



Planning Area 9

ROCKVILLE PIKE

The Rockville Pike planning area is one of Rockville’s most active commercial corridors, with the Twinbrook transit station located to the south and a range of commercial, residential, and office uses throughout. Residential communities in the planning area include: The Alaire, Bethany House, The Escher, The Galvan, Residences at Congressional Village, The Terano, Village Green, Westchester Rockville Station, Woodmont Overlook, Woodmont Park, and Woodmont Spring. The planning area is shown in detail on Figure 66.

Area Characteristics

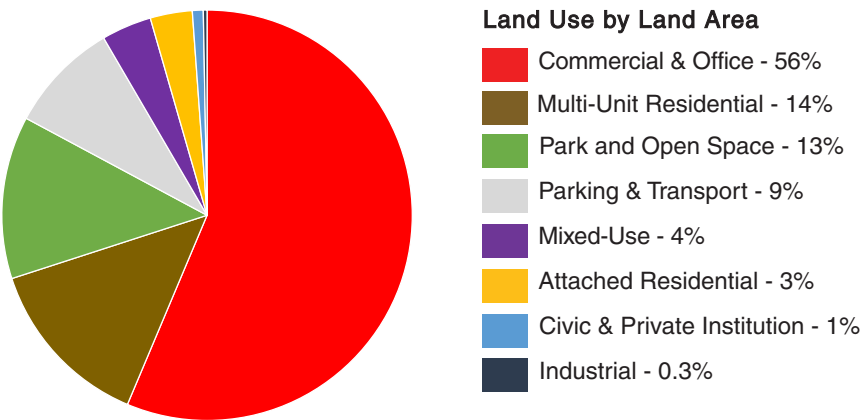
For decades after the opening of the Twinbrook Metro Station in 1984, the Rockville Pike corridor was primarily an auto-oriented, regional commercial destination, with a transit station serving nearby government offices and residential commuters. In 2009, as part of a comprehensive zoning update, much of the planning area was rezoned to allow for mixed-use development. New development projects

since then have consisted mostly of multi-unit residential apartments and stand-alone retail, restaurant, and service establishments.

New office development has not occurred in the planning area since the 1980s, primarily due to unfavorable market conditions in the region. However, proximity to the Twinbrook transit station and anticipation of a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route along the Pike may bring new office and other mixed-use development to the area in the future.

This plan adopts, by reference, the *2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* for portions of the neighborhood plan area that coincide with their respective new planning area boundary, noting that the current planning area now includes the property at 100 First Street (the Westchester Apartments) and 12501 Ardennes Avenue. Policies in this chapter supersede any policies that are in conflict with those in the 2016 plan as well as all previous policies for the planning area in the *2002 Comprehensive Master Plan*.

Existing Land Uses in Planning Area 9



Residential Dwelling Units	
Attached Residential	149
Multi-unit Residential (apartment/condo)	2,789
Total units	2,938

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

Planning History

As a transportation artery for centuries, Rockville Pike (Maryland Route 355) can claim to be the oldest road in Montgomery County. Pike travelers have included Native Americans, early American farmers, American presidents, enslaved people seeking freedom, Confederate and Union troops, wealthy Washingtonians retreating to their summer homes, and modern day commuters and shoppers.

Growing development pressures along Rockville Pike as a result of its commercial success, as well as the opening of the Twinbrook Metro Station in 1984, resulted in the Mayor and Council adopting the *1989 Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan*. The plan focused on urban design and transportation system management strategies to regulate development and maintain a high quality district and streetscape. In 2007, the City determined that an update to the 1989 plan was needed and initiated Rockville’s Pike: Envision a Great Place. The *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* was adopted in August 2016, replacing the 1989 Rockville

Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan and the Planning Area 9 recommendations from the *2002 Comprehensive Master Plan*.

One emphasis of the 2016 plan is to improve place-making near the Twinbrook transit station by encouraging a mix of uses, improved walkability, diverse commercial establishments and housing choices, and ensuring that there are adequate parks to serve the expected population growth. The plan also calls for a larger, recreational park in the ‘Middle Pike’ area to serve residents and employees of the planning area and city at-large.

