

The
SUGARLOAF
Area Plan

BRIEFING BOOK



Livable Frederick Planning and Design Office

Frederick County Government
Frederick County Maryland
30 North Market Street
Frederick, MD 21701





The Sugarloaf Area Plan Briefing Book

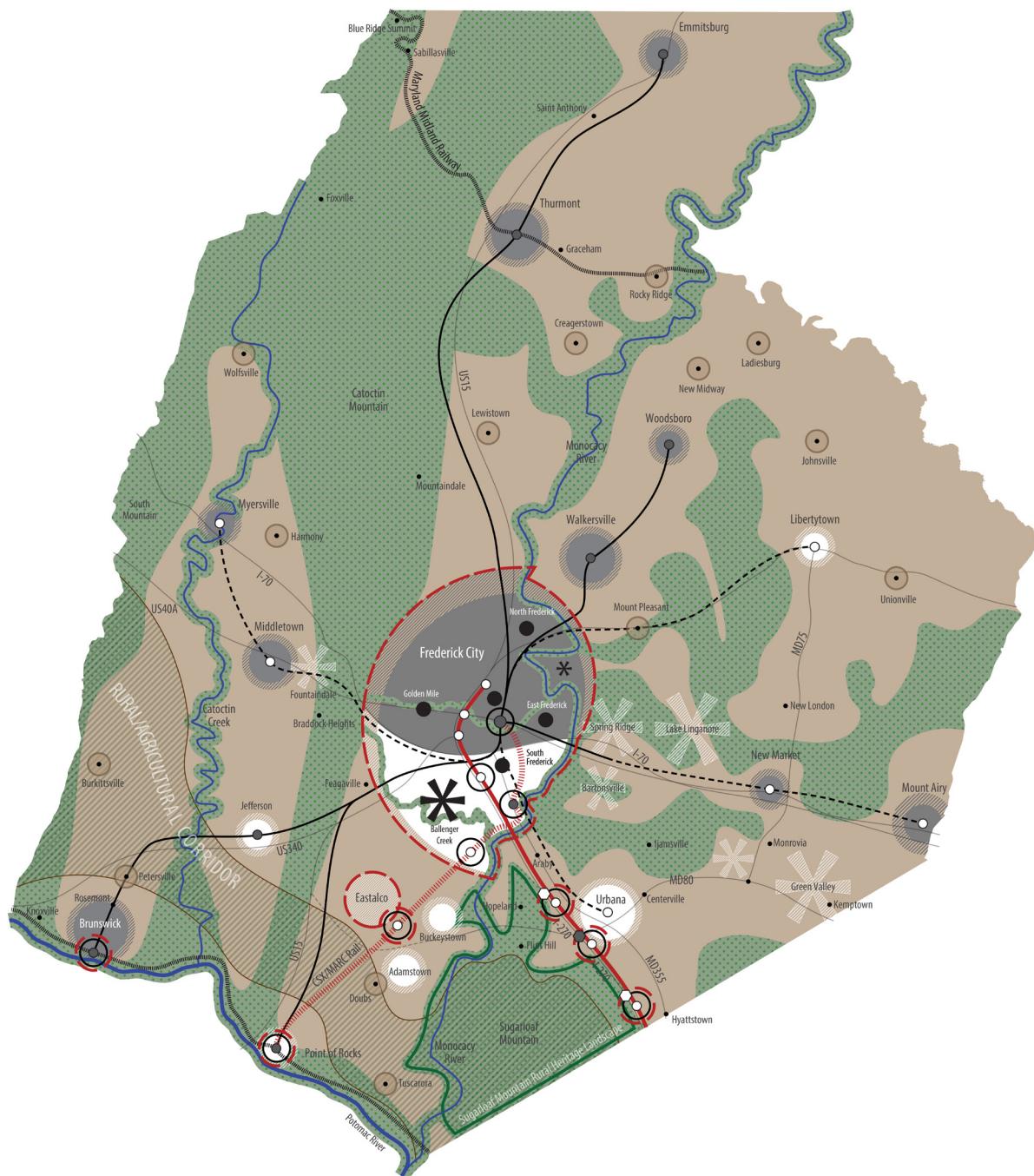
Contextual Information and Initial Project Scope



Sugarloaf Area Plan

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Introduction

Livable Frederick Master Plan

The Planning Department has initiated the approved Implementation Program for the *Livable Frederick Master Plan* (LFMP) following the September 3, 2019 adoption of the planning document by the Frederick County Council.

The Implementation Program for the LFMP describes future planning efforts in the County, sets priorities among those efforts, and establishes overall work plans and schedules. Important underlying objectives of the Implementation Plan--and the LFMP itself-- include the fostering of transparency and informed participation in the process for creating future plans.

Targeted planning initiatives, including the creation of large area plans where the focus is on broad and contiguous areas of the County, will implement the LFMP over time. Specific work plans will be reviewed and discussed annually with input from the County Council, the Planning Commission, and the public. The *Sugarloaf Area Plan* is an example of a *large area plan*, as described within the Development Framework section of the LFMP and the County's annual Implementation Program. The *Sugarloaf Area Plan*'s focus on a specific geographic area will most likely result in changes to the County's Comprehensive Plan map and zoning map, as new policies, goals and land use recommendations will be identified. The completed *Sugarloaf Area Plan* will be adopted as an amendment to the *Livable Frederick Master Plan*.

Thematic Plan

The Thematic Plan Diagram – a key component of the LFMP - broadly reflects the vision and strategies articulated in the LFMP. The Thematic Plan graphically depicts the preferred pattern and geographic distribution of new development in the County within the described Primary and Secondary Growth Sectors, as well as the general pattern of protection of our natural resources within the Green Infrastructure and Agricultural Infrastructure Sectors.

The Green Infrastructure Sector of the LFMP is identified as supporting the conservation of natural resources and environmentally-sensitive areas in the county; directing urban and suburban growth away from green infrastructure and sensitive areas; and, ensuring the protection and integration of green infrastructure where it exists within areas targeted for growth. Sugarloaf Mountain and its environs are key components of the Green Infrastructure Sector within the LFMP.



Briefing Book

This briefing book for the *Sugarloaf Area Plan* provides a broad introduction to the Sugarloaf Planning Area, including historical context, a description of current conditions, and a list of challenges and opportunities facing the area that can serve as a starting point for discussion between residents, landowners, institutions, employers, public officials, planners, and other stakeholders. It is hoped that the release of this Briefing Book will serve to facilitate these discussions, engage citizens in the planning process, and allow for informed decisions by elected officials, institutional partners, and private sector stakeholders.

The Sugarloaf Planning Area is 17,630 acres in size. Physical proximity and visual relationships to Sugarloaf Mountain, as well as overall landscape-related associations with the mountain, determined the planning area, which is bordered by MD 80, Fingerboard Road to the north, and I-270 to the east. The western boundary includes the Monocacy River, the southern portion of Greenfield Road, and a portion of MD 28 (Tuscarora Road). The planning area ends at Frederick County's southern border with Montgomery County.

The Plan will document and describe the areas' natural resource base, its ecological significance and bearing on landscape-scale land use planning. The purpose of the Plan is to steward the Sugarloaf Area's unique and iconic assets, maintain its rural character and scenic attributes, protect environmental resources, and enhance the quality of the landscape.

