Appendix - Development of Policy Area Types

Background

The current Subdivision Staging Transportation Policy Area Review (TPAR) is administered within a framework that groups the 32 existing policy areas by four major categories or place types – (1) CBD's and Metro Station Policy Areas, (2) Urban Areas, (3) Suburban Areas, and (4) Rural Areas. During the development of the Working Draft the Planning Board directed staff to explore ways to (1) potentially combine the policy area and local area tests and (2) reduce or eliminate reliance on arterial travel time comparisons (the primary variable in TPAR) as a metric for the policy area test and critical lane volume (CLV) for the local area test. Instead, the Planning Board encouraged more emphasis be placed on non-auto driver mode share (NADMS), per capita vehicle miles of travel, accessibility via transit, parking management, and other factors or variables that are more clearly aligned with County policy and better reflect current and future conditions among the different place types within the County.

In considering the above, the Planning Board requested staff consider examining how policy areas might be grouped using a more empirical or quantitative approach related to more than (as an example) whether the area has an existing Metro Station. In addition, the Planning Board was interested in how the eventual typology or grouping would compare with the General Plan place typology.

In developing an alternative concept for both the grouping of the Policy Areas and the eventual metrics to be considered for application in those areas, staff attempted to keep in mind three overriding objectives to address stakeholder concerns most often expressed at that time in the process:

Clarity

The methodology or approach should be as clear and simple as possible to understand (even while recognizing the complexity of the subject at hand). The clarity should extend through development of the new approach and to, and beyond, application.

Relevance

The approach should reflect the County's goals and policies as they vary among different place types – including those areas in transition and in doing so, it should specifically recognize the County's different contexts with respect to land use and transportation infrastructure – both existing and future.

Transparency

The approach should be transparent and the results should be readily recognized as something that intuitively "makes sense". An important part of transparency is that the assumptions and data sources are well documented through development and generally accessible to most stakeholders with a reasonable amount of effort.

Approach

Staff initially presented an approach for grouping the Policy Areas at a Planning Board work session on February 4, 2016. The first step in the approach was to plot the Policy Areas against three variables:

- Existing Land Use Intensity – jobs + households per acre (from the Cooperative Land Use Forecast)
- Future Land Use Intensity – jobs + households per acre (from the Cooperative Land Use Forecast)
- Existing Non - Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) – home based work trips by any means (including telecommute) other than one person driving alone in a vehicle (from the American Community Survey)

