

# LAND USE

## Vision

Montgomery County is uniquely positioned over the next fifty-years to address quality of life issues. Significant park land and open spaces will be of great value as the region grows and land is developed. This land use vision establishes a priority to protect and enhance existing communities and open space resources, and to confirm the General Plan, known as “Wedges and Corridors”. The General Plan guides the County’s growth by concentrating jobs and housing inside the Beltway and along the I-270 Corridor, and protecting large areas of the County for agricultural and open space uses.

The demand for more jobs and housing within a quality living environment includes providing easy access to schools, shopping and entertainment with alternative transportation options and less congested roadways. This land use vision directs growth to mixed-use activity centers and Metrorail station areas. As an example, by responding to development issues associated with the growing high-tech/bio-tech industry job are directed to the White Oak/FDA activity center in the eastern part of the County, and housing growth directed to the I-270 Corridor concurrently with job growth. Opportunities to improve the balance of jobs and housing within planning areas will reduce commutes and enable people to live close to work. Development will be focused in areas with existing infrastructure and services including transit stations, schools and other community facilities. Master Plans will foster the creation of communities that offer access to a mix of uses, an interconnected system of local streets, quality streetscapes, and transportation choices (roads, rail transit, buses, walking and bicycling).

This vision would support transit-oriented development by providing sufficient density at the County’s activity centers and Metrorail station areas to support a mix of uses served by a range of transit and vehicular transportation options. This vision includes providing a range of transportation options for work and recreation activities to reduce the dependence on the automobile. They also include significant attention to issues of community character and safety.

Agricultural and rural open space preservation will continue. Some future jobs and housing growth will be shifted from rural areas to designated growth areas.

## Principles

The land use and transportation vision focuses on three principles that establish communities that respond to significant challenges. These challenges include responding to the needs of our regional economy, and our diverse population and demographic trends in Montgomery County. The following principles are intended to address quality of life issues and reduce the need and cost for providing transportation infrastructure.

- **Create Communities With Jobs Located Near Housing:** Balance jobs and housing in major sub-areas of the County to reduce cross- and up-county commutes which will have a modest, but helpful effect of reducing demands on the transportation system.

- **Foster Transit-Oriented Development:** Plan communities with a compact range of housing choices, retail, employment and civic uses with a development pattern that fosters pedestrian and bikeway activity. Communities that have easy, safe, and pedestrian access to transit reduce the impact on the road system.
- **Improve Corridor Character:** Improve the visual and functional qualities of arterials and address traffic congestion of the older commercial strips.
- **Enhance Existing Neighborhoods:** Maintain and enhance the quality and character of existing neighborhoods, and encourage a wide choice of housing types.

### **Land Use Recommendations - *Making the Vision a Reality***

Land use vision and principles provide a framework for defining quality of life in our communities. The following recommendations are intended to implement the above policies and vision to improve quality of life within the County and to reduce the need and cost for providing transportation infrastructure.

**Balanced Jobs and Housing:** Fostering a balance of jobs and housing within the framework of the General Plan is a critical feature of the existing master plan process. This balance is achieved when the number of jobs is equal to the number of workers in each household. The projected ratio of jobs and households applied countywide is in balance. This is not the case in major sub-areas of the County. Existing master plans already establish principles that attempt to provide this balance. Achieving this balance will reduce some of the current dependence on the automobile and have the positive effect of reducing demands on the transportation system. As new master plans are approved, establishing this balance should continue to be a feature. Findings indicate improving the balance of jobs and housing would accomplish the following: reduce vehicle miles traveled, increase percentage of County jobs accessible by walking, biking or transit, and take advantage of existing infrastructure including Metrorail.

The following actions identify the opportunities to balance jobs and housing at a variety of levels:

- Balance jobs and housing countywide: Plan for a countywide balance of jobs and housing (enough jobs for each resident worker).
- Examine opportunities to improve the balance of jobs and housing within planning areas at the neighborhood scale in order to reduce commutes and enable people to live close to work.
  - Improve the balance of jobs and housing in the Eastern County: Support employment center growth at the White Oak/FDA Center.

