



Planning Area 5

WOODLEY GARDENS AND COLLEGE GARDENS

Planning Area 5 consists primarily of the neighborhoods of Woodley Gardens and College Gardens and is also home to the townhome and apartment communities of Plymouth Woods, Regents Square, Scarborough Square, Woodley Gardens Co-op, and Yale Village. Upper Watts Branch Park and Woodley Gardens Park create a continuous stream valley park running through the planning area and a major natural and recreational amenity for its residents and visitors. The planning area is shown in detail on Figure 58.

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Area Characteristics

The planning area contains a mix of single-unit detached houses on fee simple lots and townhouses and apartments on parcels held in common by homeowners associations and commercial property owners. Residential development in the area began in the early 1960s, with the majority of blocks built out from the mid-1960s to early 1970s. A small number

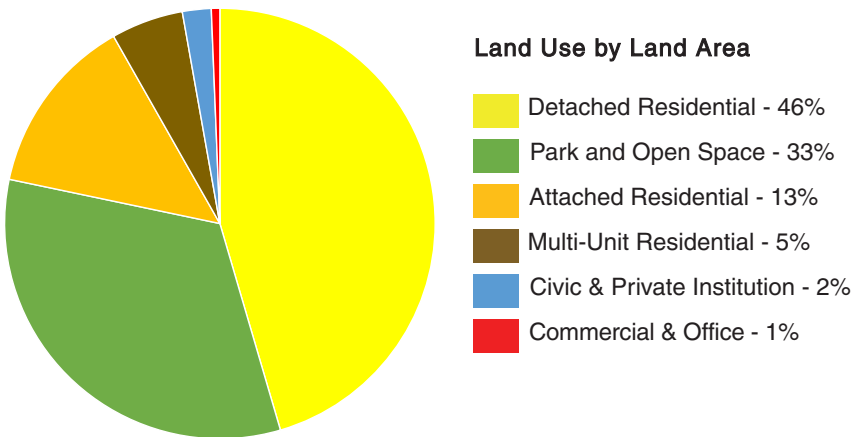
of lots at the northern edges of the neighborhood were constructed in the early 1980s.

House styles in Woodley Gardens are representative of their period of construction, with large lots and Colonial and Federal styled architecture, hallmarked by generous brick facades and mansard or gambrel style roof lines. Streets have lush landscaping and generous setbacks from the street with shade trees planted between the curb and sidewalk. Azalea Drive is notable for its wide, landscaped medians and a mix of street parking and parking courts, perpendicular to the public street, serving attached townhouse and row house clusters.

The street layout in the planning area is representative of its period of development, as well, favoring safety and traffic mitigation over connection. Vehicle access to and from the north is limited, with no road connection to West Gude Drive; requiring long drives on neighborhood streets, such as Nelson Drive and College Parkway to access destinations to the north.

Blocks in Woodley Gardens are long. For example, Crocus Drive, between Nelson Street and Azalea Drive, is 1,700 feet, with the curving Azalea Drive being the only east-west connection between the four long blocks. The presence of

Existing Land Uses in Planning Area 5



Residential Dwelling Units	
Detached Residential	632
Attached Residential	641
Multi-unit Residential (apartment/condo)	272
Total units	1,545

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



Residential street in the College Gardens neighborhood



Woodley Gardens Shopping Center

Upper Watts Branch Park to the east, I-270 to the west, and lack of vehicular connections to West Gude Drive all serve to create a transportation enclave. To the east of Watts Branch Park, the layout of College Gardens is similar, with even more cul-de-sac courts than Woodley Gardens. The only vehicle access in and out of the neighborhood is via College Parkway.

The City's Senior Center occupies the site and building of the former Woodley Gardens Elementary School, adjacent to I-270 and West Gude Drive. The Woodley Gardens shopping center, with its restaurants and neighborhood-serving retail shops, is located on Nelson Street adjacent to I-270 and is the only commercial property within the planning area. However, the College Plaza Shopping Center and Rockville Town Center are within a short walk, bike, or drive from most points in the planning area.

