



# Chapter IV: Development Pattern

## Introduction

The 2002 *Prince George's County Approved General Plan* designates three growth policy tiers—Developed, Developing, and Rural—as well as three center designations—metropolitan, regional, and community—and one classification for corridors within the county. The Development Pattern element of this sector plan applies the General Plan vision for tiers and centers to the Bowie State MARC Station area and amends the General Plan goals to reflect the area's unique characteristics and location.

Parts of two tiers, the Developing and Rural, are located within the Bowie State MARC Station Sector Plan area with no corridor or center designations. (**See Map IV-1: Existing Development Pattern, facing page.**) Each of the tiers is distinguished by its own distinctive qualities and opportunities, including its level of residential and employment development intensity.

The 2006 *Approved Master Plan for Bowie and Vicinity and Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Areas 71A, 71B, 74A, and 74B* provided the basic framework for the land use recommendations in this plan. Generally, medium-intensity land use activities are encouraged in the mixed-use activity center, and land in the Rural Tier is recommended to remain rural.

# Rural Tier

## Vision

The vision for the Rural Tier is the protection of large amounts of land for wooded wildlife habitat, recreation, and agricultural pursuits, and preservation of its rural character and vistas. New residential development blends into the landscape, while equity for landowners is balanced in an effort to preserve the rural environment and character. Scenic roads, habitats, sensitive natural features, forest, and landscapes are protected during the development review process.

## Background

The Rural Tier encompasses approximately 1,740 acres, or approximately 75 percent of the sector plan's total land area. Consisting primarily of publicly owned land (932 acres), residential development is the dominant land use in the sector plan area. The land use character and development pattern throughout the sector plan Rural Tier area is low-density residential consisting of half-acre to ten-acre home sites, farms, some existing businesses, undeveloped woodland, and public open space.

*This plan reinforces the land use policies for the Rural Tier established in the 2002 General Plan and the vision of the 2006 Bowie and Vicinity Plan to retain the area's rural character.*

Woodlands and open space areas are the dominant feature in the swath of land parallel to the 3.5 miles of shoreline along the Patuxent River. Land use is more diverse in the western portion of the Rural Tier. Residential development and agricultural uses are found adjacent to the former Bowie Race Track together with a significant amount of public land. The State of Maryland (Bowie State University and MARC Station), Prince George's County, the National Railroad Passengers Association (AMTRAK), and Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) are all major land owners in the Rural Tier.

This plan reinforces the land use policies for the Rural Tier established in the 2002 General Plan and the vision of the 2006 Bowie and Vicinity Plan to retain the rural character through the enactment of new county subdivision design regulations and other flexible design standards. These regulations are intended to allow more compact low-density residential development by preserving significant amounts of natural and man-made features of the rural environment.

## Goals

- Maintain rural character
- Preserve environmentally sensitive features
- Limit nonagricultural land uses
- Retain scenic vistas
- Protect property owners' equity in their land

## Policy 1

Design new development to retain and enhance rural character.

### *Strategies*

- Enact conservation subdivision design regulations and other flexible design standards that place a premium on conserving open areas and protecting environmental features. Through this strategy, the approved residential lotting pattern may be more compact than typically allowed, but the land that is saved from development is much greater and connectivity with other open-space areas is more easily maintained.
- Allow flexible design standards in evaluation and network gap areas of the designated green infrastructure network.
- Ensure that land preserved during the development review process expresses one or more of the following values:
  - Agricultural preservation.
  - Retention of scenic vistas.
  - Protection of areas within the designated green infrastructure network.
  - Minimal impervious surfaces.
  - Reduction of forest fragmentation.
  - Minimal ecological impacts.
- Implement rural design standards to ensure that new private and public development is consistent with the prevailing character of the rural area. The following guidelines should be incorporated into the standards:
  - Houses should be set back a minimum of 100 feet from public rights-of-way to preserve scenic viewsheds, wooded areas, open fields, and ridge lines.
  - The layout of the subdivision should preserve and enhance the existing natural features of the site—including woodland, wetlands, streams, and areas of significant wildlife habitat.
  - Preservation of existing vegetation or the installation of landscaping should be provided to soften and buffer views of houses and other structures. Landscape plants should be native and re-create rural buffers.
  - Architecture should conform to the prevailing rural style, including such elements as rooflines and pitch, entrance drives, porches, lighting and building materials. Brick, stone, and wood are encouraged building materials. Vinyl and aluminum siding are discouraged.
  - Historic features such as fencerows, tree lines, and barns should be preserved. Existing farm roads should be preserved and incorporated into the residential design whenever possible.
  - Fencing should be kept to a minimum to retain open views and rural character. The use of stockade, board-on-board, chain-link vinyl, and other high fences is discouraged. Fencing should respond to the rural-character type, height and scale existing within the Rural Tier. Acceptable fencing includes stone walls, split-rail, and equestrian-style.
  - Grading and drainage should be minimally intrusive. Massive cut and fill should be avoided. The creation of earth mounds, berms for screening, and platforms for house sites should be discouraged.
  - Rural or scenic viewsheds should be protected from adverse architectural or other development to maintain open and continuous views of the natural and agricultural landscape.
  - Where open area is to be maintained as meadow for its scenic value, homeowners-association covenants should specify management strategies that include a yearly mowing.

