

**FRAMEWORK
FOR PLANNING**

**OLNEY
MASTER PLAN**
Montgomery County, Maryland

FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING

CHALLENGE

In 1950 the Olney Planning Area was predominantly agricultural; aerial photographs from that year show a checkerboard of open fields and scattered clusters of farm buildings.

The 1970's witnessed a marked change in the study area's agricultural character. The attractiveness of Olney's rural setting and its close proximity to urban employment centers stimulated residential development and population growth. The number of homes almost doubled and population growth between 1970 and 1976. By 1978, preliminary plans for another 2,300 houses were on file to be built.

The basic planning issue in Olney is whether the community's semi-rural character can be preserved given its

popularity as a living place. Each year, new people move to Olney in search of a pleasant, rural atmosphere. Ironically, it is this decision, made by hundreds and hundreds of people each year, that poses the greatest threat to Olney's character. Yet it would be unfair to simply close Olney to any additional growth and arbitrarily deny people the opportunity to live in the community.

Olney is blessed with a fine history, an attractive setting and a strong sense of place. The challenge in the planning process is to channel and stage growth so that Olney remains an identifiable, semi-rural community.

RESPONSE

The Olney Master Plan has focused its attention on several areas of basic concern. These concerns are expressed in statements of community goals. Although the goals and objectives are discussed here under the category headings of "community and social," "environmental and agricultural," "economic and fiscal" and "implementation," they are necessarily and essentially interrelated.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To provide for community identity

Employ the satellite concept of development defined in the General Plan for Montgomery as a small urbanized area surrounded by open space, to create an identifiable semi-rural town.

Develop a Town Center that provides a mix of commercial, residential and community activities.

Assure desirable and convenient physical relationships between residential, commercial, and public land use areas.

Encourage location of cultural and recreational facilities such as libraries, community centers and local parks in the community.

To encourage social contacts and community activities

Provide varied opportunities for use of leisure time.

Locate community services so as to provide convenient access from all residences.

Encourage citizen involvement.

To provide for housing diversity and lifestyle choice

Provide a choice of suburban, semirural and rural living environments.

Provide a range of recreational and leisure opportunities.

Provide housing choice at every phase of the lifecycle.

To assure the provision of adequate community facilities at all stages of development

Stage residential development so that such development occurs where adequate supporting community facilities are available.

Locate community facilities at appropriate sites close to users.

Encourage joint use of public and private facilities.

Offer balance in commercial facilities and services.

Provide low to moderate-cost housing units in the Town Center.

To insure convenience, accessibility, and flexibility with regard to circulation systems

Develop public transit systems as far as practical to reduce the need for, and dependence upon, the private automobile.

Develop an automobile transportation network in coordination with existing regional circulation network.

Provide for pedestrian linkages between major community facilities.

Develop a bikeway network to link community facilities, residential development, and commercial activities.

ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To protect and preserve the area's unique natural and environmental resources

