

LAND USE FACT SHEET

INTRODUCTION

The General Plan's land use goal provides a platform which underlies the relationships and connections among the other goal topics. The land use goal focuses on the pattern of land use in Montgomery County.

This fact sheet presents information about the major types of land uses in Montgomery County: housing; employment; farmland and rural open space; and recreation, parks and community facilities. Transportation, the environment, community identity and design and the County's relationships with other neighboring governments are not highlighted but form an underlying set of opportunities and constraints to the general land use pattern. Together, all the goals and objectives give guidance to area master plans and functional plans which set specific locations for individual land uses for each piece of property in the County.

The fact sheet concludes with a discussion of the overall land use pattern and the County's supply of land. Additional information about housing and the environment is available in the previous fact sheets on those topics. Information on transportation, community identity and design, economic activity, and regionalism will be available in later fact sheets.

I. CHANGES IN LAND USE

The amount of land in Montgomery County is fixed; how it is used is not. The land area of Montgomery County is approximately 495 square miles, or about 320,000 acres. Information is available on how the general land uses of the County have changed between 1960 and 1991. The following are some of the more significant observations from a comparison between the two time periods.

*** Between 1960 and 1991, the amount of developed land has increased over three times.** In 1960, about 49,000 acres of the County had been developed while in 1991 the corresponding

amount is about 155,000 acres. These amounts represent about 15 and 48 percent of the total land area, respectively. Developed land includes residential, community facilities, parks and recreation, commercial and industrial, as well as other uses such as right-of-ways for transportation and utilities.

Summary of Land Use, 1960-1991
(in Acres)

	1960		1991	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single-Family	23,700	7.5%	86,800	26.7%
Multi-Family	700	0.2%	6,700	2.1%
Commercial	1,000	0.3%	5,600	1.7%
Industrial	1,000	0.3%	2,800	0.9%
Loc.Gov., Institutions, Fed. Install, other open	10,600	3.3%	22,800	7.0%
Park & Rec.*	6,800	2.1%	24,100	7.4%
Vac. Forest, Ag.	263,400	82.8%	167,300	51.6%
Other, including ROW	10,800	3.4%	8,400	2.6%
TOTAL **	318,000	100.0%	324,500	100.0%

* Some parkland is included in other categories.

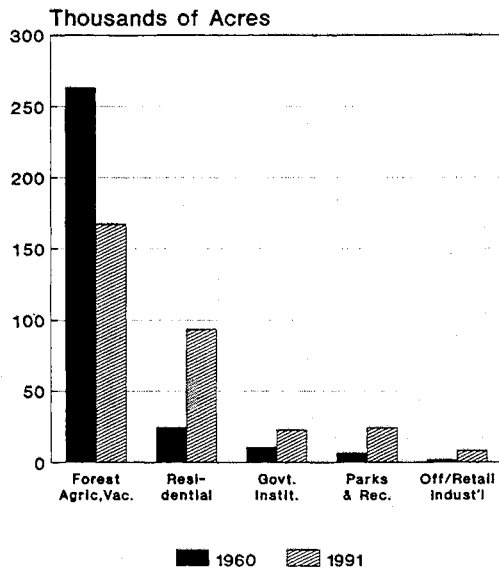
** Totals vary due to differences in tabulations of rights-of way and islands.

Source: Montgomery County Planning Department

*** Residential uses are the most common land use, accounting for about 60 percent of the developed land in 1991.** In 1991, there were about 93,000 acres of land in residential use. The next most common developed uses were park and recreation uses with about 24,000 acres. Other community facilities, government and other open space accounted for about 23,000 acres. Office, commercial, retail and industrial uses had about 8,400 acres while transportation and utility right-of-ways accounted for about 6,000 acres in the developed areas.

*** The proportions among the developed land uses, while having changed somewhat, remained relatively stable between 1960 and 1991.** Between 1960 and 1991, the table shows that the proportion of developed land devoted to residential and commercial uses increased as did land for parks, recreation and open space. Smaller proportional increases occurred in community facilities,