## ***Policy 2***

Retain or enhance environmentally sensitive features.

### ***Strategies***

- Minimize adverse impacts of development on sensitive environmental features through implementation of the Green Infrastructure Plan. When development is planned, consideration should be given to special conservation areas (SCAs), Chesapeake Bay Critical Area buffers, primary management areas, 100-year floodplains, wetlands, severe slopes, steep slopes in combination with highly erodible soils, severe slopes in conjunction with Marlboro Clay, and mature woodlands.
- Protect forest interior dwelling species habitat, the sensitive wildlife habitat area located 300 feet inward from the edge of the forest, through the implementation of the Green Infrastructure Plan during the development review process.
- Revise the Woodland Conservation Ordinance to require that projects in the Rural Tier meet woodland conservation requirements on-site. No off-site mitigation for woodland conservation should be allowed unless the site is substantially devoid of trees prior to development.
- Ensure that impacts to regulated areas are limited to unavoidable impacts, such as those for road crossings and utility easements.
- Through the development review process, carefully review sites within designated evaluation areas in the green infrastructure network. Ensure the use of environmentally sensitive site design techniques, with an emphasis on making connections to the local green infrastructure network elements. Protect existing areas of connectivity of natural resources and enhance connections where they do not currently exist.
- Identify critical ecological systems supporting local and countywide SCAs during the land development review process. Ensure protection and enhancement of these systems.
- Encourage landowners along the Patuxent River to convey land to M-NCPPC in order to protect it from future development.

## ***Policy 3***

Protect landowner's equity in their land.

### ***Strategy***

- Retain the land use density under existing zoning in the Rural Tier.

## ***Policy 4***

Scenic vistas along roads in the Rural Tier are maintained and protected.

### ***Strategies***

- Design guidelines for areas adjacent to rural, scenic, and historic roads should be adopted and used in evaluating development proposals along roads in the Rural Tier.
- In the Rural Tier, public agencies that share responsibility for preparing or reviewing plans for construction and maintenance of rural roads should:

- Design road improvements at stream crossings to maintain desirable stream views.
- Consider the location or relocation of utilities to preserve or enhance the scenic character of the roadway.
- Require investigation of alternatives to any proposal to widen or realign a roadway.
- Eliminate the use of streetlights except where warranted by safety concerns.
- Require the use of full cut-off optic fixtures in all instances.

## Developing Tier

### Vision

The Developing Tier is an area of low- to moderate-density suburban residential communities, distinct commercial centers, and transit-serviceable employment areas. Developing Tier growth policies emphasize a balance between the pace of development and the demand for adequate roads and public facilities, encouraging contiguous expansion of development where public facilities and services can be provided most efficiently.

### Background

*The majority (307 acres) of the sector plan's Developing Tier land is publicly owned property.*

The Developing Tier encompasses approximately 560 acres, or approximately 25 percent of the sector plan's total land area, and is centrally located within this area. The majority (307 acres) of the sector plan's Developing Tier land is publicly owned property. Surrounded by the Rural Tier, much of the Developing Tier comprises the Bowie State University Campus and the community of Patuxent Riding. Smaller portions of Developing Tier are also located along the western side of MD 197 in the Huntington Crest neighborhood and a portion of the Saddlebrook subdivision on the southern boundary of the sector plan. These communities primarily consist of half-acre to two-acre lots.

