

Framework For Planning In The Future

*Revitalizing Centers, Reshaping Boulevards and
Creating Great Public Spaces*

Summary Report

Working Draft

Montgomery County Department of Planning
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

MARCH 2006

The intent of this Framework Report is:

- to spark community dialogue about how best to plan and manage future growth in Montgomery County;
- to chronicle key development trends and emerging land-use and market changes as the County matures;
- to offer a fresh planning perspective that captures future development in a more focused pattern of sustainable growth to conserve land and energy in a manner consistent with our General Plan.
- to respond to the Planning Board and County Council's request to explore the growth and market dynamics of our mature commercial centers

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In February 2005, more than 300 regional leaders from 22 jurisdictions convened in a visioning exercise, Reality Check, to take stock of the pace and growth confronting the Washington region. Reality Check began a dialogue about our region's future and set the framework for implementation work to continue at the local level. The Department will take many of the principles formed in the Reality Check and evaluate how they align with the new Centers, Boulevards, and Public Spaces Planning initiative.

I. Overview

The Department of Park and Planning prepared this planning Framework Report to chronicle key development trends, changing population needs, and emerging land use and market changes in Montgomery County. It offers a fresh planning perspective that proposes to capture future development in a more focused pattern of sustainable growth to conserve land and energy in a manner consistent with the spirit and intent of the General Plan.

Most large landholdings outside of the Agricultural Reserve are almost fully developed; future growth will primarily be in the form of community-scaled redevelopment and infill, away from the Agricultural Reserve.

This Framework Report is intended to open community dialogue about how best to plan and manage this future growth. The Framework Report presents a vision of Montgomery County in transition from a largely auto-dependent suburb into a more urban form with mixed-use, transit-connected centers located along shared-use boulevards and transit corridors.

The success of this initiative will depend on community stakeholders, elected officials, and government agencies frankly exploring the challenges and opportunities associated with planning in a maturing county, articulating a vision for future communities, and developing planning approaches that provide the greatest improvement in the quality of life for all our citizens in the context of a mature, more urbanized landscape.

A work program that provides opportunity for all stakeholders to explore alternative visions of future growth and community development accompanies this Framework Report.

II. Emerging Land-Use, Development and Market Changes

- ***Greenfield development is almost over.*** In past decades, “growth” meant the development of large tracts of vacant land. Although some large vacant tracts remain, most are protected parks, open space and agricultural land, and most of Montgomery County’s future growth will be located in already developed areas within the framework of the General Plan.
- ***The focus of planning will shift from the preparation of large area master and sector plans to neighborhood planning and smaller scale plan amendments.*** Planning at the finer grain will require: a) more intensive community involvement, b) more detailed planning focusing on quality building and site design, c) preparation of detailed infrastructure and public facility assessments, and d) collaborative implementation and

unified decision-making approaches throughout all levels of government. Planning at the finer grain will involve using the planner's skill sets in different ways and placing greater emphasis on market feasibility and on detailed components of the development that historically have been left to the developer's discretion.

- ***Expansion of transit and road infrastructure will remain a priority, but will focus on improving transit access and/or adding capacity between existing job and population centers, rather than extending new facilities outward into surrounding undeveloped areas.*** Concentrating future development in transit-oriented centers (e.g., Silver Spring, Wheaton) or transit-ready development (e.g., Gaithersburg, Takoma/Langley, Kentlands, Clarksburg) requires new transportation infrastructure linking these centers to each other and to other centers in the County and region. New facilities will be designed to encourage higher transit ridership, reinforce existing town centers and boulevards and support the higher densities that can be achieved through high-quality, transit-oriented, pedestrian friendly community design
- ***According to current forecasts and adopted master plan, the County will add 170,000 jobs, 94,000 housing units and 213,000 people in the next 25 years.*** All of the job growth and most of the housing and population growth is permitted under current zoning and in master plans that have already been adopted.
- ***Some of the County's commercial centers have potential for absorbing additional growth under existing zoning.*** The County has more than 1,500 acres of commercially zoned land that could be redeveloped into more than 29 million square feet of commercial space. In some of these areas, a mix of jobs and housing might be a preferable alternative to commercial development alone.

It is by no means a forgone conclusion that meeting critical housing needs will require higher densities than currently permitted in under the County's master plans. Allowable densities through a broader mix of uses (trading commercial density for residential density) may be sufficient to achieve the goal of increased housing within our commercial centers while also accommodating the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. However, the impact of reducing our potential employment base over time must be examined and a proper balance struck.

