transitway along the tracks.

While transitway studies have concluded that priority should be given to a light-rail (*e.g.* trolley) extension proceeding directly west from Shady Grove through the King Farm property, the plans propose preserving an option to use the railroad corridor near Washington Grove as well, perhaps for heavy rail (Metrorail), light-rail (trolley), or for a dedicated busway. Designation of a 70-foot wide transit easement, in addition to a widened Oakmont Avenue, has already been incorporated into development plans proposed for properties along Oakmont Avenue. Whichever transit mode is selected, any mass transit extension in this corridor would have impacts on the Town. If Metrorail, then a transit stop at Washington Grove might not be practical and the noise of the frequent trains could be greatly lessened by undergrounding the system, as has been discussed to protect Olde Towne in Gaithersburg. If a trolley line or a busway, then a passenger stop at Washington Grove would be possible, though the impacts of increased traffic would have to be considered.

Recommendations:

- Retain any existing transit easement on the southerly side of the railroad corridor, for land use planning purposes
- Oppose using heavy rail for extension of mass transit along the railroad corridor, unless the system is completely enclosed below ground
- Planning for any mass transit in the corridor must include consideration of the noise impacts upon the Town and the continued need for efficient commuting options

3.3 Shared Roadways

(1) Washington Grove Lane

Currently, the most pressing and volatile transportation issue for Grove residents involves the transfer of authority for the 0.57-mile section of State Highway 124, where it bisects the Town under the name of Washington Grove Lane. The relocation of designated State Route 124 to a new alignment and the transfer of ownership to the Town of the 0.57-mile section of Washington Grove Lane has been encouraged by the State for many years; this transfer was incorporated into the Town's 1975 Master Plan. In March 1993, a Special Town Meeting voted to accept jurisdictional responsibility for the road, including maintenance. Discussions with State, County, and City of Gaithersburg staffs about the transfer are still underway, but all parties are in agreement on the need to increase pedestrian safety. The City of Gaithersburg's concern over potential road closure has resulted in a request for equal voice by County, City, and Town in any modification.

A transfer agreement needs to be finalized; the 1975 Master Plan called for this section of road to revert to Town control and that it be discontinued as a through street, to serve as a residential access road only. Retaining the authority to choose this option is especially important as construction on at least four other links in the regional road network are still incomplete: the Crabbs Branch Way/Amity Drive connection; the Oakmont/Girard Street connection; the

Odendhal Avenue gap; and I-370/Inter-County Connector. Any of these projects will have impact on traffic patterns through the Town; flexibility is key to maintaining the Town's pedestrian environment.

In September 1994, volume and speed counts for traffic were tracked for this section of Washington Grove Lane. This information is critical to providing methods for resolving our concerns. The Town has received and utilized a Local Transportation Planning Assistance Grant from the Maryland Office of Planning to assist with traffic engineering analyses of options for Washington Grove Lane, including a County DOT proposal that utilizes speed humps. There appear to be elements of agreement in both the Consultant's options (InTrans, Inc. Memorandum, May, 1995) and that put forward by the County. Work is ongoing to achieve the necessary degree of safety along this portion of the road for Town Citizens and all others who travel the road.

Recommendations:

- Complete cooperative intergovernmental efforts to engineer a solution to lower traffic speeds on Washington Grove Lane to increase pedestrian and vehicular safety
- For the present, make no alterations to Washington Grove Lane access configurations. Oak and Center Streets should remain closed at Washington Grove Lane
- Current prohibitions of southbound "NO LEFT TURN" onto McCauley Street and "NO RIGHT TURN" onto northbound Washington Grove Lane should be enforced. Reconfiguration of the McCauley Street/Chestnut Road intersection is expensive in terms of park land and money, without sufficient prospect of resolving the Washington Grove Lane safety issues
- Designate Washington Grove Lane as a Town road and responsibility as soon as possible. The Town must not make any agreement limiting the Town's ability to make future changes to Washington Grove Lane to respond to the impacts of new links in the regional road network
- Support actions that complete the Amity Drive connection to Crabbs Branch Way and the Odendhal Avenue roadway as a means of providing residents of surrounding jurisdictions with practical and safe alternatives to use of Washington Grove Lane

(2) Humpback Bridge/Railroad Street

Any of the mass transit extension options would affect the viability of maintaining the at-grade Aitcheson Crossing connecting Railroad Street and Oakmont Avenue, and the retention of the humpback bridge over the tracks. The present alignment of Railroad Street extending from the bridge to the southeast to Aitcheson Crossing and Oakmont Avenue became a public way by usage through the early 1900's. The B&O Railroad totally reconstructed the bridge about 1946 replacing a deteriorating timber structure with a new timber structure. During the 1960's the B&O sought County approval to close the at-grade crossing. A study was made at that time by the County to improve the sight distance on the bridge by raising the east approach slightly. The County Council did not approve the closure of Aitcheson Crossing, and the B&O Railroad refused to improve the bridge.

In April 1961 a Master Plan for the Vicinity of Gaithersburg was adopted by M-NCPPC which showed State Route 124 being relocated westward from Muncaster Mill Road to the southwest swinging toward Gaithersburg and to the north of the Grove's west woods. An arterial road was proposed to extend southward from new Route 124 generally parallel to and a couple of hundred feet from our woodlands west boundary through the area now occupied by Girard Place and Gaithersburg Ford Tractor, crossing over existing Route 124 (East Diamond Avenue) with a bridge over the B&O tracks and tying into East Deer Park Drive at Woodland Drive. This proposal was strongly opposed by the City of Gaithersburg, and the County in 1964 prepared studies that would relocate the bridge southward tying into Oakmont Avenue in lieu of East Deer Park Drive.

The Town's 1975 Master Plan incorporated this location for the County's planned bridge replacement location, a major structure, but did so to preclude the direct connection of Railroad Street to Crabbs Branch Way. The plan noted that the connection would stimulate increased traffic flow from new housing development and have increased heavy truck traffic from facilities such as the County Service Park and installations off Gude Drive, while recognizing that the bridge as planned also would have a deleterious environmental impact.

In the development process, the planned road shown along our west woods boundary in the 1961 Master Plan shifted westward and in essence became Girard Street. The proposed bridge location did not at that time shift with it to Girard Street. About 1977 a study prepared for the Gaithersburg Planning Department proposed construction of the new bridge at Girard Street. This concept was the subject of a public hearing by Gaithersburg in January 1985, and supported by Town testimony.

In July 1983 Town officials met with the County Executive to discuss certain zoning matters and the replacement of the existing bridge. At that time, the Director of the County DOT indicated that he was pleased to hear of the Town's interest in the bridge and that he would be recommending that the bridge be included in the Capital Improvements Program. The County Executive indicated that he would act favorably on it.

Subsequent to the January 1985 Public Hearing in Gaithersburg, the County Planning Board asked the County DOT to prepare various studies of the alternatives to accommodate flow in this traffic corridor, including the Girard Street Option with variations, the Master Plan Option with variations, and the Railroad Street to Crabbs Branch Way Option. The Town asked that a "No Build" Option with variations also be evaluated.

Planning considerations connected with the various options:

1. Every Master Plan proposal for the past 32 years has provided a bridge crossing over the railroad to replace the existing bridge.
2. The existing bridge and grade crossing will at some time be closed for safety reasons alone or certainly when the planned transit way along the west side of the railroad is constructed.

3. Our 1975 Master Plan stated that it is intended to be a living document which is reviewed for possible revision at least every 10 years and that there should be no reduction of any factors that now contribute to fire and rescue services in the Town.