Challenges & Opportunities

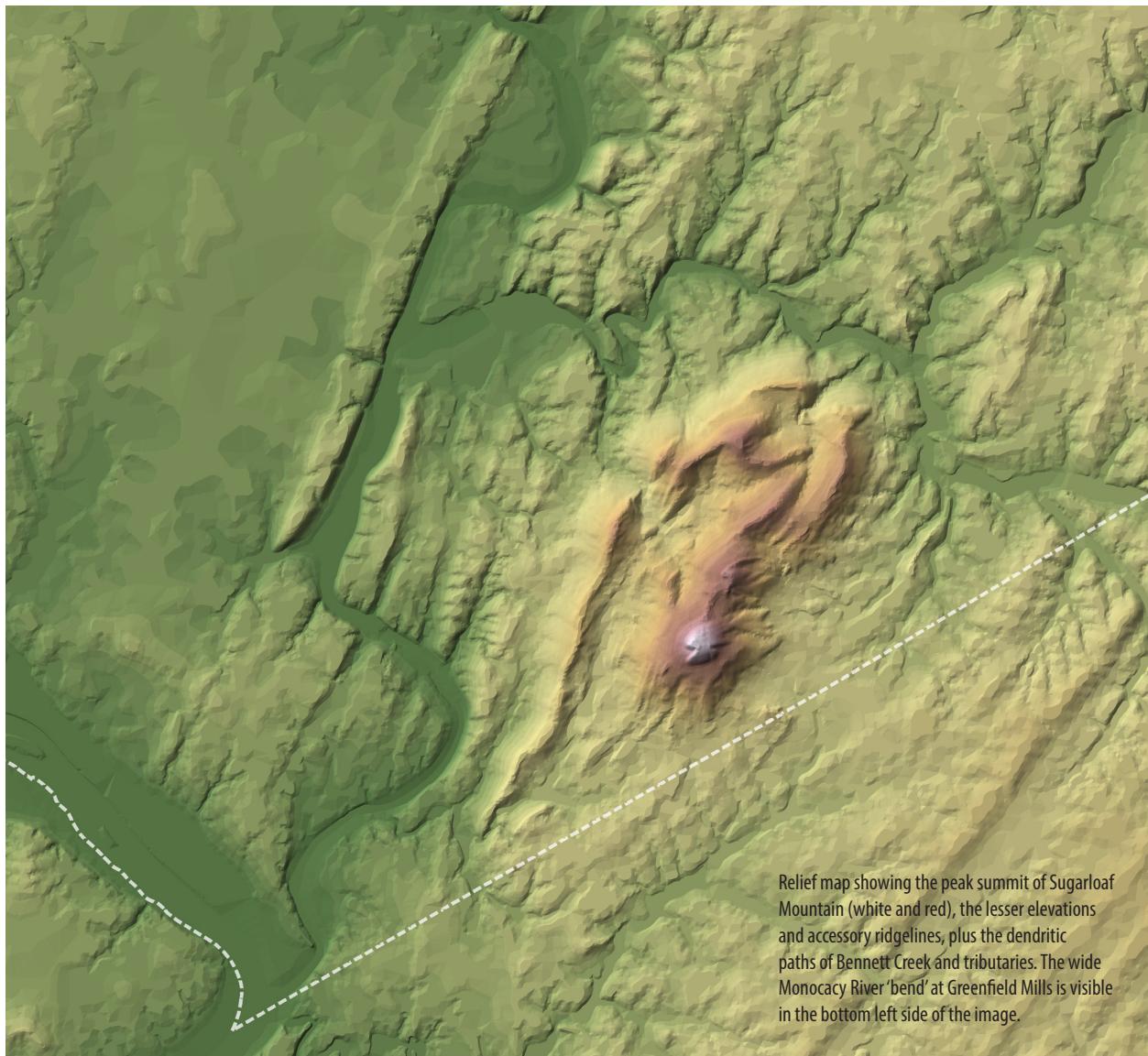
Every thorough planning effort begins with a series of questions and considerations about the place, or topic, being studied. It is a goal of this Briefing Book to articulate the most critical challenges facing the Sugarloaf Area, as well as to describe opportunities that might be useful in meeting these challenges. The following questions provide a starting point for this important discussion:

- What are residents' desires and concerns regarding the future of the Sugarloaf Planning Area? What is the community's vision for this area?
- Should the Sugarloaf Area Plan focus primarily on environmental conservation and natural resource enhancement? Rural land preservation? Overall environmental and economic sustainability? Another issue of concern?
- How can the community best support the continued preservation of – and access to – Sugarloaf Mountain?
- What are appropriate locations, scales, densities, and impacts of future land uses or development in the Planning Area? What would new development look like, and how would it perform in terms of maintaining the rural environment?
- Can additional residential, commercial, office, or institutional land uses be accommodated without negatively impacting the area's rural qualities, or degrading natural resources?
- Is the transportation network in the Planning Area adequate to serve the planned needs of the community? Can it support new institutional facilities or employment uses?
- Should the local roadways in the area be brought up to current functional standards through widening and upgrading, or be maintained in their scenic and rural condition? Should the construction of new roadways in the area be considered? Are there existing roadways in the area that warrant inclusion in the County's Rural Roads Program?
- Are there challenges and opportunities that should be added to this list?

Sugarloaf Area Background

“... Those who appreciate natural beauty will be better people, people who treat each other better.”
Gordon Strong

The dominant feature of the Planning Area is Sugarloaf Mountain, a unique and isolated geologic feature called a “monadnock.” A type of mountain, a monadnock is what remains after the surrounding lands have eroded over millions of years. The mountain rises approximately 800 feet above the surrounding lands, and stands at 1,282 feet above sea level. Sugarloaf Mountain has two (2) primary summits as well as accessory ridgelines with lesser peaks and lower elevations. Sugarloaf Mountain towers above a rural landscape of forestlands, streams and rivers, low hills, agricultural fields, and very low-density residential development. The iconic peak contributes significantly to the area’s unique place identity, within a broader landscape setting that contains distinctive scenic qualities, rich natural assets, and a unique cultural history.



Relief map showing the peak summit of Sugarloaf Mountain (white and red), the lesser elevations and accessory ridgelines, plus the dendritic paths of Bennett Creek and tributaries. The wide Monocacy River 'bend' at Greenfield Mills is visible in the bottom left side of the image.

Sugarloaf Mountain and the immediately adjacent lands owned by Stronghold, Incorporated, comprise 3,400+- acres. Through the singular efforts of the Stronghold organization, this privately-owned mountain has remained open to the public for hiking, bird watching, student field trips, and the experience of enjoying the natural world in a quiet and peaceful local setting. Recognizing Sugarloaf's exceptional qualities, the Secretary of the Interior designated Sugarloaf Mountain as a National Natural Landmark in 1969. One of just six (6) such sites in Maryland, National Natural Landmarks are chosen for their "...condition, illustrative character, rarity, diversity, and value to science and education." The National Park Service administers the program and works cooperatively with landowners, managers and partners to promote conservation and appreciation of our nation's natural heritage.

Gordon Strong, a Chicago businessman with ties to the Washington D.C. real estate market, acquired the mountain and adjacent lands over a period of nearly 50 years, and established Stronghold, Inc. in 1946 as a non-profit entity to preserve the mountain and promote environmental education and appreciation. From its inception in 1946, Stronghold, Inc. has embraced Gordon Strong's foresighted protection of the natural resources, forestlands, and wildlife habitats of Sugarloaf Mountain. Barring

any changes to its current structure or organization, the non-profit corporation, in its current form, is subject to a 'sunset date,' which would occur in 2045. One potential outcome of this *Sugarloaf Area Plan* may be to discover ways in which the community can assist Stronghold Inc. in maintaining the tradition of public access to the mountain in the latter half of this century.

Stronghold's stewardship mission and function, including free access to the mountain, has significant elements of the 'public trust doctrine,' whereby Sugarloaf exists, essentially, as a resource held in custodianship –or trust- by the Stronghold Board of Directors for the benefit of the public and for the purpose of maintaining and sharing its intrinsic natural and cultural value. Various private and public sector entities – *in cooperation with Stronghold Inc.* - may be helpful in advancing a long-term vision



Strong Mansion



that ensures public access to the mountain, wildlife protection, and sustainable management of the mountain's environmental and cultural resources in perpetuity.

Directly adjacent to Sugarloaf Mountain is the 1,800+/- acre Monocacy Natural Resource Management Area (MNRMA), owned and managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. These public lands also contain extensive forestlands, fields, and agricultural uses, where ecological research and environmental studies are conducted.

Building on the legacy of conservation established by Gordon Strong and the State of Maryland for the centerpiece lands (Sugarloaf Mountain and the MNRMA), the *Sugarloaf Area Plan* will address the long-term sustainability of the Sugarloaf Planning Area, and seek to preserve its rural qualities and defining natural attributes.

The Forest Environment

Although Sugarloaf Mountain and the vast forestlands are defining elements in the Planning Area, forest covers just over half (9,451 acres or 53.6%) of the area's 17,630 acres. These forestlands are high in biodiversity, with ecologically significant landscapes and wildlife habitat, according to data from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. These resources are rich, inherently valuable, and provide multiple environmental benefits or 'services' for humans, such as:

- Sequestering carbon and purifying the air
- Filtering and cooling water in streams and aquifers
- Storing and cycling nutrients
- Pollinating crops and other plants



View from Comus Road



Trees and forests are sometimes described as 'carbon sinks,' a condition where carbon (CO₂--carbon dioxide) is sequestered—absorbed or retained – by plants. Carbon storage by forestlands is both environmentally and economically valuable. Carbon, that would otherwise have been emitted through the combustion of fossil fuels into the atmosphere as CO₂, thus contributing to climate change, is instead trapped in living trees. This sequestration, therefore, provides an economic benefit by: helping to reduce CO₂ concentrations; limiting the negative effects of climate change; and, minimizing the negative impacts on people and the planet.¹

Land-use and land-cover related options for mitigating climate change (reducing its speed and impact of climate change) include: expanding forests to accelerate removal of carbon from the atmosphere; modifying the way cities are built and organized to reduce energy and motorized transportation demands; and, altering agricultural management practices to increase carbon storage in soil.²

Planning Area History

According to historians, the name 'Sugarloaf' has derivations from the 16th century sugarcane industry in Brazil, where blocks of sugar were placed in conical molds of clay for ship transport. In 1712, Swiss explorer Christoph von Graffenreid, visited current-day Frederick and Montgomery Counties, and wrote, "From there we went further back upon a mountain of the highest in those parts, called Sugar Loaf, for it has the form of a loaf of sugar....".

