

B.3.3 Modern Period (1930-1960)

The stock market crash of 1929 sharply curtailed post-World War I development. Unlike the rest of the country, though, the suburbs around D.C. continued to expand during the 1930s in order to meet the demand for housing brought about by the large number of people who moved to the area for new Federal jobs. In Montgomery County, the population more than doubled during the 1930s, and by 1940, the Federal government accounted for the largest percentage of wage earners living in the county—a significant change from 1920 when the majority of county residents were employed in agriculturally related concerns. Between 1935 and 1940, over 7,000 new dwellings were built, as many as had existed in total in the county in 1920 (Hiebert and MacMaster 1976, 302-304). New developments included the community of Greenbelt, Maryland, designed and built under the direction of the Suburban Resettlement Division of the Resettlement Administration as an experiment in low-cost planned housing (Federal Writers Project 1937, 829). Also during the 1930s, a permit for the first multi-family unit was granted, indicating the beginning of a new housing form that was to become increasingly popular during the post World War II years. This new construction was further removed from the city than earlier suburbs, therefore residents were heavily dependent on automobile travel (Figure 6).

African-Americans in and around Washington generally did not benefit from the Federal expansion. Post-war migration to the suburbs did not involve large numbers of African-Americans, despite earlier African-American suburbs, due to patterns of discrimination which discouraged African-American business and professional people from buying or renting homes. In fact, the African-American population of Montgomery County dropped significantly during the 1930s and World War II era as restrictive covenants in neighborhoods increased and employment opportunities decreased. There were better paying jobs and more welcoming residential areas in the District of Columbia and Prince George's County (Hiebert and MacMaster 1976, 302-307).

During World War II, the shift to a wartime economy halted suburban growth. After the war, the Federal government acted to stimulate home construction through the Veterans Emergency Housing Act of 1946. Meanwhile, the Washington, D.C. area, like the rest of the country, was suffering from a severe housing shortage, especially low-cost developments, as veterans returned seeking places to live. Temporary housing in areas such as Glen Echo, around Sligo Creek Parkway near Forest Glen Road, and near Takoma Park helped defray some need for shelter while construction on new communities began.