Any version of the previous Master Plan Bridge Alignment will:

1. Eliminate through traffic on Railroad Street to the southeast.
2. Provide a new four-lane bridge crossing the tracks at a skew and be much longer and in the neighborhood of 6 feet higher than the existing bridge.
3. Be highly visible and project traffic noise farther into the Town than at present.
4. Place a four-lane highway immediately adjacent to the proposed transit way along the west side of the railroad and take Hershey's Restaurant.
5. As stated in our 1975 Master Plan "impose a serious nuisance on Grove residents through loss of direct access to the south."
6. Require that all vehicular access to the Grove be by way of Washington Grove Lane; Brown Street and Hickory Road would no longer connect to Railroad Street; Oak Street and/or Center Street would be reopened and McCauley Street reconstructed to permit access to and from the north; all of which were anticipated by our 1975 Master Plan.

Any version of the Girard Street Bridge Alignment (see map) would:

1. Move most traffic to the west side of the railroad. The connection of existing Railroad Street to Crabbs Branch Way would still be a possibility to be faced.
2. Have no significant visual impacts on the Town.
3. Place a four-lane highway immediately adjacent to the proposed transit way along the west side of the railroad and take Hershey's Restaurant.
4. As in the Master Plan Option "impose a serious nuisance on Grove residents through loss of direct access to the south."
5. Require that all vehicular access to the Grove be by way of Washington Grove Lane.

The Railroad Street to Crabbs Branch Way connection (see Map) involves a substantial cost savings as opposed to any bridge option, but would open up a major traffic route paralleling Route 355 between Gude Drive and downtown Gaithersburg. This proposal included:

1. Continued through traffic on Railroad Street.
2. No bridge or grade crossing between Shady Grove Road and Summit Avenue.
3. An opportunity for the Town to obtain, through sound and visual barriers of our choosing, some measure of relief from current traffic impacts.
4. A two-lane realigned Railroad Street immediately adjacent to the Town's side of the railroad with trucks prohibited.
5. Abandonment of existing Railroad Street from a point approximately 200 feet east of Grove Road southward through the Town park; thus increasing usable park area in this vicinity.
6. Railroad Street lowered to track level in the stretch between Chestnut Road and Hickory Road; closure of Chestnut Road access to Railroad Street; removal of the existing

humpback bridge; and construction of a retaining wall to leave the existing hill slopes on the Town side undisturbed.

7. Current County bus route along Railroad Street would be continued giving Town residents access to public transportation.
8. Washington Grove Lane, Hickory Road, Grove Road, and Ridge Road would continue to connect to Railroad Street.
9. Traffic-actuated signals at Grove Road and Ridge Road to permit safe vehicular exit from the Town.
10. County maintenance of realigned Railroad Street, including snow and ice removal.

Recommendations:

- Continue Town opposition to connection of Railroad Street to Crabbs Branch Way due to all the negative impacts of the high-volume traffic flow that would result on Railroad Street. Monitor the westward extension of Crabbs Branch Way to the I-1 zone adjacent to the Grove as approved in the county master plan, at which time access to Railroad Street from the I-1 land is to be eliminated
- Continue maintenance of the existing humpback bridge and the at-grade crossing until an acceptable engineering solution can be found for crossing over or under the railroad tracks. For now, maintain closure of Brown Street at Hickory Road.
- Relocate Railroad Street from the bend just east of Grove to continue it contiguous with the R/R right-of-way to Aitchison Crossing, abandoning the short section through Morgan Park. Retain the existing road as local access to Block 25
- Support completion of the Amity Drive connection to Crabbs Branch Way to provide residents of surrounding jurisdictions with an alternative to use of Railroad Street

(3) Ridge Road

Prior to 1992, Ridge Road delineated the eastern boundary of the Town. With annexation of the 1.58-acre Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission property (Parcel 360) and the 2.88-acre Ward residential property (Parcel 635), the corporate limits have moved eastward. Ridge Road is a narrow residential lane within the Town that also provides access to some properties outside the Town that are under County planning and zoning control. These outside properties include three homes (Parcels 238, 291, and 303) and Washington Grove Hills, a subdivision consisting of nine single-family homes situated on lots of generally an acre or more. Annexation into the Town has been explored for the 12 homes on these outside properties.

Plans for Ridge Road are contingent on the Casey-Ridge Road/Mill Creek development plan as submitted in 1991 to Montgomery County. This development, as proposed, would comprise 174 homes on 45 acres with no vehicular access onto Ridge Road. During evaluation of the preliminary subdivision plan and discussion with planners, Town representatives identified changes needed to the subdivision plan including dedication of a 35-foot strip along the subdivision's Ridge Road border. The purpose of the 35-foot strip is to preserve the identity of the existing communities and to provide amenity. Practical and effective maintenance of the strip can best be accomplished by deeding that strip to the Town and creating a forest conservation agreement. Transfer of the strip to Town ownership removes Ridge Road from

County planning control and therefore eliminates County requirements to widen Ridge Road to a 60-foot right of way for the development.

If Washington Grove Hills is annexed into the Town, and zoned to retain the character of the community (RR-3 Zone — minimum 20,000 square foot lot size), and there is no vehicular access onto Ridge Road from the Casey development, then Ridge Road can continue to provide adequate vehicular access. If Washington Grove Hills is not annexed into the Town, then the Town must be concerned that future resubdivisions under County authority would adversely impact Ridge Road with construction vehicles and with the residential traffic the additional homes are likely to generate. Likewise, any vehicular connection between the Casey development and Ridge Road would adversely impact Ridge Road with additional traffic. To make this road safe and appropriate for increased traffic or for the movement of construction equipment, Ridge Road would have to be widened and rebuilt its entire length—and then the increased traffic would be unsuitable for its present use—a residential lane. This Plan opposes such a change in character and use.

Therefore, if Washington Grove Hills is not annexed, or if a connection is approved by the County between the Casey development and Ridge Road, then the Town must protect the use and character of Ridge Road by closure at Town limits—and Washington Grove Hills must be provided with vehicular access by connection through the Casey development. The decision to annex Washington Grove Hills must be made in time to coordinate with plans for the Casey-Ridge Road/Mill Creek development.

Recommendations:

- Pursue annexation for the 12 homes currently using Ridge Road for access, including Washington Grove Hills, with a Town zoning designation of RR-3. If the annexation of the 12 homes is not successful, this Plan recommends notifying the residents of Washington Grove Hills and appropriate County offices of the closure of Ridge Road at Town limits as soon as vehicular access is provided to Washington Grove Hills through the Casey-Ridge Road/Mill Creek development
- With or without Washington Grove Hills annexation, finalize an agreement for the Casey development to preclude connection to the Town's portion of Ridge Road and to obtain the 35-foot buffer strip along the Town's portion of Ridge Road as a forest conservation area

3.4 Internal Streets and Roadways

(1) Road Rights of Way

The Town holds title to a 50-foot strip of land along the northern side of McCauley Street in order to accommodate public improvements and any future widening of that street. The Town also holds title to a 25-foot strip of land along the eastern edge of most of Maple Road to accommodate possible public improvements and as surety in maintaining open space on the narrow roadway by restricting construction. Adoption of Town width standards can assist with evaluation of road and right-of-way requirements for McCauley Street and Maple Road. These

standards can also provide some measure of consistency for any new road construction, and for decisions on maintenance or transfer of existing Town-owned parcels. Transfer of surplus parcels will reduce areas of Town maintenance and direct responsibility.

