

To: Mayor Sidney Katz and Gaithersburg City Council members  
From: Pamela Lindstrom and Judy Christensen

### **Citizens' Plan for the Frederick Avenue Corridor**

At the public hearing on the draft Gaithersburg Land Use Plan, we proposed to organize community charrette meetings and produce a plan for the Frederick Avenue Corridor which would provide the vision for development which the draft plan seemed to lack.

We are pleased to send you the Citizens' Plan that is the result of three community charrette meetings, numerous drafts, several epiphanies, reading and editing by many neighbors, professional assistance from Scott Knudson of Wiencek + Associates architects and planners. In other words, it is a real community effort. We are proud of our fellow citizens who participated and encouraged us and bought in to a rather ambitious plan for redevelopment that comes pretty close to their backyards.

Thank you for agreeing to delay discussion of the Frederick Avenue Corridor to give the community the opportunity to produce this plan. We look forward to presenting the Citizens' Plan at the Mayor and Council's worksession on July 11.

# Gaithersburg's Frederick Avenue Corridor: A Vision

## Introduction/Summary

The Gaithersburg Planning Department has produced a draft update of the citywide Land Use Plan. Several people testified at the March 2011 public hearing that the draft plan lacks a guiding vision for the Frederick Avenue Corridor. It is simply a zoning list, with similar guidance for the disparate districts along the Corridor. We looked for a plan both more ambitious for Gaithersburg's main urban corridor, and more attentive to the historic neighborhoods nearby.

Several residents of these neighborhoods decided the best input to the draft Land Use Plan would be to *show* City officials what the community wants, rather than simply telling them via the usual three minute verbal statements. We invited residents of the neighborhoods around the Frederick Avenue corridor to several charrette<sup>1</sup> meetings, from which a Citizens' Plan was developed.

With the help of Scott Knudson and the resources of Wiencek + Associates Architects + Planners, three charrettes were held in April and May, attended by some 40 residents from all the neighborhoods along the Corridor from Deer Park Drive to Montgomery Village Avenue. Several property owners and zoning attorneys with interests in the Corridor also had input.

This narrative describes the Citizens' Plan, which takes as its central premise that the Frederick Avenue Corridor should be the city's centerpiece, its Great Street. It should be read in conjunction with the map that follows. The most significant recommendation is to resurrect the concept of a New Downtown for Gaithersburg with its core around the site of Gaithersburg Square shopping center. All who participated agreed that the New Downtown, which appeared on city plans through the 1980s, is an ideal place for Gaithersburg's largest, densest urban center. It has excellent accessibility and visibility. Its tall tower buildings would be seen from Frederick Avenue and I-270, announcing "This is Gaithersburg!" The promise of a real urban core for the City emphasized the importance of an efficient public transitway to serve the Frederick Avenue Corridor.

This area was distinguished from two other districts along Frederick Avenue: the Heritage Corridor, where the old town of Gaithersburg fronts Frederick Avenue; and the Southern Residential District, which is similar to the draft Land Use Plan district, but better organized. These two districts border established neighborhoods of single family homes. In these two districts, redevelopment is proposed that is compatible with nearby residences and establishes a permanent buffer between the corridor development and the houses. The Olde Towne commercial corridor intersects Frederick Avenue at the transition between these districts.

### **The structure of this report is as follows:**

- I. A Summary of the overall vision and individual districts in the Frederick Avenue Corridor
- II. More detailed descriptions of the three districts
  1. The New Downtown
  2. The Heritage Corridor
  3. The Southern Residential District and Intersection with Olde Towne.
- III. The use of the Citizens' Plan
- IV. Appendix.

# **The Vision: The City's Main Street Linking New Downtown, Historic Town And Southern Residential Entry**

## **The Problem**

The Frederick Avenue corridor runs through Gaithersburg's 1850s pre-railroad business district and alongside its oldest houses. This road's name has been shortened from the "GeorgeTown to Frederick Town Road" and it has carried the great and the humble since colonial times, as noted by the historic marker by the railroad overpass.

