

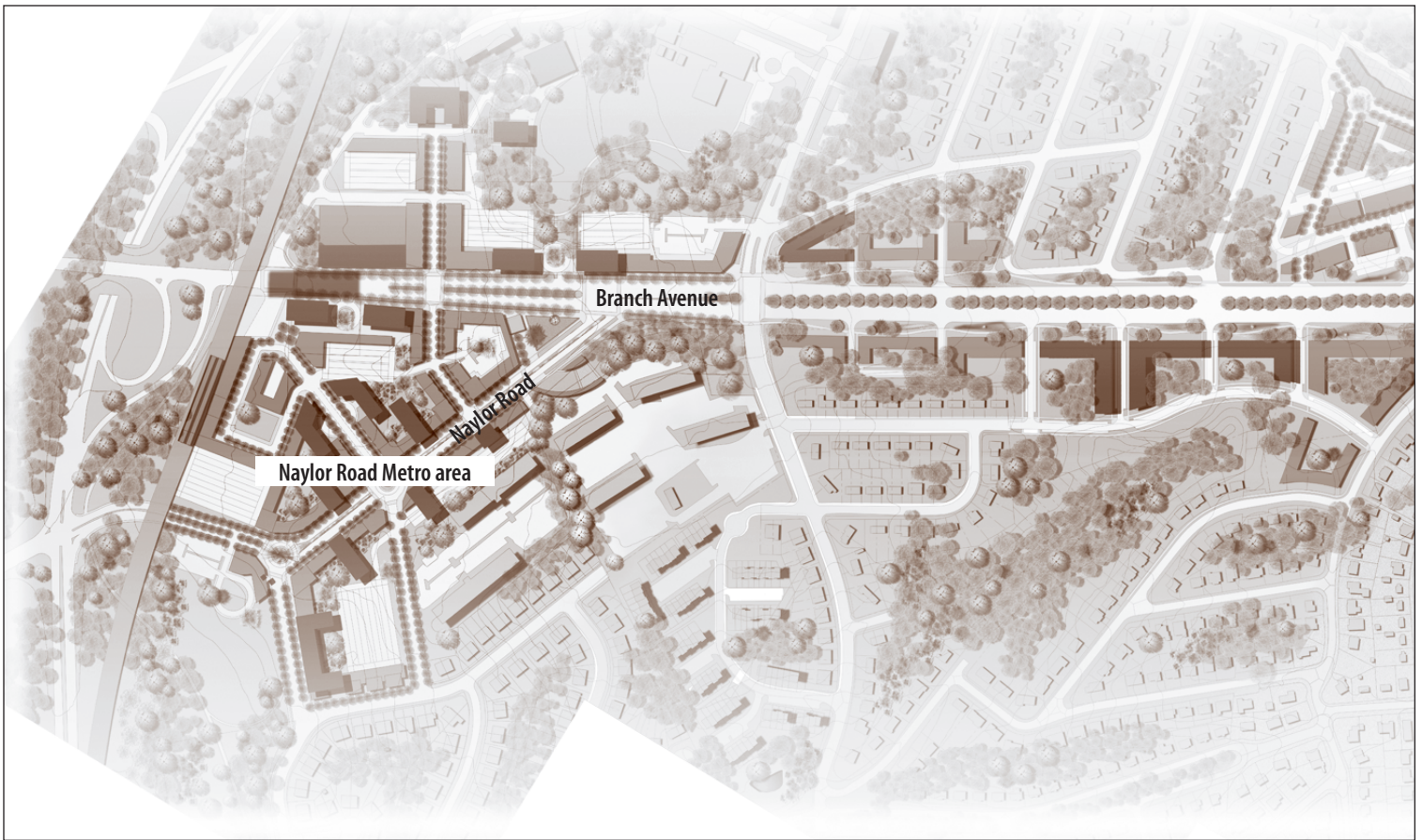


## Chapter 4: The Vision

This plan is organized around the community vision detailed in this chapter. The vision describes the collective thoughts, values, and hopes of the community for its future. The community workshops and stakeholder interviews that were done as a part of this planning process helped shape the vision of what the Branch Avenue Corridor sector plan area could become, maximizing its location and existing infrastructure. Change starts with a vision, which is followed by a plan that reflects priorities, provides strategies, and makes recommendations to realize the vision. The Branch Avenue Corridor vision described below is forward looking. It is based on what the area once was, as well as a desire to regain the area's former vitality and to create a sense of place.