Recommendations:

- All new road construction should be based on a standard right-of-way total width of 30 feet to accommodate traffic needs and public improvements. Standard paved roadways should have a 20-foot asphalt base width with 16-foot driveable surface and 2-foot shoulders on either side of the driveable surface. The shoulder should not encourage driving but allow parking on a tar and chip shoulder or other heavy textured surface, to avoid displacement by vehicles and runoff
- The driveable surface should consist of a six-inch bituminous concrete (asphalt); the shoulders of a 4-inch asphalt base course and 2 inches of tar and chip
- Reduce Town-ownership of existing strips along Town roads within developed areas of the Town for a right-of-way maximum width of 50 feet. This accommodates possible public improvements and maintains open space
- Prepare updated listings of all Town-owned parcels, rights of way, easements, and abandoned alleys. Review and evaluate data using the above standards. The Town policy to sell parcels, when found to be surplus, to the contiguous property owner(s) should be encouraged, wherever it is determined that there is no potential for Town need. Evaluation of requirements for rights of way should take into account parking needs and other possible public improvements including putting utilities underground

(2) Center Street

At issue for this discussion is the possible opening of Center Street for emergency vehicle access. While opening this street would save approximately 1-2 minutes transit time, the possible negative consequences should be considered. Among the most obvious are that the maintenance area and its environs become more susceptible to trash and waste dumping, thus compromising the ecological balance of the entire woodland area.

Recommendation:

- Continue restriction of vehicular access on Center Street between Maple Avenue and the maintenance area

(3) Cherry Avenue

In 1976 special permission was given to four homeowners of Lots 1-6 of Block 31 to use the center 10 feet of width of Cherry Avenue between Brown Street and its coincidence with the intersection of Lots 6 and 7 of Block 31 for reasonable vehicular access to their properties. The 1976 resolution provided that this permission shall be progressively withdrawn from each successive lot owner beginning at Lot 6, Block 31, as said lot owner gives consent to such withdrawal or as each of the four properties is sold. This permission now only applies to two residences — 102 and 108 Ridge Road. Despite the limitations on vehicular access, there have

been occasional eruptions in controversy caused by vehicular use of Cherry Avenue contrary to the 1976 resolution. Recent Town action has included reminding residents of the area and eliminating trash trucks on Cherry Avenue.

Recommendation:

- As vehicular use of Cherry Avenue ceases as provided in the 1976 resolution, Town Groundskeeping staff should work with the Forestry and Beautification Committee to restore that portion to conform with other walkways in Town

(4) Brown Street

The western end of Brown Street at Hickory Road is closed to regular vehicular traffic by a locked gate. This has dramatically reduced cut-through traffic speeding along narrow streets of The Grove.

Recommendation:

- Continue restriction of vehicular access at western end of Brown Street

3.5 Other External Roadways

(1) I-370 / InterCounty Connector (ICC)

The ICC has quite a long history. First conceived as a freeway along part of the path of a planned Outer Beltway, many of the individual purposes and needs for the facility have changed over the years. In 1983, a draft environmental document for the ICC between I-270 and Gladys Spellman Parkway was approved by Maryland State and Federal Highway Administrations. However, as the sensitivity of the environment became an increasing concern in the late 1980s, the impacts of the ICC as planned were determined to be excessive. While the ICC was not built as planned, the process did yield the construction of I-370 which connects I-270 to the Shady Grove Metro Station. Recently, a new 3-year study has been initiated to respond to road-building pressures from within the State Highway Administration (SHA), some land use planners, and development interests.

The Town continues its interest and involvement in the ICC review process, with representation again on the latest ICC Citizens Advisory Committee. Any freeway construction as proposed would include a freeway offramp (closer to Washington Grove than I-370) to connect the ICC with the current Metro access portion of I-370. When the Town earlier protested construction of I-370 and its impacts on the Town, an Historic District on the National and State registers, SHA responded in 1982 with:

- “Since Washington Grove is further removed from I-370 than the sites analyzed, it is obvious there will be no degradation of the existing air and noise environment of Washington Grove.”

Listening to the increased day and nighttime noise that has resulted from I-370 traffic, Town residents must question the credibility of SHA officials. The misrepresentation of SHA's 1982 response raises doubts that the current ICC study will adequately address Town concerns. It is clear that an ICC freeway would exacerbate the negative impacts of I-370, and further degrade the Town's ambient environment with diesel fumes and noise from increased cross-County truck traffic on the portion of I-370 near the Town.

Recommendations:

This Plan recommends to appropriate Federal, State, and County officials that

1. Corrective noise abatement structures be built along the present course of I-370 to ameliorate its impact on pre-existing communities
2. No new freeways be constructed in the ICC study area
3. The western loop of proposed Alternate G between I-370 and Mid County Highway be dropped as it will be unnecessary and would have unacceptable impacts on the Town as well as the Town's neighbors
4. Improved east-west transportation should be provided by Mid County Highway in conjunction with improvements in traffic management and safety along existing roadways
5. New expenditures for transportation should encourage use of public transportation
6. All transportation planning should strive to maintain the quality of life in existing communities

4. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Existing Town structures provide more than just a practical service to the residents of Washington Grove. Many, such as McCathran Hall and the Gazebo, offer a sense of history and kinship and define the character of the community. They enhance the unique architecture of Town residences and the Town layout that reflect the development of the community from a Methodist camp meeting ground and summer residential retreat from Washington, DC to a railroad commuter suburb and permanent, year-round residential community. The distinctive original Town plan of open space, forests, and parks, along with a circle around which six avenues radiate, is still extant and vitally connected to the Town Hall. These significant characteristics, along with the pedestrian-friendly interior paths with safe passage to various parks and open space are the basis for the Town's designation as a National Register Historic District in April 1980. The following recommendations are to maintain the public structures in good repair and for new improvements in keeping with the spirit and nature of the old.

Whenever maintenance, renovation, or new construction are contemplated, attention should be given to ensure that all facilities are accessible for the handicapped. The requirements of the American Disabilities Act are the guide to that end.

4.1 Public Buildings

(1) Town Hall

As well as filling the practical need for government offices, McCathran Hall is of great historical significance to Town residents and is the focal point of many community activities as was the Sacred Circle in the Town's earliest days. The hall will undergo extensive remodeling that will include needed repairs to the original building and an addition that will expand meeting and record keeping capabilities.

Recommendations:

- In keeping with current plans, reserve space within the hall for an active historical archive accessible for citizens to contribute and research historical materials. Consider housing materials in a museum-like setting or in a library format
- Rehang the original windows in the main hall in new casements for energy efficiency. Provide a security system on the windows and other access points

(2) Gazebo

A large contingent of Town volunteers constructed the Gazebo in the 1970's. Since that time, the facility has been extremely popular for Town and family events. As the structure aged, it received new flooring and roofing. Based on an evaluation for the draft master plan, however, structural work was identified. While a short-term job would have temporarily secured all sections of the Gazebo, the Council decided to undertake rebuilding of the facility immediately to meet current code requirements and ensure safety. This has been accomplished and no additional action is recommended.

(3) Maintenance Building

While the Town Garage is in good condition, it is not large enough to accommodate both Town maintenance supplies and equipment and the Town vehicle. There are many options. For example, the Town could investigate the purchase of a modular unit that could be placed on a concrete pad next to the garage. This type of space is often used by construction companies for inexpensive, yet secure and weathertight storage. This kind of space could house Town materials presently stored in the garage, making more room for the Town truck and tractor.