- ***The County needs more affordable housing and better job/housing balance.*** Home prices are increasing faster than wages in Montgomery County. In addition, there are about 50 years of commercial development in currently adopted master plans, but only about 25 years of housing development. This will put further pressure on housing costs. The County

needs more housing choices that are affordable to a wider range of households.

While the need for housing exists throughout the County, the biggest imbalance is in existing commercial centers that are job-rich and housing-poor. The job-rich centers are concentrated in the I-270 Corridor. Multi-family units, built at densities sensitive to surrounding areas, would help address this growing problem.

- **In a planning framework that puts less emphasis on large-area master plans, other tools, such as the growth policy and master plan staging elements, will continue to play an important role in coordinating the pace of development and the services that support it.** As the County's future growth begins to focus more on redevelopment and infill, there will be a continuing need to predict, provide, and stage needed public facilities to better assure residents and workers that roads, schools and other public facilities will be adequate at the local level.
- **Sustaining the quality of life, in areas not planned for additional growth or significant redevelopment, will continue.** The focus on redeveloping centers should not diminish the commitment to sustaining and enhancing the quality of life in communities not planned for growth or substantial redevelopment, including the Agricultural Reserve.
- **The Chesapeake Bay Agreement calls for the reduction of *harmful sprawl* within the Bay's watershed.** To achieve this goal, the County should concentrate most of its future development and redevelopment in areas zoned for more than two houses per acre and served by existing public sewer. Concentrated development by way of redevelopment and infill will lead to a greater reliance on renewable resources by reducing dependence on cars and taking greater advantage of transit. Transit is generally more fuel-efficient and reduces air pollution.
- **Redevelopment also provides us with an excellent opportunity to recycle portions of our built environment into "green" environmentally friendly communities** that promote healthy living. Green buildings and communities can make a difference in exactly how environmentally sustainable our future will be.

III. Setting the Stage

A. Background

Forty years ago, Montgomery County adopted its groundbreaking General Plan ... *On Wedges and Corridors*. The County had less than half of today's population but was growing rapidly. The Plan outlined an overall pattern for future development in the County and addressed fundamental land use issues: What areas should be developed? What farm and forestland should be preserved? How will the transportation system be structured? Should the network of stream valleys form the backbone of a park and public open space system? How can the pattern of future development and the park and open space system best serve the needs of a growing population?

Since the 1960's, the County has seen its population double, the number of housing units triple, and its jobs quadruple. Within two generations, the County's character has changed dramatically from a bedroom community with a few employment centers to a major employment, commercial, and population center--home to more of Maryland's population and economic activity than any other jurisdiction in the State.

Thanks to a long-term commitment to principled land use planning, backed by strong political leadership, growth has generally followed the Wedges and Corridors land use pattern prescribed in the General Plan. Its overall vision is now well established. However, the regional transportation network that was planned at the same time to support that vision has been only partially implemented. Major transit links, like today's Metro, were built on time and as planned, but many of the major planned highway facilities were either delayed or cancelled throughout the region. Major transitways extending the reach of Metro from Shady Grove to Clarksburg as between Silver Spring and Bethesda are still only in the planning stage.

Farmland has been preserved in the 93,000-acre Agricultural Reserve in the northern and western region of the County. Much of our natural heritage has been retained through the 33,000-acre park system and innovative land conservation program, Legacy Open Space. At the same time, the County has created a stable market environment that offers a large range of residential and business choices.

In the early 21 Century, the County has reached a turning point.

Most land intended for conventional suburban development is built out; most large landholdings outside the Agricultural Reserve are developed. Growth can continue under the existing master plans- indeed the County is forecast to add 170,000 new jobs and 94,000 new housing units by 2030. This is like adding the combined current development in Rockville, Germantown and Gaithersburg. All

of the expected job growth and most of the housing growth is already permitted under current zoning and in adopted master plans. Some additional housing growth will be needed to maintain a healthy balance of jobs and housing.

The I-270 Corridor will see the most job and housing growth in the next 25 years--many offices, stores and housing will be clustered around existing and proposed transit stations. The I-270 Corridor has the planned capacity for the majority of new jobs in the County--led by Rockville and followed by Germantown, North Bethesda, Clarksburg, and Gaithersburg.

Many parcels with capacity for additional housing will involve infill and redevelopment in down-County areas and along transit corridors. Approximately 60% of new housing will be condominiums and apartments.

Capacity for more traditional suburban development exists in the outer areas of the I-270 Corridor, Georgia Avenue, and Route 29 major arterials; Clarksburg, Germantown, Aspen Hill, Olney, Fairland; as well as residential wedge areas of Potomac, Upper Rock Creek, Cloverly, and Burtonsville.

