



Planning Area 14

ROCKSHIRE AND FALLSMEAD

Planning Area 14 is a large and diverse area, consisting of neighborhoods, public schools, stream valley parks, and the Lakewood Country Club. Rockshire, with attached and detached homes spread throughout the planning area, is the largest neighborhood in the planning area. Other subdivisions and townhome communities include: Cambridge Heights, Carter Hill, Fallsbend, Fallsmead, Fallswood, Flint Ledge Estates, Glen Hills Club, Glenora Hills, Great Pines, Griffith Oaks, Horizon Hill, Rock Falls, Saddlebrook, and Watts Branch Meadows. The planning area is shown in detail on Figure 71.

Area Characteristics

Interstate 70-S (now I-270) was completed in this portion of the county in 1960, making land near its highway

interchanges with West Montgomery Avenue (Maryland Route MD-28) and Falls Road (MD-189) 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. Wootton Parkway is an arterial road that bisects the planning area, but also provides vehicular access to points north and south of the planning area and the region.

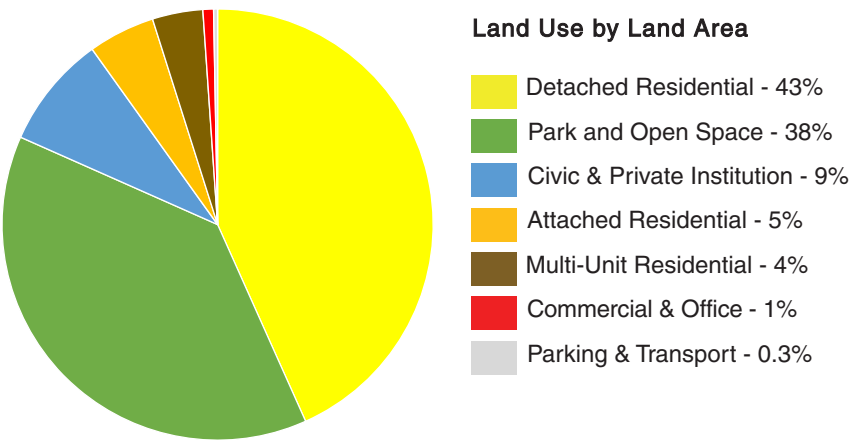
The planning area includes five townhouse communities situated throughout the area and an assisted living community of more than 400 units located just south of the Lakewood Country Club golf course. Four schools (two elementary, one middle, and one high) are located within the planning area and residents have access to several large active and passive recreation parks.

City-owned parks in the planning area include Woottons Mill Park, Rockmead Park, Glenora Park, and Horizon Hill Park. Fallsmead Park is owned and maintained by the Fallsmead Homeowners Association. These public and private parks offer a variety of recreational and passive leisure opportunities for the area's residents. In 2017, the City purchased the five-acre site of the former Karma Academy at 175 Watts Branch Parkway from Montgomery County government, adding it to the acreage of adjoining Woottons Mill Park.

Planning History

The Rockshire neighborhood was developed in the 1970s, with more than 760 single-unit detached homes and townhouses, and is one of the largest planned subdivisions

Existing Land Uses in Planning Area 14



Residential Dwelling Units	
Detached Residential	1,639
Attached Residential	492
Multi-unit Residential (apartment/condo)	666
Assisted Living/Nursing Home	22
Total units	2,819

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



Historic site of Woottons Mill in Woottons Mill Park.

in Rockville. Rockshire was created through an innovative concept for residential development called a Planned Residential Unit (PRU). Popular in the city starting in the 1960s, a PRU was approved through a special development review process whereby greater-than-usual flexibility was allowed in the layout of the subdivision to achieve other community goals, such as open space and community amenities. The Rockshire PRU, as well as smaller communities in the planning area, including Fallsmead, Fallsbend, Fallswood, Flint Ledge Estates, Barnside Acres, and Carter Hill, continue to be regulated under the terms of their PRU approvals and any departure from their original designs require City-approved amendments.

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.

The property owners of Rockshire Village Shopping Center have so far indicated an interest to pursue residential development on the site. However, this Plan recommends that any new housing development at Rockshire Village should include neighborhood-serving retail space and/or

provide a significant gathering space that would be an asset to the broader community beyond the site.

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;
- Desire for additional community amenities and programming/events/arts in this portion of the city;
- Concern over how future redevelopment of the Rockshire Village Center may occur;
- Need to improve traffic congestion on arterial roads, especially Wootton Parkway and the I-270 interchanges proximate to the planning area;
- Various items related to Thomas S. Wootton High School, including ADA compliance, evacuation routes, parking for students and staff, and the aging building.