Upper Watts Branch Park is a 79-acre forested park in the planning area that contains Watts Branch Creek, nature trails, and an urban wildlife sanctuary. Major work was completed in 2018 to control erosion, reduce pollutants entering the stream, and protect and enhance forest areas, wetlands, habitats and trail systems in the park. Although it is an appealing natural amenity, Upper Watts Branch Park bisects the planning area and limits east-west connections for both drivers and people walking, rolling and biking.

College Gardens Park is a smaller park, with passive and recreational amenities and a landscaped stormwater management pond. The park is situated next to College Gardens Elementary School, an International Baccalaureate World School--the first IB elementary school in the state. In 2011, the City received the Maryland Department of the

Environment (MDE) Smart, Green and Growing Sustainable Infrastructure/Innovation in Stormwater Management Award for its commitment to foster a smarter, greener and more sustainable future for residents as part of a stormwater retrofit and park renovation project at the park.

Planning History

There is no neighborhood plan for this planning area and none is recommended. The corresponding planning area in the *2002 Comprehensive Master Plan* included Montgomery College and other institutional and commercial properties along MD-355. These properties are now situated within the new Planning Area 7 (Montgomery College Area).

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;
- Need to increase bicycle and pedestrian connections, east-west across the planning area and north to West Gude Drive;
- Interest in restoring bicycle and pedestrian connections between Montgomery College and adjacent neighborhoods and streets;
- Concern over traffic noise pollution from I-270 in the western portion of the planning area;
- Concerns over the long-term economic viability of Woodley Gardens Shopping Center.

Focus Area Recommendations

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

AREA 1 A1

Woodley Gardens Swim Club property

This property has, for many years, been jointly occupied by a private swim club and private preschool. During the preparation of this plan, the continued use of the property as a swim club and preschool came into question after a fire damaged a portion of the preschool building. If the pool and preschool cease operation and the property owner considers

redevelopment, this plan’s preference is that some kind of private community amenity take their place.

Land Use Policy Map

This area is designated OSP (Open Space Private) in recognition of its primary current use as a private recreation facility. If this land use proves impractical, residential development consistent with the RD (Residential Detached) designation may be considered, due to its proximity to nearby residential homes.

Zoning Recommendations

No zoning change is recommended to the existing R-90 (Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Restricted Residential) zone.

Urban Design Recommendations

If a private recreation/education use proves impractical, the property should redevelop into residential housing that is compatible in size, scale, and design with the surrounding neighborhood.

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 new vehicle entrance to the Rockville Senior Center parking lot from West Gude Drive while restricting vehicle access through to the residential neighborhood.

PROJECT 2 **P2**

Work with Montgomery College to construct a bicycle and pedestrian connection between Princeton Place and Campus Drive. Engage affected neighborhoods, property owners, and businesses in any such planning efforts. (See also Goal 2 and Action 8.5 of the Transportation Element, Action 10.5 of the Community Facilities Element, and Planning Area 7)

PROJECT 3 **P3**

Design and construct an attractive and safe bicycle and pedestrian path in the Yale Place right-of-way, connecting to the Millennium Trail along West Gude Drive.

PROJECT 4 **P4**

Explore the feasibility of one or more new bicycle and pedestrian path(s) across Upper Watts Branch Park to better link the east and west sides of the park. This project may be implemented at one or more locations throughout the entire park, between Nelson Street and West Gude Drive. (See also Policy 17 of the Transportation Element)

PROJECT 5 **P5**

Explore the feasibility of a new bicycle and pedestrian path connecting Upper Watts Branch Park with West Gude Drive, opposite Gaither Road, to increase north-south connections. (See also Policy 16 of the Transportation Element)

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. Support the continued operation of the Woodley Gardens Shopping Center as a commercial shopping center.



Stream restoration location at Upper Watts Branch Park after 3 years

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