





**Silver Spring Downtown Plan, Scope of Work**

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**Completed: 03.19.20**

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**Description**

Scope of Work for the *Silver Spring Downtown Plan*.

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends approval of the proposed Scope of Work and Sector Plan Boundary.

**Summary**

The *Silver Spring Downtown Sector Plan*, as an update to the *2000 Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan*, includes the area bound by that plan. This memorandum presents the Scope of Work for the Sector Plan, including the proposed Plan boundaries and purpose, the context and background of the Plan area, overall planning framework, elements to explore, a public engagement strategy and the Plan schedule.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this document is to define the scope of work, study area, and sector plan boundaries for the proposed *Silver Spring Downtown Plan*, an update of the 2000 *Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD) Sector Plan*.

Downtown Silver Spring is a vibrant area that is defined by its unique diversity. Its revitalization over the last 20 years has resulted in an economic and retail center that draws consumers for a variety of local and ethnically diverse food and drink venues, many of them found along Georgia Avenue and in Fenton Village. In the last decade, numerous high-rise apartment buildings have sprung up, adding over 4,000 housing units to the downtown Silver Spring area.

There are several changes coming to Silver Spring in the near future. The Purple Line is already under construction and will position Silver Spring as a key node on the east-west light-rail network, with two stops in the downtown and another just outside. In addition, the region is facing a housing shortage, particularly affordable housing, and there will be a lot of pressure to look at new opportunities in downtown Silver Spring.

Silver Spring is home to many diverse groups. The planning team will work hard to engage all communities to ensure everyone has the opportunity to fully participate in the sector plan process. This plan will guide future growth in Silver Spring and its recommendations will be built on the engagement of the entire community.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **History**

Native Americans utilized the land comprising Silver Spring before the English colonization of Maryland in the mid-1600s. In the mid-1850s, Francis Preston Blair established his country estate in Silver Spring. Blair's promotion of the area coupled with the opening of present-day Georgia Avenue connecting Washington, D.C. and Brookeville led to further population growth.

The establishment of the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Washington, Woodside and Forest Glen Railway in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century initiated development and spurred population growth in Silver Spring. New commercial and industrial enterprises emerged along Georgia Avenue from the Baltimore and Ohio station to Colesville Road in the 1920s. Economic growth continued as the Washington, D.C., region experienced significant population increase due to the expansion of the federal government and New Deal programs in the late 1930s. The opening of the Silver Spring Shopping Center at Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road created a thriving retail environment and by the end of World War II, Silver Spring was the second largest community in the state of Maryland.

While retail development stalled in the late-1950s due to the construction of nearby suburban shopping centers and changing consumer habits, Silver Spring's business district experienced substantial

growth the following decade. Multi-story office buildings, hotels, and apartments complexes transformed the area into a regional employment center. Silver Spring continued to diminish as a retail center even with the opening of the Silver Spring Metro Station in 1978. This period of time, however, created affordable housing and businesses opportunities that contributed to the area's celebrated racial, social, and economic diversity. At the turn of the twenty-first century, redevelopment efforts included a revitalized retail core, the promotion of an arts and entertainment district, and the construction of corporate headquarters for Discovery Communications.

### **Previous Planning Initiatives**

The 2000 *Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan* established a planning framework for downtown Silver Spring, and over the last 20 years, Silver Spring has flourished. Today it is one of the most diverse communities in Montgomery County. It is a destination for retail, dining, and arts and entertainment, with numerous development projects currently under construction. A number of planning and urban design initiatives have helped to guide the development of downtown Silver Spring.

- *Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan*. Adopted in 2000. Envisioned a downtown that was transit-oriented, green, pedestrian-friendly with a strong market for both commercial and residential development.
- *Silver Spring Greenspace Guidelines*: Completed in 2010. Guidelines to support the green spaces suggested in the 2000 Sector Plan.
- *Silver Spring Placemaking Initiative*: Completed in 2014. Three community charettes that considered "short-term" and "long-term" approaches to placemaking in three distinct sites in Downtown Silver Spring.
- *Silver Spring Streetscape Standards*: Approved in 2019. This update of the 1992 Streetscape Standards identifies a hierarchy of streets and intersections for the road network of downtown Silver Spring. These will be reconsidered as part of the sector plan process and will be updated as necessary.