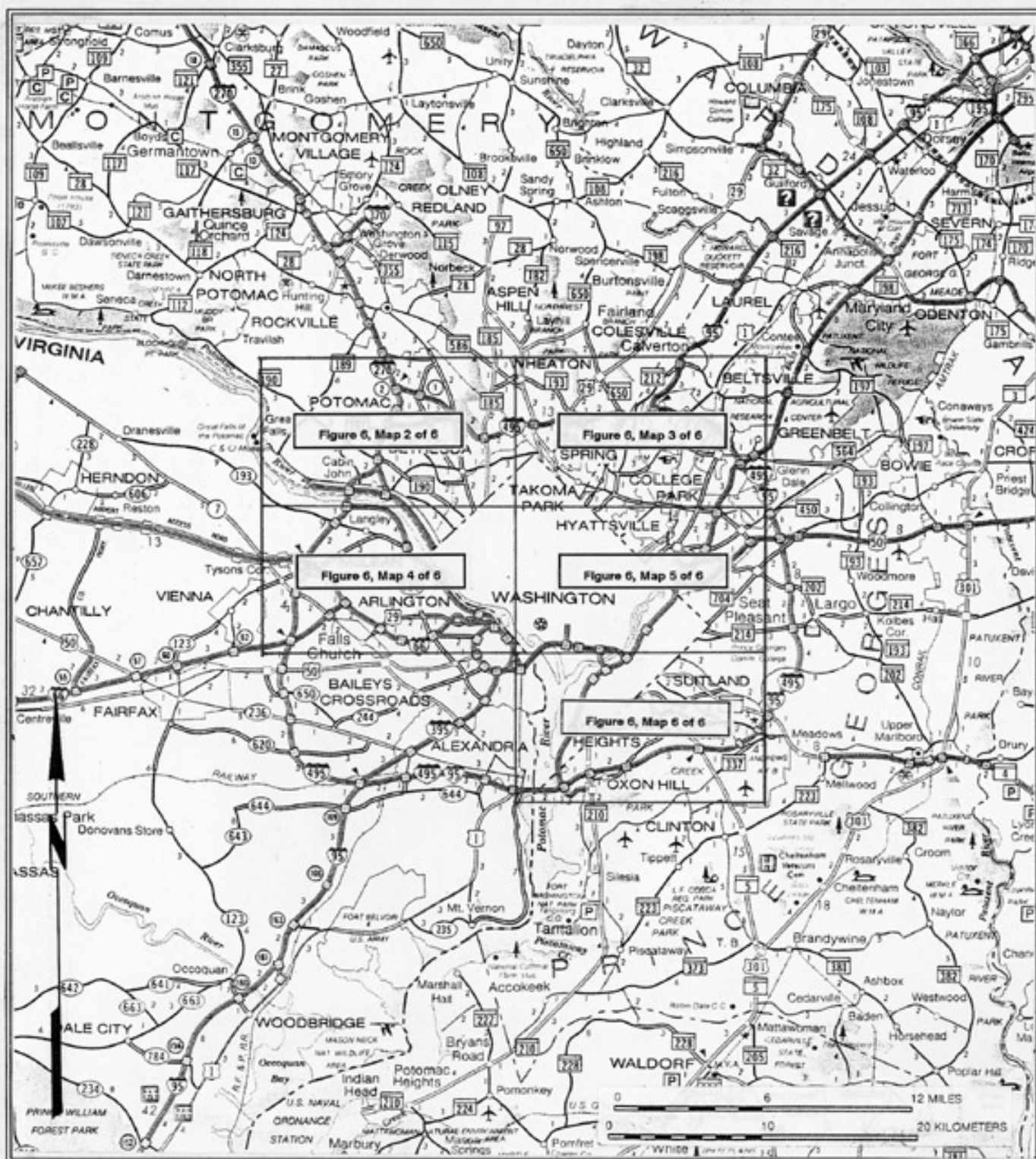
The housing boom following World War II was particularly significant in the Washington metropolitan area. The dropping of the atomic bomb served as a catalyst for the Federal government's decision to decentralize itself from the District of Columbia's core to the outlying suburbs. In 1948 the General Services Administration began a plan to disperse government agencies. In 1950, President Truman proposed \$139 million to build enough offices in the suburbs to accommodate 40,000 people. By 1951, the Federal government was in conference with Montgomery County officials to discuss ways in which the construction of government offices would have the least impact on the county's farmland and water and sewer systems. The development of Federal enclaves in the

suburbs was not new to the county and officials wanted to be certain that they were well planned. Indeed, several facilities were already located there, including the David Taylor Model Basin (1937), the National Institutes of Health (1938), Bethesda Naval Medical Hospital (1942), and the Defense Mapping Agency (1943). Post war facilities included White Oak Naval Surface Weapons Center (1948), the Atomic Energy Commission (1956) and the National Bureau of Standards (1960) (Hiebert and MacMaster 1976, 351-355).

Many new residential developments were constructed some distance from existing markets, schools, and shops in response to the outward movement of jobs and businesses. Automobiles became a necessity. The first post-war shopping centers began to locate closer to residential areas, as road-building projects began to meet the increased demands for access from the suburbs to the city. The first shopping center in Silver Spring was constructed in 1944, and lured other big stores to the area. Soon other areas, including Chevy Chase, began to break ground for suburban shopping centers. The booming industrial and commercial growth encouraged a second housing boom in the late 1950s and 1960s. Differing from the early boom, the second wave of growth focused on larger and more expensive homes. Multi-family housing also increased. By the 1960s, there was an increased emphasis on planned communities that combined single family homes, multi-family units and apartments, and commercial developments.

Washington was greatly impacted by the Capital Beltway (I-495). Completed in 1964, the 66-mile-long double-loop road was designed primarily to allow East Coast motorists to bypass the city. But it also became a magnet for high-rise, urban-style office and retail centers that catered to the thousands living outside the periphery of the city (Frankel and Fehr 1997, 1). Montgomery and Prince George's counties both underwent rapid annual growth as a result of the beltway (Figure 7). In addition, the completion of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway in 1954 and I-95 between Baltimore and Washington in 1971 encouraged suburban Washington to creep ever closer to suburban Baltimore.