The 2016 plan established a new development option for “Champion Projects” in the South Pike area, near the Twinbrook transit station, that allows for greater building heights and other incentives for large projects in exchange for delivering benefits to the City that would not otherwise be required. As of 2019, only one developer had applied as a Champion Project; but others are possible, particularly on the west side of Rockville Pike where there are large sites that could meet the criteria, if redeveloped.

The Twinbrook Commons Planned Development (PD-TC) zone was established in 2005 under the Twinbrook Metro Performance District’s Optional Method of Development. The 26.5-acre planned development originated from property owned by WMATA on either side of the Twinbrook transit station. Its land use objectives are compatible with those of the *2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*. However, the development agreement between JBG-Smith and WMATA to implement this planned development expired in 2018. The



Congressional Plaza sign on Rockville Pike, c. 1960. Source: Peerless Rockville



West side of the Twinbrook transit station and Park-n-Ride lot

agreement had called for the site to be developed in multiple phases over a 12-year period. Two of the six phases were completed, including the Alaire and Terano apartments with ground-floor commercial on Fishers Lane, prior to expiration of the agreement. JBG also built a 428-space parking garage to replace a WMATA surface parking lot. The future of the remaining development parcels remains uncertain at this time.

Key Issues

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

- Interest in the improvement of the built environment, streetscape and walkability along Rockville Pike;
- Uncertainty about the future of the remaining phases of the Twinbrook Commons Planned Development at Twinbrook Metro Station, after the approved developer ended its development agreement with WMATA;
- Monitoring implementation of the Twinbrook Quarter development project as the City’s first “Champion Project”;
- Need for improved bicycle and pedestrian safety in the Rockville Pike corridor;
- Reduction of traffic congestion at the intersections of First Street, Wootton Parkway and Rockville Pike; Edmonston Drive and Rockville Pike; Twinbrook Parkway, Rollins Avenue and Rockville Pike; and Veirs Mill Road and First Street;
- Planning, design, and implementation of the proposed

Montgomery County Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route along MD-355 and its station locations;

- Concern over the changing environment of retail and office markets that could impact existing businesses and jobs;
- Need for additional parkland to accommodate the growing population along the Rockville Pike corridor.

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 Rockville Pike as vibrant and safe multi-way, multi-modal boulevard, as described in the *2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*.

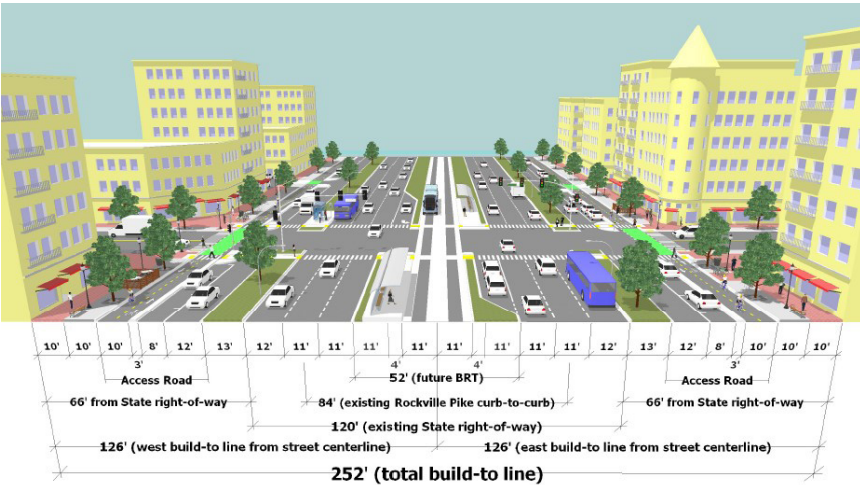


View of North (top) and South (bottom) Rockville Pike sections.

The core recommendation of the 2016 Pike plan is to redesign and reconstruct Rockville Pike as a multi-way boulevard. A multi-way boulevard attempts to balance the competing needs of roadway capacity, local access, transit, street parking, bicycle accommodation, and pedestrian comfort. It consists of through lanes for faster-moving traffic and transit; access lanes for slower-moving local traffic, bicycles lanes and on-street vehicle parking; wide sidewalks; and green medians. The boulevard concept is crucial to meeting the transportation, place-making, and economic goals of the plan and addresses the dual (local and regional) nature of the Pike.

