

HOUSING PLAN

Goal:

Provide a mix of housing types in Olney, and increase opportunities for affordable housing and housing for the elderly in southern Olney.

INTRODUCTION

In the County's General Plan, the Olney area is considered a suburban housing resource. Although the single-family detached house is the predominant housing type, making nearly 72 percent of all dwelling units, Olney has a variety of housing types including townhouses and multi-family garden apartments. Townhouses at 23.7 percent constitute the second largest type and exceed the Countywide average of almost 18 percent. Multi-family dwelling units account for about 4.5 percent of Olney's housing stock. Most of the townhouses and apartments are located around the Town Center in higher density zones such as PD-7, PD-9, R-30, and RT-12.5. Townhouses are also located in other locations in the Northeast and Southwest Quadrants, mostly as a result of the transfer of development rights from the Agricultural Reserve in Olney (in 1980, there were only 592 townhouses).

Olney's high quality of life makes it a very attractive location for housing. This desirability has resulted in rapidly rising housing values. The median cost of a new single-family detached house in Olney in 2001 was \$555,196 compared to the County's \$436,928. By 2003, the median cost of a new single-family detached house rose to \$723,592, compared to \$590,759 Countywide. The median price of an existing single-family detached house in Olney in 2001 was \$346,000 compared to \$289,000 Countywide. By 2003, the median cost of an existing single-family detached house rose to \$425,000 compared to \$248,000 Countywide. The median price for an existing townhouse in Olney in 2001 was \$183,950 compared to the County's \$155,800. By 2003, the median cost of an existing townhouse rose to \$248,500 compared to \$229,000 Countywide.

The Plan reinforces the concept of Olney as a housing resource in one of the residential wedge areas of the County through careful refinement of the land use pattern, and recommends rezoning of some of the vacant properties with the potential to add up to 2,000 units of new housing in southern Olney. The proposed changes to allow townhouses and multiple-family units, especially in the Golden Bear area and the Town Center, would help provide housing in the median price range, generally referred to as workforce housing. This additional density is located along Georgia Avenue, which has the greatest transit opportunities in Olney, including the proposed Georgia Avenue Busway. In addition, the Plan focuses on exploring opportunities for affordable housing in appropriate locations in Olney.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Montgomery County Housing Policy defines affordable housing as any general housing, or elderly housing, offered for sale or rent at a price equal to or less than that affordable to a household with an annual income of less than 65 percent of the County's median income. The median household income in the Olney Planning Area in 2002 was \$104,745, while the County's median household income in 2002 was \$78,647. Nearly 12 percent of the households in the Olney Planning Area earned less than \$50,000 in 2002. A household with an income of approximately \$51,120 (65% of \$78,647) per year would qualify for a mortgage of between \$90,000 and \$150,000 depending upon down payment, credit history, insurance and property taxes.

Affordable housing depends upon public programs and initiatives to keep up with the demand. One of the cornerstones of the County's housing policy is the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program adopted by the County in 1974 to increase the supply of moderately priced housing in Montgomery County. Originally designed for developments of 50 or more units in areas zoned for lots of less than one acre, the program was modified in 2004 to apply to developments of 20 units or more and extended to sewered properties in the RE-1, RE-2C, and RNC zones. It requires a minimum of 12.5 percent of the units to be moderate-income households. The units may be multi-family or single-family and for either sale or rent. The control period for MPDU for-sale units is 30 years, and for rental units 99 years. To be eligible, a household generally must be below 65 percent of the median income for each household size. Some of the MPDUs remain within the affordable range even after they are no longer price controlled, because they are generally smaller than market rate units with fewer amenities.

As of 2003, there are more than 500 affordable housing units, including elderly housing, in Olney. Of these, 183 were price-controlled privately owned MPDUs, 139 were owned by the County's Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and other non-profit entities, and the remaining units were built with some other form of public subsidy either as regular family units or elderly housing.

The share of affordable housing for different planning areas in the County varies. It also fluctuates over time as new affordable units are created and older units age and move out of the programs that made them affordable. Goshen and the rural area with 0.4 percent each have the lowest amount of affordable housing as part of their overall housing stock whereas Germantown with 8.1 percent has the highest. Historically, Olney has been in the lower half of this range with less than 4.0 percent.