English and German settlers each began to permanently settle in the Sugarloaf area by the 1740's. Native American foot trails and wildlife migration paths established the first travel routes and were upgraded to facilitate the transport of supplies and products to and from lumber mills, flour mills, forges and furnaces. The Johnson Furnace, built by Roger Johnson (brother of Maryland's first Governor, Thomas Johnson), was one of the earliest known industries in the Sugarloaf area, circa 1775. An early forge existed around this time on the Bloomsbury Tract, northeast of the summits on Bennett Creek. Other early and notable industries in the Sugarloaf area included the New Bremen Glass Works, established around 1784 by Johann Friedrich Amelung in the vicinity of Park Mills Road and Bear Branch Road, on Bennett Creek, as well as Adam Kohlenberg's Glass Factory.

By the mid-19th century, industries in the Sugarloaf Area included stone and slate quarries; however, the principal rural industries continued to be small service shops such as blacksmiths, wheelwrights, cobblers, distilleries, as well as lumber and flourmills.

Rural Roads

These early industries relied on roadways and waterways to make their businesses economical. Sugarloaf Mountain Road, for example, was built to transport the pig iron from Johnson Furnace to Bloomsbury Forge near Urbana. Today, many of these historic roadways exist within the planning area; some are

¹ Bluffstone, R., J. Coulston, R.G. Haight, J. Kline, S. Polasky, D.N. Wear, and K. Zook. 2017. Chapter 3: Estimated Values of Carbon Sequestration Resulting from Forest Management Scenarios. The Council on Food, Agriculture, and Resource Economics (C-FARE) Report No. 0114-301c, Washington, DC.

² Brown, D.G., C. Polasky, P. Bolstad, S.D. Brody, D. Hulse, R. Kroh, T.R. Loveland, and A. Thomson, 2014: Ch. 13: Land use and Land Cover Change. Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment, J.M. Melillo, Terese Richmond, and G.W. Yohe, Eds., U.S. Global Change Research Program, 318-332.



included in the County's Rural Roads Program. Rural Roads are primarily gravel roads that represent the migration, settlement and travel patterns of the area's early population. They are important components of their historic landscapes, providing links to early settlements and industries. These roads also offer opportunities for additional recreation such as bicycling, horseback riding, and running. However, these roads can present public safety concerns because of their alignment, constrained width, and occasional deep ruts and ditches resulting from washouts following storm events.

Development

The character of an area as well as the health of its land can change over time. Land use changes and land cover conversions are shaped by a wide variety of factors including demographic trends, economic markets, laws and regulations, social and cultural preferences, politics, and technology.

The 20th century's population growth, exurban expansion, and construction of interstate highways such as I-270 (formerly U.S. 240) resulted in the creation and development of residential subdivision lots around Sugarloaf Mountain. This growth and development reflected the attraction to the mountain and the area's natural beauty as a desired location for rural living. Since the 1960's, the exercise of land subdivision within the zoning districts that comprise the Sugarloaf Planning Area has created a total of 710 residential lots. As of November 2019, 86% of these lots are developed with residential dwellings or agricultural buildings. In addition to the lots constituted through the subdivision process, the Planning Area also contains many singular land parcels, most of which are developed (with the exception of the majority of Stronghold, Inc. lands and the DNR holdings), bringing the total number of residential dwellings in the Planning Area as of October 2019 to 830. An analysis of data from U.S. Census data (2013 ACS, 5-year estimate) shows the Area's population to be 2,200.

In addition to residential development, thirteen (13) commercial operations, private institutional facilities, and large-scale agricultural activities are located within the Planning Area. Some of these land uses include golf courses, residential retreat centers, equestrian facilities, an environmental education center, and a veterinarian hospital/animal boarding facility. The County Zoning Ordinance establishes these uses as principal permitted land uses or allowable by special exception in the Agricultural and Resource Conservation zones.

The early roads in the Sugarloaf Planning Area, which once carried infrequent and slow-moving horse-drawn freight wagons, now carry thousands of vehicles each day providing access to hundreds of residential dwellings as well as large commercial and institutional facilities. This increased vehicular activity on a transportation network with many roadway alignment challenges (curves and hills), intersections with inadequate site distance, and constrained travel lanes (widths, adjacent vegetation) can jeopardize public safety.

Human-centered land uses—their scale, location, and density—alter and disrupt the character of rural neighborhoods to varying degrees, from loss of forest cover, rural road overload, noise pollution, and even viewshed degradation. The Sugarloaf Planning Area's rural character, forested environments, and cultural heritage can be preserved for future generations through sound policies and actions that maintain the majestic beauty of Sugarloaf Mountain and its surrounding rural countryside.

Zoning Districts within the Sugarloaf Planning Area

Zoning District	Acreage	% within Sugarloaf Planning Area
Resource Conservation	8,962	50.8%
Agricultural	7,385	41.8%
R-1 Residential	631	3.5%
Mineral Mining	18	< 1%
General Commercial	7	< 1%
Village Commercial	0.29	< 1%

*Roadways, their rights-of-way, and the Monocacy River comprise the remaining acreage in the planning area.