As Washington, D.C. increased in size, scale, and national importance as the center of government, the areas around the district expanded to house the thousands of people who flocked to the city for employment opportunities. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and extending into the present, the history of Washington, D.C. can be traced through the history of its suburbs. Unlike the rest of the country, whose suburbs were initially aimed at the wealthy, Washington's suburbs were, from the beginning, designed to appeal to the middle-class who found employment within the city. As the twentieth century progressed, the suburbs developed from being entirely dependent on the city for shopping, entertainment, and culture, to being centers of life themselves.



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

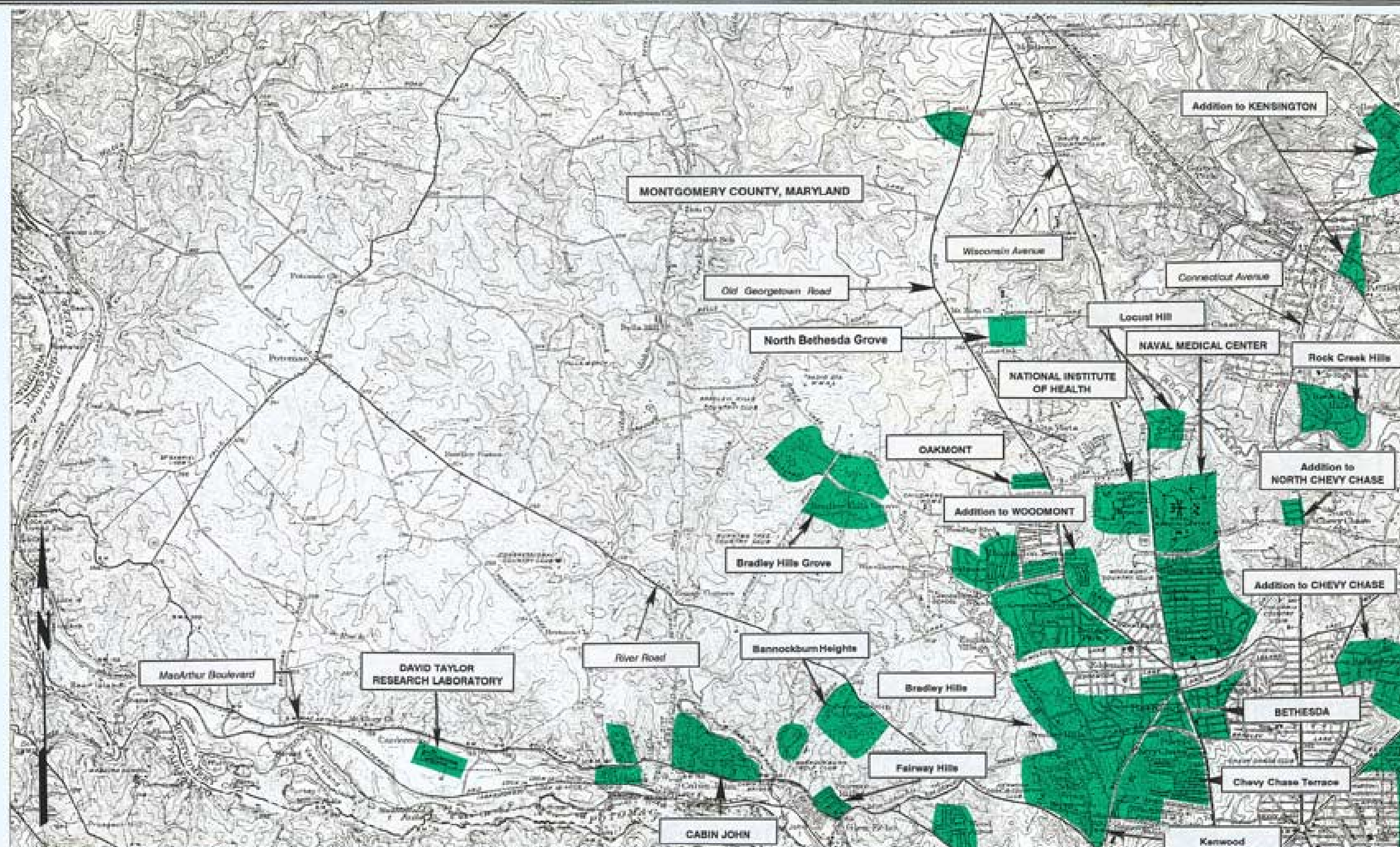
Montgomery and Prince George's Counties
Suburbanization Historic Context
and Survey Methodology