Beginning in the 1960s, plans described Frederick Avenue as the City's main street corridor and future site of its principal downtown or Urban Core. Recent plans have diverged from this concept. It has been replaced by a series of more-or-less dense commercial centers around and outside the boundaries. Most visitors think of the City's central corridor in light of trips to the Montgomery County Fair and Lakeforest Mall. Recent Land Use Plans for the Corridor allow denser development, but offer no compelling vision either to encourage urban redevelopment, or to reassure residents that the city's oldest neighborhoods will be sustained. These recent plans omit Lakeforest Mall although it was included in original New Downtown plans and conversations about redevelopment have started.

Meanwhile, Montgomery County and Rockville have refocused on MD Route 355 as their central urban corridor; some call it the county's Great Street. For many reasons, Gaithersburg should return to its commitment to the centrality of the Frederick Avenue corridor. The residents of the adjoining neighborhoods would like to see it become our Great Street again.

In the old town area and Deer Park, the city's first suburban development toward the south, the Frederick Avenue developed corridor is quite narrow, with established residential neighborhoods within a block of the Avenue. The lack of vision and uniform Corridor Development (CD) zoning in the Land Use Plan raise the threat that commercial development can spread into these neighborhoods through assemblage of properties. The original CD zone was limited to properties located within the corridor boundary defined in the adopted Land Use Plan. That was changed<sup>ii</sup> to allow any property adjacent to a Corridor property recommended for CD in a Master Plan to be zoned CD, thus becoming part of the Corridor and allowing higher density development. The CD zone does not buffer adequately, since it requires minimal space separating commercial and single family residential uses.

## **The Citizens' Plan**

Residents of the adjoining neighborhoods have developed a vision inspired by the 1960s Gaithersburg Corridor City plan, restoring the prominence of the Frederick Avenue Corridor as the city's main urban axis, and preserving the livability of nearby homes and residential streets. Corridor development according to this plan would benefit current residents as well as new urban businesses and residents. The citizens' plan divides the Corridor into three districts, the New Downtown, the Heritage Corridor and the Southern Residential District; and a transitional area between the second two.

Older city plans designate the mall/shopping center area as the City's urban mixed use "core", called the New Downtown beginning with the 1983 Neighborhood One plan. The Citizens' Plan proposes to return to that title.

The New Downtown comprises a Core which would allow the highest density with the tallest and most prominent buildings, and a surrounding downtown radiating in two directions across Frederick Avenue. The height and density would taper down to the current site of Lakeforest Mall, and through the fairgrounds to the railroad track. The Core would occupy the most visible and most accessible site in the city, just west of Frederick Avenue. The city's principal station of the planned Rt. 355 Corridor bus rapid transit (BRT) service would be located here. The New Downtown would be the city's urban mixed use center comparable to downtown Rockville or Bethesda.

The Frederick Avenue corridor becomes the Main Street linking the New Downtown and the old original downtown. Thus Gaithersburg's complete downtown is somewhat dumbbell shaped along Frederick. The large scale modern New Downtown and small, historic old downtown are connected by an urban corridor that is moderate in scale and respects the unique character of each City district that it serves and borders.

The old downtown in turn comprises two parts: the oldest business district on Frederick just north of the railroad, and slightly more recent Olde Towne along Diamond Ave.

The Southern Residential District, from Summit Avenue to Deer Park Drive, is typical of lower density areas along major urbanizing corridors. It separates denser urban centers or defines the entry into a distinctive center. Redevelopment in this district should retain lower-scale multifamily housing, large parks and institutions, and have a green prospect as viewed from Frederick Avenue.