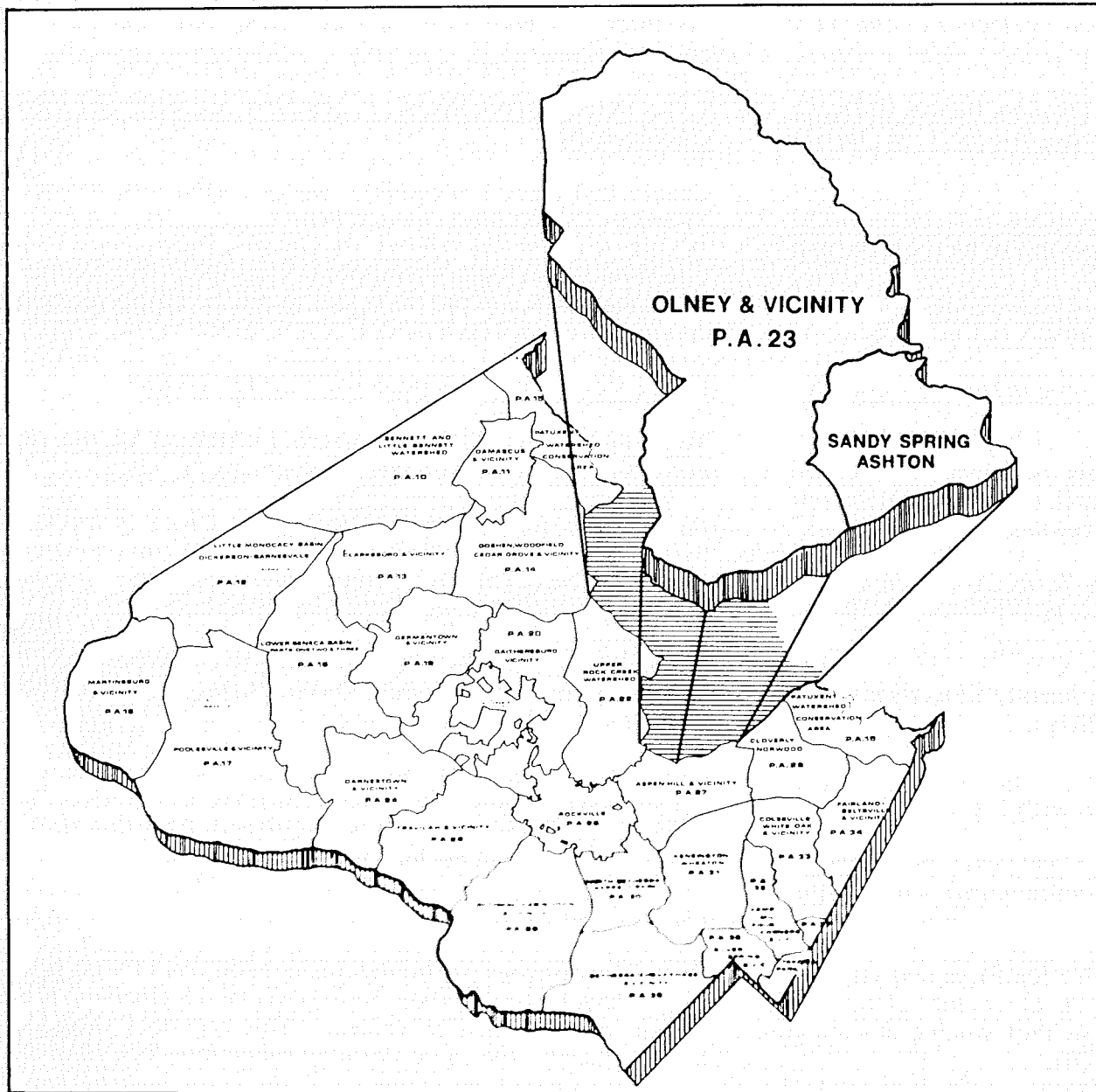
Emphasize the planning area's natural and environmental features, particularly stream valleys, as prime determinants of physical form and intensity of land use.

Monitor the ecological impact of development to preserve natural features and ecological balance.

Emphasize the preservation of prime farmland and open space.

To develop a comprehensive planning strategy to preserve prime agricultural soils

Explore innovative ways to preserve farmland from residential intrusion.



LOCATION MAP

Approved & Adopted : June 1980

OLNEY MASTER PLAN

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Create and employ a realistic set of ordinances governing land use in agricultural areas.

To recognize the contribution of farming to the County's historical and cultural development, as well as to its economic base

To consider all elements of the environment, in terms of the effects of each on physical and emotional health and welfare

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To provide a viable yet limited commercial and employment area.

Use careful planning and controls on development and performance to assure the scale and type of development compatible with rural satellite concept.

Encourage the development of the Town Center as a community activity center where a wide range of service is available.

Provide a sufficient market for a variety of convenience, retail and service commercial facilities.

Discourage strip development along major roads to minimize adverse economic competition with the Town Center.

To provide for the most economic and efficient expenditures of public funds for capital improvements and social services

Schedule the provision of community facilities and services according to a well-conceived development plan, and monitor the pace of development so that staging plans can be modified to reflect changing needs.

Encourage shared use of facilities, both public and private.

To provide comprehensive planning criteria for land development

Create and employ a realistic set of ordinances, designed to assure coordinated development.

Coordinate open space and park acquisition and development programs so that they are in balance with the pace and direction of development of a satellite town.

IMPLEMENTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To provide mechanisms to assure fulfillment of the rich potential envisioned for the development of Olney

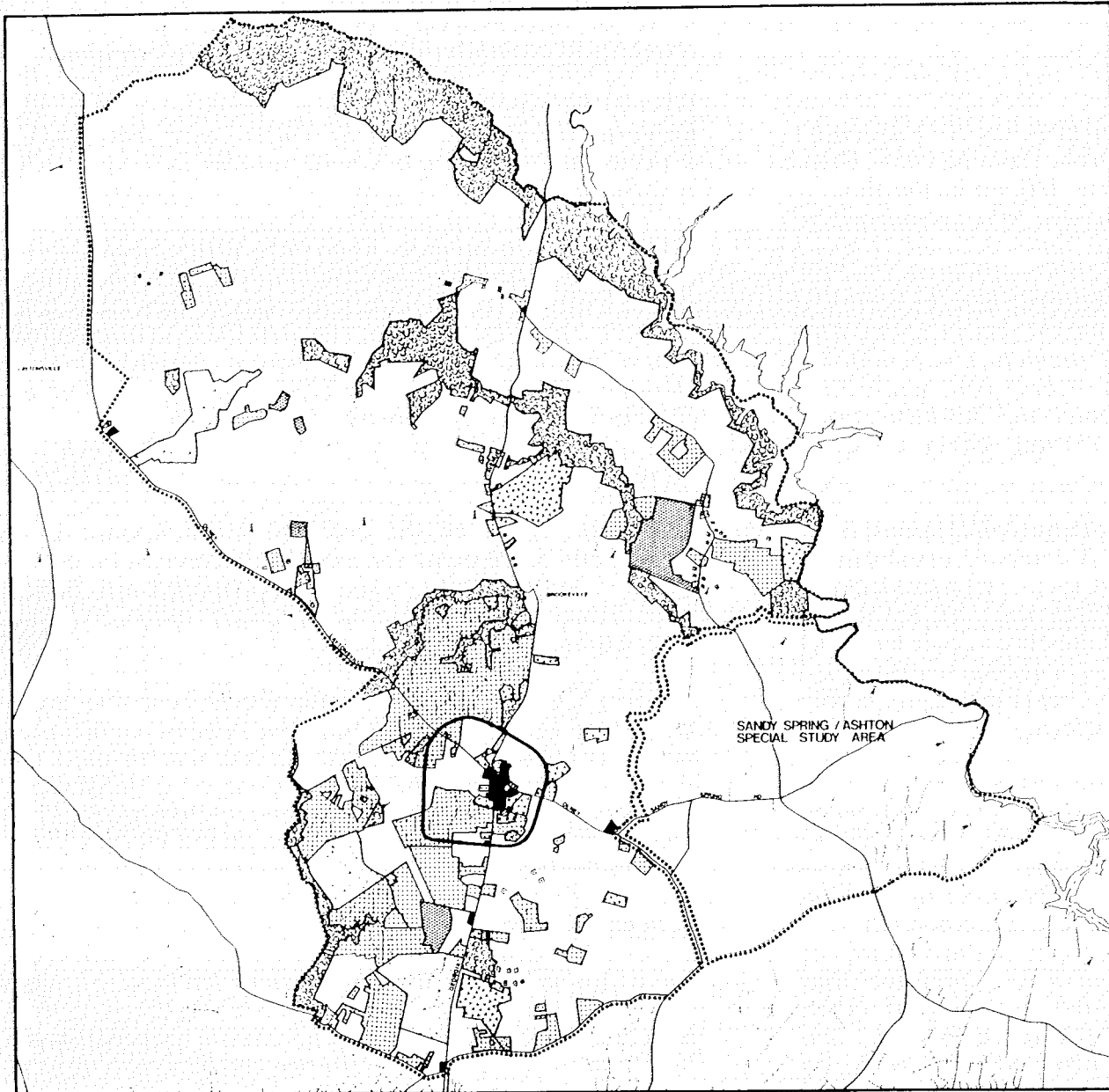
Monitor the continuing development of Olney in terms of public facilities, growth rates, agricultural and ecological impact, transportation impact, sewer and water impact, housing mix and commercial development.

Encourage fulfillment of stated goals and objectives by providing necessary services and facilities and appropriate incentives and controls.











Conduct periodic Master Plan reviews, to measure achievement against goals and objectives and to assess the findings of the monitoring activity and the potential of new programs and development technologies.

PLAN CONCEPTS

Plan Concepts are strategies for moving from "what is" to "what should be." They represent sound planning principles and community values. The concepts discussed below underlie the more detailed recommendations of the



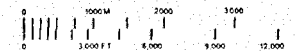
EXISTING LAND USE

-  Residential, One Family
-  Residential, Multi-Family
-  Commercial / Office
-  Institutional
-  Park
-  Private Open Space
-  Federal / Public Utility
-  Rural / Agricultural
-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Town Center Boundary

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Olney Master Plan.

