

B.3 History of Suburbanization in the Washington, D.C. Area

Suburbanization in Washington, D.C. was largely influenced by the same trends that propelled the movement across the United States. It also was influenced by a set of circumstances that were unique to the area as the capital of the United States. As in most areas, suburban development was directly related to transportation routes, especially railroad lines, trolley lines, and freeways. In addition, the location and layout of suburbs were influenced by such factors as ethnic heritage and the number of Federal government workers who were searching for homes. The expansion of the Federal government after the passage of the Civil Service Act (1883), and during and after the Second World War had major impacts on the development of suburbs around Washington, D.C.

B.3.1 Agricultural-Industrial Transition Period (1815-1870)

Unlike many North American cities, Washington, D.C. was developed and planned from its inception to serve a very specific purpose. Although there were several pre-existing farms and plantations on the site, Washington, D.C. was the first capital conceived and planned before construction began. Pierre L'Enfant designed the city for a large population and laid out the city with wide avenues, vistas, and impressive public buildings. For its first 70 years, though, the city was not an important urban center. From 1800 until the Civil War, Washington, D.C. was a small town whose boundaries ended at present-

day Florida Avenue (Figure 2). Not until the Civil War did the population grow substantially. From 1861 to 1864, the population grew from 61,000 to 140,000, mostly with transients attracted by war-related activities. Washington had but a small commercial and industrial foundation, with its principal employer being the Federal government. The lack of substantial industrial enterprise kept the city from growing at the pace of more industrialized cities. Although the city was spared the high levels of pollution associated with industry, it still had many of the issues associated with overcrowding, including water and sewage problems.

Washington's population contained a large proportion of African-Americans. During the Civil War, a large number of the people migrating to Washington were African-Americans from the rural counties surrounding the city. Many also came from the South, among them thousands of runaway slaves. Unlike many cities, Washington, D.C. lacked both the population and the impetuses that drove the early suburbanization movement in other areas (Levy 1980, *passim*).

Some development did occur in D.C., both within and outside the city limits. As early as 1854, a planned settlement was laid out across the Anacostia River at the southern end of the Navy Yard Bridge. This subdivision, Uniontown, catered to the working classes who worked at the Navy Yard, the Federal Arsenal, and St. Elizabeth, an institution for the insane (Levy 1980, 73) (Figure 3).

Mt. Pleasant, along 14th Street beyond Boundary Street was another early subdivision. When it was first laid out in 1865, it was designed to take advantage of slightly higher elevations and more healthful air, and to escape the rising city land values as the city became more congested due to an influx of people during the Civil War. At that time, several large estates were established there. However, it was not until the passage of the Civil Service Act in 1883 that this neighborhood began to be developed into the area that is recognized today for its streets of rowhouses with open front porches. Mount Pleasant generally attracted government workers because of its proximity to the downtown area and its cleaner atmosphere (Levy 1980, 76).