### **Corridor Principles**

Several common principles will apply throughout the corridor:

- The form and appearance of Frederick Avenue, parallel roads, and bikeways into the New Downtown should be designed to link the districts together.
- Frederick Avenue should be designed to become an urban boulevard, with more traffic lights and crosswalks, wide sidewalks, trees, and green panels between the sidewalks and road. The road right of way through the Heritage Corridor should be expanded to accommodate these amenities, but not to add traffic lanes.
- Driveway cuts on Frederick should be reduced, and replaced locally by alleys and linked parking facilities at the back of properties. Alleys would connect existing cross streets; traffic would reach Frederick Avenue at current and newly signalized intersections; short trips and turning movements into driveways on Frederick would be reduced. This would improve traffic flow on Frederick. Access to Frederick from side streets would also be improved.
- Efficient transit, sidewalks, and bikeways should carry as much travel as possible, reducing the dependence of new development on cars.
- Cross streets will carry commercial traffic off Frederick to entry driveways or alleys to parking. The streets should change form where they enter a residential neighborhood. The city's road code should include "residential streets", a street form that reduces car speed to that of cyclists, discourages cut-through traffic and provides a safe path and crossing for pedestrians.<sup>iii</sup>

- Surface parking lots should be minimized and replaced, where possible, with low-visibility parking garages. Parking requirements for development can be reduced as transit and other alternatives are improved.
- A permanent buffer should separate single family neighborhoods from urban development along the corridor. This buffer will serve as an enforceable boundary between the edge of urban development and neighborhoods. The CD zone should be amended to require for buffering, or the Proposed Land Use Plan should use the buffer zones in the current zoning code.
- Development in the corridor should add to the primary employment and residential base of Gaithersburg’s center, to balance lower value fast food and retail establishments and to attract professionals.

More prosperous residents will have short commutes to the many good jobs in Gaithersburg, reducing the demand for radial car trips on our arterials at rush hours. Higher income residents and workers will provide customers for the higher value retail and restaurants desired by current residents.

But development should also add other attributes of a complete community: entertainment venues, higher education facilities such as Montgomery College expansion, and high quality affordable housing through the city’s Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit law.<sup>iv</sup>

## **II. The Corridor Districts**

### **II. 1. Overall Scheme for the New Downtown**

The New Downtown is the northernmost of three districts along a proposed Frederick Avenue Corridor. It covers the area from Lakeforest Mall across Frederick Avenue to the Montgomery County Fairgrounds and from Odend’hal to Quince Orchard/ Montgomery Village Avenue.

#### **The New Downtown Core**

The New Downtown Core occupies a compact area (about 50 acres) west of Frederick Avenue along Perry Parkway and Montgomery Village Avenue/Quince Orchard Road, including Gaithersburg Square and properties to the north and northwest. The highest density and tallest buildings would occupy the Core. Just outside the core, at slightly lower height and density would be blocks of residential and office buildings east of Frederick, and, possibly, the northern parking lots in the Fairgrounds. Successive bands of buildings at lower heights give the downtown a classic “tent” shape, ending with townhouse-scale buildings on the eastern edges of Lakeforest Mall and the southern ends of the fairgrounds. Residents in our meetings referred to a “symmetric” pattern for the two arms of the crescent-shaped New Downtown. At the heart of the Core would be the wide junction of two perpendicular axes:

- The Downtown Greenway, an east–west green boulevard for cars, transit, pedestrians and cyclists, following the route of Lakeforest Boulevard west through Gaithersburg Square to a monumental gateway to the fairgrounds. The Greenway could be extended into the fairgrounds or Lakeforest in a later phase if these properties are redeveloped.
- A north-south multi–modal road extending East Diamond Avenue running parallel to Frederick

Avenue along the northern boundary of the fairgrounds, connecting the Core directly to existing East Diamond Avenue at Chestnut Street.

Where the two cross, the Greenway widens into a public plaza featuring a landmark “exclamation point” building, visible from far away, that would mark the center of Gaithersburg. The exclamation point building would be over 15 stories, the tallest in Gaithersburg. Other buildings in the core would be 10 to 15 stories. The central transit station/hub would also be here. Buildings in the lesser core on the east side of Frederick Ave. would be of middle height, ranging up to nine stories, possibly one or two at ten stories.

As has been written at least since the 1964 bicounty On Wedges and Corridors, and the 1968 Gaithersburg Corridor City plans, this dense downtown would depend on a high share of peak hour travelers using transit or some other alternative to a single occupant car. Thus, development must be coordinated or “staged” with improvements in transit service and non-auto driver mode share.