Satellite Town

The satellite concept of development was first proposed for Olney in the 1964 General Development Plan. Although the concept is not clearly defined in the text, it consists generally of a small urbanized area surrounded by open space.

The satellite form of development channels growth to a defined area. Residential, commercial and (if applicable) industrial uses are clustered to provide the population needed to support an active and diverse community life. Farmland and open space surround the satellite town, creating a pleasant, semi-rural setting within a metropolitan area.

The satellite concept offers an attractive alternative to land-extensive suburban sprawl. A compact development pattern allows more efficient and less costly provision of public services. As noted in The Cost of Sprawl, a national study prepared for the Council of Environmental Quality, transportation and utility costs, sanitary and storm sewer costs, and water line costs are considerably reduced in a contained land use pattern.

By minimizing sprawl, the satellite concept supports the preservation and conservation of open space and prime agricultural land. This is especially important in Olney because it includes some of the County's richest agricultural soils and supports over 15,000 acres of working farms. Expansion of rural residential development is a major concern since it is contributing to the annual loss of working farms and prime soils. It is imperative that development be directed to pre-defined areas if urban growth is to occur without the total demise of the agricultural sector. The satellite concept with its

emphasis on contained growth, is supportive and complementary to agricultural and open space preservation.

When designated a satellite community in the 1964 General Development Plan, Olney was expected to experience "gradual but steady growth in single-family residences."

An active sewer program in the late 1960's quickened the pace of development, doubling the population in only six years. Although the scale of Olney since the 1964 General Plan has changed, the potential still exists for Olney to function as a semi-rural satellite with a pleasant physical setting and an environment that encourages community identity.

