



Planning Area 7

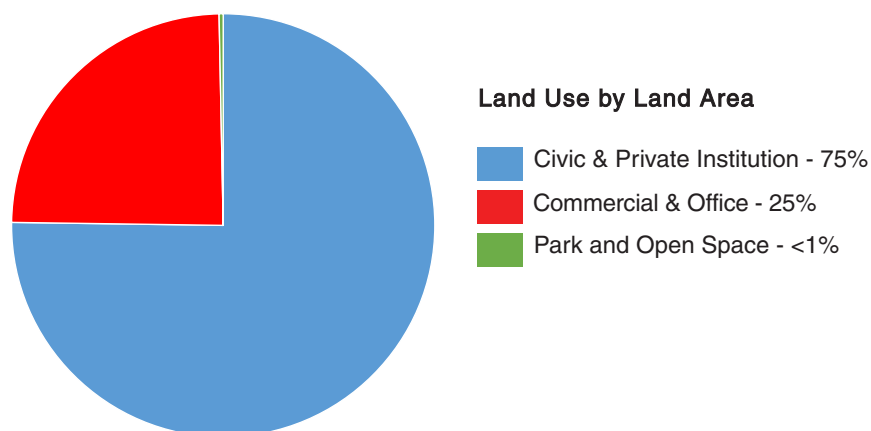
MONTGOMERY COLLEGE AREA

The plan establishes this new planning area on the west side of MD-355, from the north edge of Town Center to its intersection with West Gude Drive. The Rockville campus of Montgomery College is the largest and most active site in the planning area; also important are the headquarters of Montgomery County Public School and existing office and commercial developments. The planning area is shown in detail on Figure 64.

Area Characteristics

The land uses in this planning area generate a large amount of activity, with Montgomery College being perhaps the largest single attractor of people in Rockville and one of the most important and valuable assets in the city. The transportation corridor of MD-355 (Hungerford Road/Frederick Road) is heavily traveled, not only by College visitors, but also by drivers from across the region as it is one of the few major north-south corridors in this part of the county.

Existing Land Uses in Planning Area 7



Montgomery College - Rockville

The Rockville campus of Montgomery College is approximately 86 acres, with nearly one million square feet of space that includes: academic classrooms, a performance arts center, various administrative services, a library, information technology, admissions, financial aid offices, a

bookstore, food services, and more. The campus opened in 1965, with an enrollment of approximately 2,500 students. Since then, the Rockville campus enrollment has grown to a student attendance of about 17,000.

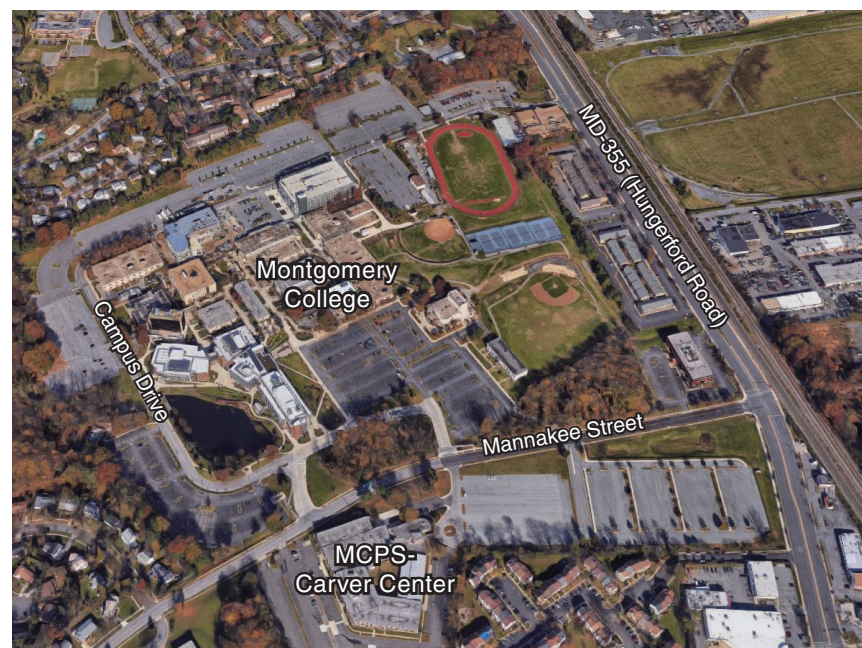
In addition to students, the college hosts thousands of visitors every year for art exhibits, concerts, theatrical events, athletic events, conferences, lectures, and other events, many of which are open to the public. The City of Rockville has partnered with the college for such events and many other activities. Rockville residents, as well as others throughout Montgomery County and beyond, take advantage of the great diversity of educational and cultural offerings at this high-quality community college.

