

in urban society. The stream valleys, whose sense of wilderness is heightened by abundant vegetation, fish and wildlife, have been termed "corridors of environmental quality."⁵

Additional values are located outside of or adjacent to the stream valleys, usually in clusters. These have been termed "nodes of diversity."⁶ They most frequently include historic and scenic areas.

The regional conservation pattern in Montgomery County is formed by the corridors of environmental quality along with the nodes of diversity.

The predominant environmental corridors in the County are formed by the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers. These two rivers encompass the most significant ecological areas and thus the most important conservation values.

The preservation of the smaller stream valley corridors also contributes essential conservation values to development, at a sub-regional, community, and neighborhood level. The retention of these smaller corridors is as vital as the conservation of primary stream valleys, although the lesser streams are too small to be included within the regional pattern.

In addition to preserving regional conservation values, conservation must be integrated with urban development. The retention of natural features in developing urban and suburban areas will bring nature to the people and greatly enhance their environment. Touches of nature can be added to existing urban areas and are especially essential in high density urban cores and regional activity centers to provide a feeling of spaciousness and diversity.

The protection of regional conservation values and the integration of development with nature can only be accomplished if conservation becomes an established element in the planning and development procedure. Consideration of these values should become an important part of the decision-making process, a major element in regional and local plans, and an item of significance in future urban and suburban developments.

CRITIQUE

The 1964 General Plan contains few policies on several subjects of great environmental importance. Air and water pollution is one of these subjects. The only statements in this field are concerned with preserving the supply of water for domestic use, referring also to underground water resources, which are now seen as a relatively unimportant part of the future water supply except in certain local areas.

The General Plan proposes no policies in connection with the disposal of solid wastes, a problem whose dimensions are now more evident than when the Plan was prepared.

Another aspect of the environment which received little recognition in the General Plan is aesthetic values. The only guideline in this area is the encouragement of the undergrounding of electric and telephone wires.

Important additions to the General Plan policy statements on the environmental aspects of development are needed, especially in connection with the elimination of pollution and the encouragement and accomplishment of an improved aesthetic quality in development in the County.

Also, the Plan should be expanded to include the policies enacted by the County Council in response to the State legislation of 1966 and 1967 concerning County water and sewerage systems.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Public water and sewer service has not consistently followed the sound planning principles envisioned in the 1964 General Plan. Undesirable development has occurred, a portion of which is due to the untimely provision of water and sewer service. It is imperative that plans and programs for water and sewer systems be developed which implement the principles of staging, financing, and construction.

⁵Phillip H. Lewis, Jr. Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Basin Studies, Appendix B - Esthetic and Cultural Values, U. S. Department of the Interior, 1958.

⁶Ibid.

There are significant health problems stemming from failing wells and septic systems. To combat such problems steps must be taken to assure that, in the future, public water and sewer systems will be extended concurrently with urban development. Where extension of the central system is not practical, local community systems must be established immediately.

The Potomac Interceptor sewer is expected to reach full capacity in the next ten to fifteen years. Provision must be made as soon as possible either by augmenting the Potomac Interceptor, pumping sewage into other existing sewer networks, or constructing new sewage treatment plants.

There is a great possibility that the County will experience a critical potable water shortage in the next decade. Such a shortage must be averted by the maximum use of ground water, the establishment of impoundments in the Potomac River Basin, and all other available methods.

Greater consideration must be given to methods of providing alternative water and sewer systems to areas outside of the existing community systems.

Certain aspects of utility systems are not aesthetic in appearance and may be improved through better design of water storage structures and electric transmission lines, increased use of undergrounding for utility wires, and the use of common rights-of-way by various utilities. The latter may also provide for certain cost savings to the public.

Implementation and enforcement of programs for the abatement of water pollution must be improved on both the public and private levels. There is a significant recreational demand for high quality water resources in the County.

Better implementation and enforcement of air and noise pollution abatement programs are needed. The wedges and corridors concept of development ameliorates air pollution problems by allowing a system of natural ventilation. Additional research information is needed, however, especially in the field of noise pollution.

Long range plans must be made for the disposal of solid waste. Detailed consideration must be given to the location of disposal sites, improved design and location of incinerators, and especially a regional approach to solid waste disposal.

Improved design of housing, commercial areas, circulation facilities, and all other types of development are needed in order to improve the aesthetics and livability of the County as a whole.