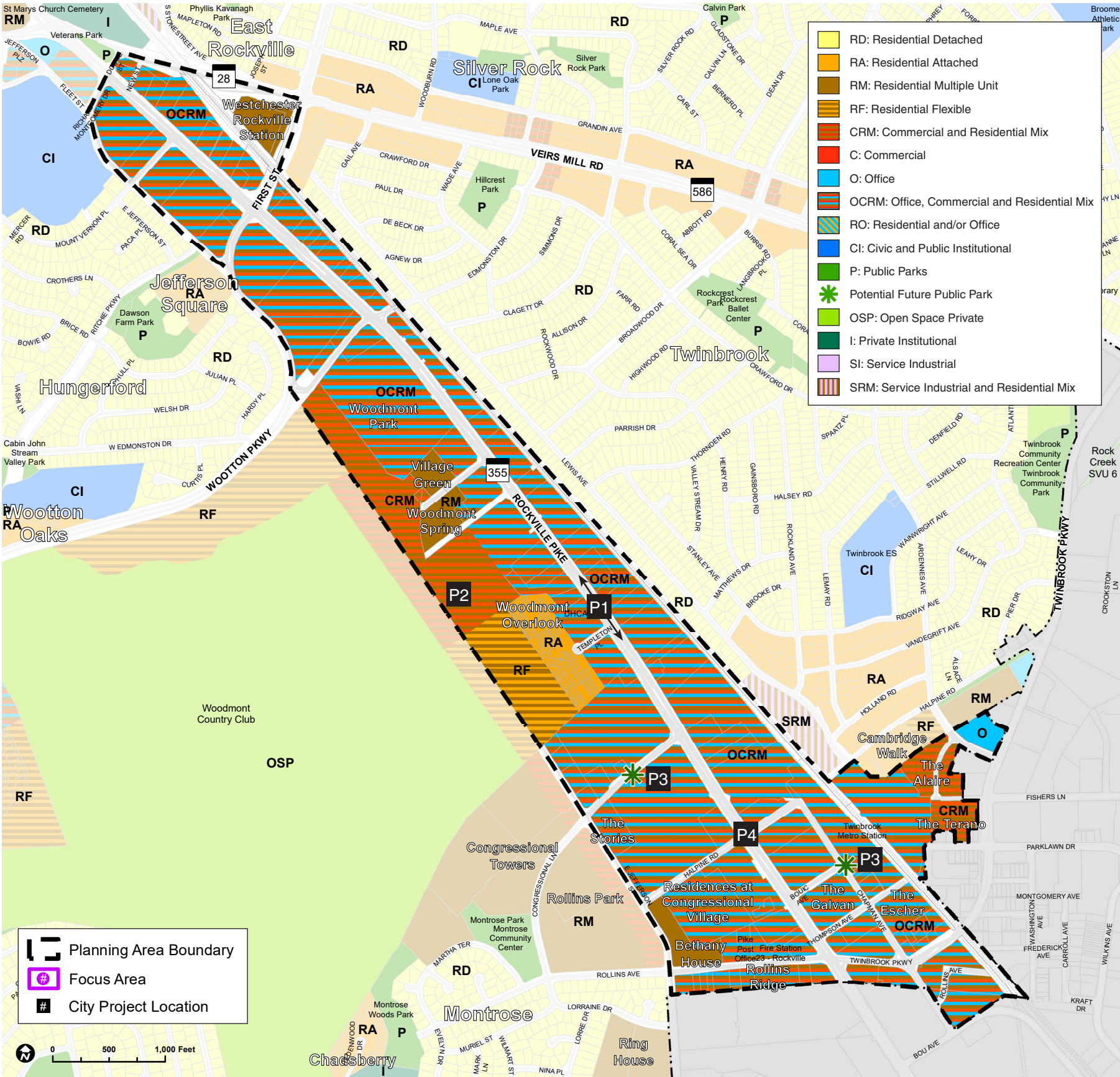
While the boulevard concept is a central element of the 2016 Plan, re-design of the Pike as a multi-way boulevard is not expected to be fully implemented, due to exceptions allowed by the plan. One exception allows for modifications to the full boulevard design for parcels on the east side of Rockville Pike in the ‘north’ and ‘middle’ sections of the planning area that are physically constrained by the CSX/Metro tracks and the Pike. The other exception stipulates that approved “Champion Projects” in the ‘south’ section with property frontage on Rockville Pike are not required to provide access roads or easements for access roads.