Regional trends also will impact the County in terms of how the County residents live, work, and travel. The Washington region forecasts growth of an estimated 2 million people and 1.6 million jobs by 2030. Montgomery County will be affected by the cumulative impacts of growth decisions made by our neighbors in surrounding jurisdictions.

In the nation and the world, the increasing scarcity and expense of energy is likely to continue. Nations including the United States may well strengthen their resolve to conserve energy, reduce carbon dioxide emissions, and slow global warming in the future. Montgomery County's energy policy already calls for reducing carbon dioxide emissions compared to the level in 2000. A less automotive dependent form of development will also reduce energy demands.

B. Approaching Build-Out

Growth in the County should and will continue, but the County's planning policies must evolve so that future growth produces more mixed-use communities where County residents and business can thrive in the realities of the 21st Century--

- The rate of development will slow: greater attention must be paid to each new project and how it fits into its surroundings.
- The focus of planning will shift from large master and sector plans to smaller-scale planning and plan amendments to manage growth that is directed inward and to some extent upward.

- Some existing retail and business centers should become genuine centers for their communities- more urban in character, accommodating to pedestrians, with a wider mix of use including- housing, community public buildings, community serving retail, and vital public spaces.
- The outward expansion of infrastructure will diminish as greater attention is focused on planning facilities needed to support and enhance redeveloped centers and surrounding existing neighborhoods.
- The County remains committed to the stability of the countryside, parkland, Agricultural Reserve, and established residential neighborhoods.

As an initial step in developing new 21st Century policies, community and business leaders along with public officials and planners, are embarking on a Centers and Boulevard initiative to examine the County's commercial centers and major arterial roads, with the goal of renovating them into vibrant community centers located along grand boulevards, with attractive public spaces, and accessible from surrounding neighborhoods on foot or bike and connected to each other by public transport. (Attachment #1: Work Program).

Other key issues that are vital to the County's future social and economic well being will also be explored—

Integrity of the Agricultural Reserve. Infill development in centers and along boulevards can provide attractive housing and employment centers which will ease development pressure on the Agricultural Reserve. Further actions are needed however, to better insure its long-term viability. A program to address its long-term viability is being prepared concurrently with this Centers and Boulevard initiative.

Provision of Affordable Housing. The housing affordability crisis can be eased by the addition of multi-family housing in centers, but again, additional actions will be required to meet the needs of the full range of residents and employees.

Balance between Jobs and Housing. Currently, the County has a good overall balance between jobs and resident workforce. (Attachment #2) However, the geographic distribution of jobs and housing is not well balanced. Furthermore, remaining zoning capacity increasingly favors job growth compared to housing for workers. This imbalance tends to lead to more pressure on road capacity and housing prices. To address this problem, a "jobs/housing balance policy" is needed when amending master plans and approving development. Maintaining a job/housing balance is an explicit goal of the General Plan, but this goal has not always been addressed in County plans. The Transportation Planning

Report II (TPRII) Alternative Land Use Scenario is currently providing job/housing balance guidance for master plans, but this approach needs broader discussion and more analysis.

Staging of Private Development with Public Facilities. The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance will need to evolve and be strengthened. A planning framework that puts less emphasis on large area planning obliges the County to reinvigorate how we regulate the pace and staging of growth and assure residents and workers that roads, schools and other public facilities will be adequate at both the local level and on a countywide basis.

Providing improved mobility and access to jobs and housing. Implementation of recommendations in County plans, to improve mobility for residents, will support quality of life throughout the County.

IV. Planning Past, Present, and Future

A. Guidance from the General Plan...*On Wedges and Corridors*

In 1964, Montgomery County adopted one of the most progressive countywide general plans of its day that continues to be a source of inspiration for localities throughout the country. The countywide General Plan, “...*On Wedges and Corridors*” embraced the principle that growth should be concentrated in areas well served by public facilities, that persons of every background and income should have a place in the County to live and work, that every generation must act as the steward of the County’s natural resources for the next generation, and that the County’s farming heritage should be preserved with an economically healthy agricultural industry.

“...*On Wedges and Corridors*” has remained the guiding principle for new development. Since the 1960’s, the wedges and corridors concept has been implemented in master and sector plans for individual communities and by way of the 1980 Functional Plan for the Preservation of the Agriculture and Rural Open Spaces. The areas intended for intense development, low-density development, and rural preservation are apparent to those traveling throughout the County. Continuing our commitment to provide a range of multi-modal transportation facilities to support the wedges and corridors concept will set us on a sustainable path into the future.

