

LAND USE GOALS

The charge to planners at all levels, public and private is to find ways to make these essential elements in our social system work better, more efficiently, and thus to make our cities more desirable places in which to live.

—Simon Eisner

SCOPE

Land Use is the centerpiece of the General Plan Refinement. The Land Use Goal, together with the geographic components of the Wedges and Corridors concept, describes the intended pattern of development for Montgomery County. Goals such as Housing, Economic Activity, and Community Identity and Design expand on the Land Use Goal. Transportation serves land use while the Environment Goal provides guidance on ways to integrate land use with the natural environment.

KEY CONCEPTS

Consistency with the Wedges and Corridors concept is fundamental to the Land Use Goal. The Land Use Goal sets out the basic pattern of development and describes the function of each geographic component. The precise location, specific nature, and intensity of land use are decided in subsequent planning processes. The Land Use Goal supports the variety and intensity of uses in the different areas necessary to continue to provide the County with a full range of housing and economic activity. The County is sufficiently large and strategically located to accommodate both urban and rural settings. It is important to the Wedges and Corridors concept that agricultural use be viewed as a valued and permanent land use. This General Plan Refinement rejects the notion that agricultural land preservation in the Agricultural Wedge is a holding use for future development.

The Land Use Goal in this Refinement is more evolutionary than revolutionary. It recognizes that the character of vast areas has already been established and will continue for the

LAND USE

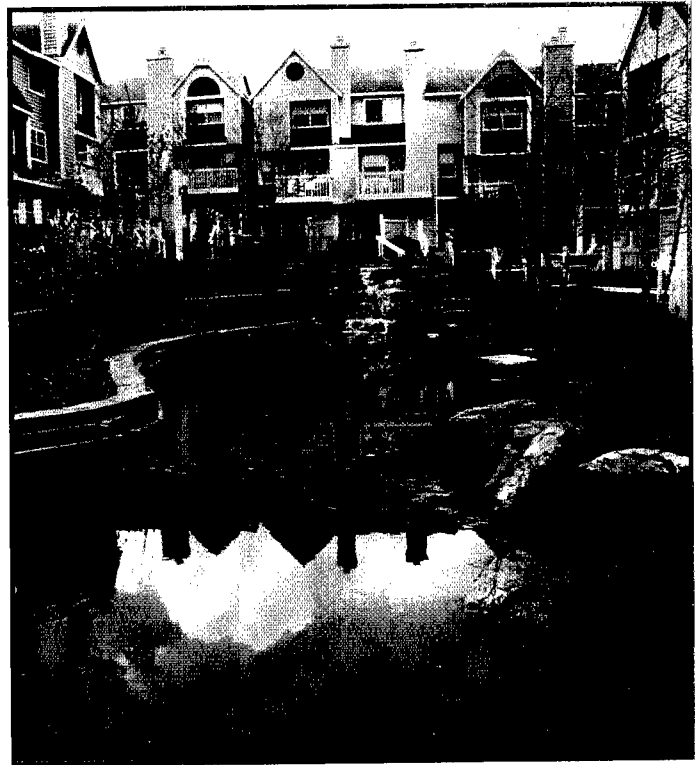
foreseeable future. Its concepts are intended to continue the existing trends where they are beneficial and to change their direction when they are not. They are intended to discourage incompatible intrusions into stable communities.

CHANGES FROM THE 1969 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Since 1969, a significant amount of Montgomery County land has been developed. Montgomery County is no longer just a bedroom community. The County has become an employment center in its own right. Land use intensities for employment areas have increased. Montgomery County's 1980 at-place employment was almost 25 percent higher than the 1969 General Plan Update forecast for that year. Actual employment had surpassed the Update's forecast for 2000 by 1990. Both the Update and the 1964 General Plan expected major growth in high tech manufacturing jobs. Instead, the greatest growth was in office employment. As a result, Montgomery County is now a significant office market, well beyond what was anticipated in the earlier plans.