In addition, the *Bicycle Master Plan* was adopted in 2018 with a vision for a safe and connected bicycle network across the County. In 2018 Montgomery Parks approved the *Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan*. This document used downtown Silver Spring as a test area, but issues a county-wide, data-based approach to understanding the open space assets of the County, both public and private, and how well those spaces are serving the needs of the County. This Functional Master Plan will guide the public space recommendations of the Sector Plan but will not supersede them.

In recent years, the County Council and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission have approved and adopted a number of sector plans for communities surrounding downtown Silver Spring:

- 2013 *Long Branch Sector Plan*
- 2017 *Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan*
- 2020 *Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan*.

These plans will inform in particular the analyses conducted on the study area discussed below.

## **Plan Boundary**

This scope of work establishes a plan boundary that defines the limits of the planning effort and the site-specific recommendations. The plan boundary for the 2000 *Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan* followed the CBD boundary that was established in the 1993 *Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan*. The current plan will largely follow the same boundary as the 2000 plan. The plan area will be approximately 386 acres, with a resident population of approximately 11,500.

The planning staff is recommending an adjustment of the plan boundary on the south side of Wayne Avenue between Fenton Ave and Cedar Street. Currently the CBD boundary crosses through a recently completed building. In addition, there are two adjacent parcels owned by the Church of St. Michael the Archangel that are currently outside the Central Business District. The church owns parcels on both sides of Wayne Ave, but the northern parcels are inside the boundary, while the southern parcels are not. The church has requested that all of their parcels on Wayne Ave be included in the plan. The southern parcels are currently included in the *East Silver Spring Master Plan*. (See graphic on p. 14).

As part of the analysis, a study area has been identified that captures the surrounding neighborhoods and major entrance roads and will be used for broader demographic and traffic analysis, as well as community engagement. As downtown Silver Spring is a retail and commercial destination for the surrounding area, the study area will encompass the neighborhoods to the north, east and west of downtown Silver Spring, and is based on the area covered by the Silver Spring Regional Services Center. The neighborhoods to the south and southwest are in Washington, DC, which is outside the purview of this department. However, the team is planning to coordinate with both the DC Office of Planning and the City of Takoma Park as part of the engagement process so all surrounding neighborhoods will be considered.

## **PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

### **County-wide Initiatives**

The Planning Department, County Executive Agencies, and the County Council are pursuing a number of county-wide efforts that will inform and guide the planning process and the development of Sector Plan recommendations:

- **Vision Zero**: Vision Zero aims to reduce transportation-related deaths and severe injuries. The County adopted a resolution mandating the approach in 2016 and all transportation planning efforts and policies need to align with the Vision Zero principles. The target goal is to reach zero traffic fatalities by 2030;
- **Net Zero**: In December 2017 the Montgomery County Council adopted a resolution stating that by 2035 the county will reach a goal of zero net greenhouse gas emissions. As part of the resolution, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission will assist the county in achieving that goal;

- Thrive 2050 (General Plan Update): The update to the General Plan is underway and will be continuing as this plan gets started. Several Silver Spring sector plan team members are participants on General Plan committees, so this will help with coordination;
- Pedestrian Master Plan: Similarly, the Silver Spring team is coordinating with the Department's Pedestrian Master Plan team regarding roads, crosswalks, safety, and pedestrian experience in downtown Silver Spring.

### **An Equity Lens for Planning**

In 2019, Montgomery County passed a Racial Equity Bill cementing the county's commitment to racial equity and social justice. The bill requires the Planning Board to consider racial equity and social justice impacts when preparing a Master or Sector Plan. The Planning Department continues to build on previous efforts that focused on racial equity. This is reflected in the mission statement of the General Plan, and it will be a driver for the *Silver Spring Downtown Plan* as well. Equity is about giving all people the resources they need to have an equal chance at success. This does not mean that all people need the same resources; it is about meeting people where they are and removing barriers so that success is possible.