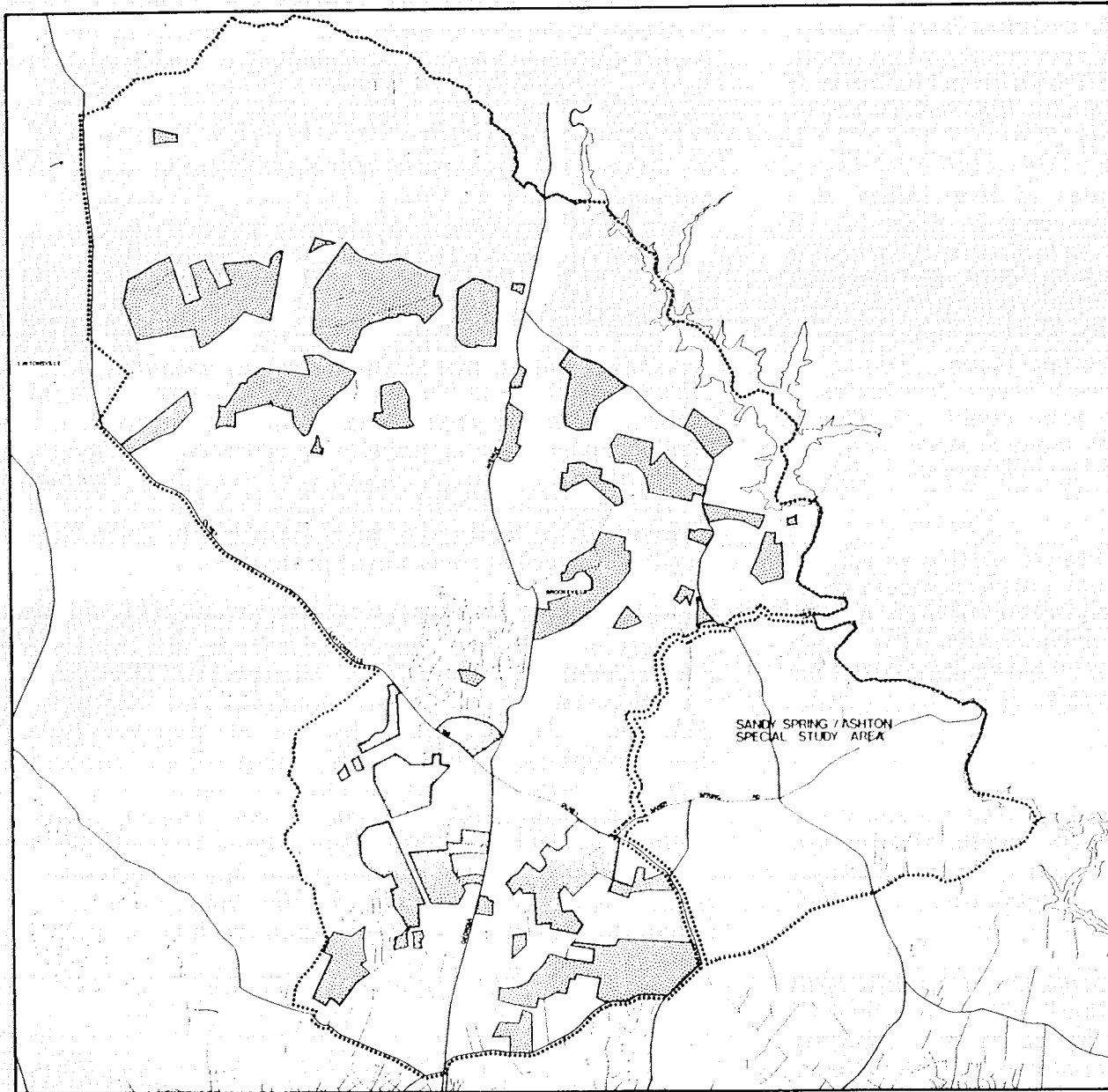
Town Center

An integral part of the satellite town concept is an identifiable focal point for commercial and social activities. A well-planned, visually appealing Town Center helps residents feel part of a larger community and contributes to a sense of place.



A Town Center is proposed for Olney near the intersection of Routes 97 and 108, the present commercial core. The Plan includes a detailed design concept and land use plan for the Town Center. Residential, commercial and public uses are interrelated to provide a unified activity center that strengthens Olney's community identity.

Residential Diversity

One of the goals of the Olney Master Plan is to provide a variety of housing choice. A mix of dwelling types--detached, townhouses and apartments--is proposed in the Plan to accommodate different age and economic groups.



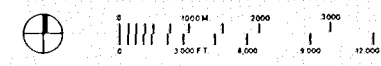
SUBDIVISION ACTIVITY

-  Subdivision Activity 1970 - 1980
-  Planning Area Boundary

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At present, there are about 5,500 dwelling units in Olney; only 593 are townhouses or garden apartments. As a result, those people who either cannot afford a detached home or who do not require large living spaces are excluded from the planning area.

A mix of housing types contributes to the vitality of a community by attracting a diverse range of lifestyles. It also fosters greater stability by providing housing choice throughout the lifecycle. A young couple, for example, may only be able to afford an apartment early in their marriage. As their income rises and household size increases, they may purchase a larger home. When the children leave or one of the spouses dies, a townhouse or apartment may prove attractive once again. A diverse housing stock would allow for all these choices, enabling people to remain in the community by meeting their changing housing needs.

Residential diversity applies to physical setting as well as unit type. Residential development patterns should meet the needs of those wishing a country setting as well as those desiring a more suburban environment. The Olney Master Plan allows for such choice by designating areas for rural estates as well as for townhouses.

Phased Land Development

The Olney Master Plan Amendment emphasizes the coordination of private development with public investment. Careful phasing of development can help assure that transportation, education, parks and recreation, and other public services do not lag behind new growth.

The consequences of failing to coordinate growth with public facilities are evident in Olney, where the pace of development has outstripped the service capacity of many facilities. Roadways are the most notable example. Route

97 (Georgia Avenue), built to handle rural traffic volumes, is seriously overtaxed by the number of car trips it now serves. Relief (widening Route 97 to four lanes) cannot be expected for at least five to ten years.

To avoid the inconvenience and hardship caused by inadequate public facilities, the timing of zoning and land development in Olney should be coordinated with the provision of publicly financed capital improvements.

Agricultural Preservation

As already noted, the satellite concept encourages farmland preservation by channeling development to a defined area. To further enhance agricultural preservation, the Olney Master Plan explores new approaches to land use regulations in farming areas. Preservation strategies recommended in this Plan are based on the concept that farming is a legitimate and essential function which should be afforded government protection.

The agriculture preservation program proposed in the Plan consists of four key elements: zoning, the transfer of development rights (a new concept for Montgomery County), sewer and water policies, and agricultural districts. An important feature of the transfer of development rights program is that it offers farmers an economic return for the development potential of their land. At many meetings during the planning process, farmers voiced strong opposition to large lot zoning or any other measure which denied them the opportunity to realize at least a portion of the land's development potential. The preservation program outlined in the Plan addresses these concerns.