### **Uses in the New Downtown.**

The Core will accommodate mixed residential, office, retail, service and public activities. The importance of attractive urban multi-family housing to the success of the downtown and the Corridor as a whole cannot be overstressed. The New Downtown should become a great urban place to live, comparable to downtowns in Bethesda, Rockville, and other urban centers along Route 355.

- Attracting a large population of prosperous professional residents to central Gaithersburg will reduce the percentage of commuters who have to drive to Gaithersburg to jobs. An increased primary economy of residents and jobs is essential to the economic success of retail businesses. These residents of the New Downtown will add a large base of nearby customers for the fair and its activities.
- The benefits of higher income population growth apply throughout the Frederick Avenue Corridor, including the Olde Towne commercial strip.

### **Fairgrounds**

The charrette group wants the fair to continue operation at the current fairgrounds forever. The fair and other activities are one of the few major distinctions of central Gaithersburg, a city presently known primarily as a collection of separate neo-traditional settlements on its outskirts, such as Rio and Kentlands. Gaithersburg residents greatly appreciate the ease of attending not only the fair but craft shows and festivals through the year.

The Charrette attendees understand that it is expensive to operate the fair and maintain the grounds. The non-profit Fair Board may need additional revenue from its property. If so, and if the Board pursues land development, it is recommended that any development begin at the north end parking lots. This area would provide the most lucrative types of development, and can be added easily to the downtown core street, transit and cycle/pedestrian system. Almost all fair activities, including the circus, use the southern, built-up area or the stadium area, so they could continue without interference from development. It is assumed that fair parking would be provided within the downtown development, along with better transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access.

If in the long run the entire 68-acres of fairgrounds are proposed for development, Charrette consensus

supported incorporation into the tent-like density gradient of the downtown as a whole, ending with small-scale townhouse or single-family size structures at the south end. The grid of streets should be linked to the grid in the Downtown Core.

### **Lakeforest Mall**

The 86-acre Mall property occupies the other arm of the hook-shaped New Downtown. The incorporation of this large area into the downtown should redevelopment be proposed, was a primary consideration.

The Charrette's land use map shows Mall property with a gradient of density that is higher to the west near Russell Avenue and decreasing toward the northeast and east to townhouses and small multifamily housing of 2-3 stories. It is impossible to predict the sequence in which redevelopment will occur; the process has been portrayed on the map at a stage where the mall itself has been replaced but the department store buildings remain.

### **Transit Services**

A downtown of this scale will require fast, efficient, and reliable transit service, as well as excellent bicycle/pedestrian facilities for short trips. The transit backbone should include a major station for the Route 355 BRT express bus service in the center of the Downtown Core. It is suggested that the BRT line run behind the Cemetery and Gaithers town Plaza, turn along the Downtown Greenway to Frederick Avenue. A shuttle service on the Downtown Greenway would extend to the Lakeforest Mall property. The BRT would cross Frederick Avenue on the overpass, then cross to Diamond Avenue. It would continue along East Diamond Avenue Extended to the New Downtown Core. A MARC commuter rail stop is possible if sufficient development occurs adjacent to the tracks. (See map of the New Downtown area) **Smart Growth Design Principles**

Gaithersburg's transit-served downtown would follow the chief Smart Growth principles of transit/pedestrian orientation, efficient transit service, and mixed uses. Gaithersburg has adopted a set of design principles for smart growth areas which should be followed in developing the downtown.

## **II. 2. Heritage Corridor: Original Town Business District – Father Cuddy Bridge north to Odend'hal Avenue including Brookes, Russell, Walker, Realty Park, and Chestnut - Meem Historic Districts, Fair entrances on Chestnut and Dalamar Streets**

The original Gaithersburg business district area was on Frederick Avenue just north of the railroad track. Currently it is primarily developed with small commercial buildings from one to three stories high, many with front parking. The properties along the Avenue are small former residential and business lots, one parcel deep except in three locations on the east side where old original ownership extended deeper into the residential area: the Etchison Estate between Brookes and Walker; the Duvall Blacksmith and Livery, now the Duvall Center, between Walker and Maryland; and the International Mart shopping center between Maryland and Montgomery.