The only approved “Champion Project” as of the date of this writing (with approximately one-quarter mile of Pike frontage) does not incorporate an access road along its Pike frontage. Effectively, there will not be a continuous access road on the east side of the Pike within the planning area. However,



2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan Multi-Way Boulevard Typical Street Section. This street section is not expected to be fully realized along Rockville Pike due to space constraints and design exceptions.

Figure 66: Land Use Policy Map of Planning Area 9



implementation of the full boulevard concept is still possible on the west side of the Pike and continues to be supported by this plan.

The 2016 Pike plan also accommodates space for a future bus rapid transit (BRT) line along MD-355, as conceived by Montgomery County government and, at the time of this writing, is still being studied by the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration.



The Alternative Street Section from the 2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan as it applies to 'Champion Projects'.

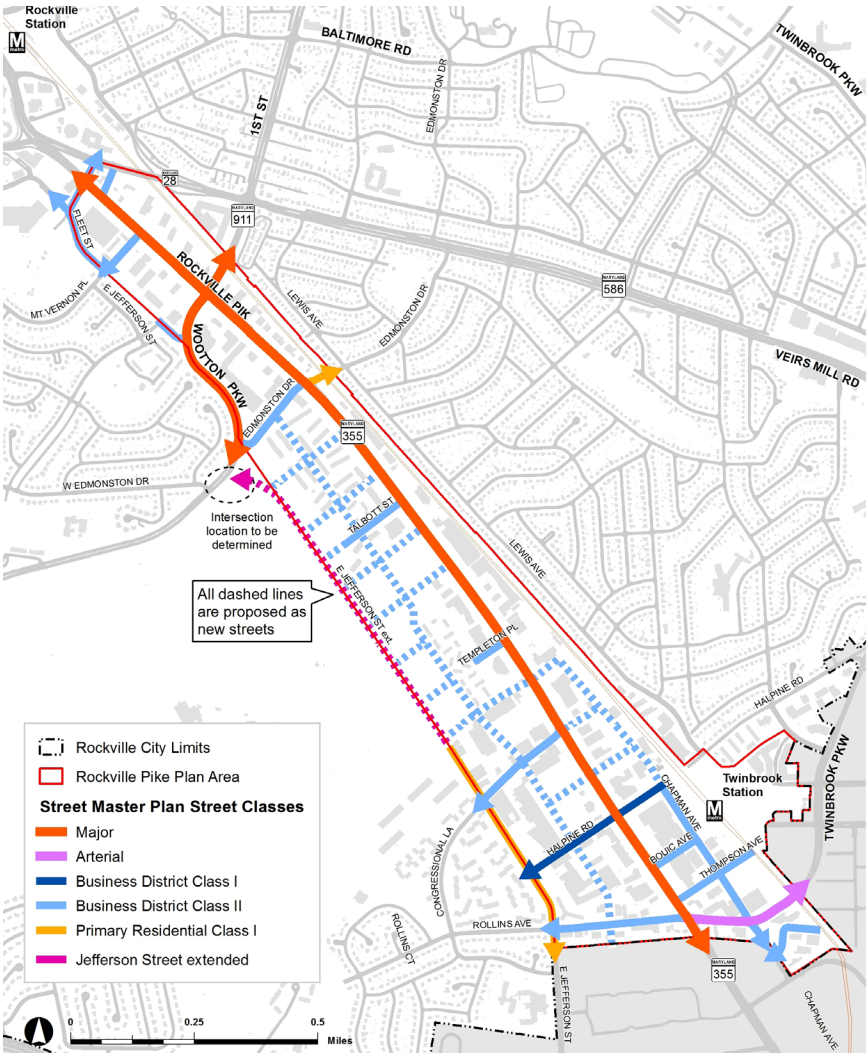
PROJECT 2 P2

Expand the street grid on Rockville Pike’s west side.

The 2016 *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* calls for expansion of the street grid within the planning area to increase connectivity and travel choice, diffuse traffic congestion, space intersections for more frequent and convenient pedestrian crossing opportunities, and create a regular pattern of developable urban blocks. Most, if not all, of the new street grid will occur in conjunction with redevelopment and all new streets will be built according to the City’s Road Code and Complete Streets Policy. The 2016 plan provides additional guidance regarding the design of the extension of East Jefferson Street. This plan amends the 2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan’s Street Master Plan by establishing that the street grid should not be required as part of any future development on the Woodmont Park apartment property in order to preserve and support continuation of the existing residential community (See also *Planning Areas 3 and 11 and Action 19.4 of the Transportation Element*).