The 1969 Land Use Goal was to "achieve a balance among the various land uses insofar as the proper amount, types and distribution of each results in an environment and diversity of life styles that fulfill the requirements of the County residents." The amount of land in residential use has increased comparatively more than the number of housing units between 1960 and 1991. This means that Montgomery County's residential growth has, on the average, produced fewer housing units per acre than did development prior to 1960. Although many developments are more dense than 30 years ago, there have been a large number of houses built on lots of one-half acre and larger.

The new Land Use Goal strives for a variety of land uses. The desirable aspects of "balance" referred to in the 1969 Land Use Goal are achieved within the objectives.



Townhouse development.

This Refinement calls for a fine grain mixture of housing and employment land uses in a wide variety of intensities.

The achievement of a wide variety of uses and densities is the key to the County's quality of life. When the County was first settled, farming appeared to be the only future for the County. At the beginning of the 1900s, the few rail and trolley residential communities were the exception rather than the rule. It was not until the 1940s that the first substantial retail activity, as well as the "new" housing form of garden apartments, began locating in the County. If the County had held to the narrow language of the 1964 General Plan, it would not have allowed for the transition from an emphasis on industrial jobs to office jobs. Establishing a framework for future development that is flexible but with limits will result in land uses that respond to the changing needs of the County and are consistent with the Wedges and Corridors concept.

INTERRELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER GOALS

Housing

The Housing Goal calls for a mix of residential densities. Providing housing choices within the bounds of the Wedges and Corridors pattern is a key concept of the new Land Use Goal. The Housing Goal adds to the concept of land use balance by calling for a sufficient supply of housing to accommodate future workers. The vision for sufficient and infill housing near employment centers is consistent with the Wedges and Corridors concept. The Housing objective to concentrate higher density housing in the Urban Ring and I-270 Corridor clearly is in conformance with the Land Use objectives for those areas.

Economic Activity

The call for a variety of employment types and intensities ranging from agriculture to high technology office space is echoed in the Economic Activity Goal.

Objective 6 of the Land Use Goal incorporates the land use aspects of the Economic Activity Goal. In addition, the Land Use Goal supports the centers that serve as the location for most economic activity. It calls for coordination of residential, employment, and retail development to create communities where people can live and work, and it specifies that "areas of greatest employment... density" are a high priority for allocation of public investment in community facilities.

Transportation

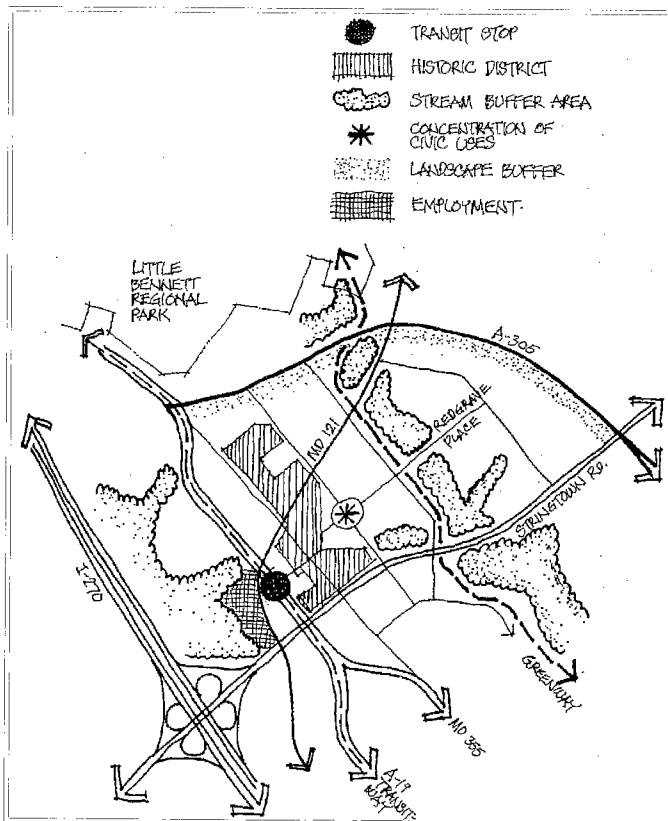
Transportation facilities serve, and sometimes define, land use. There are numerous instances in Montgomery County where the land use abutting significant transportation facilities is purposefully held to a lower density than the transportation capacity alone would dictate. Density questions are resolved by a comprehensive review of the surrounding land uses and a long term vision of how the area should function in the future. Where identified in the appropriate master plan, sector plan or functional plan, this policy will continue in the future. Transportation access is only one factor and will not be the determinative factor in resolving land use density issues.