Thurston Road

Area Planning History

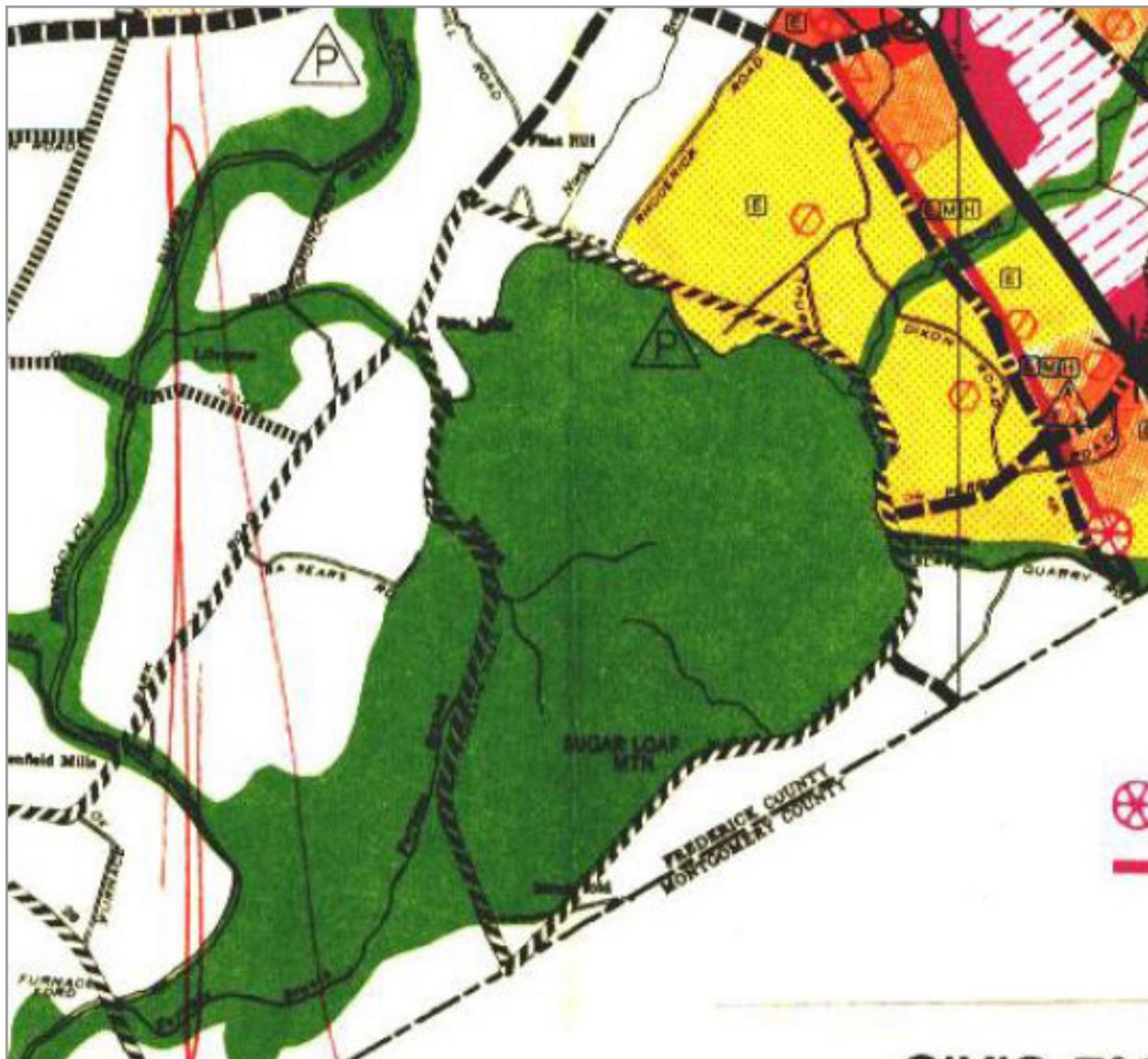
1959 Land Use Plan

Frederick County's first Land Use Plan was approved in January 1959, and identified Sugarloaf Mountain proper, as 'Recreation,' with some of the surrounding woodland environment designated 'Conservation.' Based on the 1959 Land Use Plan map, the zoning classification of C-1 Conservation was subsequently applied to Sugarloaf Mountain and the Furnace Branch stream valley. The purpose and intent of these land use districts was described in a March 1964 report by the Frederick County Planning Commission, which defined the C-1 Conservation District in the following manner: *"This district is created to protect watersheds and to provide permanent open space that will help organize and direct development and provide space for recreational use. It is to conserve geologic features, forest cover and historical sites for public educational purposes, and as an economic and recreational resource for the general welfare of the County."*



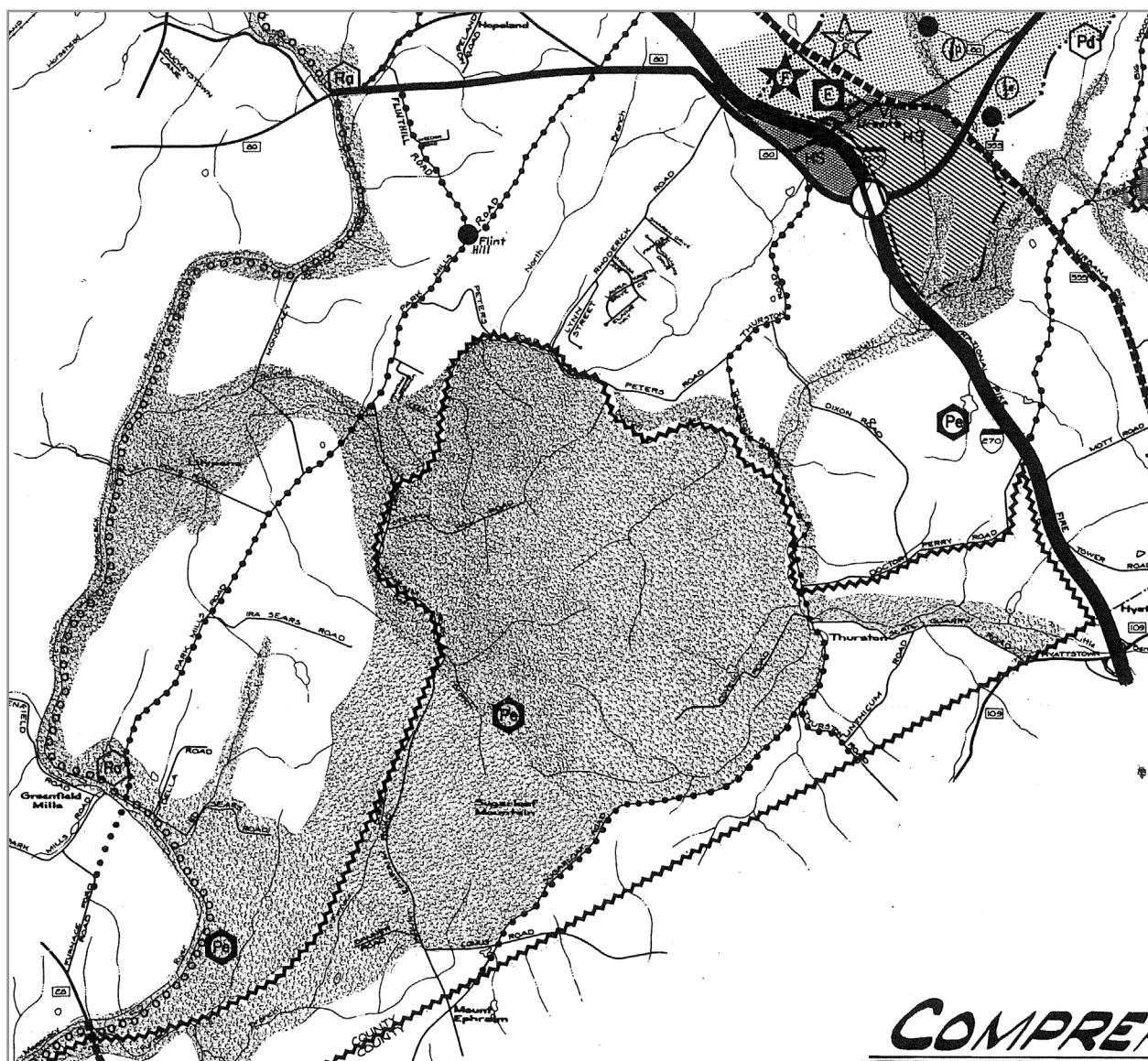
1972 Comprehensive Plan

The 1972 Countywide Comprehensive Plan continued to depict Sugarloaf and its close environs as 'Conservation' on the land use map, but included a large area for future low-density residential growth and development in close proximity to the mountain, from Peters Road to I-270; this 1972 residential growth area included a new roadway parallel to I-270, plus one of the first depictions of the defunct Corridor Cities Transitway, planned from Gaithersburg to Frederick. Surrounding the identified Conservation and Residential areas were large areas with a 'Rural Reserve' designation (shown in white) which included scattered residential development as well as forestlands and aquatic systems. The Rural Reserve land use plan designation was subsequently changed to the Agricultural/Rural designation in the 1984 Plan, and has been in use since that time.



