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General Plan Growth Policy Update

Prince George's County, MD



September 2008

 The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

www.mncppc.org

301-952-3065/TTY 301-952-4366

Abstract

TITLE: General Plan Growth Policy Update

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SUBJECT: General Plan Growth Policy Update

DATE: September 2008

SOURCE OF COPIES: The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

SERIES NUMBER: 826082405

NUMBER OF PAGES: 47

ABSTRACT: The General Plan Growth Policy Update is a progress report on the implementation of the 2002 *Prince George's County Approved General Plan*. In 2000, Prince George's County adopted the Biennial Growth Policy Plan, which helps keep policies up-to-date and implementation efforts on track. This report is the second Growth Policy Update completed since the approval of the 2002 General Plan. It contains a Highlights section that summarizes the progress for each General Plan Element. The Monitoring Progress section shows in detail how well the county is meeting the measurable objectives contained in the General Plan objectives. The Appendix provides a brief description of planning projects and studies that support the General Plan and have been completed, are underway, or are in the preplanning stage.



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The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

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The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bicounty agency, created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties: the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District;
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire county public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Department of Planning (M-NCPPC):

- Our mission is to help preserve, protect and manage the county's resources by providing the highest quality planning services and growth management guidance and by facilitating effective intergovernmental and citizen involvement through education and technical assistance.
- Our vision is to be a model planning department of responsive and respected staff who provide superior planning and technical services and work cooperatively with decision-makers, citizens and other agencies to continuously improve development quality and the environment and act as a catalyst for positive change.

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County Council

The County Council has three main responsibilities in the planning process: (1) setting policy, (2) plan approval, and (3) plan implementation. Applicable policies are incorporated into area plans, functional plans, and the general plan. The Council, after holding a hearing on the plan adopted by the Planning Board, may approve the plan as adopted, approve the plan with amendments based on the public record, or disapprove the plan and return it to the Planning Board for revision. Implementation is primarily through adoption of the annual Capital Improvement Program, the annual Budget, the water and sewer plan, and adoption of zoning map amendments.

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Introduction

“It is essential that the county monitor and regularly review the implementation of the General Plan. Too often in the past, the county has either failed to implement adopted policies or failed to determine whether the county’s implementation efforts have accomplished desired goals. In 2000, with the adoption of the Biennial Growth Policy Plan, Prince George’s County created an innovative instrument that will help keep policies up-to-date and implementation efforts on track. ...Future Biennial Growth Policy updates will be used to determine whether the county is meeting ... objectives and, if not, point to additional actions that should be taken.”

- 2002 Prince George’s County Approved General Plan

In 1998, the Prince George’s County Council prepared a white paper entitled *Managing Growth in the 21st Century: A Smart Growth Initiative in Prince George’s County*. This paper evaluated the county’s growth management efforts and found fragmented and incomplete implementation of the county’s 1982 General Plan, and development occurring contrary to the plan’s concepts and policies. It was also noted that, as area and subregional plans were prepared, a countywide perspective was lacking and that the county’s previous General Plans had not kept up with changing conditions and needs.

In 2000, the District Council approved the Biennial Growth Policy Plan to address the issues raised by the white paper and require regular, public review of county conditions and achievement of county policies. Toward that end, the Biennial Plan established measurable objectives, the review of which could be used to gauge the success in meeting plan goals.

In 2002, the District Council approved a new General Plan that built on the recommendations of the 2000 Biennial Plan. The 2002 *Prince George’s County Approved General Plan* addresses broader issues and concerns than contained in the 1982 General Plan (such as economic development, housing, urban design and historic preservation) and provides more detail than the 2000 *Biennial Growth Policy Plan*. The General Plan’s recommendations include specific goals, objectives, policies and strategies to guide future growth and development in the county. The five countywide goals of the 2002 General Plan are:

- Encourage quality economic development.
- Make efficient use of existing and proposed local, state and federal infrastructure and investment.
- Enhance quality and character of communities and neighborhoods.
- Preserve rural, agricultural, and scenic areas.
- Protect environmentally sensitive lands.

The 2002 General Plan also established a baseline of measurable objectives from the 2000 Growth Policy Plan and created a *Biennial Growth Policy Update* process to monitor progress. Each Biennial Growth Policy Update will:

- Monitor development activity since the previous Biennial Growth Policy Update as well as develop approvals through zoning approvals, subdivision approvals, etc.
- Monitor changes in trends that affect county policies.
- Evaluate the impact of new and approved county development on the county’s public facilities.
- Monitor the implementation of General Plan recommendations.
- Determine whether the objectives established by the General Plan have been met.

- Make recommendations for future actions to help implement county policies. Actions could include preparation of new plans, changes to regulations redirecting capital improvements, or directing other efforts toward implementation of the county's plans and policies.

The 2003 *Biennial Growth Policy Update* was the first update prepared to provide a status report on initial efforts to implement General Plan goals and objectives. That update determined that there had been some progress made in achieving the goals and objectives of the 2002 General Plan. However, it also found that there was not always useful or up-to-date information available to measure the county's progress in other areas.

This report is the second Growth Policy Update completed since approval of the 2000 Biennial Growth Policy Plan and the 2002 General Plan. The report contains the following sections:

Highlights:

This section contains highlights of the progress for each General Plan element.

Monitoring Progress:

This section shows in detail how well the county is meeting General Plan objectives.

Appendix:

A brief description of planning projects and studies that support the General Plan and have been completed, are underway, or are in the preplanning stage.