In addition, transportation facilities often serve as an organizing factor for land uses. Centers are located at appropriate crossroads. Edges of various types and intensities of land uses are often delineated by transportation facilities. In addition, the Transportation Goal reflects the call for mixed land uses because they have the potential to reduce total travel from what it would otherwise be.

Environment

The strategic public acquisition of stream valley parkland as well as private efforts and easements to protect streams reinforce the Wedge pattern, provide environmental pro-

FIGURE 13 Town Center Concept Diagram — Clarksburg Master Plan



tection, and enhance community identity. The same is true of judicious extensions of the water and sewer systems. Concentration of land uses at transportation nodes enhances energy efficiency. Some particular land uses, such as mineral extraction and solid waste recycling facilities, demand special attention. Citizens and private businesses are also active in protecting the quality of the natural environment. The Environment Goal encourages the continuation of activities such as recycling, tree preservation, maintenance of stormwater management facilities, other stream protection, and proper disposal of hazardous materials by the private sector.

Maintaining the quality of the natural environment while expanding human habitation and commerce will be a continuing challenge.

Community Identity and Design

The Community Identity and Design Goal adds detail to the community and centers concepts in the Land Use Goal. It calls for communities and centers that are functional, attractive, safe, and highly accessible. A positive community identity will add to the appeal of all centers and neighborhoods. The strength of centers and communities will be reinforced by compatible infill development, another Community Identity and Design strategy.

Regionalism

This goal calls for cooperative land use planning with neighboring jurisdictions and municipalities. Long-term consistency and compatibility among the plans for municipalities, adjacent counties, and Montgomery County will be sought. This includes cooperative development of a method for agreement on the maximum expansion limits of municipalities in Montgomery County.

Compliance with Maryland Planning Act of 1992

The Land Use Goal responds to six of the visions of the Maryland Planning Act. Development concentrated in suitable areas (Vision 1), is supported by the confirmation

of the Wedges and Corridors land use policy and by the variety and intensity of uses recommended in the I-270 Corridor. The function of existing rural centers as the focus of activity for the surrounding countryside (Strategy 4E) responds to the requirement that growth be directed to existing population centers in rural areas (Vision 3). The accommodation of both urban and rural growth areas is responsive to conservation of resources (Vision 5) and encouragement of economic growth (Vision 6). The designation of priorities for open space, park, and recreation investments, and the preservation of important environmental features (Strategy 8A) are responsive to the requirement to protect sensitive areas (Vision 2) and to the requirement to address funding mechanisms (Vision 7).

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

Achieve a wide variety of land use and development densities consistent with the "Wedges and Corridors" pattern.

OBJECTIVE 1

Direct the major portion of Montgomery County's future growth to the Urban Ring and I-270 Corridor, especially to transit station locales.

Strategies

- A. Channel higher density development to the Urban Ring and Corridor.
- B. Emphasize compact development in the Urban Ring and I-270 Corridor.
- C. Foster transit serviceable land use patterns.
- D. Balance the need to protect land in urbanized areas for natural eco-systems with the human need for compact communities.
- E. Continue to ensure that centers are compatible in size, scale, and location with the intent of the Urban Ring and I-270 Corridor.

OBJECTIVE 2

Recognize the importance of identifiable centers of community activity at all levels: city, town, neighborhood, and rural community.

Strategies

- A. Encourage a mix of uses to provide places to live, work, and shop in a relatively small area.
- B. Require creative and marketable design techniques to provide compatibility with adjacent land uses.
- C. Design streets in centers to better encourage street level activity and a safe pedestrian environment.
- D. Limit new centers and expansion of existing centers to a size appropriate to the scale and character of the various communities throughout the County.
- E. Use special care to plan for suitable transitions between residential communities and commercial centers.

OBJECTIVE 3

Provide for moderate density residentially-based Suburban Communities located between the Urban Ring and Corridors, and the Wedge.