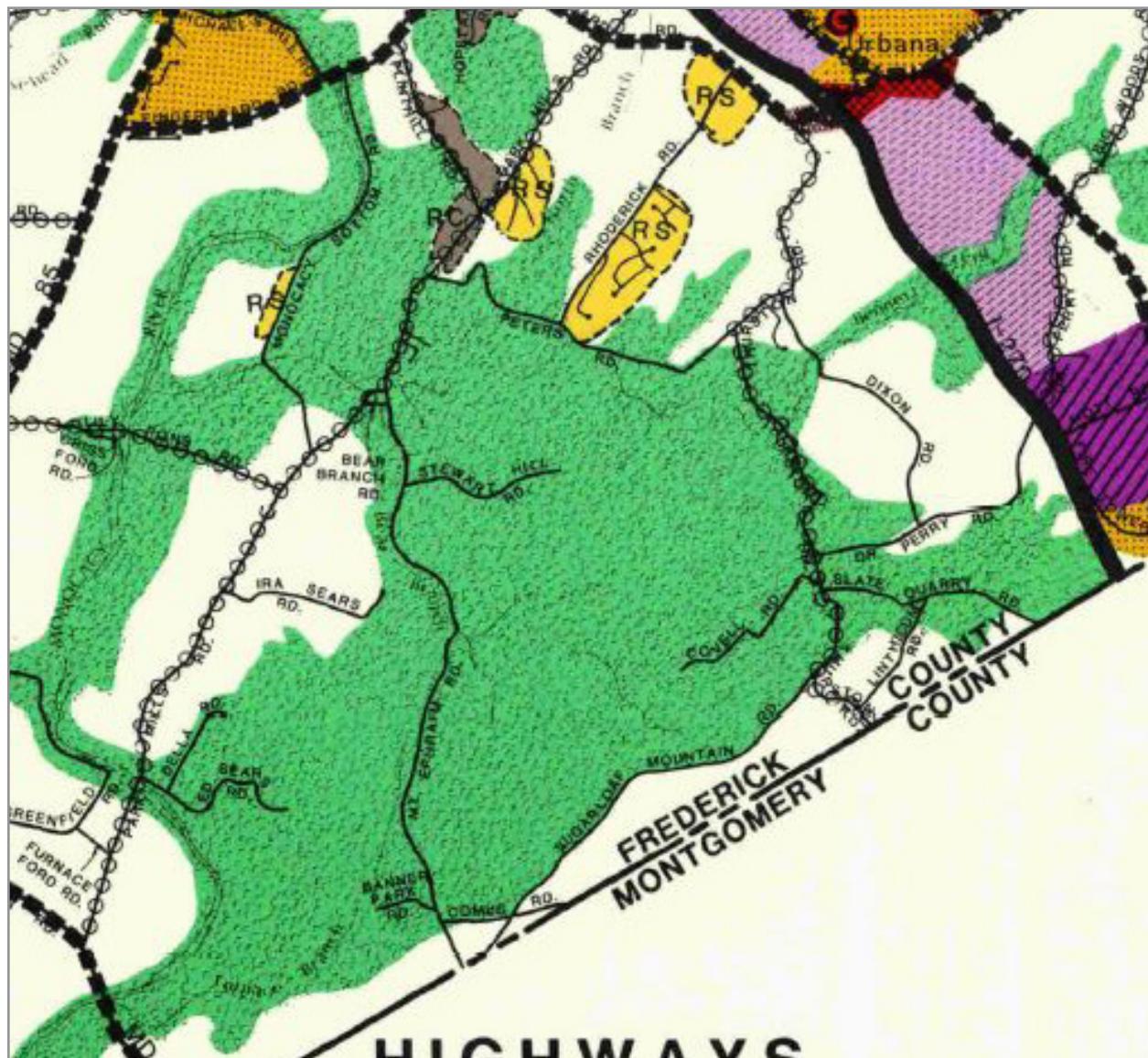
1978 Urbana Region Plan

In 1978 the first *Urbana Region Plan* was adopted, which identified a Sugarloaf Mountain Environmental Area as an area of "critical state concern" per the legislation passed in 1974 by the Maryland General Assembly that required all comprehensive plans to include such an element. The 1978 *Urbana Region Plan* applied the Conservation land use plan designation to the "Sugarloaf Mountain Environmental Area," and contained very brief descriptions of its characteristics, a mapped delineation, and current and future management techniques. Some of these techniques included the pursuit of scenic easements, and the acquisition of sensitive lands by governmental agencies and other organizations. A notable feature of this 1978 Region Plan was the depiction of a new southern alignment for MD 80 (Fingerboard Road) from Park Mills Road to the Monocacy River. The presence of environmental features such as steep forested topographical gradients, multiple stream systems, plus an overhead power transmission line prompted the removal of this road from future plans.



1984 Urbana Region Plan

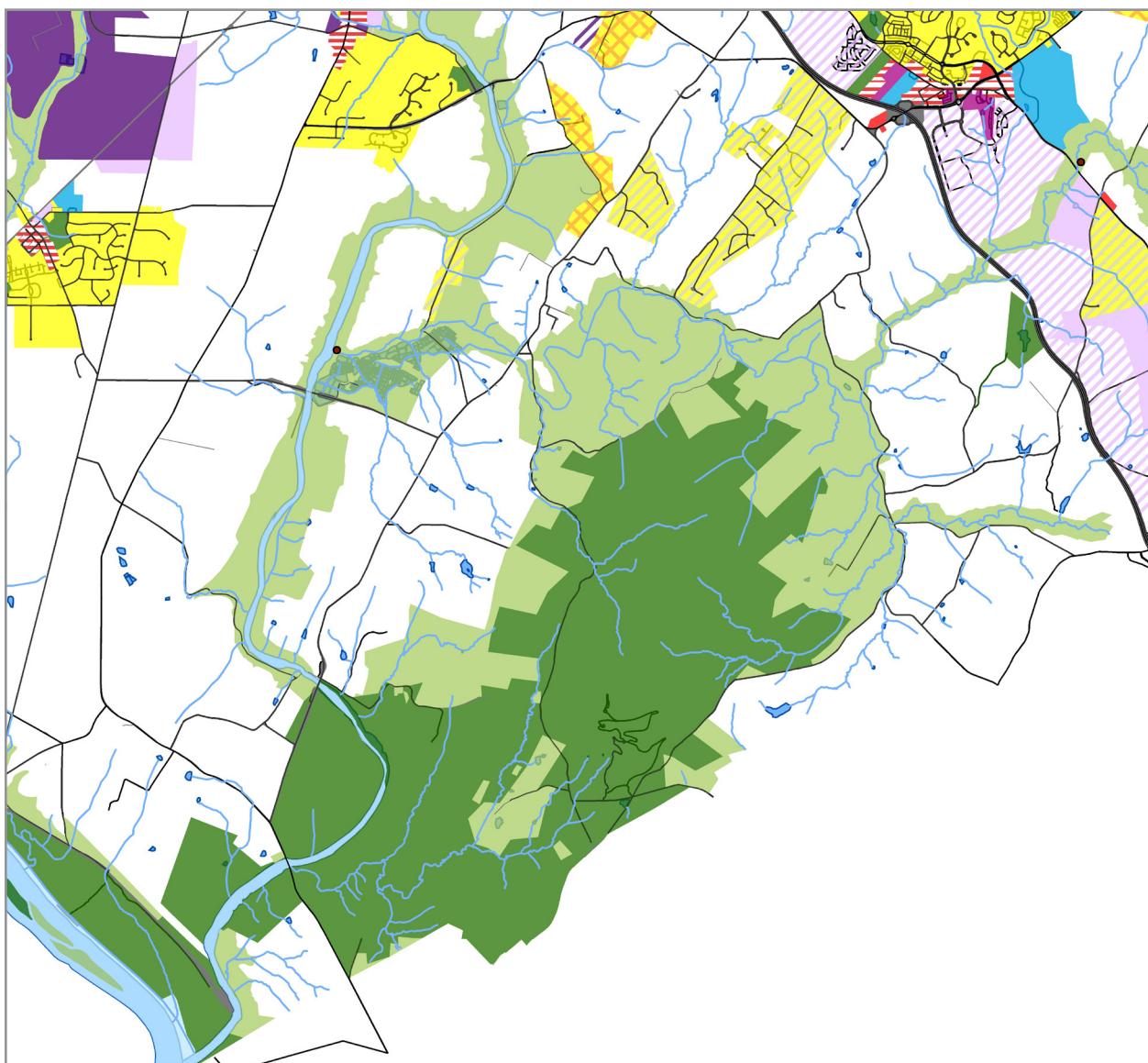
Beginning with the 1984 *Urbana Region Plan*, and continuing to the 2004 *Urbana Region Plan* and the 2010/2012 Countywide Comprehensive Plan updates, the 'Conservation' land use plan designation in the Sugarloaf District was expanded through the use of aerial photographic analysis, and later, GIS technology, to more accurately depict the extent and location of the far-reaching forestlands and other resources in the area beyond those lands owned by Stronghold and the DNR. The 1984 Plan reflected the residential development that had occurred in the District through the application of the 'Rural Subdivision' designation and the 'Rural Community' designation (applied to Flint Hill and Hopeland). The Rural Subdivision designation was replaced with 'Rural Residential' in the 2010 Countywide Comprehensive Plan.



2012 County Comprehensive Plan

The 2004 Urbana Region Plan added a "Public/Quasi-Public Park or Open Space" land use plan designation to distinguish natural resource areas, including lands with steep slopes and large forested tracts, from local, state, or federally-owned parkland. This designation also included the lands comprising Sugarloaf Mountain. These lands are shown in dark green on the 2012 land use plan map. Areas in light green are designated "Natural Resource," which replaced "Conservation" in 2010.

Large areas in the Sugarloaf Area with sensitive environmental resources --steep topographical gradients, connected woodlands, aquatic systems, etc. -- do not reflect the Natural Resource land use plan designation on the Comprehensive Plan map. The *Sugarloaf Area Plan* will identify these contributory and allied features, recommend appropriate designations and corresponding zoning classifications, and advance sound management approaches for these significant resources, consistent with the *Livable Frederick Master Plan*.



