

# REGIONALISM FACT SHEET

## I. INTRODUCTION

Regional aspects of planning and governance have been and will continue to be key challenges for Montgomery County's future. In 1961, when the original *...On Wedges and Corridors* General Plan was being prepared, President Kennedy addressed this issue in a message to Congress:

Bold programs in individual jurisdictions are no longer enough. Increasingly, community development must be a cooperative venture through the common goals of the metropolitan region as a whole.

At the kick-off symposium on the General Plan Refinement held in October 1991, an issue that seemed to be on a lot of people's minds was that many of the problems facing Montgomery County appear to be regional in nature. Regionalism was chosen as one of the new goals to add to the General Plan. This fact sheet explores the idea of regionalism as it relates to Montgomery County and this General Plan Refinement.

This fact sheet first introduces the concept of regionalism, then discusses Montgomery County's regional role. The final section examines issues that need regional approaches and past and present approaches to resolve those issues.

What do County residents mean when they think of a problem as being a regional problem? In many respects, we believe that it is a recognition that a particular concern facing a jurisdiction is greater than that jurisdiction's power to directly deal with. Most County residents have little interest in whether there is an entity that can address the concern or how such an entity should go about accomplishing that task. Yet, we also believe there seems to be an understanding and expectation by County residents that there should be a means for Montgomery County to participate in addressing such regional concerns. In any discussion of regionalism, there are various institutional and government issues on subjects such

as geographic coverage, roles, responsibilities, and authority. One dilemma of regionalism is that these subjects are of little interest to the average citizen, yet they are important to be mindful of due to legal and political concerns that can help or hinder the development and implementation of solutions to the issues and of the General Plan.

## II. THE CONCEPT OF REGIONALISM

\* **Montgomery County is part of many regions that change over time.** The geographic coverage of each region varies, based on its focus. In some cases, the boundaries of a region reflect political boundaries and in other cases, natural boundaries. The variety of regions and their overlapping boundaries affects regional cooperation. For example, there are different regions for statistical and environmental purposes. The U.S. Census Bureau defines the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as the region comprised of Washington, D.C. and the surrounding counties from which workers commute. This type of region changes over time as workers live farther away from the central city. After the 1980 census, the Washington MSA was expanded to include Frederick, Charles, and Calvert Counties in Maryland and Stafford County in Virginia.

It appears that the metropolitan region, of which Montgomery County is a part, is about to be changed as a result of the 1990 Census which is expected to show that the Washington and Baltimore MSAs now overlap. It is expected that the two adjacent metropolitan areas will be consolidated into a Combined Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) later in 1992. The Washington-Baltimore CMSA, with about 6.3 million residents, will be the fourth largest metropolitan area in terms of population behind Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago.

Another type of region that includes Montgomery County is the Chesapeake Bay drainage