

Some of the associations also work on master plans and other projects.

The participation of citizen groups, clubs, and business associations was encouraged by the 1969 Plan. In addition to civic associations, there are business groups such as the Chambers of Commerce, the I-270 Employer's Group, and the North Bethesda Transportation Action Partnership. These groups and others participate in the development review process and in civic affairs in a variety of ways.

PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

* A wide variety of social, religious, charitable, and recreational clubs are available to County residents. These groups serve as a way of gathering with people of similar interests. Many of these clubs work towards improving their community and helping others. In addition, there are a number of businesses specializing in recreation, health, and social activities.

IV. HOW WE DESIGN COMMUNITIES

As discussed in the three previous sections, the way County residents live together where residents gather and interact, and how we govern ourselves affect our community identity. The County's influence on these changes ranges from none (for example, on family mobility) to extensive (on schools and shopping locations). This section focuses on the influence that the planning and development processes have on the function and appearance of communities.

The 1964 *General Plan* stated that "Economy, convenience, and pleasant surroundings are the key concepts of the Plan," where economy "... arises from the compact form of development, easily reached by public services." In addition, the 1969 *General Plan* stated that "each community should have an identity, which can be created by imaginative design."

The pattern of development during the last two decades has been influenced by the 1964 and 1969 *General Plans*. The 1969 Plan recommended

that the County "incorporate urban design considerations into all aspects of the planning and development process." Since then, revisions to master plans and to the development process and regulations have instituted major changes in an effort not only to improve the quality and compatibility of development, but to guide the design of communities and neighborhoods in a manner that instills a sense of community and identity.

MASTER PLANS

* Master plans play an important role in establishing the pattern of public and private development, which can foster a greater sense of community identity. Master plans have increased the amount of design guidance since 1969. Master plans adopted in the late 60's and early 70's focused on land use, zoning, and roads. Master plans have now evolved to include several levels of design guidance as well as an increased emphasis on mixed uses and transit accessibility. The design guidance ranges from townscape to streetscape and often focuses on areas of significant planned activity. These include the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center and the Germantown Streetscape Study, as well as pending amendments for the Germantown Town Center and the Clarksburg Town Center.

DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

The 1964 and 1969 *Plans* both recognized that the existing development process needed improvement to achieve the vision of the wedges and corridors concept. Current efforts by the County to re-shape the development process illustrate that these processes are constantly being adapted to achieve the County's goals and objectives.

The development review process generally begins with master plan recommended zoning and land use. The zoning designation, in addition to the subdivision regulations, determines development standards such as the minimum lot size, building setbacks, and street and open space locations. Individual development proposals also

may go through site plan review to ensure compatibility with surrounding development. A number of other processes and regulations are designed to improve community identity and the appearance of the County.

ZONING

* Today, the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance lists 67 zones, 2-1/2 times as many as in 1970. In 1970, when the *Updated General Plan* was adopted, there were 13 residential, 5 commercial, 3 industrial, 2 CBD, 3 planned unit development, and 2 transit station development zones. The total was 28 zones, almost twice as many as in 1954. Today, there are 67 zones. The number of residential zones has nearly doubled and now includes Transferable Development Rights (TDR) receiving areas and several new townhouse zones. There are about twice as many commercial zones, industrial zones, CBD zones, and planned unit development zones. Completely new categories since 1970 are mineral resource recovery and residential mixed use development. A rural zone was introduced in 1973 and two agricultural zones in 1980 to help preserve agriculture and rural open space.

* Much of the County has developed using zones that separated houses from activities such as stores, offices, and factories. This pattern was intended to protect residents from harmful effects of some land uses. The businesses in Montgomery County are relatively clean and quiet and there is less need for separation of land uses based on public health concerns.

The 1964 Plan recognized the need for additional zoning classifications to achieve the Plan's vision. Many of the newer zones allow large parcels of land to be developed with a mix of land uses to foster a sense of community, consistent with the 1964 and 1969 *Plans'* guidance.

SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

* The special exception process is used to control uses that are normally not permitted in a zoning district. Common examples include day

care centers and home occupations in residential zones and automobile filling stations and community swimming pools in commercial zones. The special exception process is designed to ensure that certain uses will be consistent with the General Plan and local master plans and will be in harmony with the general character of the neighborhood with regards to design, scale and bulk of proposed structure, and traffic and parking conditions.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

* Montgomery County uses site plan review to control compatibility, safety, efficiency, and attractiveness, but not architecture, building materials and colors. Montgomery County began requiring site plans for proposed development in some zoning categories in 1967. Site plans are detailed layouts that show building locations, landscaping, parking areas, and lighting plans. Since 1967, the number of site plans each year has ranged from 15 to 175, with an average of 65. The 1969 Plan encouraged the County to promote varied site plan designs that create spaciousness, interest, and beauty. Since then, the County has amended many of the zones to require site plan review, increased green space and open space, which can result in more pleasing developments.

RECREATION GUIDELINES

* The 1969 Plan recommended that parks and recreation should be integrated with development areas. The Montgomery County Planning Board began using *Guidelines for Recreational Amenities in Residential Development* in 1991 to determine whether the private recreational facilities in proposed subdivisions are adequate. These recreational facilities are in addition to the public park system.

PROJECT PLAN REVIEW

* Montgomery County uses project plan review in 11 zoning classifications under optional method of development procedures to increase the public and private amenities in certain areas of the County. A project plan is a detailed plan

for a proposed development that allows the Planning Board to evaluate whether the plan is compatible with the surrounding area. The Planning Board is authorized to approve buildings that are bigger than would normally be allowed in exchange for developer provided amenities. These amenities are a means to assist the formation of a community identity such as public parks, plazas, arcades, art, street furniture, museums, art galleries, community rooms, and child or elderly day care.

A project plan is required in order to determine whether the proposed amenities and other design features will create an environment capable of accommodating additional density allowed by the optional method of development.

Land zoned to allow the optional method of development procedure is only located in Silver Spring, Bethesda, Friendship Heights, Wheaton, and along the I-270 corridor. Over 60 optional method of development projects have been reviewed by the Planning Board since 1975. In the Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD) alone, almost 3 million square feet of non-residential floor space and 964 residential units have been completed, or are near completion, under optional method of development procedures.

MANDATORY REFERRALS

* The Montgomery County Planning Board reviews and comments on proposed public projects and public projects on private property through the mandatory referral process. The mandatory referral process allows the Planning Board to review and comment on development proposals from other public agencies. These development proposals include public roads, parking garages, Federal projects, and schools.

The mandatory referral process provides an opportunity to improve the compatibility of public projects with the surrounding areas and to minimize environmental impacts. These projects are exempt from zoning and subdivision review. The agency proposing the project may, at its dis-

cretion, choose to accept or ignore the recommendations of the Planning Board.

STREET TREES

* The County will begin in July 1992 to require that new roads include trees within the right-of-way. The aesthetic reasons for planting trees along roads are clear. Trees also shade the streets, which can serve to cool the road surface, which in turn helps to moderate the temperature of stormwater run-off, which is beneficial for water quality in streams. Landscaping along roads was recommended by the 1969 Plan to improve the motorist's view and to provide for the safety of pedestrians through separation from roadways.

BILLBOARD AND SIGN CONTROLS

* There are about 50 billboards in the County, despite County regulations prohibiting them. In 1968, all billboards were banned in the county but existing ones were given an amortization (phase-out) period until 1972. In 1986, there were still about 60 billboards; new County legislation was passed prohibiting them. A court case that had been pending since 1972 between the County Council and one of the major billboard owners was settled recently by an agreement that permitted the billboard owners to keep their current billboards and to move them to different locations.

The County sign ordinance considers large signs such as billboards to be inappropriate in Montgomery County because they are not compatible with the planned character of the county, they cause sign clutter and visual discord, and they obscure views. The 1969 Plan recommended "controls for improving visual 'eyesores'" as part of an objective to "remove unattractive elements from roadside developments."