Following the adoption of the General Plan, several key policy actions were taken to help implement its goals and objectives:

Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Law (MPDU). Increased affordable housing has been pursued through the MPDU Program which was recently strengthened. Housing prices near transit stations are most often

unaffordable to moderate or lower income households. The County, however, continues to explore ways to make transit-oriented housing more affordable to moderate and lower income households.

Affordable housing units have been built throughout the County, providing an array of housing choices. Nevertheless, the number of jobs is growing faster than available housing which means the need for more affordable housing will continue to increase. The new workforce-housing program addresses the needs of middle-income residents.

Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). The timing of public facilities in developing areas is critical to the quality of life for people living and working in developing areas. To improve the coordination of public facilities with new housing and commercial buildings, the County adopted the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance.

As the County begins to focus more on redevelopment and infill of some existing commercial centers, the need to predict, provide, and stage needed public facilities at the local level will intensify. Also, the facilities needed will change.

The current methods of measuring public facilities adequacy may need to change. In addition to public facilities covered by the APFO, it may be important to monitor, measure, and require other types of facilities/amenities to insure that redeveloped commercial centers provide benefits for residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. These may include: adequate school capacity, transit service, road capacity, parks/trails, meeting places, libraries, even private facilities like food stores, day care centers, and cafes.

B. Transition into the 21st Century

The General Plan has guided Montgomery County well. The County enters the 21st Century in good shape to adapt to changing realities—our economy is strong, focused on the business districts of the urban ring, and along the I-270/MD 355 corridor and along Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard, New Hampshire Avenue and Columbia Pike. Metro rail service logically has followed the I-270 Corridor and other major arterials, so that much of the urban ring and corridor area is served by high quality public transportation. Commuting by transit is an option for many more people than in a typical suburb. Commercial centers tend to be located on major roads, and many are served by Metro or significant bus transport. Restricting development in the Agricultural Reserve reduced the number of people and businesses in remote locations.

The County is well prepared for the transition from traditional suburban development to a more compactly arranged and integrated urban future as envisioned in the General Plan. This transition must be closely planned and managed in order for it to fulfill and serve countywide public interest and meet the needs of all County residents.

The urban transition, as envisioned in this Framework Report, will focus on the existing commercial centers and some of the major roads and transit routes that connect them. The County's commercial centers, from small strip centers to large "power centers" and malls are subject to increasing pressure for redevelopment.

The central purpose of this Centers and Boulevards initiative is to engage all interested parties in developing new visions and appropriate zoning for these centers, so that when redevelopment occurs it serves a broad public interest. Only a fraction of our commercial centers are appropriate for extensive redevelopment; most will see modest improvements or none at all. The community will be engaged in deciding which commercial centers will redevelop and how they will be turned into well designed, community- serving centers.

V. History, Function, and Future of Commercial Centers

The County's commercial centers were first developed along and at crossings of its roads, including Wisconsin Avenue/Frederick Road, Georgia Avenue, and Colesville Road. These early commercial centers were most often defined by a combination of commercial uses- such as a mill, blacksmith or general store; public facilities- such as a post office or schoolhouse, and nearby residences. These early commercial centers became community- gathering places for communities like Rockville, Kensington, and Colesville.

These early commercial centers provided services and a focus for community life to the evolving rural, then suburban communities.

As time passed, commercial centers evolved to include a grocery store, drug store, gasoline station, and sometimes a neighborhood theater. Residential development surrounded these centers and was often strung along many road frontages near trolleys and railroad stations. As lifestyles continued to change, a broader spectrum of services was provided in the centers, including restaurants, dry cleaners, and entertainment.

By the late 1960's, a pattern of concentrated centers linked by a network of roads was firmly established and articulated in the General Plan. They were, and remain, the places that create a sense of community for County residents and workers.

Cars, parking lots, and a tangle of ingress and egress points, however, have dominated many centers. Many have come to resemble each other. This interferes with their function as recognizable centers that distinguish well-defined communities. Many no longer function as community gathering places.

The future planning of these commercial centers presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Redevelopment could bring an increase in traffic and the need for additional infrastructure and public facilities. If redeveloped well, however, the centers could provide multiple community benefits and return commercial centers to their historic function as unique centers that serve nearby residents and distinguish communities.

If carefully planned and designed, some commercial centers have an opportunity to:

- Provide vital community serving public spaces and other public facilities;
- Add market and affordable housing to the mix of uses;
- Better connect the surrounding neighborhoods to retail, public buildings and transit by foot or bicycle, reducing the need to drive to the center; and
- Provide sites for religious institutions.