### Vision Statement

*The Branch Avenue Corridor sector plan area is a safe, vibrant, and attractive community that encourages residents to walk to new mixed-use centers on Branch Avenue and the upgraded commercial areas on St. Barnabas Road to shop, work, and socialize. It is a well-connected community that has trails and sidewalks with attractive landscaping and lighting linking residential neighborhoods to shopping, recreation and transit. Pedestrians experience a safe and comfortable walk along both Branch Avenue and St. Barnabas Road because of the improved crosswalks and the traffic-calming devices that now control vehicular traffic along the new urban boulevards where cars and people safely share the road. A mix of old and new businesses provides quality retail goods and services to serve the surrounding community as well as other shoppers. And the new well-designed mixed-use centers provide numerous opportunities for people to gather and socialize in new restaurants, cultural and recreational facilities, plazas, and other community facilities that serve to bring new and long-time residents together to form strong bonds and to ensure a safe and healthy community.*



Illustrative concept of Branch Avenue redevelopment, showing possible new building footprints, streets and green spaces for mixed-use development. This illustration portrays only one of many possible long-range redevelopment scenarios that may result from implementation of the recommended land use concept for this area.

## Vision Elements

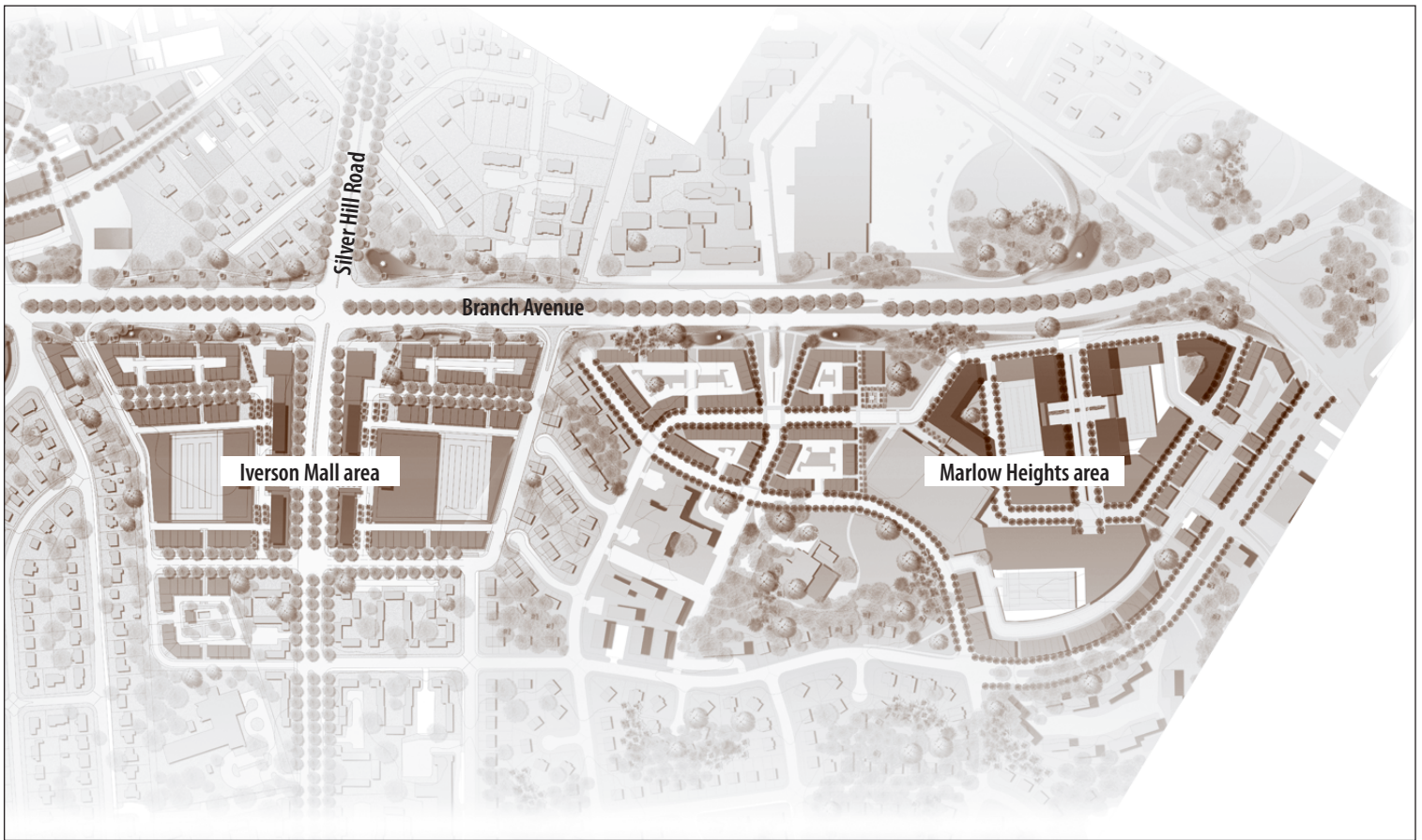
Five elements frame the vision for the Branch Avenue Corridor sector plan area. The plan is organized around these elements:

- Land Use and Economic Development
- Design and Appearance
- Infrastructure to Support the Plan
- Quality of Life
- Community Involvement

### ***Land Use and Economic Development***

*The plan guides future uses of land in ways that will promote economic development, encourage the development of a high-density mix of land uses at Naylor Road Metro Station, and promote medium-density mixed-use development in and around Iverson Mall and Marlow Heights Shopping Center. The plan will also guide the revitalization of St. Barnabas Road commercial areas and protect and enhance nearby residential communities.*

The Branch Avenue Corridor sector plan amends the General Plan by recommending a change in the designation of Naylor Road Metro Station from “Community Center” to “Regional Center.” The plan recommends high-density mixed land uses to stimulate revitalization and redevelopment of existing commercial and retail centers and, by so doing, to attract new high-quality businesses, offices/services, and residential development. The plan envisions a densely developed mixed-use center focused around the Naylor Road Metro Station; primarily office and residential with complementary retail and institutional



uses connected by pedestrian-friendly streets and open spaces. Renovation or redevelopment of Lynn Hill condominiums and Top of the Hill apartments to higher-quality and well-maintained residential units—with safe and strong pedestrian connections to the Metro station—also provides the opportunity to attract new urban residents to the area.

Away from Naylor Road Metro Station the density and intensity of commercial and residential uses taper off along Branch Avenue toward Iverson Mall. Along this segment of the Branch Avenue Corridor, medium- to high-density and intensity mixed-use development with a residential focus is recommended at designated areas. This offers the community a diverse mix of market-rate and workforce housing options.

Iverson Mall, Old Silver Hill Road, and part of Silver Hill Road are recommended for redevelopment. The plan envisions mixed-use, community-oriented centers with moderately dense high-quality residential, commercial, and retail development. The proposed redevelopment pattern of Iverson Mall orients retail activities on both sides of Iverson Street, providing wide sidewalks that encourage pedestrian movement, window shopping, and outdoor café-styled restaurants.

Marlow Heights Shopping Center is recommended for redevelopment to a mixed-use center with moderately dense, high-quality residential units and larger retail and commercial spaces to attract nationally-

known stores. This center is envisioned as an appropriate location for a public library; however, location of this facility would also be appropriate at the redeveloped Iverson Mall.