Recommendations:

- Inventory supplies and materials in the Town Garage to determine need for long-term storage. Provide covered and secure storage to augment existing space and make indoor parking space available
- As part of the six-year Master Plan review, evaluate the condition of the Garage roof for repairs and possible replacement

4.2 Other Facilities

The following recommendations deal with lesser structures either existing in the Town, or recommended for construction. Improvements in the Maple Lake area such as fencing and the drainage ditch bridge are discussed in [section 6.2](#).

(1) Tennis Shed

The tennis shed is in poor condition, but can remain serviceable for a few more years with proper maintenance. Within five years, however, replacement of the shed will become inevitable.

Recommendation:

- Schedule eventual replacement of the tennis shed with a larger structure that can accommodate other recreation supplies such as croquet equipment, volley ball nets and balls. The present location is well suited for access and visibility

(2) Fireplace, picnic facilities

The stone fireplace in Woodward Park holds fond memories for many Grove residents.

Recommendation:

- Repair the fireplace. Designate a fire circle for bonfires in an open location within Woodward Park, away from overhanging branches.

5. ACTIVE RECREATION AND PARKS

Washington Grove has a long standing interest in recreation and has sponsored many activities in Town parks since the earliest Camp Meeting days. Our parks provide space and openness that enhance the quality of life within the Grove. Our parks also provide an opportunity for spontaneous activity by our children and adults, the “pick-up” game, in contrast to the regulated pace that is characteristic of the work and school day. Town parks are intended to provide active and passive recreation areas and are located in several locations within the Town boundaries.

Passive recreation by Town residents ranges from star gazing on a bench in Wade Park to acidic comments while draped over the tennis court fence. Active recreation can be accomplished on an individual basis with one or more players (golf practice, shooting hoops, use of children’s play equipment, croquet, tennis) or on a team basis with several members composing each team. In general, team play requires much larger areas and has a potential for ancillary needs such as parking and spectator spaces. Typically, both individual and team players want to practice to improve their skills and use Town facilities for that purpose.

Because most of our parks are imbedded within the residential areas of the Town, adjacent households have the advantage of immediate access for their recreation, and are front row spectators for all activities related to park use. Users of the parks have a responsibility to the Town to safeguard the condition of the parks and to abide by Town regulations concerning such things as parking, trash, and hours of use. Users of the parks also have a responsibility to adjacent households to minimize any peripheral effects of the users' activities. These include, but are not limited to, physical damage to property, excessive noise, and inappropriate behavior.

It is the responsibility of the Town to maintain the park areas in good condition for a variety of uses, both for current residents and guests and for future generations of Grovers and their friends. The popularity of certain sports, games, or activities will wax and wane with succeeding generations and town regulations should provide flexibility for these changes.

5.1 Designated Parks and Green Space

(1) Woodward Park

Woodward Park is bounded by Grove Road, Maple Avenue, and Boundary Street. This large park includes the following active recreation areas: 1 soccer field, 2 baseball fields with back stops, 3 tennis courts, 1 basketball court, children's playground equipment, picnic areas, garden plots.

Recommendations:

- Support a consistent policy for use and maintenance of the active recreation areas within Woodward Park to ensure their continuing viability for present and future users.
- Repair and maintain the backstops on a regular schedule. Replacement of at least one backstop may be necessary within five – six years. Project Open Space money should be used for this purpose.
- Fencing around the tennis courts should be inspected for routine repairs and aligned to avoid injuries to fence line trees. Consideration should be given to realigning the hard tennis court and solving the eroding effects of underlying drainage problems in the future when the next major resurfacing is planned. Drainage problems underlying the hard court affect its long-term viability
- A regulation size volleyball court should be located within the park in an appropriate location
- Install a fitness course around Woodward Park and throughout some of the walkways. A similar course exists at Welsh Park in Rockville. This course should be rustic in appearance and offer numerous physical fitness benefits to participants

(2) Wade Park

This park is bounded by Acorn Lane and 5th Avenue.

(3) Knott Park

This park is bounded by Grove and 1st Avenues near McCathran Hall.

(4) Howard Park

This park is bounded by Chestnut Road, Grove Avenue, McCathran Hall and the Woman’s Club.

(5) Zoe Wadsworth Park

This park is bounded by Center Street, Grove Road to the intersection of Locust Lane, and Woodward Park.

(6) Chapel Park

This park is bounded by Chestnut Road, Grove Avenue, and Center Street.

(7) McCauley/Wash Grove Lane park

(8) Maple Road “McCathran” park

This park is located on the east side of Maple Road between house numbers 105 and 115, and was dedicated as a neighborhood woodland park.

(9) Jackson Park

This park is bounded by Acorn Lane, Chestnut Road, Grove Avenue, and Miller Drive.

(10) Morgan Park

This park is bounded by Brown and Railroad Streets between Maple Avenue and Hickory Road.

(11) Railroad Park

This park is west of the humpback bridge on the south side of Railroad Street between two commercial properties outside of the Town’s boundaries. [See section 7.2](#) for discussion of this park.

Recommendations:

- These parks should be maintained as open space within the Town. Consider installation of some playground equipment for younger children in Howard and/or Chapel Park
- For Morgan Park, extend the woodlands to the footpath running diagonally from Brown Street to Railroad Street
- The boundaries of each of the public parklands should be defined and all parks should be named

5.2 Maple Lake

The Lake is located in the West Woods at the end of Maple Lake Road. Recommendations pertaining to active recreation at Maple Lake, and including Maple Spring and Whetstone Spring are found in [section 6.2](#).

6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

In accordance with State law, this Plan recognizes the need for goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards designed to protect, from the adverse effects of development, sensitive areas, including the following:

1. Streams and their buffers;
2. 100-year floodplains;
3. Habitats of threatened and endangered species; and
4. Steep slopes.

The abundant and clean water supplies within the 200 acres of the Town were a major attraction for the original purchasers of the Town. Over the years, open and piped drainage systems were installed in the residential and wooded sections of Town.

Recommendation:

- The Town culverts and drainage systems should continue to be maintained on a yearly basis and replaced when necessary as roads are repaved. This benefits the quality of the headwaters of three major streams that feed the Potomac River: Rock Creek, Muddy Branch, and Great Seneca Creek.

6.1 Forest Conservation

The Town's Forest Preserves (see Exhibit A) serve four main purposes. They provide habitat for plants and wildlife in an area of diminishing natural habitat; they help to prevent erosion and degradation of the quality of the headwaters of three significant waterways; they provide places for recreation such as walking and birding; and they act as natural buffers from encroaching development.

To ensure that the goals of forest conservation also apply to privately-owned properties within the Grove, the Town has enacted a forest conservation ordinance that governs subdivisions, grading, and activities requiring a sediment control permit for tracts of land over a specified size. This Master Plan recognizes that the Town's Planning Commission must administer the forest conservation ordinance as part of its development review activities.

(1) East and West Woods

The Forest Preserves of Washington Grove total almost one half of the Town's lands and are located on the northeast and northwest sides of Town. They provide significant environmental and aesthetic benefits to the Town, as well as to the external neighborhoods in the area. Water running through the East Woods is part of the Rock Creek headwaters. Water running through the West Woods is part of the Great Seneca Creek headwaters. The Town has an adopted Forestry Policy that is aimed at protecting the East and West Woods and ensuring that their benefits will be available for the foreseeable future.

Since adoption of the 1975 Master Plan, additional housing has been constructed along a portion of both the east and west woods borders (see map). The East Woods now are encircled by housing. The result of the new housing, some with lawns extending to the woods and occupants who look out on and develop concern for the woods, has been to reduce points of entrance to the woods and some of the associated impacts such as trash dumping, motorized vehicles and vandalism.