Owners of parcels within commercial centers are already coming forward with redevelopment plans. The challenge will be to make sure that zoning regulations, parking requirements and other incentives encourage the land uses, quality of design and public spaces needed by the community.

A critical issue is that current commercial zoning and parking requirements encourage intensive redevelopment that is mostly commercial and car dependent in nature. Mixed-use pedestrian oriented development is excluded; public amenities are not a priority and site plan review is not required.

The goal of the Centers and Boulevards initiative is to envision our future community centers, to guide their growth and redevelopment to their historic function as focal points of community life.

VI. Creating Boulevards that Join Communities and Commercial Centers

The County's major roads were designed primarily for carrying traffic. As such, they tend to divide communities and discourage pedestrians. Narrow sidewalks are not bicycle friendly. The lack of pedestrian amenities in many neighborhoods makes car travel more necessary than it needs to be for many trips.

Disconnected local street networks force local traffic onto major highways like Rockville Pike, Georgia Avenue, and Colesville Road, compounding traffic congestion, slowing down buses and emergency vehicles, and further discouraging cyclists and pedestrians.

The challenge for the 21st Century is to improve the design of our transportation network, while providing sufficient capacity to move both people and goods more safely and efficiently. Completion of transit and road projects recommended in our land-use plans is needed to accommodate master planned growth in jobs and housing. Revisiting the form of some planned development will provide the opportunity for reshaping segments of some major highways into boulevards. Boulevards that serve more as multimodal links within and between centers, rather than barriers through them, will help to improve the livability of those communities without reducing the capacity of our transportation network overall.

As Montgomery County makes the transition from auto-oriented suburbs to pedestrian-oriented, transit-friendly, more-urbanized areas, the challenge will be to balance car use, which typically accounts for about 90% of daily trips, with alternative modes of travel such as walking, biking, and the use of transit.

Within centers, this could mean:

- *Encouraging mixed-use, mid-density development* so that everyday destinations within centers are located closer together and intense enough to stimulate transit use so that improvements in service are justified.
- *Creating more street connections* from surrounding neighborhoods, so that people don't use the major arterials and highways for local trips, and more trips are made by bicycle and on foot.
- *Providing pedestrian and bicycle amenities* such as bike racks and lockers, special pavement and lighting so that non-motorized people know they are welcome.
- *Ensuring that new buildings are interesting at a pedestrian scale*, with façades near the sidewalk and interesting enough to be attractive at walking speed.
- *Encouraging shared parking.*

Between centers, this could mean:

- *Redesigning some roads* into attractive multi-modal boulevards, with bus lanes, bicycle paths, landscaping, medians and wider sidewalks.
- *Adding transit and road capacity between centers* to divert through-traffic off secondary roads and streets and expanding interconnectivity between transit and road networks.
- *Investing in more comfortable and informative bus stops.*

- *Connecting the street grid to give local traffic alternatives to the major highway.*
- *Implementing traffic calming measures to slow down traffic at critical points, especially at pedestrian crossings.*
- *Returning segments of major roads to their traditional design with wide landscaped sidewalks, and local/parking/bicycle/transit lanes separated from through lanes by landscaped medians.*

A key distinction between the boulevards of the future and the typical suburban roads of today is the treatment of boulevards as shared public space. Traffic lanes can be supplemented with on-street parking and bus pullouts. Special pavement in crosswalks, signalization, medians, and curb bumpouts¹ make it clear to all that pedestrians crossing the road are important. Amenities such as street lights, seating, retail kiosks, directional signs, and street trees help to make streets into great places to be in their own right.

Implicit in this notion of moving to shared-use boulevards is the imperative of much closer and more collaborative planning between transportation and land use agencies, including planning, environment, housing, and economic development agencies as well as the community. This process should begin with concept development and end with project delivery. For some roads, such as New Hampshire Avenue, other jurisdictions must participate and partner in the process.

The goal of the Centers and Boulevard initiative is to gather all interested parties to envision where and how to create new boulevards from some of our outmoded arterial roads. *One of our challenges will be to achieve more pedestrian-oriented design standards along some of our most busy roadways without reducing the overall efficiency of our transportation network.*

VII. Taking the Next Step

County citizens and leaders are already looking into the future and asking tough questions about how the County might accommodate future growth, where it will be located and how our future communities will look and feel.

But how will the County accommodate future growth? The County is united in protecting the integrity of its Agricultural Reserve, and it certainly does not envision extensively redeveloping existing residential communities. But, developable land resources are growing scarce.