Internally, the subdivisions of the planning area have few connections to each other, resulting in a concentration of traffic onto primary routes, such as Wootton Parkway and Watts Branch Parkway, particularly at peak travel times. Residents expressed concerns during the Rockville 2040 effort about pedestrian and bicycle safety on the major thoroughfares, given heavy traffic at peak times and higher speeds at times when there is less congestion.

Focus Area Recommendations

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

AREA 1 A1

Rockshire Village Center

Rockshire Village Center was a successful indoor retail mall when it opened in 1978 and remained viable for several decades, until recent market conditions in its vicinity changed. The neighborhood shopping center of approximately 52,000 square feet of interior space, all of which is currently vacant, was developed as part of the larger



Front entrance of the former Rockshire Shopping Center

Rockshire planned development and is regulated under the Rockshire Planned Development zone (PD-RS). The site was anchored by a Giant supermarket that closed in 2012.

The shopping center has faced new competition in recent years, particularly with the development of Fallsgrove Village Center and Park Potomac, each about two miles away to the north and south, respectively. Proximity of these two newer shopping centers, each anchored by grocery stores, has divided the customer trade area that once supported the Rockshire Village Center. Today, its low-visibility location on Wootton Parkway, a mile or more from major intersections, is also not ideal since retail tenants make site selection decisions based on passing traffic counts and visibility, among other factors. Nonetheless, there remain significant sources of market demand, including from the residents of nearby neighborhoods and students at Thomas S. Wootton High School.

At Rockville 2040 meetings, and at community meetings held in 2019 regarding the future of this site, residents expressed preference for retaining at least some retail uses and/or a community amenity, and opposition to new development that would be exclusively residential. The PD-RS planned development zone for the Rockshire area allows for a mix of residential and commercial uses, but the approved PRU (Planned Residential Unit) project identifies this site only as a retail center. Any other uses require Mayor and Council approval through an amendment of the PRU and planned

development zone. Prior comprehensive master plans, including the 2002 Plan, identified the site as appropriate for retail through the NC (Neighborhood Commercial) designation.

Parking for the Rockshire swimming pool and clubhouse is provided under a license agreement that is binding on the current and future owners of the land, as long as the Rockshire swimming pool and community room exist and are owned and operated by the Rockshire community. Parking for the adjacent church and Wootton High School have been shared through terminable agreements with Giant Food and the property owner. There are no City development-related conditions that require the property owner of the vacant Giant Food site to provide parking for these other properties. The high school's use of the parking spaces was voluntarily provided by the owner to accommodate overflow parking for students, but recently has been terminated. In conjunction with any redevelopment proposal for the site, the property must incorporate the parking for the swimming pool and clubhouse, while the adjacent church and school will need to address their own parking needs in a different way apart from the redevelopment of the property.

Land Use Policy Map

The Rockshire Village Center property is planned for a mix of residential housing types with the potential for small-scale commercial uses under the RF (Residential Flexible) land use designation.

Any new housing development should include neighborhood-serving retail space and/or provide a significant gathering space that would be an asset to the broader community beyond the site.