Along the West Woods borders, there is new single-family housing within Town boundaries along Daylily Lane and older single-family housing, now annexed into the Town, with access along Washington Grove Lane; previously constructed multi-family and more recent single-family housing beyond the Town boundaries. Floodplain associated with Whetstone Run and City of Gaithersburg playfields remain the only green spaces adjoining the West Woods. Erosion and trash dumping continue to impact the West Woods.

The impact on the woods and its flora and fauna, as surrounding green spaces have disappeared, cannot be assessed because firm base data are not available for preceding years. While the East Woods contend with rampant greenbrier growth and the changes associated with wet-weather streams and a deteriorated drainage system dating back to Association days, they continue to enjoy the most regular use by Town residents for dog walking, nature hikes, and exercise.

Walkways within the Town's forest preserves offer a variety of settings and require different levels of maintenance, as opposed to walkways within developed areas. For instance, portions of walkways within the East Woods are currently unusable for days (or even weeks) after inclement weather, but mitigation of several drainage problems could allow easier access into some areas. Within both the East Woods and the West Woods, the walkways could be enhanced by placement of benches, by replantings that concentrate native plants into low-maintenance natural gardens, and by naming and mapping the walkways to invite use by pedestrians.

Regular removal of trash helps to eliminate the notion that woods should function as dumps. The East Woods currently enjoy a fairly low level of trash impact. The West Woods, however, are the repository of large amounts of dumping, much of which seems to originate from an adjacent development. Using Town maintenance staff time on a regular basis to combat refuse from a neighboring community is not equitable.

Whether from erosion, run off, natural invasions such as greenbrier, or the assault of motorized vehicles or tree cutters, both woods are sensitive areas and vulnerable to degradation.

Maintaining as much environmental diversity as possible to support flora and fauna should be a major goal of the Town. This includes a hospitable environment for those species that appear in our woods on a seasonal schedule as well as for those that pass through the woods as part of their regular territory.

Recommendations:

- The Forestry Committee should develop a safety management plan for each woods
- Compile a three-year inventory of existing plants, animals, soil, and water of both woods. Seek professional assistance from local, state, and federal experts in coordination with Town Volunteers
- Following inventory of woods flora and fauna, assess the long-term impact of erosion and greenbrier. Consider whether the drainage system through each woods should be revitalized
- Leave existing nature trails/walkways wide enough for the Town tractor to mow. Increase maintenance where needed to ensure that existing walkways remain accessible throughout the year and that fencing receives needed patching and repair. Some trimming along designated trails may encourage additional pedestrian use, and also increase sunlight to maintain a variety of habitats for birds and vegetation
- Schedule regular trash removal from the woods. Utilize community resources. Request enforcement assistance from the County and State Environmental Protection offices to help control trash and storm water impact on the woods
- Restore names of walkways in the forest preserves, as shown on early maps
- With regard to any actions related to the future of Washington Grove Lane, these must take into account and, where possible, improve existing and potential runoff and erosion problems in the West Woods associated with the road.

(2) Town Trees and Nursery

Within the residential portion of town, huge old trees are a complement to the forest preserves. In addition to natural trials such as drought, they have others to contend with, among the most lethal of which are lack of nutrients as they age, air pollution and base wounds.

A Town Nursery was established within the Woodward Park boundaries over 30 years ago. Many plantings in the Grove began as small slips and seedlings from the nursery, transplanted over the years by volunteers and Town Grounds staff. There now is considerable older plant stock, however, so big that transplanting cannot be easily accomplished by volunteers with shovels. Many of the trees and shrubs are of high quality and would be real assets, if transplanted successfully in other public areas around Town. The largest plants in the nursery are taking space that could better be used to begin new, young plants for future plantings and replacements.

Recommendations:

- Update the 1970 survey of mature trees and develop a program for their health and, when necessary, replacement. A periodic inspection for Gypsy Moth infestation should be part of the program

- The program should be the basis to schedule regular feeding of the trees in the Town parks and along the walkways, as well as for the annual safety trimming and tree removal. Include necessary supplies and staff time in the Town's annual budgets
- Evaluate plant stock in the Town Nursery for transplanting or replacement. Seek funds from green and open space programs to successfully relocate trees and shrubs from the nursery to other public areas in Town

6.2 Sensitive Areas

(1) Maple Lake

Maple Lake is one of the great environmental and recreational treasures of Washington Grove and its source, Maple Spring, is part of the headwaters system of Great Seneca Creek. Originally constructed in 1910-1911 for swimming, boating, and ice-harvesting, the Lake later was neglected and gradually filled in with silt, plants and decayed organic material. In the 1950s it was revived by cleaning out and deepening the basin, building the earth berm on the east side and improving the drainage and outflow systems. In 1974 the Lake was drained and dredged by a bulldozer to remove the silt, mud and organic decayed material. The sludge was heaped and left at the southeast side of the lake, where it became covered with overgrowth.

A deep drainage ditch was constructed outside the entrance to the Lake. This ditch carries run-off and storm water from the woods and Washington Grove Lane around the area of the Lake. A wooden bridge spans the ditch and has survived the recent passage of a large drilling rig.

In the late 1980s significant water flow was lost from Maple Spring (the Lake's source) due to construction outside of Town west of the Lake. With support from the City of Gaithersburg, the Town was reimbursed by the builder for the construction of a deep well and pumping system which is now adding cool, clear water to the lake on a timed basis each day during the summer months.

Monitoring and Management: The primary goal is to prevent eutrophication, the process by which excessive nutrient enrichment (including increased nitrogen and phosphorus) due to decomposition of organic materials, including algae and submerged rooted pond weeds, depletes oxygen levels in the water. Lakes then gradually fill in with new plant growth and silt and become swamps or small streams. This process is what happened to Maple Lake after 1912. In recent years, algae and submerged rooted pond weeds have been controlled fairly well with algaecides and herbicides, but the decomposition of algae and weeds as they fall to the bottom increases the nutrients in the water, causing further growth.

The Town must continue to maintain the delicate ecological balancing act that allows the use of the Lake for safe swimming, and keeps it safe and hospitable for water creatures including fish, turtles, muskrats, frogs and birds both on site and as headwaters for Great Seneca Creek. This balance can best be accomplished by continued water quality testing and by continued use of safe herbicides and algaecides while we consider and investigate long-term plans. The fecal coliform count has been well below the standard acceptable level.

With the availability of the well water at Maple Lake, an opportunity exists for constructing toilet facilities (Exhibit B, item I). This possibility should be explored with WSSC to determine if the existing sewer line at Maple Lake is still active. A connection permit and some form of metering system would be required. The bathroom itself should be a simple block structure, vandal proof to the extent possible. It should be located away from the open area, so as not to become a prominent landmark of the Lake.