Montgomery County Public School property

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) property consists of two entities, the Carver Educational Service Center (CESC) and Rock Terrace School.

Carver Educational Service Center

The original Carver building opened in 1951 as a high school and junior college for African-American students. The facility



Aerial view of Montgomery College and the Carver Educational Services Center
Source: Google Maps, 2019

was re-purposed in the early 1960s to serve as the MCPS headquarters when the County school system became racially integrated. Today, the expanded 200,000-square-foot Carver building houses more than 500 MCPS staff, though the building was never designed for office use and has numerous operational deficiencies. Investment for a new headquarters facility, however, is constrained by demands for the construction and renovation of schools throughout the school system.

A surface parking lot at the corner of Mannakee Street and MD-355 is a part of the CESC, and MCPS leases its use to Montgomery College for parking. To recognize its significance as the first post-secondary school built in Montgomery County for African-American students, the original school building and a viewshed from the corner of Mannakee Street and MD-355 were designated as a local historic district in 2003 (see Figure 63). The historic designation means that any proposed exterior alteration to the building or within the designated viewshed must be reviewed and approved by Rockville's Historic District Commission.

Rock Terrace School

The original Rock Terrace School opened in 1951 as a public elementary school for African-American students. After integration of the school system, the building served for years as an MCPS special needs educational facility. That program has been relocated, along with the name "Rock Terrace School", to the newly-built structure in North Bethesda that houses both Tilden Middle School and the

Rock Terrace School. MCPS plans to relocate another special needs program, currently at the Blair G. Ewing Center, to this site.

Commercial Uses

The planning area is also home to a shopping center and offices along MD-355. The College Plaza Shopping Center is a commercial center at the busy intersection of MD-355 and College Parkway, with just over 110,000 square feet of retail space. It was built in the early 1970s and has not been upgraded in many years. The center is not bicycle- or pedestrian-friendly and much could be done to improve its overall appearance. It is within close proximity to neighborhoods and Montgomery College, and is at the crossroads of a very busy intersection. This center has potential that is not being fully realized and may be renovated or redeveloped during the life of this plan.

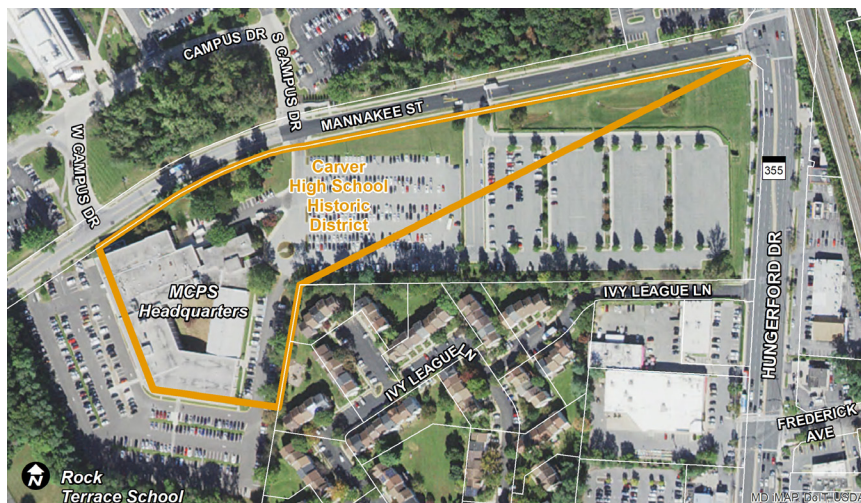
Four multi-story office buildings totaling nearly 280,000 square feet on more than 20 acres are located at the southwest corner of West Gude Drive and MD-355. Jackson Place, an office condominium complex with 112 townhouse-style office units, is located next to the Montgomery College Rockville campus along MD-355.