PROJECT 3 P3

A future public park is recommended in the general location where a green asterisk is placed alongside this project label on the Land Use Policy Map of Figure 66. The asterisk indicates the City’s intention to establish a public park in this vicinity, either by means of land dedication as part of a development project, purchase, land swap, or some other method, to serve existing residents and workers, as well



2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan Street Master Plan shows proposed new streets that are envisioned by the plan in conjunction with future development.

as expected population and employment growth in the south Rockville Pike area. (See also *Policies 5 and 6 of the Recreation and Parks Element*)

PROJECT 4 P4

In accordance with the 2016 *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*, work with Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) and Montgomery County government to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the Twinbrook transit station with a bridge or tunnel across Rockville Pike (MD-355) at its intersection with Halpine Road.

Other Policy Recommendations

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

Land Use & Urban Design

1. Ensure that any amendments to the Twinbrook Commons Planned Development (PD-TC) are consistent with the policies of the *2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan* and compatible with development in the Core portion of the planning area, west of the Twinbrook transit station. (See also *Action 10.1 of the Land Use Element and Policy 11 of the Transportation Element*)
2. Work with property owners to improve the function and aesthetics of Rockville Pike, as outlined in the *2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*. (See also *Policy 9 of the Economic Development Element*)
3. Amend the zoning district boundary on the property at 1601 Rockville Pike such that the building addressed as 1626 East Jefferson Street is entirely within the MXCD (Mixed-Use Corridor District) zone and not partially located in the MXCT (Mixed-Use Corridor Transition) zone.

Transportation

4. Collaborate with Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) to implement the City's Complete Streets Policy and Vision Zero Plan in the planning area to increase the safety and comfort of people traveling through the Rockville Pike corridor by foot, bike, vehicle, or other mode.
5. Collaborate with WMATA, Ride On, and MDOT SHA to locate bus stops in locations along Rockville Pike that do not encourage people to cross roads at unsafe locations. Add crosswalks and/or traffic signals, as needed, to provide safe road crossings to bus stops. (See also *Action 8.4 of the Transportation Element*)
6. At the time of development review for the properties at 1460, 1470, or 1488 Rockville Pike, a determination should be made by the city whether or how Chapman Avenue is extended. The exact location of the extension, as depicted in the *2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*, should not be construed as its final alignment.

7. Continue to participate in the planning effort regarding the ultimate design of a MD-355 BRT line and its station locations within the city, including bicycle and pedestrian access. (See also *Action 9.2 of the Transportation Element*)
8. Study potential locations for a bicycle and pedestrian facility over or under the CSX/Metro tracks, somewhere between Edmonston Drive and Twinbrook Parkway and work with agency partners and property owners to build the preferred option. (See also *Action 5.5 of the Transportation Element*)
9. Advocate for MDOT SHA to investigate allowing a left-turn movement from eastbound Edmonston Drive onto northbound MD-355 that ensures safe, comfortable, and efficient travel for all modes, including the potential for an all-stop red-phase or an exclusive left turn signal. (See also *Action 20.6 of the Transportation Element*)
10. Advocate for MDOT SHA to investigate allowing a left-turn movement from westbound Twinbrook Parkway onto southbound MD-355, and from eastbound Rollins Avenue to northbound MD-355 that ensures safe, comfortable, and efficient travel for all modes, including the potential for an all-stop red-phase or exclusive left turn signals. (See also *Action 20.7 of the Transportation Element*)
11. Advocate for MDOT SHA to study measures to reduce traffic congestion and increase safety for all modes at the intersection of Veirs Mill Road (MD-28/MD-586) and First Street (MD-911) and the intersection of Edmonston Drive and Rockville Pike (MD-355). (See also *Action 20.9 of the Transportation Element*)

Housing

12. Provide incentives to owners of older, market-rate multiple unit rental properties, such as older garden-style apartments, to maintain and improve their properties while preserving affordability of their existing units. (See also *action 8.7 of the Housing Element*)
13. Seek to avoid gentrification of residents and businesses when development is proposed in the planning area, through City or other agency programs and/or incentives.