Research has shown that developing an "equity tool" for a planning team to employ throughout the engagement and planning processes is one way to work towards an equitable plan. Broadly, this means that for all aspects of a plan, the team needs to ask and answer questions that address the history of a community and the inequities that exist, consider how the team can engage residents who have been historically excluded from planning processes, and explore what actions or approaches to planning can be pursued that embrace equity and help to discourage inequity. In coordination with the Planning Department's Equity in Planning workgroup (part of *Thrive 2050*), the *Silver Spring Downtown Plan* team will continue to explore and implement tools and methods that will promote an equitable planning process that assesses the racial equity and social justice impacts of the Plan's recommendations.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an equitable community must also be a healthy community. A healthy community is one where all residents have access to the social determinants of health, including healthcare, clean water, healthy food, and open spaces for active and passive recreation. The equity tool for Silver Spring will be designed to keep these issues in mind as we test planning scenarios and develop recommendations, with the aim of crafting an equitable plan that supports healthy community growth and development.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Engagement Plan**

As stated above, a goal of the plan is to execute an equitable engagement process. Broadly, we hope to reach as many individuals as possible who consider Silver Spring to be their downtown. We are outlining

an engagement plan in this Scope of Work, but we expect to fill in the details of the plan as we meet with stakeholders and learn from them how best to reach their communities.

Over the course of the planning process, we will reach out to:

- Residents, both homeowners and renters, of all ages, from teens to seniors;
- Civic and neighborhood associations;
- Employers, business owners and local business alliances;
- Major property owners;
- Individuals who work in downtown Silver Spring;
- Visitors who come to Silver Spring to eat, shop and enjoy entertainment;
- Students;
- Silver Spring Urban District, Citizens Advisory Board, and other civic groups;
- Faith-based groups;
- Ethnic community and business organizations;
- Arts and entertainment organizations.

While elements of this engagement plan will be the typical activities conducted by the Planning Department, we hope to pilot new ways of reaching stakeholders. The team has been working with staff from recently completed plans to hear their “lessons learned” from reaching diverse populations thoughtfully. For example, while planners have had success setting up tables at community events, without an in-person translator available, community members are not always able to clearly convey their thoughts and concerns to the planning team.

We envision the engagement effort to be implemented in four phases over the course of developing the plan recommendations:

- *Listening*

The first phase will focus on listening sessions. The planning team will reach out to leaders and groups that represent the communities in downtown Silver Spring to let them know the plan is beginning and to find out how best to reach their members. *We will find out where we need to go to reach people, and we will go there.* We will meet with individuals as well as groups. We will hold large “open house” sessions and smaller group sessions. We will give them the information and tools they need to effectively participate in the plan process. We hope to identify the diverse concerns of the Silver Spring communities as we are collecting and analyzing our existing conditions data. During this first phase we will begin the discussion about equity/inequity. Understanding the history of inequity in Silver Spring and how the segments of the community here feel they have been underserved will be key to ensuring that our planning policies are appropriate.

- *Visioning*

This phase will be a series of workshops held at different times and places throughout the

community over several months. Some of the locations and format for the workshops will be defined by what is learned in the first listening sessions. We may hold the workshops in different spaces to ensure that all members feel included. Language interpretation services, food/drink and/or childcare may be provided during these workshops so that participation can be broad-based. At these workshops the planning team will hold collaborative, interactive discussions about the long-term vision for Silver Spring.

- *Refining*

This phase will be concurrent with staff's formation of preliminary sector plan recommendations. We will bring these to the community to hear members' feedback. As in previous phases, the number of sessions and the way we bring recommendations back to the community will vary by constituency, and we will plan this out once we have identified the best ways to reach people.

- *Sharing*

The final phase will be the presentation of the staff recommendations. In this phase we will explain what is being recommended and how those recommendations will benefit the community over the coming 20 years. We will also try to clarify for participants how the initial thoughts and ideas we brainstormed together evolved into plan recommendations.