* The County regulates the size, location, height, and construction of all signs placed for public viewing. The intent of the sign ordinance is to protect the public safety and morals, protect property values, preserve and strengthen the am-

bience and character of the various communities, and to satisfy urban design objectives as reflected in approved and adopted master or sector plans. An important feature of the regulations is the restriction of advertising to the business or services offered the premises on which the sign is located. All signs within one commercial complex should be coordinated with the architecture in such a manner that the overall appearance is harmonious in color, form, and proportion.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The County's link with the past is reflected by a wide variety of historical sites and artifacts including buildings and places associated with historic events, buildings of architectural merit, archaeological sites, and street and place names, as well as development patterns. The 1969 Plan acknowledged that historic preservation is important as a means to maintain and build upon the collective identity of the County. Historic buildings and districts help create a sense of identity, historical continuity, and civic pride, and provide a visual reminder that others have been before and others will come after us.

* *The 1976 Locational Atlas of Historic Sites* identified approximately 1,000 potential historic properties in the County. The Atlas serves as an inventory of potential historic properties. Property owners whose sites are listed in the Atlas may make changes more readily than owners of sites designated in the Master Plan for Preservation and are not required to apply for an Historic Area Work Permit.

* **Montgomery County created a historic preservation program in 1979.** The County adopted *Preservation of Historic Resources* (Chapter 24-A of the County Code) and the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, and created the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in 1979 to encourage and monitor the preservation of County historic sites and districts.

* *The Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation* currently includes 15 dis-

tricts and 234 individual sites outside districts. Each of the districts and sites has been found to be of architectural or historical merit.

Among the designated historic sites in the County are: the C&O Canal National Historic Park, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Clara Barton House, Kensington Historic District, Bethesda Meeting House, Sandy Spring Meeting House, Strathmore Hall (Corby Estate), Perry Store, Clifton, Bonfield's Garage, and National Park Seminary. These sites are all of local importance, while some are of national importance.

* **Modifications to sites in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* require an Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) that is approved by the Historic Preservation Commission.** This permit is required for moving, demolishing, or substantially altering the exterior of a building, constructing new structures, and removing landscaping or other features which contribute to the environmental setting of the historic site or district. Despite these protections, a number of historic sites have been lost to fire during or after the designation process. Other sites were lost before County protection.

ART IN PUBLIC PLACES

* **Montgomery County allocates 0.25 percent of the estimated cost of all public construction projects to art in public places.** Approximately 500 permanent pieces of art have been put in public places since the Art in Public Places program began in 1984. Another 450 pieces of portable art travel to different locations. The total investment to date is \$2.5 million dollars. Originally, 1 percent of the construction cost was allocated to art. That was reduced to 0.5 percent in 1989, and further cut to 0.25 percent in 1990. A current proposal would halt all funding for new art until 1994.

While the 1969 Plan did not specify public funding for art, the aim of art in public places is consistent with the guidelines to locate artworks in pedestrian areas and to improve the appear-

ance of the County. Public art can help identify, as well as provide beauty and interest to an area.

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY

* The Montgomery County Planning Department is evaluating methods of improving pedestrian and transit accessibility in existing and planned areas. The upcoming Transit and Pedestrian Oriented Neighborhoods Study will identify techniques to improve the livability of neighborhoods through increasing pedestrian circulation as well as providing better access to transit services. The study will recommend principles for the revision of planning and development practices in the County.

Many of the recommendations of the upcoming study follow and build upon the guidance of the 1969 Plan, including its recommendations to "design activity centers in corridor cities to integrate residential areas with commercial, cultural, and employment facilities as well as transit stations and urban parks."

CONCLUSION

The development of identifiable communities that feel like "home" through good design was an aim of the 1969 General Plan. This continues to be a challenge, especially in light of the social changes that have occurred since the Plan's adoption, and those that have yet to occur.