The east side of Frederick has Residential Office (RO)-zoned buffers between the commercial corridor uses and single family houses to the Dalamar Street area. Much of this residential area is either a

designated historic district or in Realty Park, a 1920s subdivision. There are garden apartments both fronting on Frederick and behind the commercial uses between Montgomery Avenue and Odend'hal. On the east side, An alley behind the commercial uses connects Montgomery and Maryland Avenues. A few interconnected parking areas are present in other blocks.

The west side has commercial uses and a cemetery fronting on Frederick with a senior citizen apartment complex on Chestnut, and single family houses west of it on Chestnut, Meem, and Floral Avenues. The CSX Railroad crosses Chestnut Street and serves as a boundary between the fairgrounds and most commercial uses. Part of the residential area is also a historic district. North of Dalamar Street, there is a low-rise garden apartment complex (Casey) dating from the 1960s and the fairgrounds behind the commercial uses. The Casey apartments have a parking lot drive aisle that allows through access from Dalamar Street to Perry Parkway via a driveway behind Gaithersburg Square, although it is not a dedicated street. The dead-end McBain Avenue extends East Diamond Avenue across Chestnut between Standard Supplies and Gaitherstown Plaza. It is stopped by fair buildings and the cemetery from connecting to Dalamar Street. There is tire track evidence of improvised parking lot connections in the unit block.

Significant single historic sites on Frederick Avenue are Grace United Methodist Church on the east side and Forest Oak Cemetery on the west side. Other sites to be evaluated for significance: Gaither property at 201 Frederick Avenue, Freestate Apartments, and Casey Apartments. Any property 50 years or older must be evaluated for significance. The single family residential areas adjacent to Frederick have structures built between 1872 and 1945 with some later infill. Large mature trees on lots that are bigger than modern lots predominate; many of them have gardens and old shrubs and plantings. Streets are narrow, 30 feet or less with curbs and three foot sidewalks. The City has widened some older streets.

### **Frederick Avenue Corridor Current Conditions:**

This is no Great Street, nor is it a fitting Main Street for a Corridor City.

- Frederick Avenue roadway and right of way are narrow – two lanes each way with a turn lane in the center. The right of way is planned to expand to 150 feet.
- Many utility poles, wires, signs provide visual clutter.
- There are few street trees or landscaping, narrow sidewalks about the street with no grass or landscaped strip to separate sidewalk from street; no bicycle paths.
- Only two widely-spaced pedestrian crossings are marked, one at Chestnut and the other at Odend'hal. They are considered unsafe due to cars turning right on red. Pedestrians cross in the middle of block and wait for traffic breaks in the turn lane when medians are not present.
- Front parking lots separate buildings from the avenue, with very little rear parking space.
- Many curb cuts for turning traffic into small business driveways impede traffic flow.
- Bus stops every two blocks provide inefficient service and back up traffic.
- Few parking lots are interconnected allowing customers to avoid Frederick Avenue. One must exit and enter via Frederick Avenue, which can be difficult during heavy traffic with vehicles waiting in the central turn lane to enter traffic in both directions.

- Traffic backs up on Frederick during rush hours encouraging traffic to cut through adjacent neighborhoods.

### **Plan for the future of the Heritage Corridor**

Gaithersburg’s Heritage Corridor needs more residents and employment in order to thrive. Redevelopment of buildings along Frederick Avenue is encouraged. Enough height and density should be permitted to make redevelopment financially feasible. A range of three to five stories should allow redevelopment while preserving the human scale of the original town. Building sizes, styles and set-backs should vary to look as if they were built over time. Thus the appearance of the Heritage Corridor will conform to its long history of evolving buildings and use of buildings. Street level retail, wide sidewalks, and outdoor seating will provide a setting that encourages walking, and encourage a mix of neighborhood service businesses: restaurants, cafes, retail shops, medical offices and more.

Frederick Avenue should be transformed into an urban boulevard, with the right of way better used to provide a pleasant place for people to walk and shop. Its planned 150 foot right of way should be used to increase amenities and safety, not to increase travel lanes. The existing road lanes should be shifted toward the west, where parking lots mostly border the road. Widening the road right of way to the east would take it too close to existing buildings, especially Grace Church.