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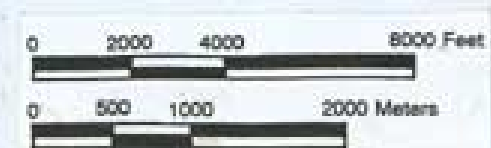
**Figure 6, Map 1 of 6
Map Key**

Source: Maryland Department of Transportation
State Highway Map

Scale: 1: 380,160



TAKOMA PARK	Municipalities	LEGEND	Areas of Suburban Development, 1918-1944
Tenleytown	Neighborhoods		
Capital Beltway	Transportation Routes		



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

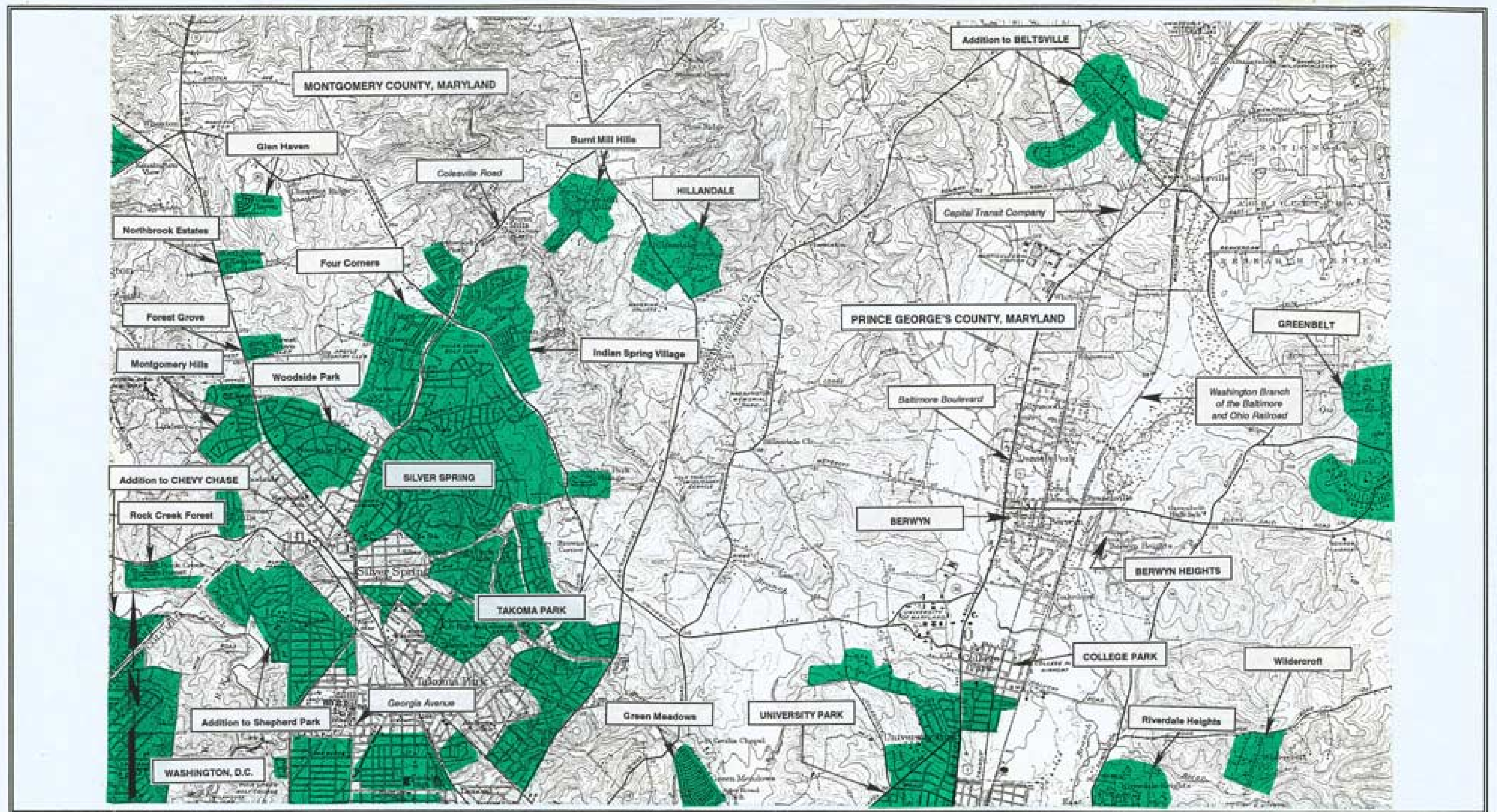
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Figure 6, Map 2 of 6
Map of the Washington, D.C. Area, 1944