### **Engagement Tools and Approaches**

In addition to in-person meetings during daytime, evening, and weekend hours as needed, the engagement plan will include a range of additional ways to get involved, provide feedback and participate in the planning effort:

- Internet-based updates (social media, plan website, email newsletter, listserv);
- Planning team attending community events to meet people where they are – farmer's market, street festivals, community arts events, etc.;
- "Pop-in" visits to local business and community facilities (coordinated with the owners);
- Regular attendance at established groups like the Urban District, Citizen Advisory Board, civic associations;
- Office hours: every two weeks, planning staff will hold 90-minute sessions where the community can come and speak with staff directly and ask the planning staff anything. The office hours will be held in a central location at a consistent time;
- Pilot neighbor-to-neighbor engagement program described below;
- New initiatives to be developed once the team begins to meet with community leaders.

In addition, for this Sector Plan, we would like to consider piloting a neighbor-to-neighbor program as a way to reach more people. This sort of program has been successful in other local urban areas with underserved communities. The volunteers would be trained by planning staff about the planning and community engagement processes. The planning team and the volunteers would work together to



develop a tool (like a survey) that would be used to gain input/feedback from community members. This will provide an opportunity for those who are uncomfortable approaching planning staff or attending official community sessions to offer input to the plan.

### **ELEMENTS TO EXPLORE**

Below is a list of elements the team will explore. It is anticipated that additional elements will be added as the engagement effort and existing conditions analysis begin. No issue is studied in a vacuum; all plan recommendations will be considered as part of a holistic approach to shaping the future of downtown Silver Spring.

#### **Community Identity and Character**

The diverse communities that make up downtown Silver Spring have a unique character, scale, and grain. Understanding the elements that contribute to this sense of place will be essential to ensuring that future development in the downtown is reflective of and responsive to these different identities. The planning team will learn about all of the various communities during the engagement process and will explore ways to highlight the various cultures that comprise the community through urban design, architecture, and open space planning.

#### **Housing**

In 2019, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments set a regional goal of adding more than 320,000 housing units by 2030, 75 percent of which need to be attainable for low- and middle-income households. As one of the largest transit-served, mixed-use, and mixed-income downtowns in Montgomery County, Silver Spring has the potential to provide opportunities for additional attainable housing towards that regional target. This plan will examine the existing zoning and land use in and around downtown Silver Spring to determine how, where, and what type of new residential development can be accommodated. The plan will incorporate the guidelines from the *Purple Line Corridor Coalition Housing Action Plan 2019-2020* when considering recommendations that impact housing.

#### **Economic Development**

Downtown Silver Spring is an attraction in part due to its many small and independent businesses alongside regional, national, and international chains. The plan will analyze the existing economic profile of the plan area and explore ways to create conditions to support existing businesses and to attract new businesses and jobs to the downtown, through land use, placemaking, and transportation recommendations.

#### **Transportation, Access and Connectivity**

The plan will focus on access to transportation systems and connectivity both within the plan area and between the plan area and the surrounding region. The analysis will also include traffic analysis modeling of the existing conditions and future land use scenarios. Results of the transportation modeling will inform recommendations for improving circulation and pedestrian and multi-modal safety at key intersections within the sector plan area, as well as gateway intersections that connect the plan

area to the larger transportation network, consistent with Vision Zero. It will also focus on the local street network and the hierarchy of the pedestrian experience as outlined in the 2019 *Streetscape Standards*.

The analysis phase will address, among other issues:

- the existing transportation network (commuter rail, Metrorail, local and regional bus services);
- impact of the Purple Line rail system;
- impact of US 29 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Flash Service;
- vehicular and bicycle networks;
- existing and new modes of micromobility;
- increased demand for ridesharing;
- pedestrian network;
- parking demand (existing vs future).

As mentioned above, all efforts will be coordinated with ongoing and pipeline projects such as the Fenton Village Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects.

### **Energy and Environment**

The plan will explore various approaches to realizing a sustainable downtown Silver Spring consistent with the county's net zero greenhouse gas emissions goal. The plan will examine existing conditions in the plan area including impervious surface cover, tree/green cover, habitat health, stormwater management, water/air quality, carbon emissions and other elements. The team will assess the urban ecosystem of Silver Spring and its capacity to provide environmental benefits to the people, flora and fauna within the plan area.