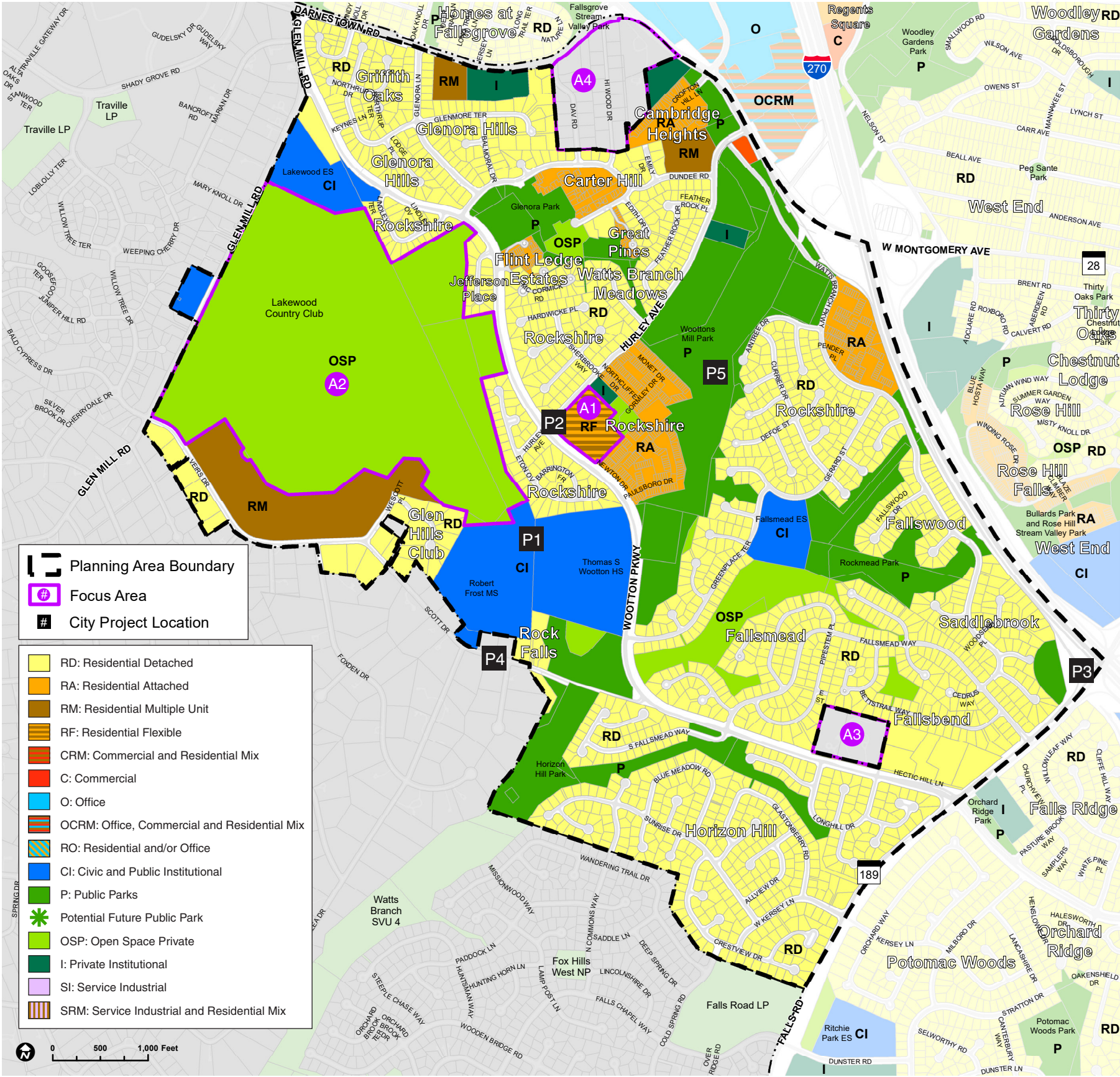
Zoning Recommendation

Amend the approved planned development for the property to allow residential uses (preferably single-unit detached homes or attached townhouses/row houses) if the proposed residential development includes neighborhood-serving retail and/or community gathering space.

Urban Design Recommendations

Any new development at the Rockshire Village Center site should blend well with adjacent housing in terms of scale, massing, and height. Building heights adjacent and close to existing housing should complement existing conditions.

Figure 71: Land Use Policy Map of Planning Area 14



Building heights may be slightly taller along Wootton Parkway, along the perimeter shared with the church, and within the interior of the site. Retail uses should have good visibility and/or visible signage from Wootton Parkway. Parking for the Rockshire HOA swimming pool must be provided in close proximity to the path connecting the site with the pool.

AREA 2 A2

Lakewood Country Club

This private membership club, with an 18-hole golf course, encompasses nearly 200 acres of the planning area, between Glen Mill Road and Wootton Parkway. It is bordered to the south by The Villages at Rockville, a senior living community, and to the north and east by a public elementary school and residential homes, respectively. This plan maintains an OSP (Open Space Private) land use designation for the property and recommends retaining the existing low-density residential zoning of R-400 (Residential Estate).

Lakewood Country Club is one of the largest properties in the city. Should the Club seek to redevelop all or a portion of the site in the future, it should be considered a unique opportunity for both development and natural resource protection that might take advantage of the scale of the site.