United States Geological Survey
Washington and Vicinity Topographic Map

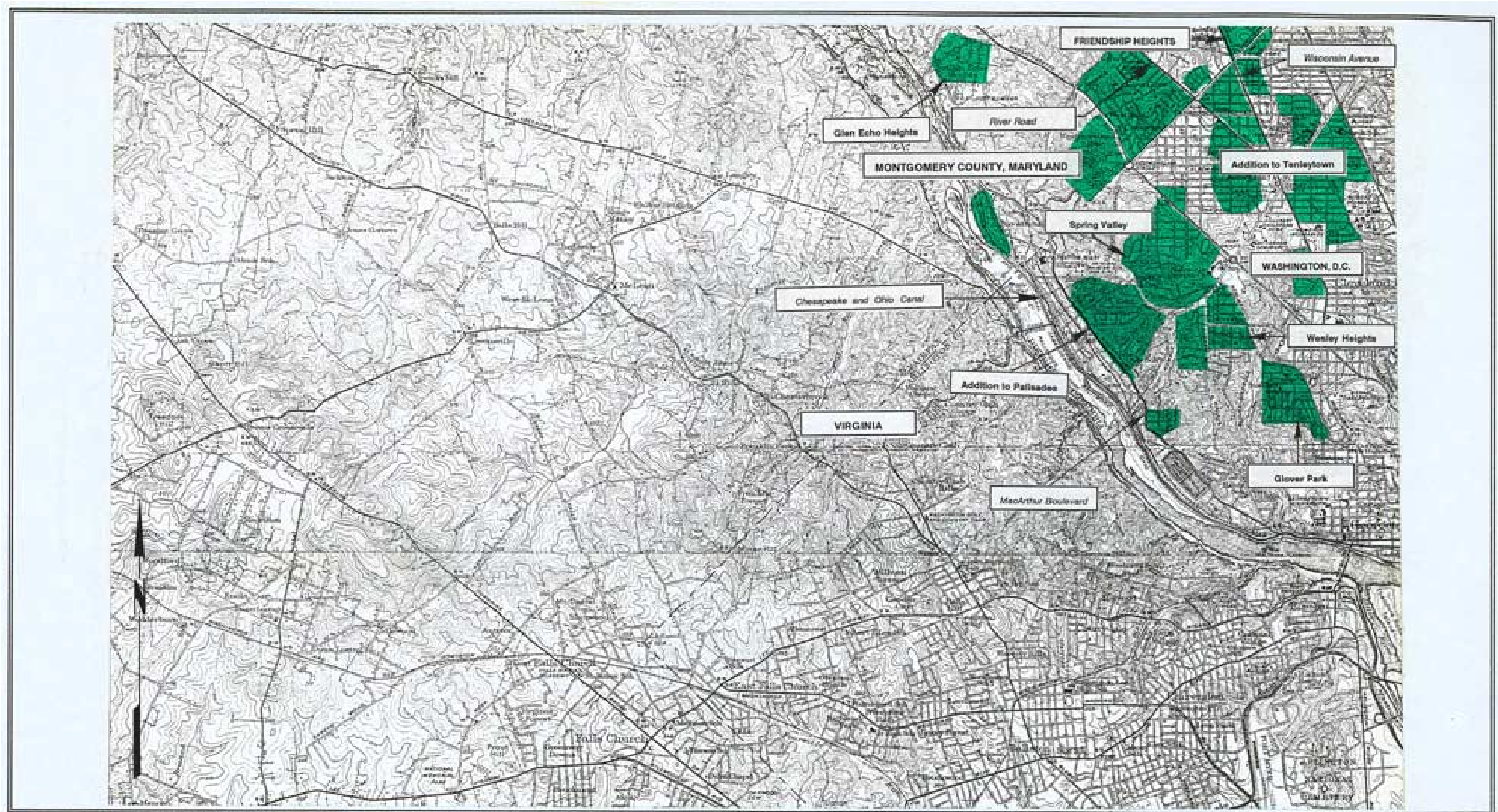
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1 cm = 480 Meters