The resulting graph is shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Policy Area Comparison
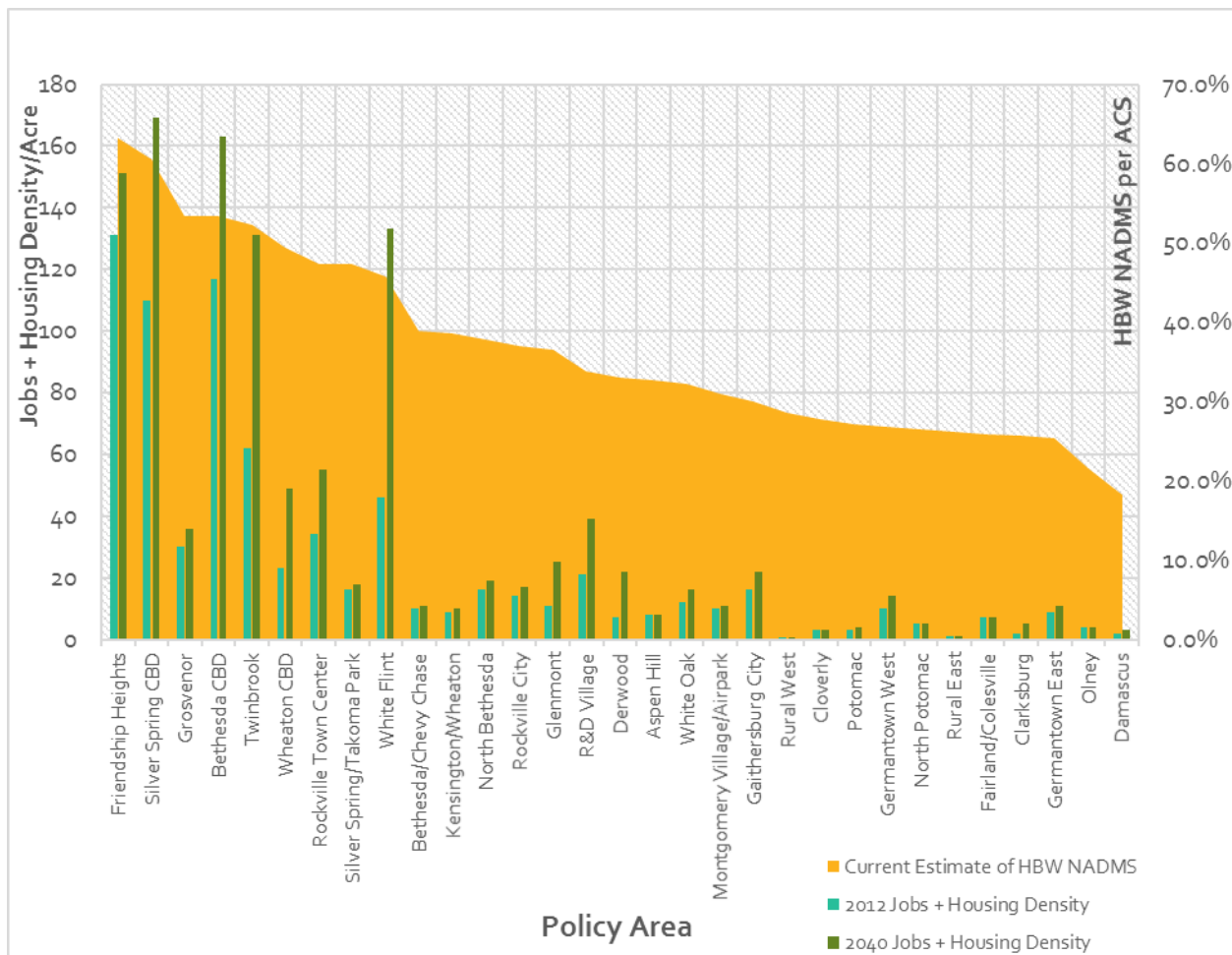
The next step in the process was to group the Policy Areas that generally exhibit similar characteristics with respect to the three variables. This part of the process is somewhat subjective but it does bring some notable differences into view. As an example, it clearly brings into focus the difference between Grosvenor, Glenmont, Wheaton, and Rockville Town Center and other CBD's and MSPA's.

The initial grouping of the Policy Areas (based upon this approach) is shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Initial (Example) Grouping of Policy Areas

Public Hearing Draft Grouping

The eventual grouping of the Policy Areas included in the Public Hearing Draft differed slightly from that shown above in Figure 2. One change involved changing the group names or labels to better reflect place type and relate to the General Plan. Another change involved Clarksburg Town Center being added in recognition of its designation as the County's northern most "Corridor City."

The grouping as included in the Public Hearing Draft is shown in Figure 3 for comparison purposes.

Figure 3 – Grouping of Policy Areas in Public Hearing Draft

Relationship of Recommended Policy Area Groups to Policy Area Test, Local Area Test, and Transportation Impact Tax

It should be noted that the eventual recommended grouping of the Policy Areas is utilized in multiple aspects of the Public Hearing Draft:

- In the Policy Area test, the Core and Rural Policy Area Groups are exempt.
- In the Local Area test, the Core Areas are exempt and the other Policy Area Groups are used to differentiate among differing scoping, testing, and mitigation requirements.
- The Recommended Transportation Impact Tax is based in part on multiples that take into account per capita VMT and NADMS by Policy Area Group. In certain cases, reductions in the Transportation Impact Tax could be realized through the application of multipliers established for different Policy Area groups that are related to parking supply below the baseline minimum.

In summary, the recommended Policy Area grouping could be used more broadly than the current approach.