Design features should include:

- Wider sidewalks;
- Trees and landscaped strips to separate pedestrians and sidewalk activities from the roadway;
- Green median;
- Period street lights, traffic signals on poles, and underground utilities;
- At least one more traffic light (at Dalamar Street), with secure pedestrian crosswalks at all lights;
- Bikeway.

Design features such as signs, special pavement, and period style streetlights along Frederick Avenue through the Heritage Corridor should signal motorists that they have reached an older area that connects the old downtown to the New Downtown. The new design roadway amenities continue on a “bicycle-pedestrian” (bi-ped) promenade south of Brookes Avenue along the east side of Frederick past Roy’s Place Restaurant, turning the corner, and continuing on East Diamond to Olde Towne’s principal intersection at the railroad station at Diamond and Summit Avenues. Signs should also direct pedestrians from Frederick to the historic residential districts along the side streets. North on Frederick at the New Downtown, the special pavement turns west from Frederick onto the Downtown Greenway, ending at the principal plaza in the Core.

The historic residential streets are inherently good for cycling and walking. They will link Frederick Ave. to a second bi-ped path connecting short alleys east of Frederick from the railroad overpass on a complex route to Lakeforest Mall (Potentially the east end of the New Downtown, see map). Another bi-ped path west of Frederick will follow East Diamond Avenue and its extension behind the Frederick

Avenue Corridor commercial area. The residential streets and three north-south bi-ped routes will provide superior bi-ped travel within the old town of Gaithersburg.

It appears infeasible to add a busway to the narrow section of Frederick Ave. through the Heritage Corridor. In the Citizens' Plan, the BRT route leaves Frederick at the railroad overpass and follows East Diamond extended past the fairgrounds to the New Downtown Core.

Parking should be located behind buildings, in parking garages as much as possible. Where commercial properties extend into residential properties, three or four level garages could be allowed if well designed (see map). Perhaps a parking district can be organized with pay-in for smaller commercial lot owners. Parking garages should be an attractive backdrop for houses that back up to them. The garages with planted walls at National Airport are a good model.

### **Boundary of the Corridor.**

This plan takes the boundary edge between the commercial corridor development and the historic neighborhoods very seriously. It proposes ways to keep commercial traffic off neighborhood streets, and provide easier access for residents to Frederick Avenue and other nearby commercial areas. Some Charrette suggestions are:

- Connective alleys or drive aisles between parking lots and parking garages behind businesses, as shown on the map;
- Closed streets beyond the commercial area, or one way streets during certain hours;
- Barricades/ planters, etc. that neck residential streets down to a narrow opening;
- Humps or raised sidewalks extending across streets to make them less visible to through traffic;
- Limits on night hours for businesses adjacent to residential neighborhoods;
- Better bi-ped routes for local trips to destinations like the Lakeforest Mall area and the Olde Towne commercial area; eventually to and around the New Downtown;

## **II. 3 Southern Residential District**

Calling MD 355 Montgomery County's "Great Street" is appropriate for the County's principal axis of development from the DC boundary through Rockville to the Shady Grove station area and King Farm. But there it ends. No Great Street, along Frederick Avenue or anywhere else, is apparent in Gaithersburg. The Charrette proposes that the City's plan for Frederick Avenue promote the Great Street that we have lacked for so long. This Great Street, beginning "softly" in our southern end of the city and unfolding northward into a dynamic new downtown core near Montgomery Village Avenue, will give our city renewed character and direction, making it an exciting place to live, work, shop, and visit.

### **Current Land Use**

The current entry to the Frederick Avenue Corridor includes the inviting green vistas of Summit Hall Park with the Colonial style farmhouse, ponds, front lawn, and the high school. The new apartments

recently constructed at West Deer Park Road are appropriate. On the east side are some small garden apartment buildings and obsolete single family houses, an underwhelming entry to the Corridor.

