



Planning Area 13

POTOMAC WOODS, POTOMAC SPRINGS, FALLS RIDGE AND ORCHARD RIDGE

Planning Area 13 is a collection of single-unit detached neighborhoods in located in southwestern Rockville, including Potomac Woods, Potomac Springs, Falls Ridge, and Orchard Ridge, with several major County facilities and commercial properties along its eastern border with I-270. The planning area is shown in detail on Figure 70.

Area Characteristics

Rockville’s residential growth began to move westward from its original town center in the early 1960s, following previous rapid post-war growth east of the Metropolitan Branch railroad tracks. Built during decades of economic growth in the city, many of the subdivisions in Planning Area 13 were developed with bigger houses, sited on larger lots, than those built in Rockville in the earlier decades.

Interstate 70-S (now I-270) was completed in this portion

of the county in 1960, making land near its highway interchanges with Montrose Road and Route 28 (Falls Road) highly desirable. Most residential homes in the planning area were built in response to this new highway access, between the 1960s and 1980s. Its residential subdivisions are stable and well-kept and no major changes are expected to their residential character over the coming decades.

The predominant street pattern in the planning area is of curvilinear streets and culs-de-sac. This pattern results in limited vehicle travel options and a concentration of traffic on four-lane arterial roadways. Irregularly-shaped lots at the bulbs of each cul-de-sac reduce the overall density of these subdivisions; the planning area has among the lowest residential densities (dwelling units per acre) in Rockville.

City-owned parks in the planning area include Potomac Woods (42 acres), Orchard Ridge (1.7 acres), as well as the Millennium Trail linear park and shared use path. These public parks offer a variety of recreational and passive leisure opportunities for the area’s residents.

Planning History

In 2018, the City retained a consultant, Eureka Facts, to evaluate the community’s level of support for constructing a new community recreation center in Rockville, west of I-270 and south of Hurley Avenue, and if supported, identify the best location and amenities for the new center. The study results indicated moderate community support for a new recreation center and/or improving existing facilities.

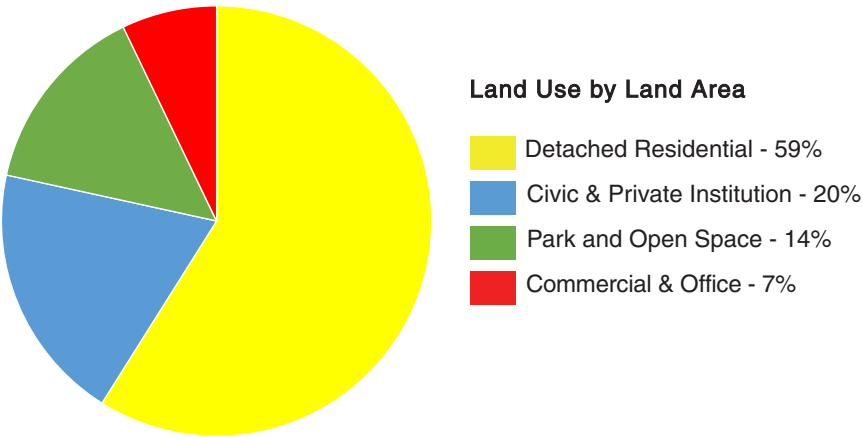
There is no neighborhood plan for this planning area and none is recommended.

Key Issues

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

- Desire to maintain and continue to improve the residential quality of life in the planning area;

Existing Land Uses in Planning Area 13



Residential Dwelling Units	
Detached Residential	769
Assisted Living/Nursing Home	32
Total units	801

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



Residential homes in the planning area.

- Absence of indoor City-owned community gathering area for communities in the southwest portion of Rockville;
- Mitigating and managing impacts, such as traffic, noise and visual, from continuing operations of the Montgomery County Detention Center and Montgomery County Department of Transportation Technical Center on Seven Locks Road and remaining up-to-date about any potential future plans for the facility;
- Manage the traffic impacts on adjacent neighborhoods of redevelopment on the commercial properties along Seven Locks Road, Wootton Parkway and Fortune Terrace;
- Addressing traffic congestion on area arterial roads and I-270 interchanges;
- Improving bicycle and pedestrian safety on major thoroughfares.

The Montgomery County Detention Center is located on a 26-acre site between Seven Locks Road and I-270. It currently operates as a booking, intake, and short-term inmate housing facility to support the courthouses in downtown Rockville. A Montgomery County police sub-station is located on the site, as well. A viewshed easement is established along the west side of Seven Locks Road, between the residential neighborhood of Falls Ridge and the Detention Center, to maintain a landscaped, visual buffer between the two uses.