Planning History

In the *2002 Comprehensive Master Plan*, the properties in this planning area were part of Planning Area 5, which also included the Woodley Gardens and College Gardens neighborhoods. In that plan, the planning area discussion focused on the residential areas, with very little coverage of non-residential uses, including Montgomery College. This new planning area was created to highlight the importance of this key activity area and its distinct nature in relation to the city, including its proximity to Rockville Town Center, and to address improvements to this portion of the MD-355 corridor.

The Montgomery College area has been a focus of planning by the City in the past. In 1968, The Mayor and Council approved an urban renewal plan entitled the Junior College Urban Renewal Project, which established a framework for improvements to the area around the college. Implementation of this framework followed in the 1970s, resulting in a series of land transfers between the College and the City and the construction of the office townhouses and other office buildings that face MD-355 today.

Figure 63: Carver High School Historic District Viewshed



Various property redevelopment options have been considered over the years for the CESC parking lot, including but not limited to, building a new MCPS headquarters, expanding the Montgomery College Campus, and building a new Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Station. In 2002, the property was listed as a Critical Site in the City's Land Use chapter. Projects contemplated at that time included an educational facility serving the Montgomery County Board of Education or Montgomery College. The 2002 plan further recommended retaining the historical significance of the site and that any new development minimize adverse effects on its adjacent neighborhoods: Woodley Gardens and College Gardens.

A 2015-2018 co-location study was conducted by Montgomery County government to find opportunities for County agencies and departments to share real estate (land and buildings) and services (infrastructure, technology, etc.). The MCPS CESC was one site studied. While no final decisions were made, some of the options included establishing a new MCPS headquarters building on the site, expanding Montgomery College, and building a new educational facility, new fire station, housing, or commercial.

Key Issues

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

- Need to accommodate future expansion of the Montgomery College Rockville campus and minimize its impacts on the surrounding community;
- Obsolescence of the Montgomery County Public Schools headquarters building in the former Carver High School;
- Need for preservation and enhancement of the historic portion of the former Carver High School building;
- Need to reduce traffic congestion at major intersections, in and near the planning area, related to significant vehicle trips associated with Montgomery College;
- Desire for improved pedestrian and bicycle connections among Montgomery College, surrounding neighborhoods, and nearby shopping destinations, such as Town Center and King Farm Village Center;
- Challenge of limited affordable housing opportunities for Montgomery College students and staff near campus;

- Visually unappealing streetscape along MD-355 and WMATA/CSX tracks.

Montgomery College is a key stakeholder in the planning area. The College develops its own strategic, facilities and master plans to meet its requirements with the State of Maryland Higher Education Commission and to support its own vision and educational plans. The current approved Facilities Master Plan covers the ten-year period from 2013 to 2023. In addition to the Facilities Master Plan, the overall planning effort includes a 20-year land use plan (2013-2033) to establish a framework for the development of its three campuses county-wide. The Facilities Master Plan projects a deficit of 500,000 square feet of building space over the next 10-15 years for all campuses.

With some exceptions, there are limited opportunities for vehicle movement between the properties within the planning area other than along busy MD-355. As a result, traffic congestion can be a significant problem at key intersections along MD-355, especially due to the traffic from and to the college. Both vehicular and non-vehicular travel is difficult and perceived as unsafe throughout the planning area. The WMATA and CSX train tracks, running along the east side of MD-355, further limit movement and, along with the Washington Gas fields east of the tracks, contribute to the visually unappealing nature of this stretch of the MD-355 corridor.

