



Planning Area 12

TOWER OAKS

Tower Oaks is an area consisting of offices, residences, and large natural open space that has been built up over time, largely under the direction of a planned development. The planning area is shown in detail on Figure 69.

This Comprehensive Plan supersedes the *1985 I-270 North of Montrose Road Neighborhood Plan*, as well as all previous policies for the planning area in the *2002 Comprehensive Master Plan*, but does not alter the approved Tower Oaks Planned Development and its relevant development agreements and subsequent amendments.

Area Characteristics

The planning area is composed of office and research & development buildings, two restaurants, and two residential communities. The Villages at Tower Oaks is an established townhome community, just south of Dogwood Park, and a new residential development is nearing completion on Preserve Parkway, with detached and attached homes, multiple unit buildings, and community open spaces and

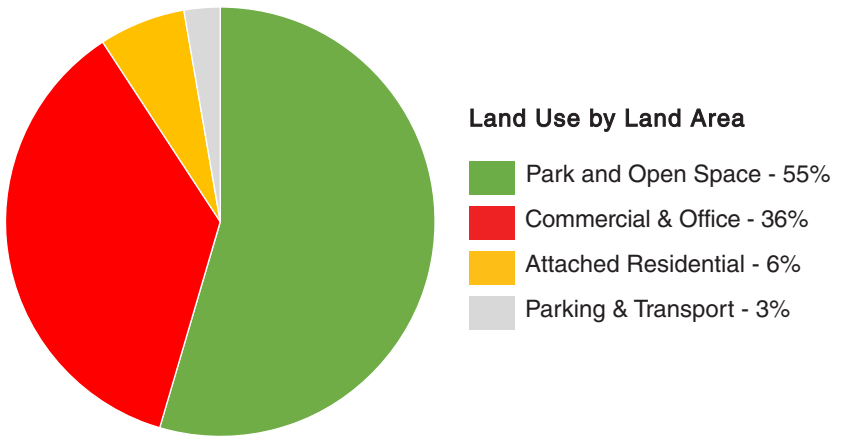
amenities. Several undeveloped, forested properties and a City-owned stream valley park are also located here.

Properties in Tower Oaks enjoy ready access to the I-270 highway corridor and the east-west arterials of Wootton Parkway and Montrose Road; one of the reasons that a major office cluster was planned here in the 1980s (see *Planning History, below*). However, the market for commercial office space was never strong enough to lead the primary property owner to complete the entire planned development. As a result, a new residential community, The Preserve, was approved in a portion of the planning area to replace previously entitled office space and was under construction during the preparation of this plan.

Planning History

The *I-270 North of Montrose Road Neighborhood Plan* was approved in 1985 to lay out recommendations for a development agreement and master plan with the land owner and to amend the City’s 1970 Master Plan land use map. The neighborhood plan included a list of public improvements to be carried out by the City, as well as improvements to be completed by the developer, as the project progressed. All required improvements to City infrastructure are now complete.

Existing Land Uses in Planning Area 12



Residential Dwelling Units	
Attached Residential	136
Total units	136

Source: City of Rockville land records and GIS, 2019.



Office building in Tower Oaks



Residential townhouses in The Villages at Tower Oaks

Tower Oaks was one of the last large parcels of undeveloped land within the city limits at the time its 192-acre Comprehensive Planned Development (CPD) was approved in 1987. Situated along I-270, it was then regarded as one of the most desirable areas in Montgomery County for a suburban office park. The Tower Oaks CPD called for 2 million square feet of office space, a hotel, restaurants, 275 dwelling units, and a 12-acre lake for recreational purposes and stormwater management. The original plan has been amended three times, eliminating the lake and altering the land use mix based on changing market trends, and has never been fully implemented. At the time of this writing, it is uncertain whether the remaining entitled parcels will be developed according to the approved planned development.

Key Issues

The following issues were identified during the Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan effort:

- Concern about the current weak market demand for office space;
- A desire for future development that is better connected to the surrounding community;
- Interest in minimizing adverse environmental impacts from development of remaining natural areas on forests, habitat fragmentation, and species displacement;

- Concern about the relatively slow pace of site development.

The Tower Oaks Development Agreement has been amended on a site-by-site ad hoc basis, most recently by converting a site previously planned for 755,000 square feet of office space to 375 residential units (a mix of single-unit detached homes, townhouses/row houses and condominium apartments).