### **A Green Gateway to Gaithersburg's Central Corridor**

A strip of lower-rise multifamily housing, park and high school fields provide an appropriate southern entry to Gaithersburg's corridor. The future image of the Corridor's Residential District (from Deer Park Drive to Cedar Avenue) would look much like it looks now, but better. A landmark building on the east side just north of the Deer Park intersection, combined with the new apartments across the avenue would form a recognizable "gateway" to the Corridor. The land use plan should encourage redevelopment of the current houses and apartment buildings, while maintaining the lower height and green aspect of the place. A green wall buffering most of the Frederick Avenue Corridor buildings from the adjacent neighborhoods should be introduced or reinforced as development proceeds. Proper buffer zoning and site planning must assure that development maintains the current border between corridor development and the Deer Park neighborhood. The churches at the intersection of Frederick and Summit are a good transition, announcing the historic town of Gaithersburg.

A coordinated plan for redevelopment of the Corridor Development-zoned properties between Deer Park Drive and Peony would have many benefits. A unified development plan should provide green landscaped buffers within the Corridor properties, between these properties and the houses along Gaither Street. To encourage this, the plan should allow owners of the long residential lots at the lower end of Gaither Street to subdivide and sell their back yards. The proposed line of subdivision is shown on the map (not to scale). This line approximates an extension southward of the lot lines of the shorter lots on the "uphill" end of Gaither. In all cases, R-90 house lots should remain along Gaither Street. Adding depth to the CD-zoned properties would allow better access and space for a green buffer from the houses.

A coordinated development plan should include a joint driveway behind all the apartment complexes buildings, with one entry on Deer Park Drive at the current apartment driveway, and curving to one entry on Frederick Avenue in the vicinity of the Gaither House apartments. This driveway could be part of the green buffer screening apartment developments from the houses on Gaither Street. The group supports studying the feasibility of a path connecting Gaither Street to Frederick Ave. in the vicinity of the Gaither House Apartments. Potential problems should be considered as well as the benefits for Deer Park residents, high-school students, and for apartment residents' access to Duvall Park.

Three-to four-story multifamily housing should continue as the predominant land use. Buildings could rise as high as five stories to improve greenery and views. In particular, taller buildings with distinctive architecture should be sited just north of Deer Park Drive, as described above. Frederick Avenue is lowest in elevation at Deer Park, and slopes upward toward Summit Avenue. If well sited and landscaped, somewhat taller buildings here would not loom over the small neighborhood houses.

The form, height and placement of buildings on Frederick should continue the existing form of the present streetscape. The style and setback of buildings should vary, to look as if they were built individually over time. Setbacks in some places should allow for significant vegetation; for instance, retaining the "cliff" in front of Gaither House as a green feature. Apartments atop the cliff could advertise their fine view of Summit Hall Farm Park across the avenue. As redevelopment occurs, utility

lines along Frederick and into housing complexes should be buried under sidewalks that are styled to be more inviting for pedestrians.

### **Limited Retail**

A single shopping center at or near the present strip shopping center across from the high school should be part of redevelopment, with housing above. Expansion of retail in the residential area is not desirable. Retail overdevelopment, excessive pavement, lights and noise would all increase, and diminish the wooded, quiet character of the neighborhood that soon emerges as one travels east on Deer Park.

### **A Permanent Edge**

The current border between Corridor Development and neighborhood houses should be made permanent. Corridor Development should extend no further down Deer Park or Peony than currently exists. The first houses along Deer Park Drive and Peony should have Residential Buffer or Residential Office (RB or RO) buffer zoning. That includes RB zoning of the house next to and owned by the Devol Funeral Home.

Furthermore, the legal text of the CD zone should be amended to forbid its creep beyond current boundaries of the Corridor. This amendment is necessary for areas of contact where distinct buffer zoning is not feasible. This would include the properties on the west side of Gaither Street and Peony, as well as the house lots on the first block of Peony and Summit Avenue east of Frederick.

### **Intersection of the Frederick Ave. Corridor with Olde Towne**

The Summit Avenue intersection is the traditional entry into Olde Towne. The intersection is well framed by two historic churches. Other lots along Frederick between Peony and Summit are small, mostly with small houses used commercially. The City's existing Olde Towne plan for townhouse- scale redevelopment is appropriate for this section, given the small lots and proximity to the residential neighborhood.