The plan recommends the use of the Mixed-Use-Transportation Oriented (M-X-T) Zone throughout the area designated in the land use plan for mixed land uses. The M-X-T Zone is imposed as the closest mixed-use zoning technique currently available to the county to adequately implement the vision of the sector plan. If more appropriate mixed-use zoning tools and techniques are developed, which will more adequately implement the goals and vision of this plan, consideration should be given to rezoning of the area identified for future mixed-use zoning. The M-X-T Zone allows for a mix of land uses with high densities and intensities but is limited in its requirements and applications to “place-making” because it lacks the standards necessary to ensure the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment. As a result, the M-X-T Zone application should be closely related to the plan’s development concepts and guidelines. Other zoning change recommendations include rezoning of some properties in the C-M Zone along St. Barnabas Road to the C-S-C Zone—to encourage future uses that are consistent with the goals and vision of the Branch Avenue Corridor sector plan—since the C-M Zone is oriented toward highway (automobile) uses. The plan recommends stronger property maintenance, vigorous code enforcement, streetscape improvements, and beautification treatments along St. Barnabas Road.

Compatibility of new development to existing residential development is a strong consideration of this plan. Strategies are recommended to protect established residential neighborhoods and landmarks within and adjacent to the sector plan area and to improve, attract, and retain businesses.

#### **Development Yield Estimate**

The land use plan estimates the addition of 4000 new dwelling units concentrated within the Naylor Road Metro Station core and edge areas, the Iverson-Marlow Heights Mixed Use Center, and the area in the vicinity of walking distance to the Suitland Metro Station. It estimates a total of approximately 1.5 million square feet of office with approximately one million square feet at the Naylor Road Metro Station and the rest along Branch Avenue corridor and the Iverson-Marlow Heights Mixed Use Center. It also estimates the existing retail and service square footage to remain but replaced with high quality retail and services.

#### ***Design and Appearance***

*Use of design guidelines to facilitate site planning, building renovation, infill development, or redevelopment will upgrade the image, appearance and functionality of the area and create a cohesive, visually appealing, and compatible environment for different types of land uses.*

The plan establishes an overall design framework that will guide both new development and redevelopment efforts in ways that will create attractive streetscape, site, and building design; promote pedestrian and vehicular circulation; and encourage the general development pattern needed to attract new businesses, residents, shoppers and workers. New and existing development will be required to use design principles that minimize opportunities for criminal behavior. These design principles are detailed in the following Quality of Life section of this chapter and when applied in a comprehensive manner they will deter criminals from using public and private areas for illegitimate activities.



**TOP: The existing Naylor Road Metro Station area.**  
**BOTTOM: Imagine the Naylor Road Metro Station area looking something like this after application of the design guidelines!**

The overall appearance of the area will be significantly enhanced through the definition of streetscape design elements that transform Branch Avenue from a car-dominated thoroughfare to a tree-lined boulevard, with inviting sidewalks, landscaped medians, and linear parks. Streetscape improvements will also extend along both Silver Hill Road and St. Barnabas Road. Design guidelines are established for new development and redevelopment for features such as building setbacks, streetscape design, site design and parking, building height and massing, lighting, signage, and street furnishings. The plan establishes specific guidelines to improve the appearance and the streetscape of existing auto dealerships, strip commercial centers, and stand-alone commercial buildings.