¹ Bumpouts, also known as “bulbouts,” are extensions of sidewalks at intersections that reduce the crossing length, thus improving pedestrian safety and accommodating seniors and disabled citizens who take longer to negotiate street crossings.

The Centers and Boulevard initiative suggests that County citizens and leaders open a dialogue now about how best to plan and manage future growth. We need to place Montgomery County on a path to a sustainable 21st Century. A new vision for centers and boulevards will be the first step down that path.

WORK PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH SCHEDULE

I. OBJECTIVES

- *Articulate a planning framework reflecting public sentiment to help guide Montgomery County through transition from a largely auto-dependent suburb into a more urban form with mixed-use transit-connected centers along major transportation routes. Increase public awareness of the possibilities and potential outcomes of this transition.*
- *Examine existing commercial centers and major transportation routes with the goal of reshaping some of them into vibrant mixed-use community centers and boulevards with community serving public spaces. These centers would be accessible without dependence on automobiles and connected to each other by public transportation.*
- *Explore and reflect challenges, concerns and opportunities associated with planning for redevelopment as articulated by staff, community and business interests, and local and national experts.*
- *Develop a package of planning approaches, outreach techniques and implementation strategies that will enable the Department to respond to center and boulevard redevelopment in the Department's planning efforts: a) large area master plans including Corridor Cities; b) smaller area sector plans for centers and adjacent neighborhood areas; c) amendments to master plans and sector plans designated for redevelopment; and d) neighborhood planning for other communities identified by residents and businesses.*
- *Develop a package of regulatory and implementation approaches to foster the creation of mixed-use centers and redevelopment of boulevards and address the adequacy of public facilities and infrastructure; include new zones and revision of existing zones, environmental standards for more urban centers, road standards and implementation plans for boulevards and guidelines for urban open space and recreation.*
- *Develop a package of analytical tools to expand understanding of the economics of redevelopment, mixed-use centers, and the related transportation issues.*

II. SCHEDULE

FALL 2005

September-December

- Preliminary fact-gathering, including Mature Commercial Center Study, ULI Technical Assistance Report

The Report is available on the Department's website, http://www.mc-mncppc.org/board/meetings_archive/05_meeting_archive/agenda_091505/item11_091505_report_opt.pdf

- Introduction of development trends, changing population needs, and emerging land-use and market changes
- Presentation of a vision for planning in a maturing county

WINTER 2006

January-March

- Seek staff and public guidance on how best to proceed, plan, and manage planning at the smaller scale.
- *Divisional meetings* to obtain staff input regarding: a) the facts, trends, and vision presented in a streamlined Framework Report, and b) the next steps that might be taken to develop a program responding to the report and how best to engage and manage staff and resources. Each division will be represented on an *interdepartmental staff work group*, which will develop a planning process with alternative approaches to facilitate implementing Centers and Boulevards and address the major issues raised by the community and experts.
- *Staff email questionnaire* focusing on: a) how departmental and divisional priorities might best be reshaped to make them more responsive to the challenges of redevelopment planning, and b) how working relationships within the Department, community, developers, and staff from other government agencies might change.
- *Divisional Resource Allocation Chart*, developed by staff within each division, will illustrate all current initiatives and projects associated with center and boulevard planning in the on-going work program. This effort will provide the Department with a snapshot of resource allocations and provide a “blueprint” to further support program development.
- *Commercial Zone Blue Ribbon Steering Committee*: A steering committee will be convened to provide guidance regarding needed changes to the commercial zones. A key “product” or result of the Centers and Boulevards initiative is a set of recommendations for revising commercial zones in the County. The existing commercial zones lack site plan review, have limited requirements for amenities, and provide a narrow range of allowed uses. Staff will propose zoning text amendments for public discussion and review by the Planning Board and the County Council.

SPRING 2006

May

- *Community-Based Discussions: May 3 and May 17*. Two *Community-Based discussions* will be convened to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with expected changes to our communities, and provide community perspectives and guidance to the Planning Board regarding planning and community livability for Montgomery County in the 21st Century.

More than 100 civic and business leaders will be asked to react and respond to a broad range of questions including: 1) What are your ideas for creating a more livable and prosperous community in the future? 2) Do you support a transition of some major commercial centers and boulevards to more urban mixed-use communities? 3) How are we going to achieve the kind of community that we envision? 4) How can we create livable and inspiring places to live and work?

The Community-Based discussions provide a participatory setting to explore the ramifications of future growth and community livability. A panel of local and national experts will discuss the choices that we can reasonably make regarding our future

growth; how we can accommodate, plan, and manage future growth; and what has to happen to more fully engage the community in guiding future growth.