Focus Area Recommendations

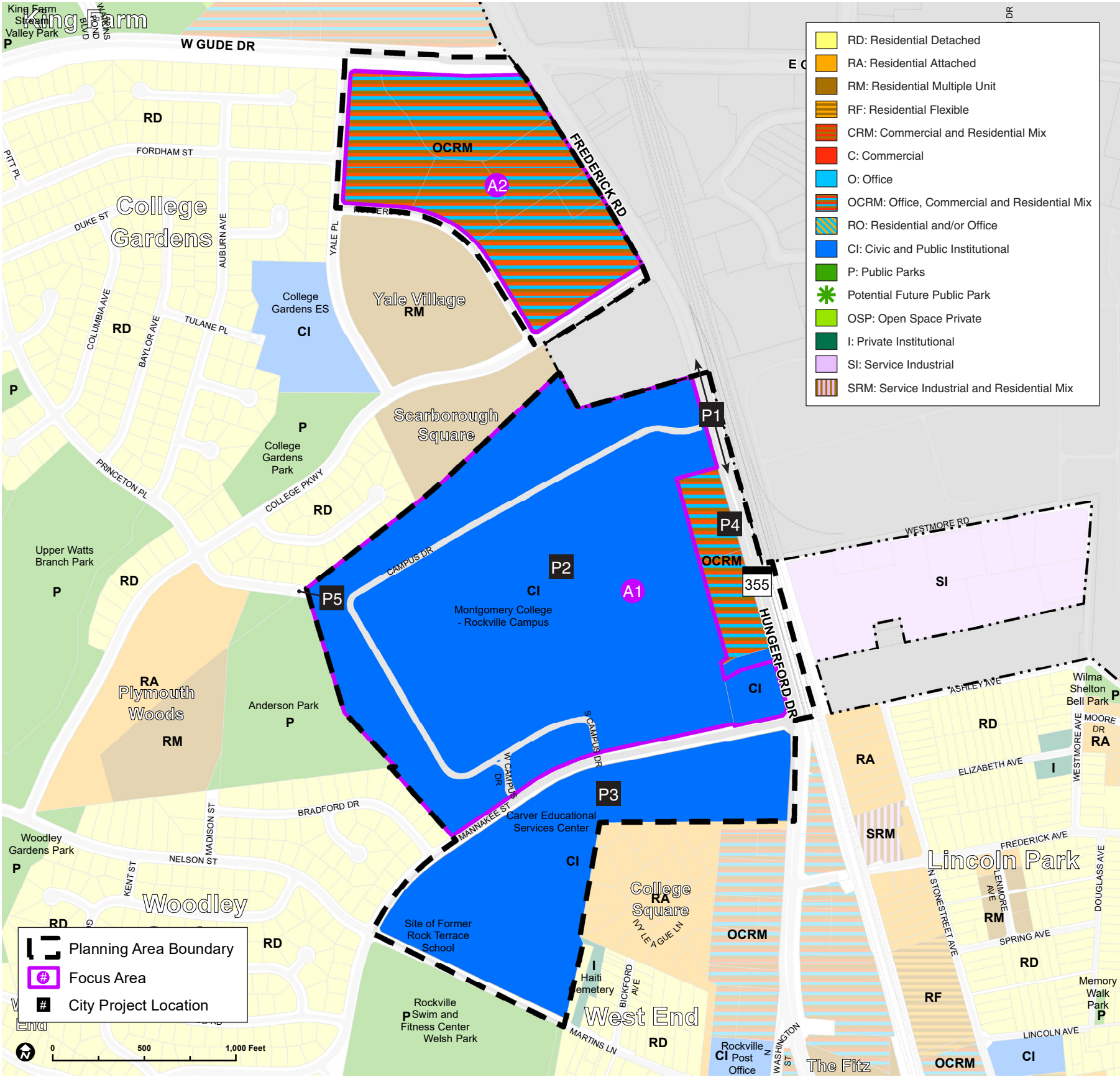
These land use policies and zoning and urban design recommendations apply to specific sites in the Planning Area. Area 1 is an exception for this section since it recommends the ways in which the City may work with Montgomery College to further City and College policy.