***Infrastructure to Support the Plan***

*The plan addresses and recommends the necessary infrastructure to support improvements to roads, transit, and pedestrian facilities, environment, schools, parks, and open space resources.*

The plan recommends the infrastructure improvements necessary to support mixed-use development, increased residential densities, and commercial intensities. The plan makes recommendations to improve vehicular and pedestrian connections between the area’s neighborhoods and Branch Avenue, St. Barnabas Road, and Silver Hill Road. It recognizes, however, that it is undesirable to widen major roadways in the corridor because this would further physically



TOP: The use of contrasting paving material clearly defines pedestrian crosswalks.  
RIGHT: Marked and raised pedestrian crosswalks serve as traffic-calming features.



divide the community, promote more auto usage (particularly by commuters) and reduce reliance on transit and other viable modes of transportation. The transportation network improvement recommendations include the transformation of Branch Avenue, Silver Hill Road, and St. Barnabas (between Branch Avenue and Silver Hill Road) to “major urban boulevards,” and St. Barnabas Road (from Branch Avenue to Temple Hill Road), Wheeler Road (to the Capital Beltway), Naylor Road, Iverson Street (between Branch Avenue and 23rd Parkway), and Old Silver Hill Road to “minor urban boulevards” to create a sense of place instead of a high-speed thoroughfare. These new road classifications are explained in the Transportation recommendations section. The plan also recommends that the State Highway Administration (SHA) investigate the installation of traffic signals at problematic intersections along Branch Avenue and Silver Hill Road to improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation and safety.

Pedestrian/bicycle circulation will be greatly improved by the construction of wide sidewalks, on-road bike lanes, pedestrian and bicycle amenities throughout the sector plan area, and linkages to adjacent residential neighborhoods. The plan recommends continuous sidewalks along both sides of all roads within the study area, including amenities and features such as pedestrian refuge islands, contrasting crosswalks treatments, in-pavement lighting reflectors at crosswalks, curb extensions, mid-block crossings, raised crosswalks, and other traffic-calming techniques. It is also recommended that multiuse trails be provided along the Henson Creek, Barnaby Run, and Oxon Run stream valleys. The trail networks should link to each other and to area destinations such as the Branch Avenue Metro Station, the Naylor Road Metro Station, and the Marlow Heights Shopping Center. The plan also proposes a multiuse trail along Suitland Parkway that will connect to the existing Suitland Parkway trail in the District of Columbia.

The plan also envisions the acquisition of new land for additional park and open space facilities as well as improvements to existing park facilities such as the Marlow Heights and Hillcrest Heights Community Centers. Recommendations include, but are not limited to, acquisition of developable parcels of land within Oxon Run, Barnaby Run, and Henson Creek Stream Valley Parks. This land can be used as active or passive parkland, a five-acre addition to Branch Avenue Neighborhood Playground, urban linear parks (wide green areas on both sides of Branch Avenue), and several urban plazas as part of the redevelopment scheme.

School facility improvement recommendations include the renovation and expansion of the Benjamin Stoddert Middle School, built in 1957 and currently exceeding capacity. Additional school capacity is to be met through renovation/expansion of existing facilities, carefully combined with the construction of new schools as needed. The plan envisions a new full-service fire station near the interchange of St. Barnabas Road and the Capital Beltway, renovation/expansion of the existing Silver Hill Company 29 Station, and a library in the vicinity of the redeveloped Marlow Heights or Iverson Mixed-Use Center.

### ***Quality of Life***

*Included in the plan are policies and strategies that will encourage improvements in the area's overall quality of life, including its public safety, health, sense of community, and environmental quality.*

The plan envisions a high quality of life for those living and working along the Branch Avenue Corridor. Since public safety was identified as the key issue in the area, the plan targets key strategies for improving public safety in the area, creating a community in

which it feels safe to live, walk, recreate, and shop. The strategies include a variety of actions, ranging from improved lighting and surveillance to the creation of active, people-filled centers, implementation of active neighborhood watch programs, coordinated business crime-prevention programs, limits on liquor licenses, proactive code enforcement, and improved use of—and access control within—large parking facilities.