South of Wootton Parkway, Montgomery County Department of Transportation operates the Seven Locks Technical Center, which provides vehicle and highway maintenance support on a 19-acre site. The County District One police station moved from this facility in 2013, however, the County intends to retain both the Detention Center and Technical Center and has indicated an interest in creating a plan for additional social services on the properties.

The planning area's street pattern results in vehicle access to neighborhoods from the key arterials of Seven Locks Road, Falls Road, Wootton Parkway and Montrose Road (outside of the city). Wootton Parkway serves as a major east-west arterial from Glen Mill Road (outside this Planning Area). This limited access restricts 'cut-through' traffic on neighborhood streets, yet increases traffic on primary travel routes, particularly at peak travel times. Residents expressed concerns during the Rockville 2040 effort about pedestrian and bicycle safety on major thoroughfares, given heavy vehicle traffic at peak times and higher speeds at times when there is less congestion. The planning area's street pattern means that automobile use is required for almost all trips outside the immediate neighborhood, though the County's Ride On and WMATA's Metrobus services connect the neighborhoods to Town Center and Metro Stations.

The planning area is home to the large, active Potomac Woods Park, as well as the smaller Orchard Ridge park (currently without parking) and Millennium Trail linear park and shared use path. However, some residential parcels are not within walking distance of an entrance point to a park or recreational facility, defined as one-quarter mile, partly because of the configuration of neighborhood streets.

Focus Area Recommendations

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

AREA 1 A1

Seven Locks Plaza (1065 Seven Locks Road), 1201 Seven Locks Road, and 11511 Fortune Terrace.

This focus area includes three commercial properties. The large size and aged developments of these properties make them attractive for future infill development or redevelopment.

Land Use Policy Map

These properties are planned for mixed-use development with OCRM (Office Commercial Residential Mix), allowing a mix of office, commercial, and residential uses.

Zoning Recommendation

No change in the current zoning of MXCD (Mixed-Use Corridor District) is recommended.

Urban Design Recommendations

Visual and noise buffering along I-270 may be needed, particularly if residential uses are proposed adjacent to the interstate. Redevelopment should also require improvements to Fortune Terrace and/or Seven Locks Road, as applicable, including completion of the sidewalk network. The developer should provide funding for, or construct, such buffering as is deemed necessary.



View looking along Fortune Terrace from Seven Locks Road

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

Pursue acquisition of the vacant, wooded property at the end of Locks Pond Court, adjacent to Potomac Woods Park, to expand the existing park.

PROJECT 2 P2

Improve the walking, biking and rolling paths from the Orchard Ridge and Potomac Woods neighborhoods, through City parks and along public streets, to better connect the neighborhoods to Seven Locks Road and the Park Potomac development.

PROJECT 3 P3

Advocate for Montgomery County government to complete a sidewalk in the near-term on the north side of Montrose Road, between Seven Locks Road and Falls Road, and to make a sidewalk connection that links Montrose Road with the City sidewalk network that begins at the city boundary on Stratton Drive.

PROJECT 4 P4

Study the potential for a community node at the intersection of Falls Road and Wootton Parkway, should the existing church cease to continue operating. (*See Figure 6 of the Land Use Element*)