Focus Area Recommendations

These land use policies and zoning and urban design recommendations apply to specific sites in the Planning Area.

AREA 1 A1

Forested tracts north of Tower Oaks Drive

This focus area consists of two parcels owned by the Tower Companies, the entity that has developed much of the planning area. The 20-acre parcel to the south is a part of the Tower Oaks Planned Development (PD-TO), while the 9.75-acre parcel to the north is a separate property.

The City of Rockville holds an easement on a portion of the northern parcel in this focus area for a stormwater management facility; a constructed wetland built in mitigation for stormwater disturbance caused by the construction of Wootton Parkway. In 1991, the City entered into individual agreements with the residents of Don Mills Court regarding access to the driveway for the City-maintained stormwater facility. The agreements remain in effect for as long as the agreement signers own and reside at their respective residence(s) on Don Mills Court, plus five years. Eight of the nine homeowners entered agreements with the City. As of June 2017, four agreements remain in force. Until such agreements expire and, unless the City approves an appropriate development on this site that retains the stormwater management facility and is compatible with the adjacent neighborhood, this parcel is likely to remain undeveloped.

Land Use Policy Map

This area is planned for a range of residential densities and housing types, including townhouses, apartment buildings, and other attached houses, through the RF (Residential Flexible) designation.

Zoning Recommendations

Rezone the northern parcel from R-90 (Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Restricted Residential) to RMD-25 (Residential Medium Density). The southern parcel is not recommended for rezoning because it is within the PD-TO (Planned Development - Tower Oaks) overlay zone, which was established as part of approving the Tower Oaks Planned Development project.

Recommended City Projects

These projects or studies are recommended to be undertaken by the City in specific locations within the Planning Area.

PROJECT 1 P1

Establish Cabin John Stream Valley Park as a publicly accessible open space amenity.

Cabin John Branch Creek and the City's Cabin John Stream Valley Park run through the planning area. Adjacent to the park is a privately owned stream valley parcel and stormwater management facility. As part of the Tower Oaks Planned Development, the developer intends to transfer ownership of the private stream valley parcel, between Wootton Parkway and Preserve Parkway, to the City, expanding the footprint of the municipal Stream Valley Park. The City should consider the most appropriate way to use this resource to serve the growing residential community as it has the potential to be an attractive and functional amenity as publicly accessible open space.

Other Policy Recommendations

The following additional items are recommended to address key issues and opportunities in the Planning Area.

Land Use & Urban Design

1. If the Tower Oaks area continues to evolve away from its 1980s vision of a suburban, highway-oriented office park with hotels, toward more of a residential district, care must be given to seek cohesion among the various projects. Preservation of natural features and new open space, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and other community amenities and features (including a community center) should be incorporated into new projects, helping to serve

the entire area, as was envisioned with the original Comprehensive Planned Development (CPD). Though the CPD and its relevant development agreements remain in force, adjustments may be made to the original plan that would be consistent with an equivalent zone of MXE (Mixed-Use Employment).

2. Any additional proposed conversion of entitled non-residential development under the Tower Oaks Planned Development to residential use must be assessed on the basis of transportation capacity (both vehicular and non-vehicular) that will accommodate a greater number of residents while considering ways to minimize potential adverse environmental impacts.
3. New developments should be designed to protect and enhance existing forest stands and tree canopy to the greatest extent possible. (*See also Action 10.4 of the Environment Element*)
4. Future development projects in the planning area should incorporate community-oriented elements, such as greater transit access, commercial destinations, outdoor open space and amenities, and non-vehicular connections to nearby activity centers, including Park Potomac and Rockville Town Center.

Transportation

5. Consider new bicycle facilities (e.g., protected bike lanes, shared use paths, bike parking) throughout the entire planning area as part of future updates to the *2017 Bikeway Master Plan*.
6. Maintain a safe and comfortable bike and pedestrian crossing of Wootton Parkway at its intersection with Preserve Parkway.
7. Assess and, if warranted, reduce, posted speed limits on Wootton Parkway to ensure safety and mobility for all modes. (*See also Action 19.10 of the Transportation Element*)
8. Monitor Montgomery County government's consideration of renaming Thomas S. Wootton High School due to its namesake's connection to slavery and consider renaming Wootton Parkway in coordination with the County's actions.

Figure 69: Land Use Policy Map of Planning Area 12