AREA 1 A1

Montgomery College

The policies for this area were developed in coordination with college staff as part of the Rockville 2040 effort. Their main goal is to better integrate Montgomery College into the economic and social life of the larger Rockville community by anticipating and addressing future needs of the city, including the adjacent neighborhoods and nearby commercial areas, as well as the college as an institution and its student body,

Figure 64: Land Use Policy Map of Planning Area 7



faculty, and staff. Since the college and the City master plans are on different cycles, a coordinated effort can be helpful to both parties in identifying policies that are mutually beneficial.

The City should maintain and strengthen the collaboration with Montgomery College, recognizing the importance of the College to the daily life and long-term success of the city. *(See also Policy 10 of the Community Facilities Element)*

Potential collaborations include:

1. Develop a long-term vision for the broader campus area of Montgomery College and the MCPS headquarters property, in collaboration with Montgomery College, Montgomery County Public Schools, and Montgomery County government. The vision should recognize the importance of the college, with its approximately 16,000 students, and the MCPS headquarters, with over 700 employees, as a key asset and activity center in the city.
2. Reestablish the MD-355 corridor, between the northern extent of Rockville Town Center and East/West Gude Drive, as a priority area of focus for Rockville.
3. Pursue mutually beneficial agreements with Montgomery College for use of athletic, cultural and other facilities. Seek opportunities for joint investment in facilities that would benefit the College and the City.
4. Partner with Montgomery College to address college-neighborhood relations and safety concerns.
5. Support Montgomery College in its efforts to grow and evolve to meet increasing and changing demands for its services. Ensure that its growth considers and minimizes impacts on nearby neighborhoods.
6. Seek alignment and consistency between the college's 10-year master plan and the City's master plan and other policies.
7. Work with Montgomery College on opportunities to identify and/or develop housing that is affordable to students, faculty, and employees, ideally, as part of new mixed-use developments.
8. Collaborate with Montgomery College to improve its frontage on MD-355, to increase visibility of the college, improve the visual appeal of the MD-355 corridor and potentially accommodate a new mixed-use area with retail shops, restaurants, and services that have a beneficial economic impact. *(See also Action 3.1 of the Economic Development Element)*
9. Collaborate with Montgomery College, Montgomery County government, and the State of Maryland to identify the best location for a bus rapid transit station in the campus area, including an evaluation based on potential co-location with other transit stops, long-term land use and economic development plans.
10. Seek opportunities to provide additional vehicular access to the Montgomery College campus from the north, to relieve traffic pressure on the intersection of East/West Gude Drive and MD-355.
11. Explore opportunities to open or remove barriers to access Montgomery College by non-automobile travel modes and make physical connections to the surrounding areas, while considering community and college safety concerns. 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 5)*
12. Leverage the academic assets of Montgomery College, the Universities at Shady Grove, and other institutions to attract and retain businesses in Rockville. *(See also Policy 3 of the Economic Development Element)*
13. Support efforts to strengthen links between programs at Montgomery College and Universities at Shady Grove and local workforce development agencies and the business community, to facilitate job placement for graduates and transitioning workers. *(See also Policy 3 of the Economic Development Element)*

AREA 2 A2

College Plaza Shopping Center and West Gude Office Park

The intersection of East/West Gude Drive and MD-355 is one of the busiest and most important crossroads in the Rockville area. This area is likely to see investment during the plan's time horizon.

Land Use Policy Map

This area is designated OCRM (Office Commercial Residential Mix) to allow for a mix of office, commercial, and residential development serving households of a range of income levels.