Between Summit Ave. and the railroad overpass/Diamond Avenue intersection, Frederick Avenue will be appropriately framed by mid-rise mixed use development to the east, and redeveloped, somewhat denser apartments behind the overpass to the west.

### **Observatory Heights**

On the west side of Frederick Avenue, the CD zone allows redevelopment of the houses along Frederick between Summit and DeSillum Avenues. Redevelopment here should be small scale buildings appropriate for the historic setting adjacent to Olde Town and the churches. As many of the historic houses should be retained or perhaps moved as possible.

The parcel owned by St. Martin's church is a valued green space in which a big white house sits in a green lawn far from the road. It is a remnant of the historic landscape along Frederick adjacent to Olde Town, and should be preserved. It is zoned RB near Frederick and residential farther away from the Avenue; the Citizens' Plan recommends no rezoning. Other church-related uses are permitted with the

present zoning. The current buffer between small commercial and apartment buildings, and residences should remain between the St. Martins property, Cedar Avenue and the railroad overpass.

The Observatory Heights neighborhood should remain small scale and walkable. An alley from Cedar Street should extend as far south as possible behind commercially used properties, at least from DeSellum to Summit. The alley will permit commercial traffic in this section to enter and exit Frederick Avenue via the traffic light at Summit. A traffic light and crosswalk at Cedar would allow much better neighborhood access to commerce at Olde Towne. Furthermore, the crosswalk will calm traffic and silently announce to motorists that, despite the widened road and the oncoming bridge, they are still in the City.

### **III. The Use of the Citizens' Plan**

Though the Citizens' Plan represents a lot of work and thought on the part of the participants, it does not intend to be a fully-developed land use plan for the Frederick Avenue Corridor. We hope City officials will be inspired by the vision herein, and that they will continue to develop it via an intensive public process. The citizens hope to see the vision incorporated into the City's land use plan and ambitious goals for Gaithersburg's future, and that we or our children see it realized.

Though full development according to the Citizens' Plan is far in the future, planning and work for some of the backbone facilities can begin right away. Examples are East Diamond Avenue/McBain extended as a road connecting the old and new downtowns, and the bicycle and pedestrian or bi-ped routes east and west of Frederick Avenue. City officials should adopt the Diamond Avenue extended route for the Frederick Avenue BRT and become vocal advocates for it in the current countywide BRT planning process.

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<sup>i</sup> A "charrette" is a working meeting intended to produce a complete plan document and/or map.

<sup>ii</sup> The text of the CD zone was changed by a legal text amendment in 2009.

<sup>iii</sup> The "residential street" form would be similar to the European concept of the "woonerf" with serious traffic calming devices.

<sup>iv</sup> The Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) law requires housing builders to include 7.5% units priced for households with well below median income, and 7.5% for households with near median income (about \$95,000 for a family of four).

■ 15+ story  
 ■ 10-15 story  
 ■ 5-10 story  
 ■ 3-5 story  
 ■ 2-4 story  
 ■ Existing Bldg.

**KEY NOTES:**

1. Enhance architectural expressions at gateway & landmark.
2. Bicycle-Pedestrian route.
3. R-B buffer between commercial and residential zones.
4. Rapid Bus Transit.
5. Mixture of new and existing buildings creates variegated streetscape.
6. Green space buffer.
7. Pocket park.
8. Preserve historical grand lawn.
9. Public park/plaza.
10. Bicycle-Pedestrian route wide eastern sidewalk.
11. Traffic calming device or gateway to discourage commercial traffic from entering residential neighborhood.
12. New garage between commercial & residential uses.
13. Green boulevard links Fairgrounds to Park.
14. Signature tower demarcates downtown, 15 stories or more.
15. New intersection facilitate traffic from 1-270 to New Downtown & Fairgrounds.
16. Create gateway to Fairgrounds.
17. Potential development of Fairgrounds parking lot with residential & commercial uses to include replacement parking.
18. Possible redevelopment of mall site creates mixed-use community potentially retaining anchor stores.