### **Parks and Open Space**

With the increase in density in the growing areas of Montgomery County, parks and open spaces have become essential to creating livable, healthy, and complete communities. While several of the previously proposed open space projects have been completed or may soon be underway, the 2000 CBD Plan goal of a "green downtown" has not been fully realized. Informed by a data-based analysis approach established in the 2018 *Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan*, the team will assess current deficits in resources and will develop recommendations for the plan area that will support a local and regional open space network that provides accessible green spaces of various types and sizes to meet the needs of the community. The plan will study and address the quality of these spaces and how the open space network supports the vision of a sustainable Silver Spring. The Plan will also study how privately-owned public spaces are a part of this open space network.

### **Historic Resources**

Through research and community engagement we will expand and recontextualize our understanding of the history of downtown Silver Spring to include communities that may have been historically and systemically underrepresented. In addition the team will review the recommendations of the *Historic Resource Survey Report: Silver Spring Central Business District* (December 2002) and conduct the

necessary surveys to update documentation and determine which individual resources and/or districts should be listed in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* and the *National Register of Historic Places*.

### **Community Facilities**

In the 2000 Plan there were recommendations that led to the construction or renovation of several community facilities that are well utilized today including the Civic Center and Veterans Plaza, the fire station, the district courthouse, the AFI Silver Theatre, and the Silver Spring Library. All of these facilities are used by residents of the downtown area, those who live in the immediate surrounding neighborhoods, and many who travel from other locations in the county. Through community engagement we expect to learn about how those facilities have served the Silver Spring community and any plan recommendations will respond to current and future needs. The team will also consider the impact of the current development moratorium related to school capacity.

### **CONSULTANTS**

As in other sector plans, we will be using an outside consultant for transportation modeling. We are also investigating hiring a consultant for a retail study. A detailed understanding of the economics of Silver Spring would be helpful to the team in order to prepare realistic land use and zoning recommendations that respond to market conditions and support sustainable growth in the plan area. This study will coordinate with a county-wide study of international/ethnic retail that will be running concurrently with the Plan, and which will be including Silver Spring as a focus area. In addition, we are exploring opportunities for training and education in planning with an equity lens.

### **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

The *Silver Spring Downtown Plan* will be initiated with the approval of this Scope of Work by the Planning Board. Milestones are anticipated below but are subject to change as the plan develops.

Scope of Work: March 2020

Existing Conditions Analysis/Commence Engagement: March 2020 - May 2020

Visioning and Preliminary Recommendations: May 2020 - February 2021

Development of Staff Draft Report: March 2021 - June 2021

Planning Board Work Sessions and Public Hearing: July 2021 - December 2021

Planning Board Draft: December 2021

County Executive Review, County Council Review/PHED Work Sessions: January 2022 -May 2022