**Between 1960 and 1991 Land Use Changed
Toward Developed Classifications**



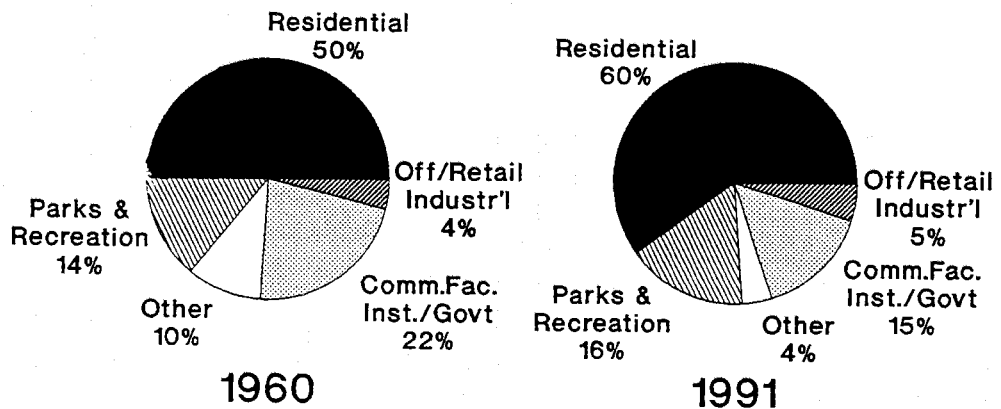
Source: Montgomery County Planning Dept.

government uses, institutions and transportation and utility right-of-ways.

* The distribution of land by major zoning category has changed significantly since 1960. The changes in zoning have often tended to limit, rather than encourage, changes in use. An example of this is the introduction of rural zones to protect farmland. In 1960, over 98 percent of Montgomery County's zoned land was zoned for single-family residential use; by 1991, this percentage had declined to just over 50 percent. The most significant shift was that of over 40 percent of the County's zoned land from single-family residential zoning to the newly created rural zones. Multi-family residential zoning also experienced a significant percentage increase from 0.4 percent to 1.7 percent of the total. About 17 percent of the multi-family capacity is currently vacant or redevelopable.

Two other changes highlighted by the table of zoning distribution are the development of

**The Percentage of Residential and Park
Uses Increased Between 1960 and 1991**



Source: Montgomery County Planning Dept.

mixed-use zones as a significant zoning category and the increase in land zoned for commercial and industrial use from 1.1 percent to 3.9 percent. (It is important to note that although the actual number of acres of land zoned for commercial, industrial and multi-family use is still very small compared to other categories, the yields per acre of jobs and housing units in these zones is comparatively high.)

Percentage Distribution
of Montgomery County's Zoned Land
by Zoning Category
1960 - 1991

Zone	1960	1991
Commercial	0.4%	1.1%
Industrial	0.9%	2.8%
Mixed Use	N.A.	1.4%
Multi-Family	0.4%	1.7%
Single-Family	98.3%	51.2%
Rural	N.A.	40.8%
Other	N.A.	0.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Total is less than the County's total acreage because most water areas and many rights-of-way are not zoned.

Source: Montgomery County Planning Department, Maryland State Tax Assessor's Parcel File, and ...On Wedges and Corridors, 1964, February 1992

II. RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

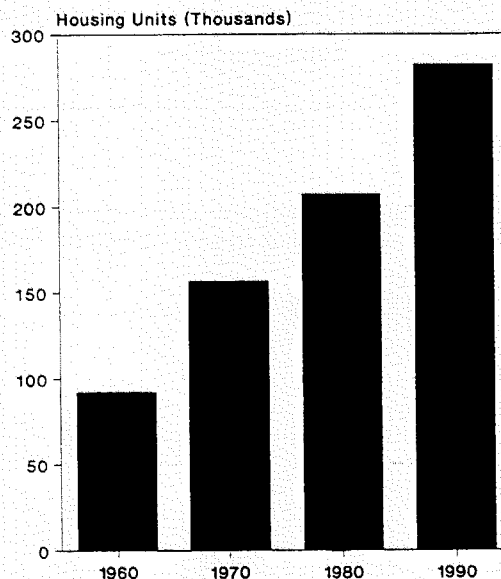
Montgomery County's housing stock has grown substantially in quantity and variety since the 1969 General Plan was adopted.

A. Quantity

* The number of housing units in the County grew by 83 percent between 1970 and 1990, from 161,000 to 296,000. The larger increase occurred in the 1980s when the number of housing units increased by 37 percent, or 79,500 units. The amount of growth in the 1970s was 34 percent, or 55,000 units.

* Montgomery County's 83 percent growth exceeded the region's rate of 56 percent. The County's growth rate was less than that of Fairfax County, where the housing stock increased by more than 127 percent, from 141,000 units to 320,000 units, but more than Prince George's County, where the housing supply increased by only 35 percent, from 200,000 units to 270,000. (The data includes the cities in each county.)

Housing Stock Grows



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and Montgomery County Planning Dept.

B. Housing Types

* Between 1970 and 1990, the composition of Montgomery County's housing stock changed significantly. Single-family detached houses declined from a 68 percent share to a 52 percent share, while townhouses emerged as a major housing type. In fact, townhouses increased from about 1 percent of the housing stock, or 2,400 units, in 1970 to a significant 17 percent or 50,500 units, by 1990. Townhouse completions were 39 percent of all residential completions from 1981 through 1990, reaching a high of 53 percent in both 1982 and 1983. The percentage