Some of the above recommendations fall within the principles of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). These are techniques that focus on granting residents and visitors access to comfortable areas, thereby making them unattractive to criminals. These tools are used in new development design and revitalization to create an attractive and safe community. CPTED recognizes that criminals are adept at assessing risks to their enterprise. CPTED principles help design areas that criminals consider as risky for illegal activity. The CPTED tenets are territoriality, natural surveillance, activity programming, and space control. Applied in a comprehensive manner, these design principles deter criminals from using public areas for illegitimate activities and increase everyone else's comfort and safety. Much of the Branch Avenue Corridor area was developed without using these principles, and attempts to retrofit properties, such as the barriers used to control access to the Iverson Mall parking lot on Branch Avenue, can often create unattractive situations. If CPTED tenets are included as part of an overall design, compatible materials and design can be included to create a higher quality development.

Similarly, the physical and economic health of the area is tied to how safe its inhabitants feel and the image that the area presents. The image is based both on the built and natural environments. At the same time that new development is being encouraged, steps need to be taken to preserve and/or reclaim the natural areas that have been neglected and are in



A well-designed, well-placed, and well-used public open space with pedestrian amenities creates a comfortable place to meet and relax. It also discourages criminal behavior.



distress. The Branch Avenue Corridor sector plan area contains some of the county's most valuable stream corridors, such as Henson Creek, Barnaby Run, and Oxon Run, which serve as important recreational and ecological resources. These and other natural habitat settings need to be protected and preserved. Similarly, all design guidelines developed for the area will need to incorporate effective techniques to promote environmental sustainability, including those that control and reduce run-off, improve water quality, foster the growth of native vegetation, reduce air and noise pollution, and implement environmentally-sensitive design techniques.

Quality of life also creates a strong sense of place that community members can identify with and be proud of, such as prominent features, landmarks, and gateway entrances. Factors that will enhance a positive sense of place within the sector plan area include attractive and busy mixed-use centers that satisfy the needs of both residents and visitors, gateway entrances, a network of pleasant pedestrian connections that allow people to get to know the area "on foot," a system of parks that allows for a variety of outdoor activities, and attractive community facilities that exceed the area's recreational and educational requirements and encourage residents to get out and walk to gain benefits from a more active lifestyle.

Another key element to creating an improved quality of life for the sector plan area is to focus on improved access and utilization of recreational and educational programs and services. It is a goal of this plan to engage more youth, particularly teenage youth, in both recreational activities as well as community improvement activities.

### ***Community Involvement***

*Ongoing partnership between the government, businesses, and residents in the community will help to implement public and private plan recommendations.*

Development and revitalization aimed at creating long-lasting economic vitality and quality of life improvements must rely on both public and private sector actions. In addition to public funding of necessary infrastructure, programs, and services, businesses and residents need to maintain their properties and be intolerant of activities that undermine the community's values. Partnership and commitment on the part of residents and businesses—working with local and state governments—will lead to success.

The Branch Avenue Corridor sector plan area benefits from numerous community associations in the area. These groups have been actively working for some time to improve their neighborhoods. Through the master plan effort, however, it became apparent that many organizations were relying on key leaders to accomplish their members' objectives. And these leaders were coming up against ever-more-stringent public budget limitations and conflicting needs and priorities from other parts of the county. At the same time, even as they lobbied harder for public improvements, crime was increasing in their neighborhoods. Crime and the lack of public safety were identified as major obstacles to positive change in the area. It became apparent that community associations would benefit from a coordinated effort to address crime. And this effort needs to actively engage businesses as well as the public sector. As a result, the Public Safety Work Group was established and has developed a list of comprehensive strategies to ensure a safer community.

In order to create a safer Branch Avenue Corridor, the image of the community will have to be improved, since an improved image is a major deterrent against crime. This will

necessitate updated and attractive new development, renewed pride, and improved conditions in existing residential neighborhoods. The Public Safety Work Group has identified existing crime hot spots. Working with county agency representatives—including District IV police—the group has developed strategies to address illegal activities. The strategies are based on a combination of targeted enforcement, new regulations to address illegal activities associated with concentration of particular uses, and improved understanding of the community’s role in discouraging crime. A strategy of collaboration is called for if the plan is to succeed with affordable and effective security measures, upgrading the image of existing shopping centers, retail marketing, or an areawide clean-up program.