



# MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

## OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

May 21, 2007

The Honorable Marilyn Praisner, President  
The Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

President Praisner and Members of the County Council:

I am pleased to transmit for your consideration the draft 2007 County Growth Policy Resolution and amendments to the County Code required to implement certain aspects of the resolution, together with a supporting document, **TOWARD SUSTAINABLE GROWTH FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY: A GROWTH POLICY FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**. This document contains a summary of major growth policy recommendations of the Planning Board, and the final staff report. The Board unanimously approved the draft resolution at its regular meeting on May 17, 2007.

The draft resolution, bill, and report address the issues raised in Council Resolution 16-17 (December 12, 2006), which directed the Board to conduct the analysis and make recommendations for managing growth. Accordingly, the draft resolution and the accompanying reports include:

- Recommendations for tools to manage growth and fund infrastructure;
- Recommendations to better coordinate the County's growth management and affordable housing goals;
- Analysis and recommendations regarding tests for the adequacy of school, transportation, and other facilities;
- An update of the Board's 2005 analysis of the number, age, and characteristics of projects in the development pipeline;
- Analysis and recommendations concerning impact taxes;
- Recommendations for further study.

Several of the recommendations will undoubtedly occupy a major portion of the Council's deliberations on Growth Policy, as they did of the Board's discussions. The Board urges, however, that we not lose sight of the central theme of the proposal: that development should be managed in ways that contribute to the *sustainability* of our facilities, communities, and

resources; not merely to provide for the *adequacy* of facilities to accommodate each new increment of growth.

It is now *possible* to make sustainability the goal of growth policy because of the experience the county has gained in managing its growth, along with advances in technologies and skills in state-of-the-art modeling and analysis.

It is *necessary* to manage for sustainability because of the convergence of great natural, economic, and social forces, each of which has profound implications for where and how we use land, facilitate mobility, and design the built environment. These forces include global climate change and the impact of urbanization on energy consumption, carbon sequestration, and fragile landscapes and watersheds. Restructuring of the world's economy places the county in position for long term regional economic leadership because of the high proportion and cultural diversity of our bank of knowledge workers—if we sustain the quality and equity of our education system. Demographic shifts combined with the information revolution, has changed housing and community preferences, as well as what is done, who does it, where it is done, and how it is done.

The aggregate leverage these forces exert on local growth management processes means that concern alone for staging private growth so that it is more proximate in time to the availability of public capital facilities is an insufficient policy. It is equally important to attend to the pattern of growth and the design of communities and centers so that we do not unduly compromise the county's ability to meet future needs. In this sense, growth policy represents an ethical choice about our stewardship of the county; recognition that the choices we make today will be manifest tomorrow and impose benefits and burdens that may endure for generations.

Thus, the Board has proposed that we think of growth policy more broadly than in the past. Now, in addition to managing development of open land in concert with the provision of public facilities to serve the new communities being created, growth policy involves managing the transformation of older suburban centers into vital and varied urban places, the conservation of neighborhoods, and the conversion of an auto-centric mobility system into one that favors increased use of public transportation, biking, and walking.

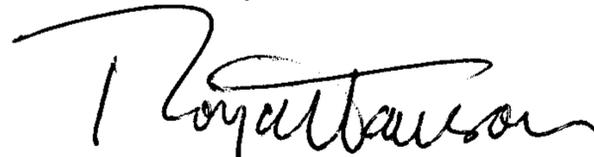
To achieve these goals, we have recommended a closer connection between Growth Policy and the Capital Improvement Program in order to provide better prioritization, in time and significance, of key projects. We have proposed substantial increases in development impact taxes and fees that allocate the marginal cost of new transportation and school infrastructure to the development that induces need for it and to help the county remain fiscally sustainable. Changes are proposed in the tests to be used to assess the adequacy of facilities to make them more understandable and useful in both the planning and regulatory processes. Suggestions are offered for creating a culture of design excellence to produce

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more sustainable communities and centers and to achieve environmental, energy, and mobility goals. And, finally, we have proposed including in all future Growth Policy reports a system of monitoring outcomes associated with policy objectives to assist the county in making timely course corrections in growth policy, plans, and regulations.

The Board and staff look forward to the Council's public hearings and participating with you in further discussion of the 2007 Growth Policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Royce Hanson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Royce Hanson  
Chairman

RH/jh