Commission Adoption of Plan: June 2022

Sectional Map Amendment: September 2022

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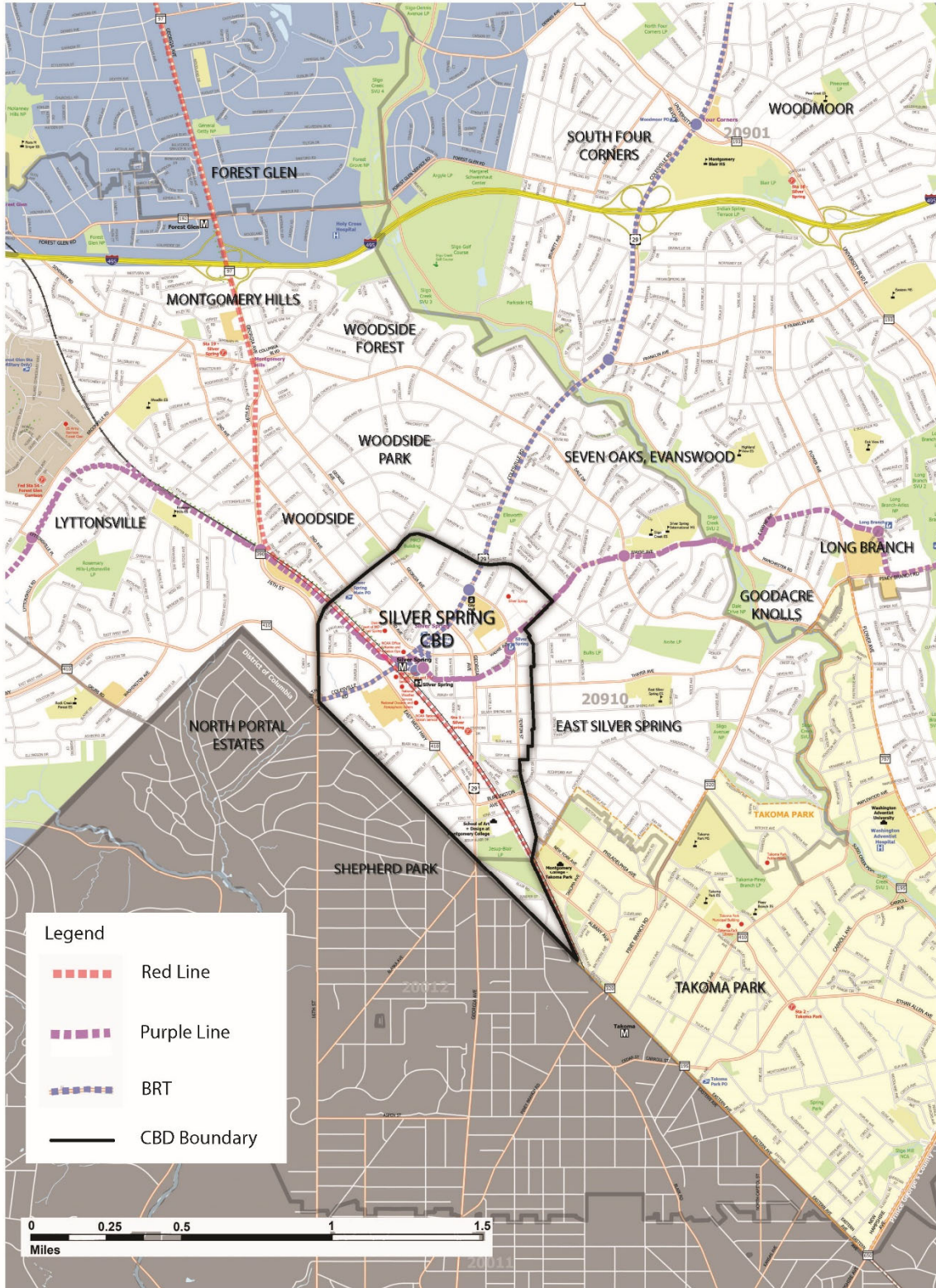
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Website:

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/area-1/silver-spring/silver-spring-downtown-plan/>

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**SILVER SPRING DOWNTOWN PLAN CONTEXT AREA MAP (CURRENT CBD BOUNDARY)**