Public Engagement

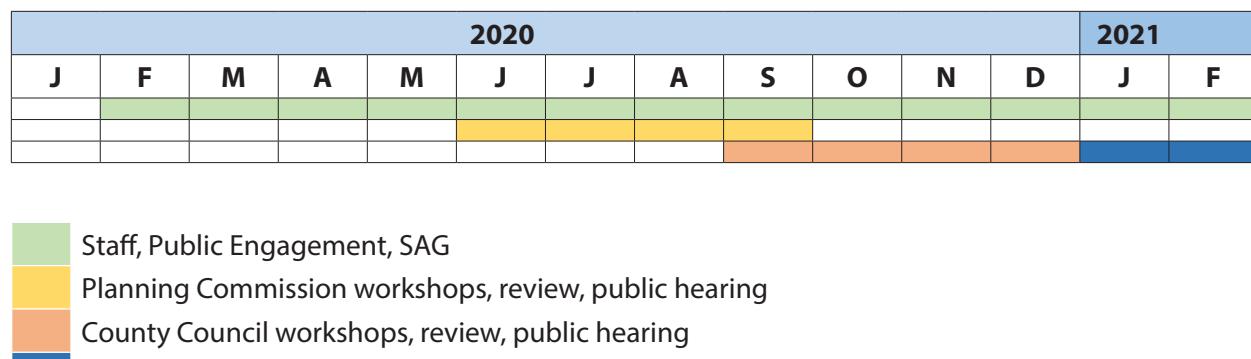
Community Meetings, Communications, Preliminary Schedule

A series of public outreach meetings will be scheduled during the planning process to solicit input from landowners, residents, business owners, and institutional stakeholders in the Sugarloaf Planning Area. A Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG) will be convened to provide further input and perspective during the planning process. Future Planning Commission and County Council workshops and public hearings will offer additional opportunity for public commentary and feedback. Broad communication channels will provide context and explanatory guidance regarding the *Sugarloaf Area Plan*.

Communications

- Central Project Website – Staff contact information, project email for submitting questions/comments, updates on community meetings, public workshops and public hearings (www.livablefrederick.org)
- Project Facebook Page – Another forum to access information on the *Sugarloaf Area Plan*
- Twitter and Press Releases – For immediate dissemination and release of milestone information.
- Each of these platforms will provide announcements regarding public meetings and hearings revolving around the *Sugarloaf Area Plan*.

Preliminary Schedule



Resources

Livable Frederick Master Plan and Implementation Program

<https://www.livablefrederick.org/>

Stronghold, Incorporated

<http://www.sugarloafmd.com/>

Sugarloaf Mountain facts

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugarloaf_Mountain_\(Maryland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugarloaf_Mountain_(Maryland))

Monocacy Natural Resources Management Area

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/western/monocacy.aspx>

https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/parkmaps/monocacy_map.aspx

National Natural Landmarks

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nnlmarks/index.htm>

National Climate Assessment

<https://nca2014.globalchange.gov/>

Maryland's Strategic Forest Land Assessment

https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Documents/sfla_report.pdf

2015 Forest Action Plan

https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Documents/2015_DRAFT_ForestStrategyUpdate.pdf

Maryland Forest Service

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/default.aspx>

National Register of Historic Places Nomination – Sugarloaf Mountain Historic District

<https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/Montgomery/M;%2012-44.pdf>

Sugarloaf Planning Area

Small Area Plan - Community Profile

Households and Population

830

Homes



Average Household Size:

2.68 Countywide | 2.73 Sugarloaf Area

The households that are located within the Sugarloaf Planning Area comprise nearly 1% of the County's total number of households.



The Sugarloaf Planning Area has a total of 2,200 residents, representing about 1% of the County's total population.



Single, female-headed households are slightly more prevalent in Sugarloaf Planning Area (11%) than in the County (10%).



Sugarloaf Planning Area:

Owners vs. Renters

93% are homeowners
7% are renters

Age and Race

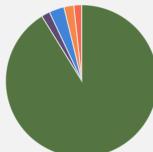
The median age in the Sugarloaf

✓ Planning Area is 50, compared to 39 in the County.

41% of residents in the Sugarloaf

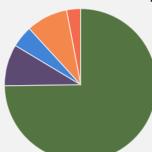
✓ Planning Area are **55 and older**. Only 17% are under 18 years of age.

Sugarloaf Race and Ethnicity



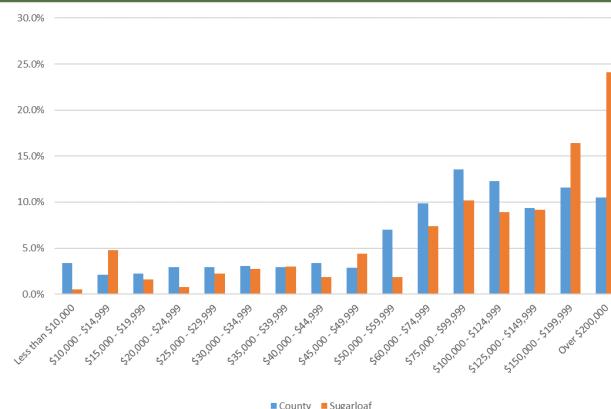
White	91.1
Black/Afr. Amer.	1.8
Asian	3.2
Hispanic	2.1
Other race	1.7

County Race and Ethnicity



White	74.8%
Black/Afr. Amer.	8.8%
Asian	4.6%
Hispanic	8.8%
Other race	3.0%

Education and Income



51% of Sugarloaf residents have post-secondary education with Bachelor's, Graduate, or Professional degrees compared to 40% in the County.



59% of households earn \$100,000 or more, compared to 44% in the County.



The Sugarloaf Planning Area's **median household income** of \$123,800 is **40% higher** than in the County as a whole.

SOURCES

US Census 2010 | 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates | Quarterly Census Employment & Wages (QCEW), DOL 2017

CREATED BY: Livable Frederick, Division of Planning and Permitting, 30 North Market Street, Frederick, MD 21701

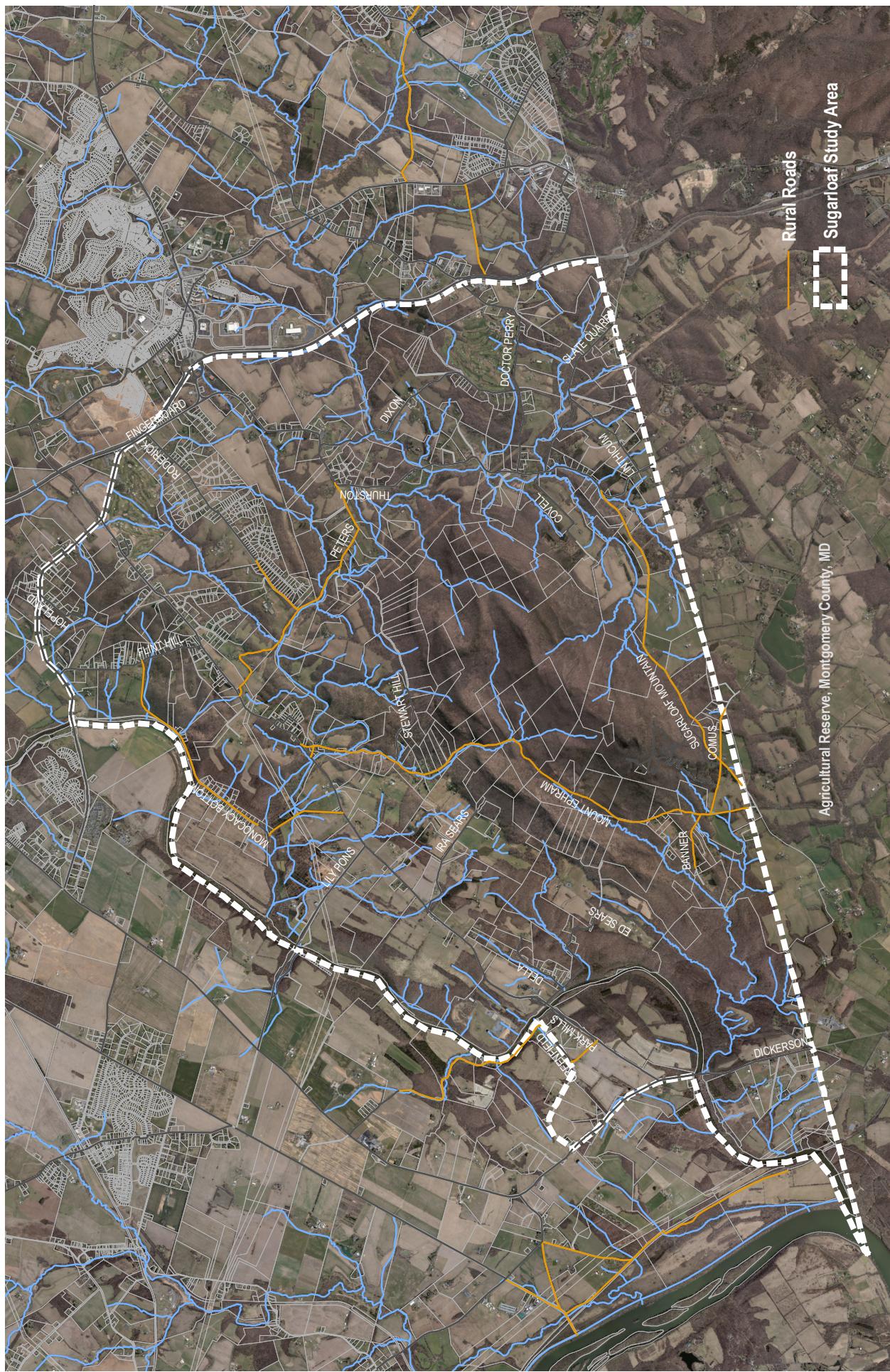
Note: The Sugarloaf Planning Area is defined by the Census Tract 752201, which includes a small area to the north adjacent to the study area boundary.