Strategies

- A. Continue residential and supporting commercial uses as the most important uses in the Suburban Communities.
- B. Plan densities at the edges of Suburban Communities that are compatible with the character of the adjacent area.
- C. Promote additional transportation options in the Suburban Communities.
- D. Use care to protect important natural features, while continuing to develop at moderate densities.
- E. Continue to ensure that centers are designed to serve local needs and are compatible in size, scale, and location with the intent of the Suburban Communities.

OBJECTIVE 4

Preserve farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Wedge.

Strategies

- A. Strengthen land use policies that encourage farmland preservation and rural open space preservation in the Agricultural Wedge.
- B. Strengthen incentives and regulations to encourage agricultural uses and discourage development within the Agricultural Wedge.
- C. Limit non-agricultural uses to those that are low intensity or otherwise identified in master plans.
- D. Continue the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program as well as the County and State farm easement programs as important elements of preserving farmland.
- E. Continue the function of existing rural centers as the focus of activity for the surrounding countryside.
- F. Ensure that rural centers primarily serve rural lifestyles and are compatible in size and scale with the intent of the Agricultural Wedge.
- G. Continue agriculture as the preferred use in the Agricultural Wedge.

OBJECTIVE 5

Maintain a low-density Residential Wedge to provide a large-lot housing resource and as one way to help protect sensitive environmental areas.

Strategies

- A. Use low-density residential zoning and parkland as the primary techniques to create a transition from more developed areas to the Agricultural Wedge.
- B. Maintain large-lot residential uses as the predominant land use pattern in the Residential Wedge.
- C. Limit the provision of community facilities and public services in the Residential Wedge, including the provision of community sewer and water.
- D. Ensure that development bonus densities do not alter

goals, objectives and strategies

the low-density residential character of the area.

- E. Explore the feasibility of a limited number of rural centers designed to serve local needs that are compatible in size, scale, and location with the intent of the Residential Wedge.

OBJECTIVE 6

Provide zoned land for different types and intensities of housing and employment uses.

Strategies

Objective 6 is an integral part of land use; consequently, it is included here. Refer to the Housing and Economic Activity Goals for detailed strategies on these subjects.

OBJECTIVE 7

Coordinate residential land use patterns with employment and retail development to provide communities and neighborhoods where people can live and work.

Strategies

- A. Designate employment and housing areas within reasonable commuting distance of each other.
- B. Increase floor area ratios when mixed uses are provided in the vicinity of transit stations.
- C. Address the adequacy of area housing to meet the needs of employees when deciding on increases in employment floor area ratios.
- D. Encourage multiple uses within office parks to assure employees convenient access to shopping, services, and open space.
- E. Plan for an appropriate balance of employment and housing on a County-wide basis.

OBJECTIVE 8

Provide a coordinated and comprehensive system of parks, recreation, and open space.

Strategies

- A. Give priority to open space, park, and recreation

investments in areas with the greatest existing or proposed residential density and in areas with important environmental features.

- B. Use open space, parks, and recreation facilities to shape and enhance the development and identity of individual neighborhoods, cluster developments, existing communities, and transitions between communities.
- C. Integrate open space, parks, and recreational facilities into urbanized areas to promote public activity and community identity.
- D. Plan for and encourage the provision of greenways to connect urban and rural open spaces, to provide access to parkland, to connect major stream valley park areas, and for recreational purposes such as walking and biking.

OBJECTIVE 9

Recognize the importance of implementing the goals, objectives, and strategies of the Refinement when allocating public investments in community facilities.

Strategies

- A. Encourage a full range of community facilities, appropriately located in areas of greatest residential and employment densities, to serve the needs of County residents.
- B. Coordinate the provision of public and private investments to assure orderly growth.
- C. Use public investment to encourage revitalization of older neighborhoods and of residential and commercial structures in business districts.
- D. Encourage private sector dedication and construction of community facilities at suitable locations.
- E. Designate the location, size, and phasing of community facilities in a manner that enhances and reinforces the sense of community in the immediate neighborhood, while also meeting the service delivery needs of the County.
- F. Designate appropriate locations for the public facility needs of County government in cooperation with the appropriate agency or department.