If any substantially scaled portion of the country club property, or its entirety, is proposed for development as anything other than its current use, a conceptual master plan is recommended that considers the relationship of the proposed development with any potential future phases. Such a plan could be conducted in the context of a planned development and would need to include direct community engagement as part of the process. Significant transportation and other infrastructure improvements would likely be necessary to accommodate any large-scale institutional or corporate use. (*See also Policy 21 of the Land Use Element*)

AREA 3 A3

Hectic Hill Lane

This residential street is a private road accessed from Wootton Parkway with seven large residential lots. As such, they are, together, considered an “enclave.” Legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 1983 provided municipalities the opportunity to annex unincorporated enclaves that met certain criteria without the consent of the

property owners. The City pursued annexation of several enclaves throughout the city under this provision at the time, including parcels on Hectic Hill. All Hectic Hill properties were annexed into Rockville except for two, whose owners were opposed to their annexation at the time.

Because of the owners’ opposition, the Mayor and Council decided to defer annexation under certain terms. In 1984, annexation agreements were entered into by and between the owners of the two properties and the Mayor and Council. The owners are subject to annexation if they either: 1) file an application to re-zone or subdivide the property, or 2) if they construct improvements to the property that result in an increase of more than a certain amount of the existing floor area of any of the buildings on the property or change in use. These annexation agreements were recorded in the land records of Montgomery County.

This plan recommends that the City continue to monitor the annexation agreements of properties on Hectic Hill Lane that are not in the city and proceed with annexation if warranted by the terms of the agreements. Areas not within the city that should be further evaluated for inclusion in Rockville’s Maximum Expansion Limits and/or annexed into the city are fully described in the Municipal Growth Element (MGE) of this Comprehensive Plan.

AREA 4 A4

Dav Road and Hi Wood Drive area

The majority of properties on Dav Road and Hi Wood Drive are located outside of the city limits. Their primary vehicular access is via Darnestown Road (Rt. 28), but the roads also connect to Dundee Road, within the City of Rockville. The Dav/Hi Wood properties are on well and septic systems; connection to the City’s sewer and water systems, as well as curb and gutter improvements, would be required as a condition of any large-scale annexation of properties.

This plan recommends that the City evaluate the fiscal impact and other advantages and disadvantages of annexation of properties on Dav Road and Hi Wood Drive if, or when, property owners seek annexation into the city. The Municipal Growth Element recommends a proactive strategy toward the annexation of enclaves if they are likely to result in net benefits to the City.

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**

Create a safe pathway to Frost Middle School from the neighborhoods on the east side of Wootton Parkway. The pathway should not require walking unprotected through Wootton High School parking lots.

PROJECT 2 **P2**

Study the potential for a community node at the intersection of Wootton Parkway and Hurley Avenue. (*See Figure 6 of the Land Use Element*)

PROJECT 3 **P3**

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*)

PROJECT 4 **P4**

Coordinate with Montgomery County Department of Transportation to design and upgrade to current standards the sidewalk on Scott Drive, between Wootton Parkway and Veirs Drive.

PROJECT 5 **P5**

Work with the Rockville community to determine what enhancements might be needed for Woottons Mill Park, such as stormwater management, stream bank restoration, trail improvements, and upgraded recreation facilities.

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.



Wootton Parkway roadway and Millennium Trail

3. Work with the Rockville community to develop a program of events and activities for the historic Old Veirs Home/Karma Academy property at 175 Watts Branch Parkway.

Public Schools

4. Support the modernization of Robert Frost Middle School and Thomas S. Wootton High School with consideration given to impacts of future expansion of the high school on the surrounding neighborhoods and natural environment.
5. Advocate for Montgomery County Public Schools to provide sufficient parking on-site for staff, faculty, students and visitors, especially at Wootton High School where a large portion of the students drive to school.
6. Advocate for schools in the planning area, and their grounds, to be fully compliant with the American for Disabilities Act (ADA), either in the context of a modernization project or otherwise. (*See also Action 6.8 of the Community Facilities Element*)

Historic Preservation

7. Evaluate 1401 Aintree Drive (within the Rockshire Village townhouse development, a.k.a. “Two Brothers”) and 2610 Northrup Drive (a.k.a. “Old Veirs House”) for historic and architectural significance

and determine if either retains sufficient architectural integrity to be eligible for local historic designation.

Transportation

8. 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 and without encouraging cut-through traffic.

The City should investigate targeted solutions that would mitigate traffic congestion on Wootton Parkway at the most congested times of the day, without widening the entire roadway. Potential solutions may include adding left turn lanes and expanding the right-of-way immediately in front of the high school, so that turning school buses do not block traffic. (*See also Action 19.2 of the Transportation Element*)

9. Work with MCPS and other partners to ensure that there are sufficient evacuation routes from school buildings and sites.

Community Partnerships

10. Work with the community, including with churches and other institutions, to offer programming and events, within parks and other sites, in this planning area and others west of I-270.

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