

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)

Article rank | *20 Sep 2013* | *The Washington Post* | *BY BILL TURQUE*

White Oak plan moves forward

Seen as a long-overdue boost to eastern county

The Montgomery County Planning Board approved a land-use blueprint Thursday that officials hope will eventually transform the long-neglected White Oak section of the eastern part of the county into a “new Silicon Valley” for medical and life sciences research.

The five-member board voted unanimously to send the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan to the County Council and County Executive Isiah Leggett for review. The project’s anchor would be LifeSci Village, a joint venture of the county government and Percontee, a private developer. The company is owned by the Gudelsky family, long active in Montgomery real estate, which has land adjacent to a county property east of Route 29 off Industrial Parkway.

Together, they propose to turn the 300-acre site, once used for sludge composting and as a sand and gravel quarry, into a complex of research facilities, office space, retail and housing. Planners envision a major employment center — catalyzed by the presence of the Food and Drug Administration headquarters next door — that could create up to 10,000 jobs.

Printed and distributed by NewspaperDirect | www.newspaperdirect.com | Copyright and protected by applicable law.

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)

Article rank | 20 Sep 2013 | The Washington Post | bill.turque@washpost.com

Board advances land-use blueprint for eastern county

The plan also calls for the redevelopment of the White Oak Shopping Center and the Hillandale area along New Hampshire Avenue into more walkable communities, supported by stops on the county's projected bus rapid-transit system.

Supporters of the master plan regard it as a long-overdue boost to the eastern county, which never benefited from the booming economic growth that occurred in the western half of the county over the past three decades. From 1986 to 2002, the region, which bumps up against Prince George's County, was under a development moratorium. It came at the behest of Marilyn Praisner, the late council member who represented the area, ostensibly because of concerns about traffic along the region's main road, Route 29.

But over time, demand has grown for the amenities enjoyed by residents in Bethesda, Silver Spring and Rockville — dining, shopping, theaters — and has helped push the master plan through the pipeline.

"The whole eastern part of the county hasn't developed," said Dan Wilhelm, an electrical engineer and community activist who has lived in the area for 35 years. "What we want is more jobs."

One issue that is likely to generate council debate is how to sequence construction so there is adequate transportation and other infrastructure to support it. The master plan calls for a series of elevated interchanges along Route 29 to help regulate heavy traffic, much of it from Howard County. But the interchanges are expensive, at \$100 million each, and can have the effect of cutting off neighborhoods.

This summer, representatives for Leggett (D) and Percontee told the Planning Board that high transportation infrastructure costs made the project economically unfeasible. They requested that the traditional tests used to assess the potential impact of new construction on traffic congestion be set aside in favor of "alternative approaches." They proposed that by the time each new phase of the project is completed, 30 percent of the trips to those destinations be made without cars.

Amendments to the plan approved Thursday call for a technical working group that would convene after council action to work out details of an alternative implementation system. The group's recommendations would be reviewed by the Planning Board.

The plan also includes the stipulation that it will not progress to its second phase unless bus rapidtransit service for the area is funded or other transportation improvements are in place.

The traffic issue is likely to receive serious scrutiny.



"There's a lot of issues with traffic. There's a lot of issues with staging. It's going to be at the council for while," said council member Valerie Ervin (D-Eastern County).

Printed and distributed by NewspaperDirect | www.newspaperdirect.com | Copyright and protected by applicable law.

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)