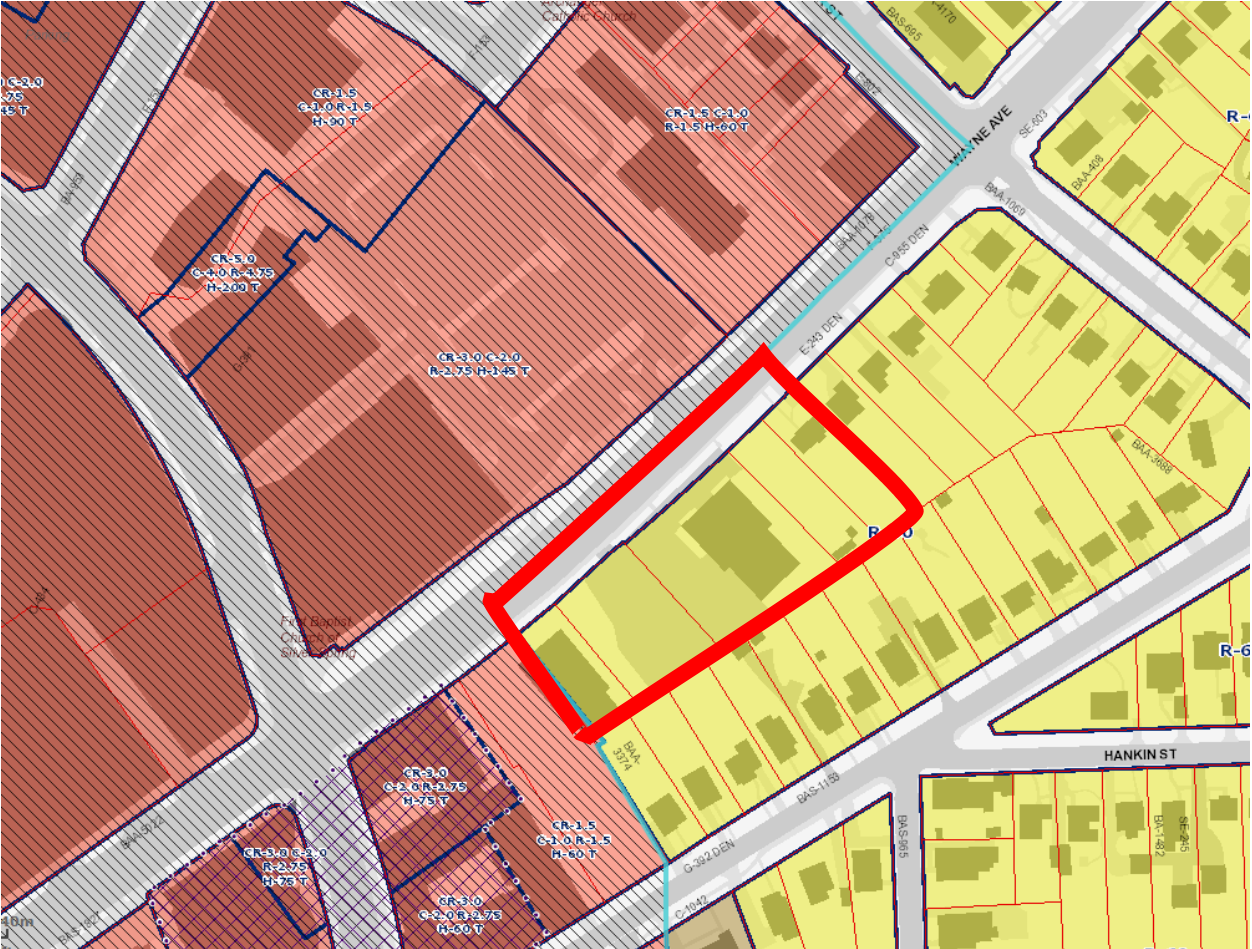






## SILVER SPRING DOWNTOWN PLAN PROPOSED BOUNDARY: ADDITIONAL PARCELS

- Cleanup of existing parcels at Wayne/Fenton; currently CBD/plan boundary crosses through a recently completed church
- Include several parcels owned by St Michael's church



**SILVER SPRING CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY**

Existing on-the-ground development (2019):

	<b>GROSS FL AREA</b>	<b>RESIDENTIAL SF</b>	<b>RETAIL SF</b>	<b>OFFICE SF</b>	<b>INDUSTRIAL SF</b>	<b>OTHER SF</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24,287,154</b>	13,996,540	2,064,263	6,191,621	375,773	1,658,957

Note: "OTHER SF" includes educational, institutional, public, arts and entertainment uses.

Housing Summary (2019):

<b>RESIDENTIAL SF</b>	<b>TOTAL DWELLING UNITS</b>	<b>MULTIFAMILY UNITS</b>	<b>SINGLE FAMILY ATTACHED UNITS</b>
13,996,540	11,958	11,901	57



SILVER SPRING CBD AERIAL IMAGES



2000



2019