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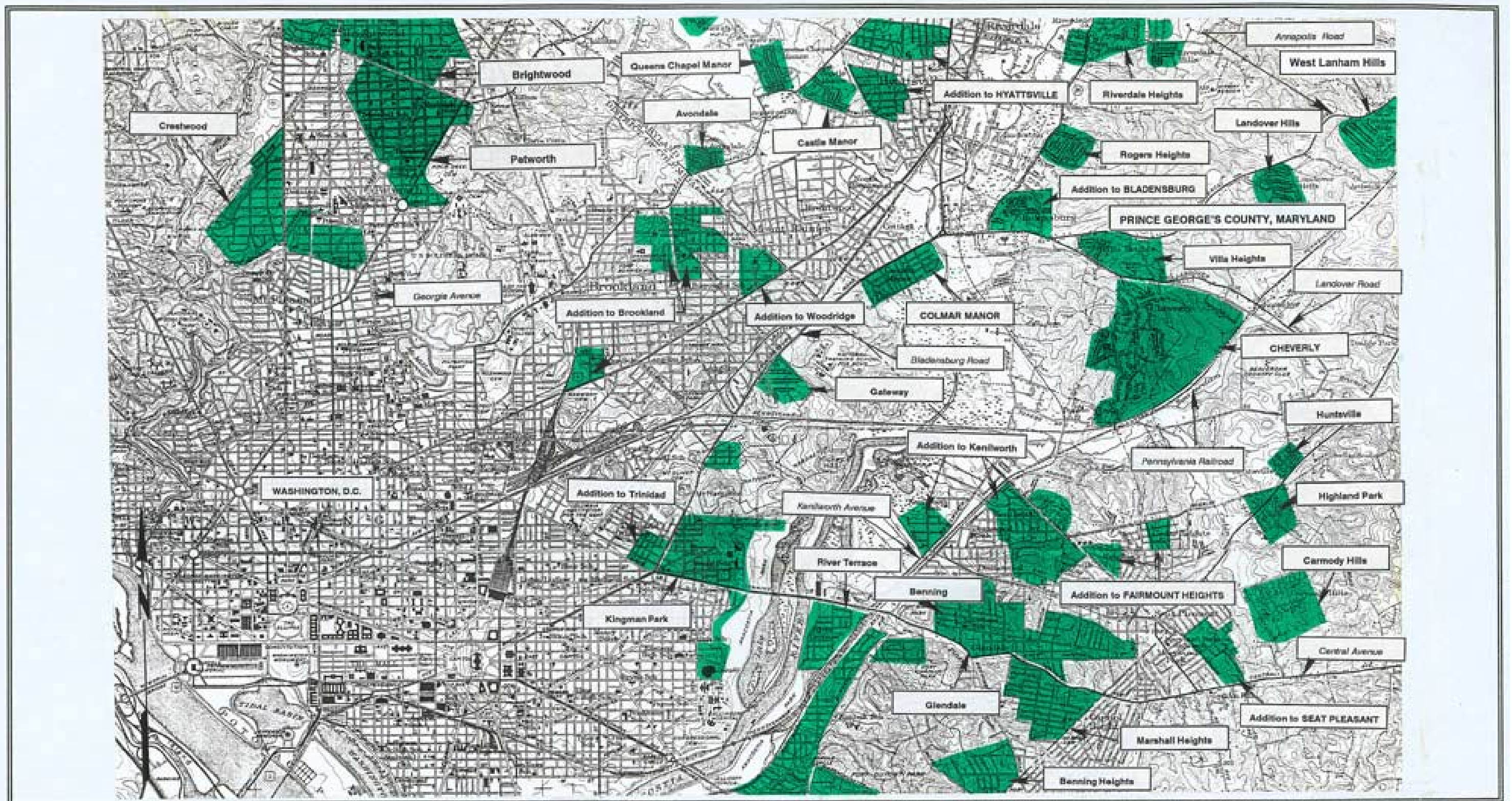
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Figure 6, Map 3 of 6
Map of the Washington, D.C. Area, 1944
United States Geological Survey
Washington and Vicinity Topographic Map
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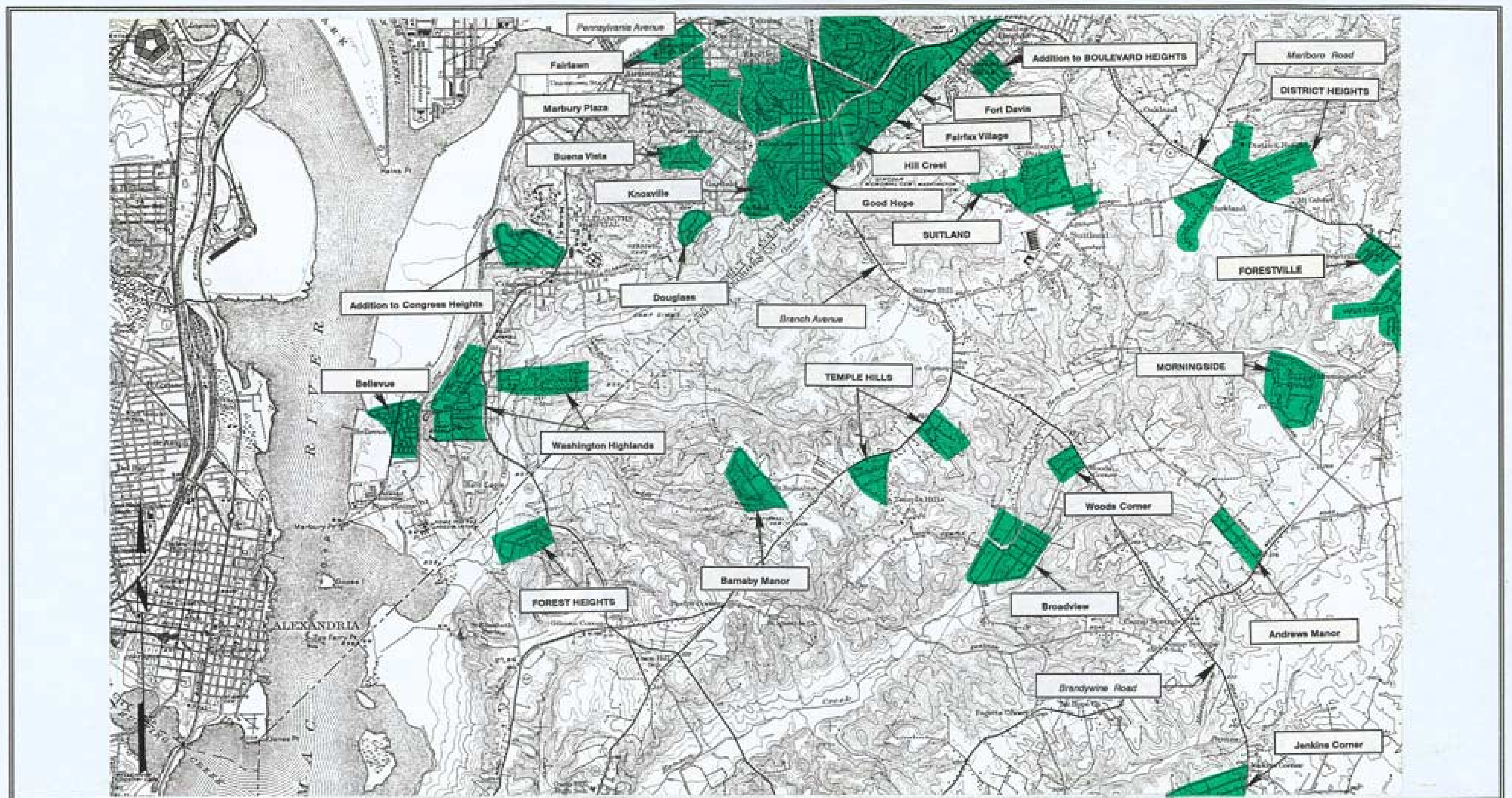
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**Figure 6, Map 4 of 6
Map of the Washington, D.C. Area, 1944**
 United States Geological Survey
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Figure 6, Map 5 of 6
Map of the Washington, D.C. Area, 1944
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TAKOMA PARK

Tenleytown

Capital Beltway

Municipalities

Neighborhoods

Transportation Routes

LEGEND

Areas of Suburban Development, 1918-1944



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Figure 6, Map 6 of 6
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