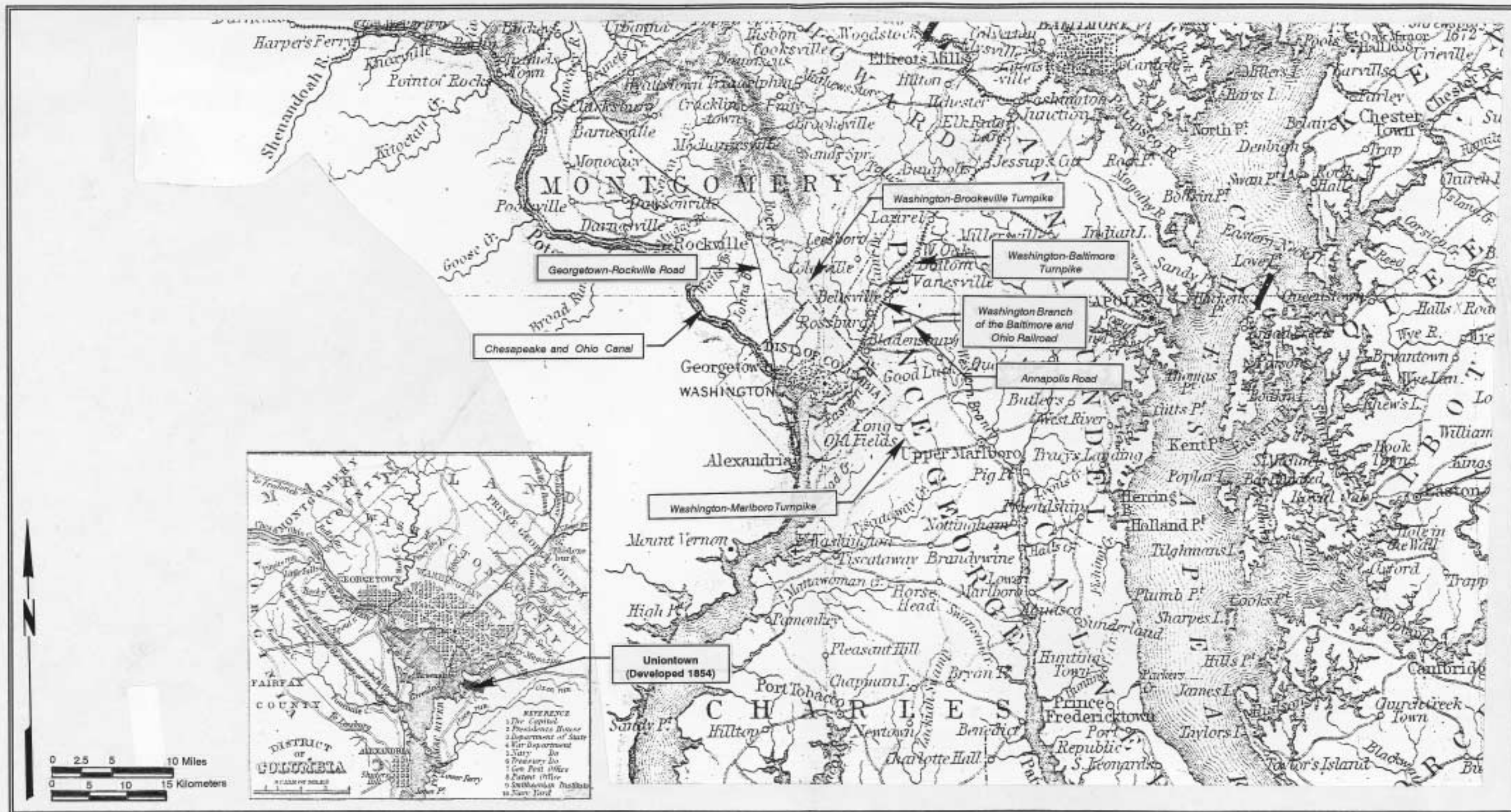
The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B & O) developed fourteen stops along the line between Laurel and Washington, D.C., including Beltsville, Branchville, Charlton Heights (the present Berwyn), College Station, and Hyattsville outside the District, as well as Winthrop Heights and Langdon within the District. These areas did not begin to develop until after the Civil War, however (Levy 1980, 89-90).

Additional information on the development of the City of Washington, D.C. can be found in Paul Caemmerer's book *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Planner of the City Beautiful, The City of Washington*; in Constance McLaughlin Green's two volume work, *Washington, A History of the Capital, 1800-1950*; and in Frederick Gutheim's *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital*.



I-495/I-95 Capital Beltway Corridor
 Transportation Study
 Montgomery and Prince George's Counties
 Suburbanization Historic Context
 and Survey Methodology
 KCI Technologies, Inc.

Figure 2: Detail, 1794 Map of Maryland
 From: A Map of the State of Maryland,
 Dennis Griffith, 1794
 Scale: 1" = 2.5 miles
 1 cm = 1.58 kilometers



**I-495/I-95 Capital Beltway Corridor
Transportation Study**

Montgomery and Prince George's Counties
Suburbanization Historic Context
and Survey Methodology

KCI Technologies, Inc.

Figure 3: Detail, 1856 Map of Maryland

From: *A New Map of Maryland and Delaware*,
J.L. Hazzard, 1856

Scale: 1" = 8 Miles
1 cm = 5 Kilometers