- Plan for a new activity center at Langley Park with a balance of jobs and housing, preferably in conjunction with the development of the Inner Purple Line.
- Improve the balance of jobs and housing in I-270 Corridor: Increase the opportunities for housing concurrently with employment.
- Examine opportunities to live near work at locations of higher density such as Metrorail stations.
- Develop the Rockville Montgomery County Public School site with the addition of a new transit stop on the Metrorail Red Line.
- Re-examine jobs and housing in Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg due to the removal of portions of M-83.
- Continue to support the preservation of agriculture and open space in the rural areas through such measures as the purchase of land or easements and the strengthening of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program.

**Transit-Oriented Development:** The county should focus efforts on Master Plan revisions at the Shady Grove transit station area, creating a new Metrorail station in Rockville at the Montgomery County Public School site, improving the Twinbrook Metrorail station area, and guiding development at the White Flint Metrorail station site. Opportunities for Metrorail station area development exist in the Wheaton CBD, Glenmont, and a future Langley Park light rail station in conjunction with the Inner Purple Line. Limited, countywide opportunities exist in less dense activity centers with a mix of uses and housing types, and bus service. Providing mixed use at Metrorail stations and activity centers should increase reverse commuting, provide a diversity of housing types including housing for the elderly, and provide transit options that reduce auto dependence.

In the near-term, the Planning Board will be focused on locations where market demand and transportation infrastructure combine to create development opportunities as follows:

- Shady Grove Metrorail Station area
- MCPS/Montgomery College
- Twinbrook
- Fortune Parc
- Wheaton CBD Metrorail Station revitalization area
- White Flint Metrorail Station
- White Oak/FDA Center
- Langley Park Transit Center

**The following actions should be taken to promote transit-oriented development:**

- Explore opportunities for more housing and commercial uses at Metrorail station areas and in other activity centers, where appropriate.
  - Plan for a mix of housing, office, and retail uses that provide opportunities to walk to work and travel for short distances to services.
  - Focus communities toward transit: Plan for the pedestrian, and frequent and reliable transit choices.
  - Create attractive and safe local streets for people: Plan for an interconnected local street system including ample sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and trees that encourage the use by pedestrians and bikes in addition to automobiles and transit vehicles.
  - Provide public facilities, and open space and recreation opportunities within communities: These facilities and spaces should be provided within walking distance to reduce the need for long distance travel by automobile.
  - Design the community for livability: Orient buildings to streets, locate larger parking facilities behind buildings, and encourage the joint use of Metrorail properties instead of single use parking structures.
  - Plan for infill development: Plan for an appropriate increase in density, and encourage the retention of institutions in existing neighborhoods.
  - Plan for revitalization: Encourage public/private partnerships and establish incentive zoning.
- Focus development in areas with adequate infrastructure including schools and other community facilities.
- Examine opportunities to reduce congestion and improve visual quality through such land use measures as creating mixed-use nodes or centers, reserving land for open space and civic uses, and clustering developments.

**Provide a Vision for Arterials:** Improve the visual and functional qualities of arterials and address traffic congestion of the older commercial strips. Increasing north-south traffic and retail development have made these older corridors congested, unattractive, and unsafe for pedestrian movement. As new development replaces obsolete buildings and land uses, opportunities are created to rethink the auto-dominant land use pattern that characterize these corridors. Clustering a variety of uses and densities, and improving the physical relationship with streets and sidewalks creates attractive pedestrian-oriented shopping and living environments. A corridor study or functional plan for these important corridors could be used to identify recommended improvements. In the near-term, staff recommends focusing on Rockville Pike (MD 355) in the upcoming Master Plan for the Gaithersburg and Vicinity Area.

- Improve the visual and functional qualities of the County's arterials that serve as gateways to existing and future communities.
- Support master plans that provide a long-term vision that improves the visual and functional qualities of the county's arterials such as MD 355 and Georgia Avenue (MD 97).