Recommendations:

- Continue regular water quality testing and appropriate use of safe herbicides and algaecides to protect and maintain this headwater of Great Seneca Creek
- Increase planting of trees and shrubs on the west side of the Lake for visual screening and to prevent erosion. The forestry committee should be consulted for ideas and recommendations
- Compile a data base for future comparison of water samples and depths, plant, animal and fish varieties to enable the Town to better monitor the Lake for signs of degradation of its ecology. Seek advice and assistance from Maryland state environmental experts in addition to our usual Town volunteers
- As the Master Plan recommendation to complete a new Town survey is implemented, clearly mark the Town boundary on the west side of the Lake beyond the fence line. Use planting to help define the property line
- Inspect the bridge over the drainage ditch to determine its weight capacity and remaining life. Install handrails along the span of the bridge
- Eliminate erosion of the Lake fence post anchors by some means such as reinstalling the fence farther into the Lake compound area and away from the drainage ditch or, in conjunction with the ditch inspection, analyze the cost of piping the ditch along the limits of the Lake fence. Alternately, consider stabilizing the ditch with rip-rap or gabions to curtail further erosion
- Investigate the possibilities of installing toilet facilities at a location near the old pumping station for use only during hours of Lake operations

Prevention of Future Eutrophication To increase depth and remove the rooted pond weeds and accumulated organic debris, the Town should consider dredging the accumulated silt, mud and debris from the Lake bottom as was done in 1974. The problem of disposal of the sludge also must be looked into with attention to legislation since the 1974 dredging work to determine if any restrictions now apply to the process of dredging or disposal of sludge from the Lake.

Another possible action is to explore the effectiveness of an aeration or artificial-circulation device to increase dissolved oxygen levels and whether these methods would be suitable for a small lake where they might increase turbidity. These methods would use either a fountain-like arrangement or compressed air pumped into the Lake below water level.

Recommendations:

- Establish a schedule to dredge Maple Lake to prevent future eutrophication. Determine if aeration or artificial circulation devices can satisfactorily maintain or improve water quality of the Lake
- Following any dredging project that may be undertaken, extend the sand beach from its present location as far as practical to the island bridge

Maple Spring and Whetstone Spring: Maple Spring is the primary source for Maple Lake and, along with Whetstone Spring (also located within the West Woods), are headwaters to Great Seneca Creek. In order to enable Town residents to enjoy the springs that were so much a part of the leisure activities of the original residents, the spring box at Maple Spring should be refurbished and an elevated boardwalk provided (see Exhibit B, item H). Because the environment is sensitive, access to this new nature area should be limited. Therefore, the fenced perimeter around Maple Lake should be enlarged to incorporate this area.

Recommendations:

- Refurbish the spring box at Maple Spring.
- Erect a raised boardwalk nature trail up to and around the spring.
- Erect a fence so that Maple Spring is included within the present Maple Lake compound.
- Install rustic log benches at the Spring.
- Maintain the rest of the area as open space and natural habitat
- Annually clear brush and rampant growth around Whetstone Spring to enhance its use for passive recreation while safeguarding its natural qualities

(2) Brown Street Corridor

The Brown Street Park corridor extends from Maple Avenue westward to the intersection of Railroad Street and Hickory Road. A gate at this intersection restricts vehicular access to Brown Street between Hickory and Chestnut Roads. A major portion of this corridor, Morgan Park, extends from Maple Avenue westward to Grove Road and borders Railroad Street. This area contains headwaters of Muddy Branch. Approximately two-thirds of Morgan Park is an emerging woodland. The remainder is semi-wooded and includes two memorial gardens. A drainage ditch traverses the park near Pine Road to a culvert at Railroad Street.

The Brown Street park corridor is a major buffer zone between the Town and the traffic along Railroad Street and along the railroad tracks. The completion of proposed extensions to Metro, in addition to the steady growth in railroad and vehicular traffic, will increase noise and air pollution in the Town. The emerging woodlands has potential to minimize these, as would berms along Railroad Street. If the wooded area is extended, the standing committee for Forestry should review security control experiences of other park systems to determine if strips or baffles should be mowed within the wooded area.

Recommendations:

- Existing woodlands in Morgan Park should be extended to the present footpath running diagonally from Brown Street to Railroad Street. In addition, the Town should consider increasing denser wooded growth as a shield along the remainder of the Brown Street Park corridor.
- The existing ditch in Morgan Park should be regularly maintained, utilizing excavation equipment if necessary, to ensure adequate drainage of both residential and wooded areas and to safeguard the quality of water draining into Muddy Branch. Cost and efficiency of use of Town equipment contrasted to contracted excavation should be considered. County officials should be informed of the need to correct drainage under Railroad Street to support the Town's efforts.

(3) Ridge Road Corridor

The Ridge Road corridor extends roughly from the end of Brown Street to Center Street ([see section 3.3](#)). Residential lots cover the west side of Ridge Road, while the east side is still essentially farmland. Waters from this area drain to Rock Creek. The most recent, although unapproved, development plans for the Casey property on the east side of Ridge Road included a buffer zone for the Grove, to be planted by the developer ([see section 2](#)).

Recommendations:

- The County should consider this property for Agricultural Preserve or inclusion into the Parks system both to help maintain water quality of headwaters for Rock Creek and for recreation needs as the greater Shady Grove corridor employment and county government services become fully developed
- Should residential development slated for this property proceed, negotiate with the developer to establish a diverse wooded buffer zone along the right-of-way to minimize the sight and noise impact. Utilities for this development should be underground and planned for as any buffer zone is planted

(4) The Emmons Property

In 1994, the Town purchased the Emmons property, about 1/3 acre along the east side of the four-hundred block of Grove Road, for the purpose of establishing a continuous line of Town owned open space from the ball field to the Town's northern border and to control and direct the future use of the land, in keeping with the 1975 Master Plan (see map). Only one small parcel along Grove Road still remains privately owned. Town ownership of the Emmons property now precludes private development, a potential prospect that Grove residents wanted to prevent, and allows its incorporation into the planning and management of the Woodward Park/East Woods tract.

The parcel has remained fallow for decades and as a result of being unused and not maintained by its owners, has become overgrown with volunteer trees and shrubs consisting predominately of tulip poplar and locust trees and wild rose bushes. No trees of significant stature grow on the property except for a large oak at the eastern edge. Additionally, the rear of the property near the woods walkway is very wet each spring and after long wet periods. Remnants of a previous garden are evident, predominantly in the spring when many bulb flowers are in bloom. The flowers, however, are losing their ability to thrive because of the uncontrolled undergrowth and the heavy shade.

Some Town residents remember when the property was a meadow attracting and providing habitat for a variety of song birds, and have suggested that the property should be returned to a similar state. Many Town residents would like to see this area along Grove Road managed as a different environment, not allowed to continue growing haphazardly.

Certainly this and other areas of Washington Grove could be maintained for particular purposes. A more controlled and planned management of this and adjoining tracts along Grove Road would provide opportunity to create a different habitat and support more diversification of species. Any project directed at reclaiming and managing the area, however, would be a major effort. It would require a commitment of Town resources either through volunteer help and/or paid-for services.

Recommendations:

Assessment and documentation should include:

- Assess and evaluate the area generally east of Grove Road to the fire lane, and from the wooded area north of the Gazebo extending to the fire lane opposite Dorsey Street as soon as possible.
- a description of the boundaries to be studied
- a documentation of the current flora and fauna
- a description of other characteristics and the appearance of the land, noting any significant features and problems and changes that might be occurring
- an evaluation of potential problems, trends, and opportunities for changes and improvements
- Develop a plan for Town consideration to convert a portion or all of the study area to a managed area that would result in a greater diversification of plant and animal life
- Continue to seek ways to secure for public use the last piece of privately-owned property north of the Gazebo on the east side of Grove Road

7. COMMERCIAL CORNER

The Town of Washington Grove is essentially residential in nature. In its early days, the Town was separated from adjoining communities by open space. At that time, there was some need to

have easy access to food and supplies, and a small general store filled these needs. In addition, the Town's postal needs have been provided over the years by a local post office rather than home mail deliveries. Through much of its history, the Town has had a single local commercial zone of approximately 40,000 square feet at the southwest corner of the Town known as the commercial corner.