Discussion participants will take part in a questionnaire that will help to provide information regarding neighborhood livability preferences, and help the community to develop guiding principles for future redevelopment.

June- July

- *Centers, Boulevards, and Public Spaces Final Report: Planning Board Presentation, Public Participation and Comment.* The community outreach efforts will culminate in a report to the Planning Board. Community comments will provide vital guidance to the Planning Board and County Council regarding future planning and direction.
- *Next Step Recommendations: Planning Board Presentation, Public Participation and Comment.* Develop a near and long term work program reflecting guidance from the community.

FALL 2006

- *Technical Workshop at Brookside Gardens:* Bring community and business leaders together, along with decision-makers from County, State, and regional agencies to explore and develop options to more effectively deliver community infrastructure and public facilities when planning at the smaller scale.
- *Develop Action Strategy* to improve collaborative implementation and unified decision making approaches throughout all levels of government.
- *Community-Based Discussion 3: People, Planning, and Implementation.* The third Community-Based discussion is anticipated to be scheduled in early Fall. The discussion will explore implementation approaches with local experts, professionals, and the civic and business leadership. Next steps needed to meet the challenge of change will be presented.

Participants will also a) Identify a set of opportunity areas appropriate for more detailed center redevelopment, neighborhood reinvestment, and corridor/boulevard planning for each sub area of the County; and, b) Identify planning principles and approaches that would be particularly helpful for application in specific areas to meet community needs.

ADDRESSING THE JOB/HOUSING IMBALANCE

SUMMARY

A balance of jobs and housing is one of the fundamental planning policies guiding Montgomery County. It is an explicit goal of the General Plan. The benefits of correcting job/housing imbalances was demonstrated by the Transportation Policy Report (TPR) analysis and the balanced "Alternative Land Use Scenario" that came out of TPR is now guiding the adoption of new master plans.

This paper reviews how "jobs/housing balance" has been defined and the benefits of a jobs/housing balance. It also reviews the County's current and forecast jobs/housing ratios, identifies where and how those ratios are not balanced, and discusses what changes will have to be made to balance jobs and housing.

What is the "job/housing balance?"

Jobs and housing units are considered "balanced" when there are roughly as many jobs as workers living in the County. On average, there are about 1.6 workers per household in Montgomery County, and roughly 1 household per housing unit. As a result, a ratio of 1.6 jobs per housing unit is considered "balanced."

As recently as 1993, the County considered jobs and housing to be balanced when there was a ratio of 1.5 jobs per housing unit. Over the past decade, the County and the region have moved to the current 1.6 jobs-per-housing-unit ratio. This ratio is used by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments in its near-term forecasting and by the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University in its 2002 study of housing supply and demand in the Washington region.

The 2003 Census Update Survey confirms that there are roughly 1.6 workers per household in Montgomery County. There are:

- 1.5 *employed* workers per household in Montgomery County. This figure includes part-time as well as fulltime workers.
- 1.6 workers per household, including both *employed* workers and those *unemployed and looking for work*.
- The current 1.6 workers-per-household ratio does not include retirees, homemakers, and persons of working age who are not working and not looking for work. These are all potential sources of some additional workers.
- According to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, between 6 and 12 percent of workers hold multiple jobs.

As the last two bullets suggest, there is some elasticity in the number of workers per household. Some people enter and leave the workforce based on economic conditions, personal situation, and other factors. One of the major trends of the baby boom generation was a rapid increase in female workforce participation rates. Older residents may decide to retire later than in the past because they enjoy working or to supplement retirement income.

What are the benefits of a jobs/housing balance?

A balance of jobs and housing is intended to meet two main goals: to provide an adequate *number* of employment opportunities for County residents, and to minimize the *distance* a worker has to travel to his or her job.

To help minimize the impact of growth on the transportation network, it is beneficial to have housing and jobs located in proximity to each other. One way to do this is to provide a variety of employment opportunities within the County to County residents.

If an insufficient number of jobs are available in the County, resident workers will have to commute outside the County to work. If more jobs are located in the County than are needed by resident workers, then those jobs will be filled by people who live outside the County. Either of these two conditions can increase traffic. Studies have shown that, over time, a balance of housing and jobs results in fewer trips of shorter duration.

Of course, even if jobs and housing are perfectly balanced, some residents will continue to commute to jobs elsewhere in the region, and some jobs located in the County will be filled by people who live outside the County. In 2000, 59 percent of employed Montgomery County residents worked in Montgomery County, while 64 percent of the people who worked in Montgomery County also live here.