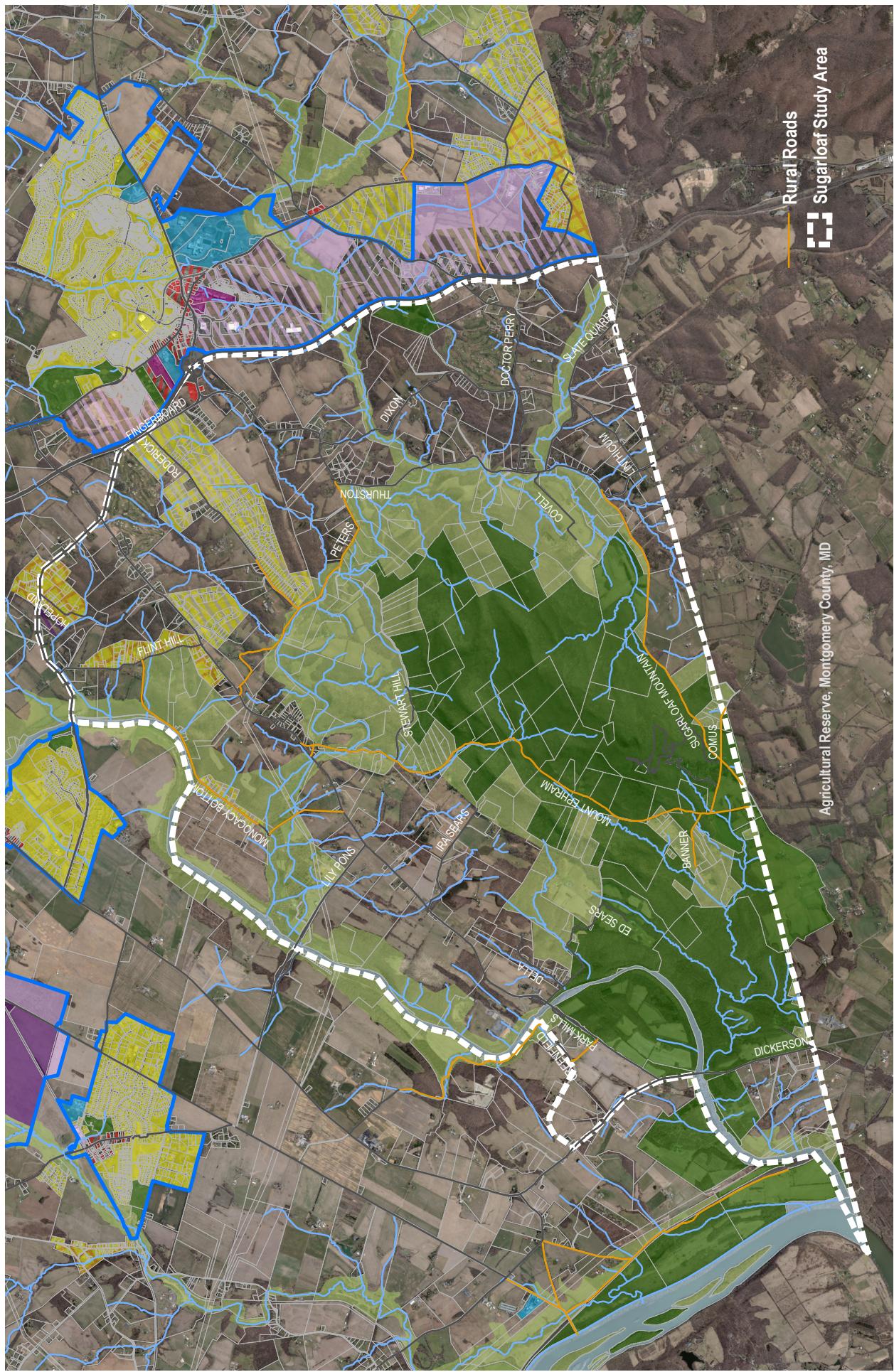


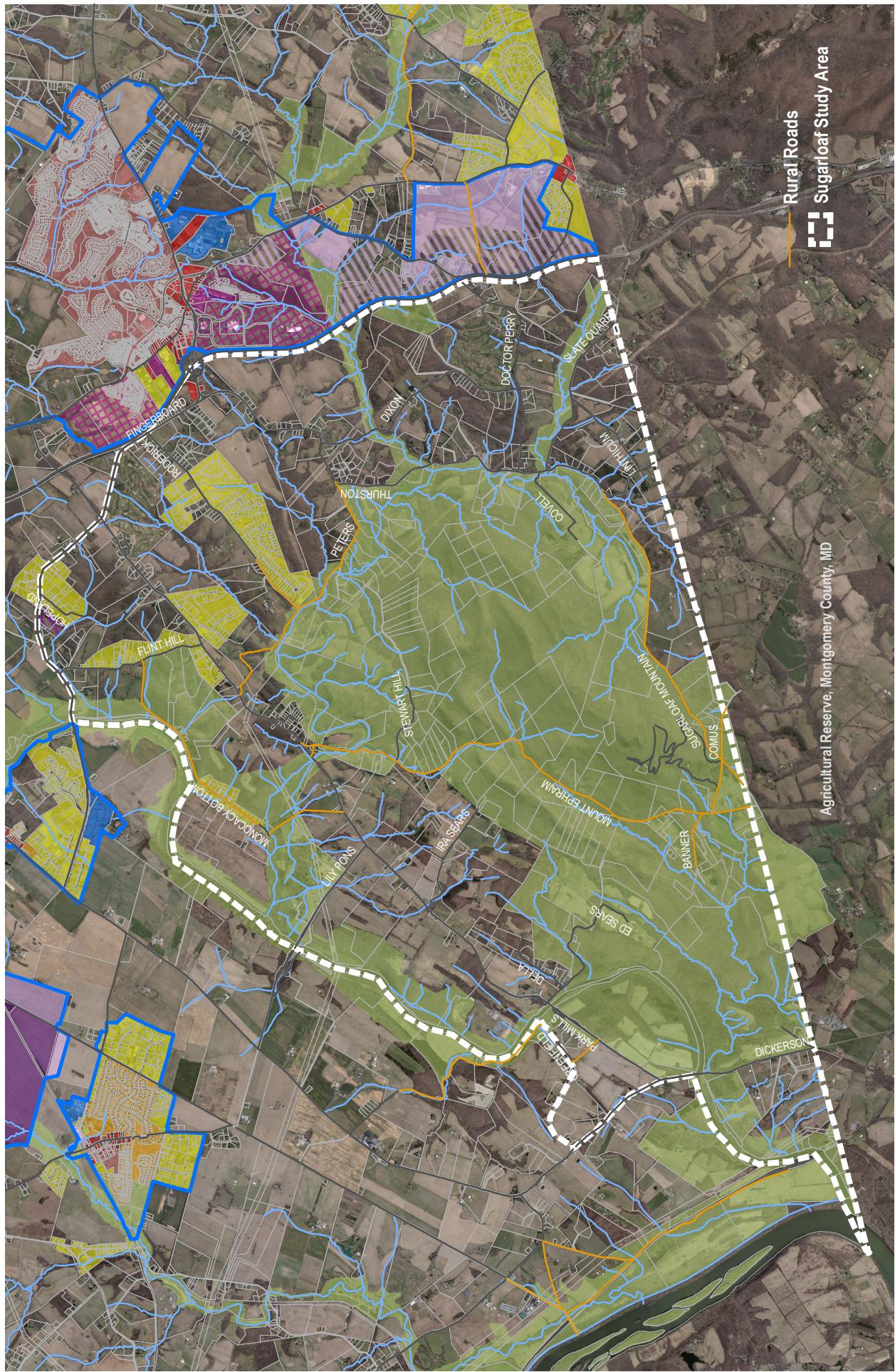
Planning Area Boundary

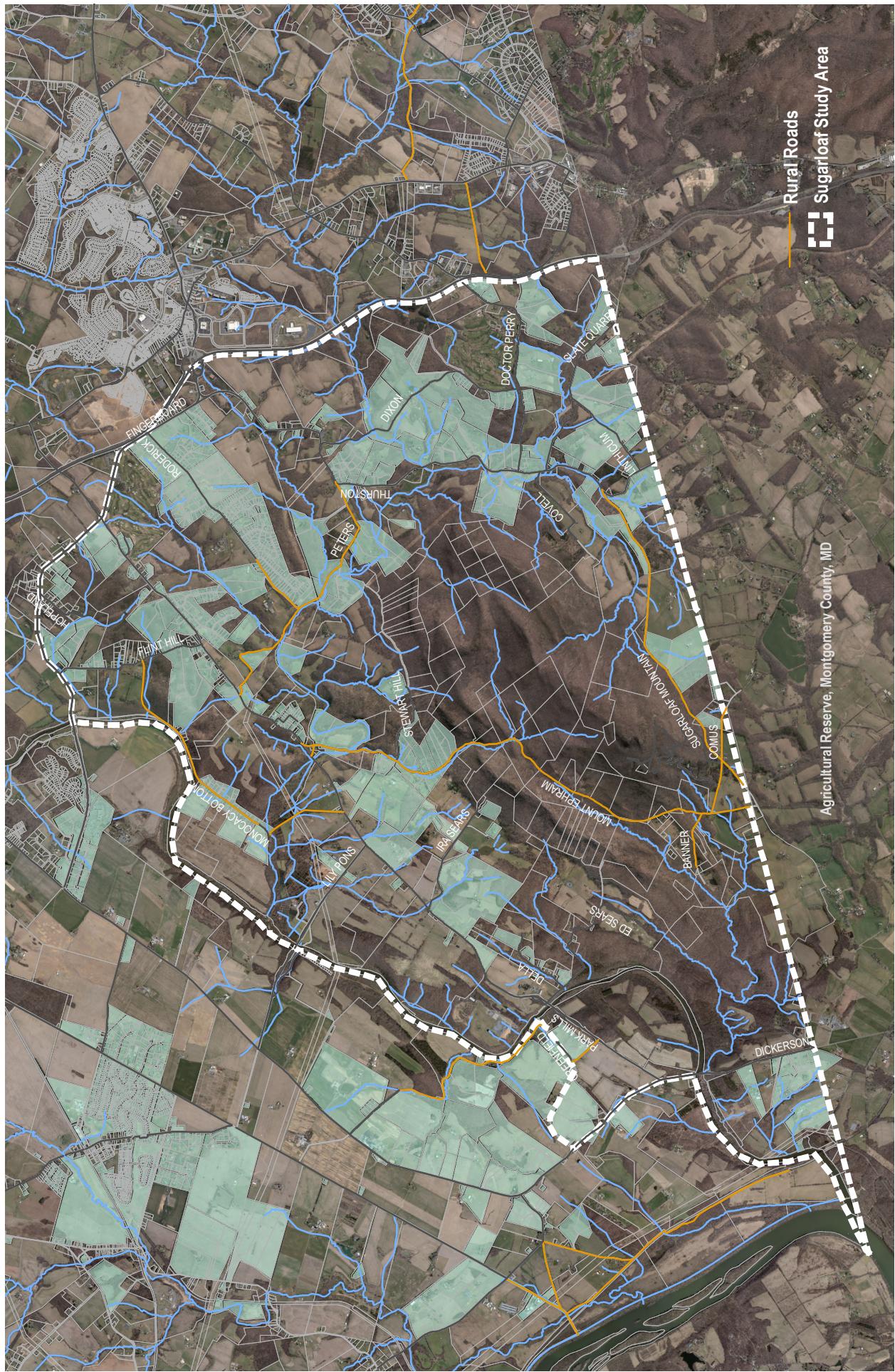
Rural Roads
Sugarloaf Study Area

Agricultural Reserve, Montgomery County, MD





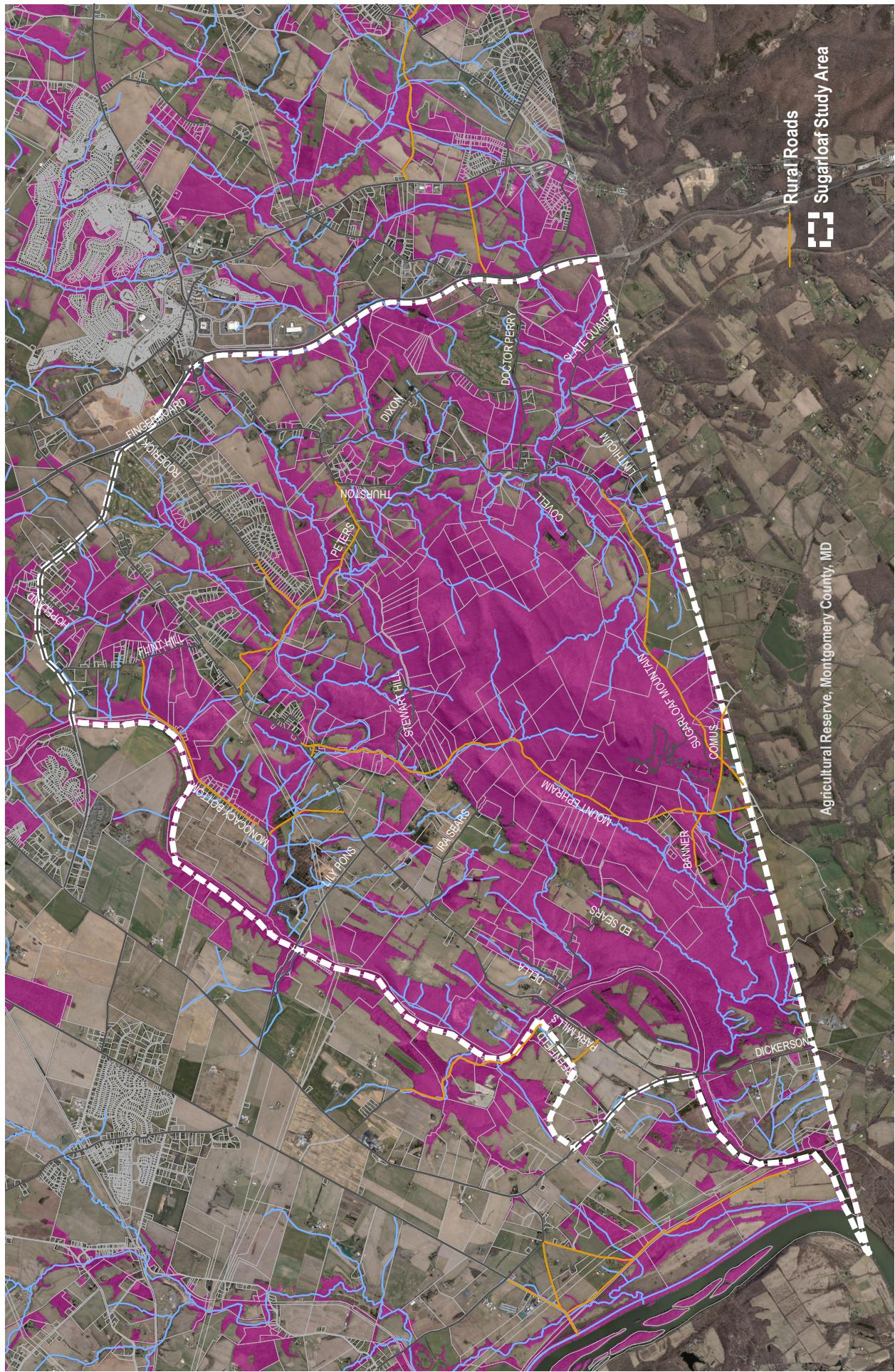




Subdivisions

Subdivision Lots





Forest Cover

Rural Roads
Sugarcreek Study Area

Agricultural Reserve, Montgomery County, MD



Livable Frederick Planning and Design Office
Division of Planning and Permitting
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