Zoning Recommendation

A zoning change from the current MXCD (Mixed-Use Corridor District) is not recommended, though potential creation of a future bus rapid transit station at the intersection of MD-355 and E/W Gude Drive may warrant consideration of the MXTD (Mixed-Use Transit District) zone in the future.

Urban Design Recommendations

This plan supports a long-term solution for College Plaza Shopping Center that results in redevelopment of the site into a more cohesive, walkable, urban-scale pattern with a mix of housing, educational, and commercial uses. The plan also supports establishing a walking path that is not along MD-355, between the Montgomery College campus and the College Plaza Shopping Center site. The West Gude Office Park is similarly envisioned as a potential mixed-use and mixed-income district with either infill buildings and amenities or a completely redeveloped site in the future.



College Plaza Shopping Center

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**

Work with MCDOT and MDOT SHA to conduct a special corridor study along MD-355 to determine congestion levels, recommend significant improvements to street design, increase non-auto driver mode share, and incorporate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). This study should include improvements to pedestrian safety and strategies to implement the vision for this area from the *2017 Bikeway Master Plan*, which includes a cycletrack (bike lane) along the west side of MD-355. (See also Action 19.7 of the *Transportation Element*)

PROJECT 2 **P2**

Study the creation of safe routes for non-automobile travel, by wheel or on foot, between Montgomery College and the Shady Grove and Rockville Transit stations. Engage affected neighborhoods, property owners, and businesses in any such planning efforts.

PROJECT 3 **P3**

Improve pedestrian and bicycle access between Montgomery College, College Plaza Shopping Center, and Rockville Town Center, including significantly improving sidewalks and bicycle facilities on MD-355 and creating a potential new pedestrian path and bikeway connecting the properties owned by the College, MCPS and the City of Rockville, to each other and to areas north and south. (See also Actions Goal 2 and Action 8.5 of the *Transportation Element*)

PROJECT 4 **P4**

Study the potential for a community node on MD-355, between Mannakee Street and North Campus Drive, creating improved frontage for the college campus on MD-355. Housing, retail and other services that complement Montgomery College's educational offerings and serve the Montgomery College community would be significant components of this node. (See Figure 6 in the *Land Use Element*)

PROJECT 5 P5

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 5*)

Other Policy Recommendations

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

Transportation

1. Advocate for Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT SHA) and Montgomery County government to improve capacity, safety, and comfort for all modes at the intersection of MD-355 (Frederick Road) and Gude Drive, while accommodating a future bus rapid transit station. (*See also Action 20.2 of the Transportation Element*)
2. Improve connections between Montgomery College and Town Center and between Montgomery College and the College Plaza Shopping Center, to serve the thousands of students and staff at the college, by:
 - Establishing an off-street, shared use path connecting the College with downtown Rockville and College Plaza.
 - Studying the potential for a shuttle bus that links Montgomery College, College Plaza, Town Center, and Rockville Transit Station.
3. Encourage WMATA to study the feasibility of adding a new rail station along the Metrorail Red Line in the vicinity of the Montgomery College - Rockville Campus, in consultation with the Rockville community and considering the impacts and benefits to surrounding neighborhoods. (*See also Action 8.6 of the Transportation Element*)

Community Partnerships

4. Develop a long-term vision for the MCPS headquarters property, in coordination with MCPS and the Rockville Historic District Commission.

Consider adjustments to the Carver High School Local Historic District that provides a higher level of respect for the history of the historic school building and grounds than does the current viewshed, while allowing appropriate development to occur within the historic district and the property's surface parking lots. Educational or public safety-related uses remain the preferred use for the Carver Educational Service Center site. The site is a good potential new location for the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department, which is currently located on Hungerford Drive in Town Center and needs a new facility (discussed in the Community Facilities Element and in Planning Area 1). Opportunities to provide housing for fire fighters, both active and in training, would also be beneficial either on that site or on other sites in this planning area.

5. Support MCPS in its efforts to maintain its headquarters within the city if it seeks to relocate from the Carver High School building. (*See also Action 7.1 of the Community Facilities Element*)

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