A jobs/housing balance can have other benefits. A mix of uses in an area creates vitality throughout the day and weekend. Having housing nearby provides additional customers for retail businesses that could not survive on patronage by workers.

A balance of jobs and housing can also have fiscal benefits for the County. A mix of land uses diversifies the revenue stream, and different land uses make different demands on public services and infrastructure.

Geography of the jobs/housing balance

Montgomery County can be divided into many different geographical areas. It is not feasible or even desirable to have jobs and housing balanced in every community. One reason for this: jobs tend to occur at higher densities, on average, than housing. The average size of a Montgomery County firm is 14.5 employees while the average household size is 2.7 persons. This means that jobs naturally occur at higher densities than housing and it would be impractical to attempt to spread jobs out into lower-density residential areas. A more successful strategy is to create job centers in relatively close proximity to residential areas, and to mix jobs and higher-density housing in urban areas.

To provide jobs for nearby residential areas, some areas of the County will have to have jobs/housing ratios above 1.6. In Montgomery County, areas in and around the Beltway and along the I-270 Corridor should have jobs/housing ratios above 1.6 to provide jobs for the predominately residential suburban and rural areas in the balance of the County.

What is Montgomery County's current and forecast jobs/housing ratio?

The jobs/housing ratio of a community will change over time. Typically a community begins its rural-to-suburban transformation with the construction of houses. Over time, those houses are joined by retail and other commercial development that provides services to households. Later, a wider variety of jobs comes to the suburbs to take advantage of the resident labor force and suburban other amenities.

Montgomery County's jobs/housing ratio in 2000 was 1.48. The forecast currently under development (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Round 7.0) for 2030 is shows a jobs/housing ration countywide of 1.62. In Round 7.0, Montgomery County's share of the region's jobs drops from 16.7% in 2005 to 15.8% in 2030. The County's share of the region's households drops from 18.5% in 2005 to 17.4% in 2030.

In 2000, jobs/housing ratios in subareas of the County were the following: Inside the Beltway: 1.92; Eastern County: 0.80; Georgia Avenue: 0.59; I-270 Corridor: 2.04; and Rural (including Olney): 0.61. The Round 7.0 forecast for these areas has jobs/housing ratios of: Inside the Beltway: 1.79; Eastern County: 1.12; Georgia Avenue: 0.58; I-270 Corridor: 2.25; and Rural (including Olney): 0.55.

Alternative Land Use Scenario – Goals for 2050

Through the Transportation Policy Report (TPR II) process, an alternative land use scenario was identified and adopted as a goal to guide future land use planning decisions. Key features of the alternative land use are to: increase jobs and housing inside the Beltway (I-495), increase jobs in the Eastern County and in the Georgia Avenue Corridor, decrease housing in the Rural Area, and decrease jobs and increase housing in the I-270 Corridor.

The potential results of implementing the alternative land use, expanding transit, and encouraging transit-oriented development include the following:

- Increase jobs within a ½ mile of rail stations from 40% in 1998 to 60% in 2050
- Increase housing within ½ mile of transit from 12% in 1998 to 33% in 2050
- Reduce cross-county afternoon work trips by 18%
- Increase transit ridership by as much as 45%

Specific jobs/housing ratio goals for 2050 are the following: Inside the Beltway: 1.92; Eastern County: 1.51; Georgia Avenue: 0.78; I-270 Corridor: 1.82; and Rural (including Olney): 0.61. The goal for the Countywide jobs/housing ratio in 2050 is 1.56.

Planning for a jobs/housing balance

Calculations of the number of future jobs and housing that are represented by a particular master plan tend to look at the theoretical maxim number of jobs and housing units that can be built under the plan: the “development envelope.” In real life, a host of factors can affect how much of the planned development is really built.

At any point in the life of a plan, markets favor lopsided development. That is, what gets built is what’s hot. Currently housing is very marketable, and this means that approved commercial development projects are building out more slowly than in the past. Additionally, developers of commercially-zoned land may be satisfied with constructing projects at well-below planned densities, or if the plan allows it, requesting that housing be built instead.

In past years, the reverse was true. Because there was a strong market for new commercial space, developers tried to maximize the amount of development on many parcels. Master plans under consideration during this period saw landowners trying to have residentially-zoned land changed.

This is a challenge for planners because plans are not meant to simply follow the market. On the other hand, plans are meant to be implemented, and there is little point in adopting plans that are not feasible from a market point of view.

A more focused planning process can help assure the market feasibility of planned development. Attention to more geographically-specific centers will permit greater opportunities for discussion and exploration of current market realities, redevelopment goals, and the market feasibility of a variety of land use options.