The Town's residents continue to need and want a local post office which functions as one of the focal points for the community. The postal facility now housed in the commercial zone well serves that need. Other commercial needs of Town residents can be and now are being met quite adequately by the commercial establishments in Gaithersburg and other surrounding areas; there is no longer a need for a commercial zone within Washington Grove.

Further, it is unfortunate that the two principal gateways to the Town — the Ridge Road entrance and the entrance at Railroad Street and Route 124 — do not reflect the sylvan beauty and residential charm of the Town but rather, at best, a starkly industrial or commercial appearance. While the Town's ability to influence or control commercial development outside its borders is limited, the Town has significant influence and control within its borders.

7.1 Long-term Philosophy for Commercial Corner

The Town should move in the coming years to replace the current commercial uses with public uses devoted to a post office and a gateway park, which would reflect more appropriately the character of our "Town within a Forest" and provide an attractive and inviting entrance to the Town from the west. Conversion of the commercial zone to a public use will especially help in protecting the residential character of the residences along Washington Grove Lane.

It is hoped that some public funding—e.g., State of Maryland "Open Space" grant funds—might be available for at least a portion of the acquisition cost.

Efforts should be taken to identify public and/or private grant sources which might be available to finance the purchase. In addition, consideration should be given to a possible capital set-aside for this purpose. The process for raising the necessary funds will almost certainly span many years and require a high degree of perseverance from the Town.

Recommendations:

- The Town should aim to acquire the Town's commercial zone if it is economically feasible to do so. This objective could best be met by the purchase of the property, perhaps using State grants or Federal funds and conversion of the property to a public use
- In addition to acquisition costs, the Town also should seek sources of public and private funds for restoration and/or renovation of the area

7.2 Zoning Issues

The Zoning Ordinance appropriately provides that the purpose of the local commercial zone is to protect both nearby residences and local retail enterprises. The Zoning Ordinance presently sets out an appropriate mix of permitted and special exception uses which meets this goal.

The Town has done an admirable job over the last several years in limiting the adverse impact of the commercial corner on the Town. Code enforcement efforts, however, should be improved and made more consistent in the future. Consideration should be given to repealing provisions of Town law which the Town does not enforce (*i.e.* The requirement that the owner chain the parking lot at 9 pm. In practice, this would create mail problems not just for some Town residents but for required US Postal deliveries and pick-ups as well.) Short of hiring an enforcement officer of some kind, enforcement could be accomplished by (a) having the Town's Grounds keeping staff routinely check the area for violations and report them to the appropriate Town official, (b) adding this responsibility to those of a member of the Town Council or the Planning Commission, or (c) having an existing or new Town committee take on this responsibility.

The Town's zoning ordinance should be amended to require that the owner of any commercially-zoned property provide copies of the Town's zoning ordinance to each tenant prior to entering into a lease. Each tenant should know what limitations on use and what compliance standards apply in the zone, and such a "notice" requirement would remove one potential obstacle to prompt enforcement of Section 8 by the Town.

Code enforcement continues to be of critical importance to achieving the purpose of the local commercial zone.

Recommendations:

- There should be no change in the permitted and special exception uses within the local commercial zone as presently set out in the Zoning Ordinance.
- A procedure should be developed for regular review of the commercially zoned property for compliance with Town ordinances. The Town attorney should play an active role in this process.

7.3 Beautification of Corner, including Railroad Park

An inviting commercial area attracts desirable tenants as well as customers and beautification of the commercial corner requires cooperation of the owner and tenants. The Town supports and encourages those permitted uses which motivate the landlord to make improvements to the property. However, close adherence by tenants and the landlord to existing ordinances would result in immediate improvements. The items that have the highest current priority have been referred to the Mayor and Town Council for action.

If the commercial corner is to remain in operation, the owner should be encouraged to consider improvements. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Visual appearance of buildings – The four buildings should be unified visually. Uniformity can be created through style and use of color. Basic industry standard upkeep of facades and structure should be maintained.
2. Signs – Signs throughout the center should have a continuity of design. Maximum safety should be a major pedestrian and traffic sign consideration: signs to prevent left hand turns from the parking lot onto Washington Grove Lane and making any turns into the parking lot from Washington Grove Lane are required. These must be apparent to motorists.
3. Traffic patterns – Evaluate closing the exit onto Washington Grove Lane except for emergency vehicles by installing breakaway barriers at the parking lot cut onto Washington Grove Lane.

Recommendation:

- Enforce existing ordinances

Short and long-term plans for “Railroad Park”, the Town parcel that abuts the railroad tracks west of the humpback bridge, can do much to improve that gateway to the Town and be a real asset for the businesses that surround it. At present, this parcel is unsightly with a deteriorated concrete and gravel base. It is used only by vehicles related to nearby businesses for access, turn-around or parking. The Town should make a strong and immediate statement regarding ownership and use. This is a precedent setting situation.

Recommendations:

- Consider ways to mitigate the deteriorated concrete base of the lot, such as removing and hauling away or adding a raised boundary barrier filled with an appropriate planting medium.
- Install fencing or other clear boundary demarcation.
- At the front of the park, abutting Railroad Street, install a bench and landscaping near the bus stop sign.
- Invite the adjacent property owners and businesses to join the Town in the beautification effort
- Install a historic marker or appropriate sign depicting the railroad’s connection with the Town’s history
- Include this front area in the Town’s regular maintenance schedule, seeking assistance from the county for assistance in the area of the bus stop

8. ECONOMIC GROWTH AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

Recognizing that most of the Town’s privately-owned parcels are already developed, this Plan recommends support for implementation of the growth management and resource protection

visions by participating in efforts to assert municipal authority for annexation. This Plan recognizes the Statewide importance of concentrating growth in areas already served by infrastructure for utilities and transportation as a means of insuring effective use of limited resources. See [see section 6](#) for a related discussion of the Town's goals to protect our natural resources.

Protecting and preserving the historic architectural and landscaping resources that characterize The Town of Washington Grove is an ongoing task for the Town. Individual citizens invest many hours and financial resources to protect and enhance their aging residences, many of which have provided almost a century of respite. While not mandated by ordinance, new construction and renovations throughout the Town reflect such architectural features as the peaks and wood trim of older homes. As a public body, the Town has placed a high priority on skill in historic preservation when selecting an architect and considering contractors interested in renovation of McCathran Hall. The Town Historic Committee continues to play a critical role in the collection of relevant historic data and planning with the architect for appropriate storage and display area for such material in the soon-to-be renovated hall and addition.

Recommendations:

- Continue the use of recycled materials in the daily operations of Town government
- Continue to promote recycling by Town residents through the posting of signs and inclusion of recycling information in Town mailings
- Continue the Town's commitment to curbside pickup of recyclable materials
- When renovation of McCathran Hall is complete, undertake an intense effort to secure and organize data and artifacts relevant to the Town's history. Support an active oral history compilation for the Town archives

9. INTERJURISDICTIONAL ISSUES

The Montgomery County Planning Board developed both the 1977 Shady Grove Sector Plan and the 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan which were adopted by the county. These planning documents delineate the county's approach to the general design for growth of the area surrounding Washington Grove. Much of that growth now is serviced in the Shady Grove vicinity: the extensive County Service Park is located at Crabbs Branch and Shady Grove Road; the terminus of the Red Line of Metrorail abuts the Service Park; the Central Processing Facility, currently undergoing a major transformation to allow rail transfer of trash, sits at Shady Grove Road and Route 355. These, and the still to be developed King property along Route 355, continue to exert enormous pressures on day-to-day living in The Grove. Maintenance of roadways, pedestrian paths, and nearby properties is an ongoing struggle because of county fiscal restraints. The issue of maintenance is exacerbated by large amounts of trash blowing from the waste transfer station.