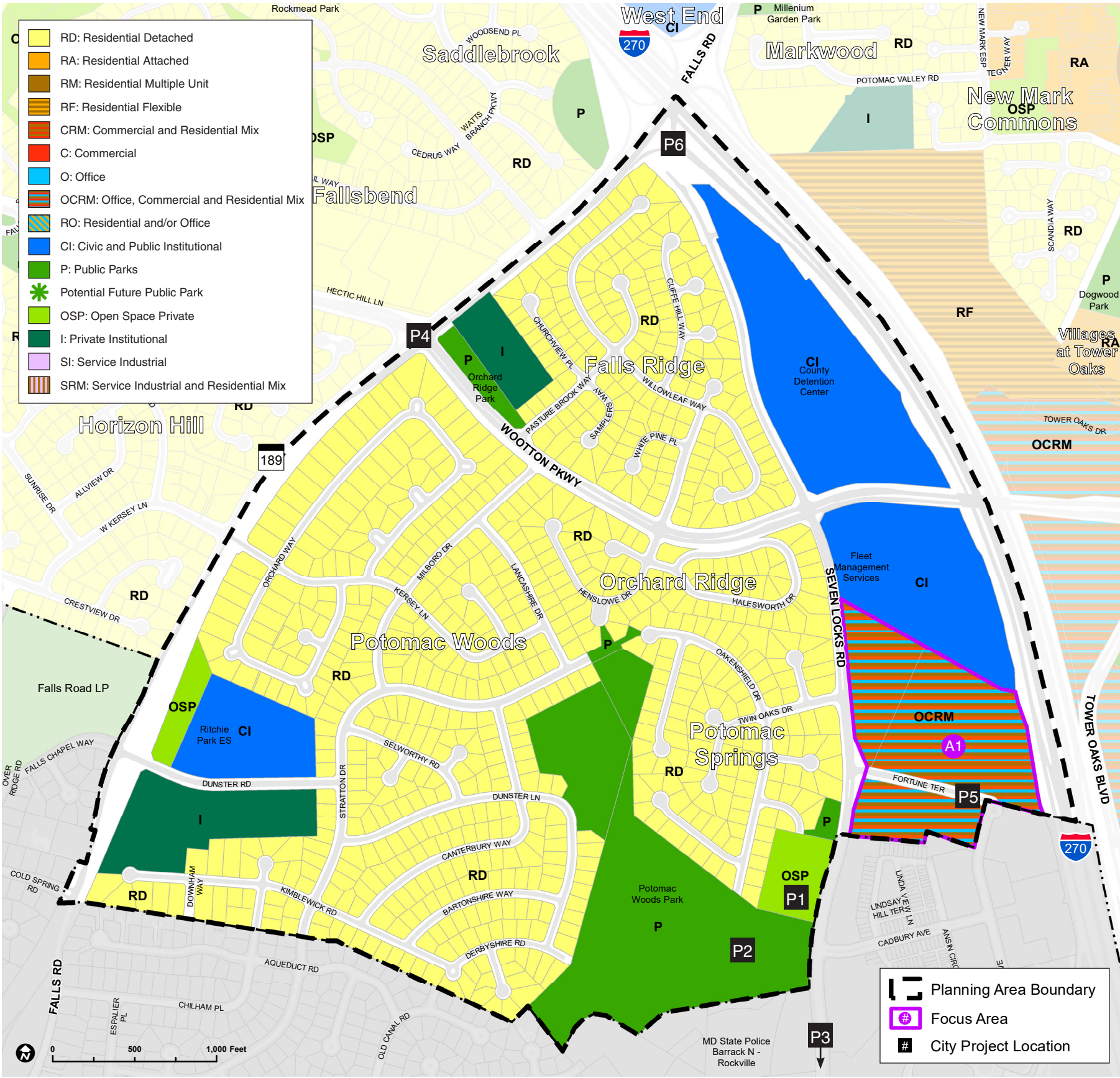
PROJECT 5 P5

Consider changing the street classification of Fortune Terrace from Primary Industrial to either Business District Class I or II if redevelopment with residential and/or commercial uses occurs. Re-construction under a Business District class road would allow for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as landscape buffers, that the Primary Industrial classification does not require.

PROJECT 6 P6

Advocate for MDOT SHA to study potential improvements at the I-270 interchange with Falls Road (MD-189) that increase safety, visibility, and mobility for all modes, such as improved visibility at off ramps, safer lane movements, and bicycle and pedestrian safety enhancements. (*See also Action 20.3 of the Transportation Element*)

Figure 70: Land Use Policy Map of Planning Area 13



Other Policy Recommendations

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

Land Use & Urban Design

1. Maintain the residential character of the planning area.
2. Focus on improving factors that enhance quality of life.
3. Work with Montgomery County government to maintain a visual buffer between the Montgomery County Detention Center and the adjacent residential neighborhood, as well as to reduce light pollution, inmate release directly to Seven Locks Road, and other impacts.

Transportation

4. Study potential approaches to relieving congestion on Wootton Parkway, west of I-270, focused on smaller-scale projects instead of increased capacity through road widening. (*See also Action 19.2 of the Transportation Element*)
5. Collaborate with Montgomery County government and MDOT SHA to connect the Carl Henn Millennium Trail with the Montgomery County bicycle network and trail system, south along Falls Road from the city limits, ultimately, as far as the C&O Canal Towpath. (*See also Action 5.6 of the Transportation Element*)



View looking at the intersection of Falls Road and Wootton Parkway from Wootton Parkway

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