This Plan supports the County housing policy of creating an adequate supply of affordable housing, including elderly housing, throughout the County for those living and working in Montgomery County, and identifies areas suitable for affordable housing. It recommends zoning and land use changes that have the potential to create more affordable housing units in Olney, especially the Golden Bear area, the Bowie Mill site and the Town Center. Recommended zoning changes for large, vacant and redevelopable properties such as the Mess property, Norbeck Country Club, and some properties in the Southeast Quadrant could also provide moderately priced housing units. In addition, the Montgomery County Public Schools' 18.5-acre school site on Cashell Road, currently reserved for Oakdale Junior High School, would be suitable for affordable housing if it is not needed for a school use.

In the Town Center, the Plan's land use and zoning changes have the potential to create MPDUs through residential or mixed-use developments. Although the maximum capacity of the new zone in the Town Center is more than 2,000 units, only the larger shopping center properties are likely to accommodate housing in mixed-use redevelopment projects. Smaller properties, if developed as residential or mixed-use, would be able to provide MPDUs even if they are not able to realize their full permitted density due to their smaller lot size and other design constraints.

Recommendations:

- 1. Allow mixed-use development with residential units in the Town Center. Provide flexibility in development standards to encourage mixed-use developments to use full bonus provisions of the MPDU law.**
- 2. Support new affordable housing as part of the cluster developments on large properties in the Southeast Quadrant in accordance with Chapter 25-A of the County Code.**
- 3. Rezone the Golden Bear area to allow higher density residential development with MPDUs.**
- 4. The 32-acre County-owned site on Bowie Mill Road should be used for affordable housing designed to be compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood. The site is recommended for R-200/PD-3 but will only achieve the full yield allowed under PD-3 if it can meet the criteria specified elsewhere in this Plan.**

SENIOR HOUSING

The population of persons aged 65 and older is steadily growing in Montgomery County. As of 2003, more than 7.0 percent of the household population in Olney was 65 years of age or older, and the vast majority of them lived in single-family housing, both detached and attached units. While the majority of the senior population in Olney may prefer to remain in their current homes, a variety of options in senior housing exists to meet the various levels of care and range of incomes for the elderly choosing to live in senior housing.

Olney currently has approximately 417 units of elderly housing within the Master Plan area, of which 99 are affordable. Two of the larger facilities are the Andrew Kim house on Olney Sandy Spring Road and Marian Assisted Living on Georgia avenue north of Gold Mine Road. Brooke Grove, another elderly housing complex of 665 units is located in both the Olney and Sandy Spring planning areas and plans to add another 402 independent living units in the near future. A new senior housing development of approximately 100 affordable units (Olney Manor) is under construction on the Finneyfrock property in the Town Center. In addition, there are large developments of senior housing just outside of the Olney Planning Area. Leisure World, an active adult community of more than 5,000 units is located nearby in the Aspen Hill planning area. Friends House on Quaker Lane off Norwood Road in Sandy Spring has approximately 215 units.

Senior Housing Facilities in the Olney Area

Project	Address	Type	Unit Type			
			Ind.	Assisted	Nursing	Total
Marian Assisted Living	19209 Georgia Avenue	Mixed income	0	40	0	40
Town Center Place	3500 Morningwood Drive	Affordable	9	0	0	9
Ammahl Home for the Elderly	16700 Batchellors Forest Road	Group home, Market rate	11	0	0	11
Winter Growth, Inc.	18110 Prince Philip Drive	Group home, Market rate	13	0	0	13
Andrew Kim House	Olney-Sandy Spring Road	Mixed income	76	0	0	76
TOTAL			109	44	0	149
Brooke Grove*	Brooke Road	Mixed income	402**	105	158	665
Grand Total			511	149	158	814

*Brooke Grove Campus is located in both the Olney and Sandy Spring planning areas. 158 nursing units include 48 units in Sharon Nursing Home on the campus. The campus currently has only nursing and assisted living units.

**402 units listed as independent in this table are proposed for future construction.

The senior housing project on the Finneyfrock property on Georgia Avenue and other such projects in the future are expected to increase the inventory and variety of senior housing in Olney. Future special exceptions on some of the vacant and redevelopable sites in and around the planning area would also add to the inventory of elderly housing in Olney. The development community should incorporate “age-in-place” strategies in new construction and in rehabilitation of existing dwellings to enable senior citizens to stay in their own home as long as they desire.

Recommendation:

Support elderly housing projects of appropriate densities at appropriate locations.