A large and varied employment area continues to expand from the Metro station at Shady Grove to Route 28/Shady Grove West. Workers from all parts of the county and beyond flow in and out

of this area daily. There are growing and unmet needs for transportation, recreation, and such basic job amenities as sidewalks from bus stops. Traffic noise from the highways that encircle the communities in this area is now almost as intrusive at night as during the day.

The City of Gaithersburg provides some stability and a number of amenities for the area-at-large. The City's recreation program and facilities are carefully controlled but available for use by many workers in the greater Shady Grove area. The City has an exemplary approach to landscaping and maintaining its roadways, many of which feed into the county employment area. Beyond the city, the county has required local recreation facilities as part of the development process.

The needs in this part of the county, however, outstrip local amenities. Review of the heavy impact traffic and roads have had on this area must be a prime restraint whenever the county considers more employment opportunities or new development. The demands for major recreational areas for adults as well as children should be resolved.

Cooperation among neighborhoods, municipalities, and county decision makers is an important ingredient to the successful resolution of these large issues that span such jurisdictions. The Town's active participation in the County and State Municipal Leagues, and such intergovernmental groups as the County Municipal Cable TV Committee, the Task Force on Tax Duplication, and the Committee on Systems Benefit Charges dealing with trash costs are examples of such cooperative efforts.

10. IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

The Planning Commission has proposed many actions for the Town that may have significant timing and fiscal impacts. If these are to be achieved, they require discussion and support. Where possible, assistance should be sought from county, state, and federal officials and programs. When funds needed to accomplish our goals are not available or fully funded through assistance programs, the Town will decide how much and when Town taxes should be used. The schedule for the 1995 revision to the Master Plan coincides with the schedule for the Town's annual budget and 5-year Capital Improvements Program. Currently, the Town has undertaken (with assistance from the State) the renovation and addition to McCathran Hall. This effort, however, should be completed within fiscal year 1996 allowing us to pay more attention to our other goals.

The following recommendations from the Planning Commission have been developed in hopes that correspondence and testimony at public hearings from residents, neighbors, and officials will speak to priorities and their importance for implementation:

PRIORITY ONE:

- PERIMETER AND INTERJURISDICTIONAL ACTIONS HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE TOWN. STATE, COUNTY, AND NEIGHBORING OFFICIALS MUST PAY VERY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO

THESE IMPACTS ON THE TOWN. AMONG THE MOST CRITICAL ARE THE FUTURE STATUS OF WASHINGTON GROVE LANE, AMENITIES ASSOCIATED WITH DEVELOPMENT OF THE CASEY PROPERTY, BUFFERING FROM ADJACENT NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONES, NOISE ABATEMENT STEPS FOR I-370, AND LONG TERM PLANNING FOR TRANSPORTATION IN THE AREA OF THE RAILROAD CORRIDOR.

PRIORITY TWO:

WITHIN TOWN CONFINES, FISCAL AND VOLUNTEER EFFORTS FOR THE NEXT SIX YEARS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARDS:

1. COMPLETING A SURVEY OF TOWN LANDS
2. ESTABLISHING A PLAN TO PLACE UTILITIES UNDERGROUND
3. SEEKING GRANT FUNDS AND BEGINNING A TAX-FUND SET-ASIDE FOR EVENTUAL PURCHASE OF THE COMMERCIAL CORNER
4. DREDGING OF MAPLE LAKE
5. DEVELOPING A DETAILED INVENTORY OF LAKE AND WOODS DATA
6. ESTABLISHING A HEALTH PROGRAM AND REPLACEMENT SCHEDULE FOR TREES WITHIN THE RESIDENTIAL AREA OF TOWN
7. INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVE RECREATION WITHIN THE TOWN

APPENDIX I

PARKING POLICY

PURPOSE

- To guide actions by the Mayor and Council regarding parking of motor vehicles on public property
- To establish criteria for Public Parking Areas
- To promote consistency in Town actions regarding parking
- To protect parks and walkways from vehicular damage
- To minimize obstructions to traffic flow and access on roadways
- To preserve the historic character and amenity of the Town

PUBLIC PARKING AREAS

Designation

- All permanent Public Parking Areas will be identified by posting of Town signs or by Council designation on a Public Parking Area map

Criteria for Establishment

- Zoning — see RR-1, RR-2, and RR-3 Zones below
- Safety of pedestrians and vehicles in the immediate vicinity
- Number of dwellings and potential drivers residing in immediate vicinity. Extent to which the parking requirements of the Town Zoning Ordinance (minimum two off-street parking spaces per residence) can be met using private property
- Existing conditions that limit vehicular accessibility to nearby residential property

RR-2 Zone (smaller lots)

- Area bounded by Grove Road, Center Street, Grove Avenue, and McCauley Street
- Also first four houses along Ridge Road near Brown Street, and four houses along Daylily Lane
- Greatest need for Public Parking Areas is within the RR-2 zone where the arrangement of public right of ways and smaller lot sizes have historically limited vehicular access to some properties

RR-1 and RR-3 Zones (larger lots)

- There is less need for Public Parking Areas within the RR-1 and RR-3 zones as lot sizes are generally sufficient to accommodate residential parking needs

Location, Dimensions

- Public Parking Areas are to be located such that vehicles will not be parked so as to inhibit the safe flow of traffic
- Each Public Parking Area should have minimum dimensions of 18 feet by 9 feet

Surface Preparation

- All permanent Public Parking Areas must be prepared by application of at least 2 inches of gravel or other Town-approved paving material, and such preparation is to be performed only by the Town or under the Town's direct control

RULES

- Parking on public property on an intermittent or continuing basis is to be prohibited, except in designated Public Parking Areas
- Residents and/or property owners are not authorized to establish Public Parking Areas without the express authorization of the Council

First-Come, First-Park

- Establishment of a Public Parking Area is intended to meet the needs of residents and guests of the immediate area, but all parking in a Public Parking Area is on a first-come, first-park basis
- It is the responsibility of the residents to reasonably accommodate the parking needs of each other

Unregistered Vehicles, Long-Term Parking

- A motor vehicle with expired, revoked, cancelled or suspended registration may not be parked on any public property for more than 24 hours

EXCEPTIONS

- Parking a motor vehicle on public property continuously for more than 7 days will not be permitted, unless a waiver has been obtained from the Mayor based on good and sufficient reason, *e.g.* owner out of Town for an extended period

Temporary Parking Permitted

- Stopping of vehicles on any public property is to be permitted to receive and discharge passengers or merchandise
- To meet special circumstances that are temporary in nature, the Mayor is to be empowered to designate a portion of public property as a temporary Public Parking Area after due consideration of the tenets listed above

REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC PARKING AREAS

- Requests for establishment of a permanent Public Parking Area should be in writing and directed to Mayor and Council
- Mayor and Council will hold a public hearing to take public comment
- Council's decision will be based on record of hearing, criteria in this policy, the Town's Master Plan, the Town's Code of Ordinances, and applicable State law
- Appeals to the Council decision may be brought before a regular or special Town Meeting

AMENDMENTS TO POLICY

- Amendments and refinements to this policy may be made from time to time to promote consistent application and the public welfare
- Adoption of this policy supersedes any previous arrangements and privileges not contained in easements or other instruments filed in the Land Records for Montgomery County