### Goals

- Preserve and maintain the suburban residential character of the area.
- Maintain low- to moderate-density land use (except in the Bowie State MARC Station Community Center).
- Plan for a compact, medium-intensity, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development at the Bowie State MARC Station.
- Sustain existing suburban residential neighborhoods.
- Preserve and enhance environmentally sensitive areas.
- Increase transit usage.
- Balance the pace of development with the ability of the public sector to provide adequate transportation and public facilities.
- Encourage the contiguous expansion of development where public facilities and services can be more efficiently provided.
- Preserve and enhance natural environments.
- Maintain roads and improve pedestrian access.

- Improve and maintain public facilities.
- Increase public safety.
- Promote sustainable economic development.
- Increase utilization of transit.

### ***Policy 1***

Provide moderate-density transit- and pedestrian-oriented development.

#### ***Strategies***

- Promote a greater mix of uses and housing choices in neighborhoods and communities focused around human-scale, mixed-use centers accessible by multiple transportation modes.
- Discourage new isolated commercial activities and promote new mixed-use development in the Bowie State MARC Station Community Center.
- Encourage the revitalization and redevelopment of existing, underutilized commercial areas, such as Old Town Bowie and Bowie Plaza.
- Promote development of mixed residential and nonresidential uses at moderate densities and intensities in context with surrounding neighborhoods and with strong emphasis on transit-oriented design, particularly in the proposed mixed-use area.

### ***Policy 2***

Plan and provide public facilities to support the planned development.

#### ***Strategies***

- Balance the pace of development with the ability of the private sector to provide adequate transportation and public facilities.
- Encourage contiguous expansion of development where public facilities and services can be more efficiently provided.
- Ensure balance between school and recreational facility capacity and new development in order to prevent school overcrowding.
- Proactively plan for construction of new school and recreational facilities.

### ***Policy 3***

Improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation and safety.

#### ***Strategies***

- Upgrade intersections to provide safe, steady flow of traffic.
- Install streetscape improvements including safety features, clearly marked crosswalks, tree, landscaping, curbs, and lighting, where needed.

# Centers

## Vision

The Bowie State MARC Station Community Center is a mix of uses at moderate-densities and intensities, with a strong emphasis on transit-oriented development and a neighborhood-serving market. Consistent with Smart Growth and sustainable mixed-use development principles, the center serves as a commercial, employment, residential, cultural, and recreational focal point for the Bowie area. The diverse mix of moderate-density and intensity residential and nonresidential areas is centered upon a transit hub that links the sector plan area to the regional transportation network.

*The Bowie State MARC Station Community Center is a mix of uses at moderate-densities and intensities, with a strong emphasis on transit-oriented development and a neighborhood-serving market.*

## Goals

- Develop a compact mixed-use development at moderate densities.
- Define the physical element to foster a sense of community that creates community identity and pride.
- Provide a transit-supportive and transit-serviceable development and multimodal transportation opportunities.
- Ensure the development of pedestrian-oriented and transit-oriented buildings, landscape, and streetscape design.
- Provide necessary transportation and public facility improvements to support the plan.

## Policy 1

Plan sufficient density to sustain a fully realized town center.

## Strategy

Develop at densities and intensities that will sustain the center's facilities and balance retail, employment, and residential uses.

## Policy 2

Establish a distinctive sense of place.

## Strategy

Provide gateway features, unique architecture, and community focal points.

## Policy 3

Promote pedestrian- and transit-oriented design principles.

## Strategies

- Develop a balanced pedestrian and multimodal transportation system that invites pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders, as well as motor vehicles.
- Ensure safe and comfortable pedestrian circulation throughout the center through the inclusion of sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and other pedestrian-friendly amenities.

# Amendments to General Plan Tiers and Centers

Currently, the General Plan places the proposed community center site and adjacent MARC Station within the Rural Tier. This area should be specifically targeted by the General Plan for growth through development and redevelopment. The location was chosen for a community center based on its proximity to a major transit rail facility (MARC), Bowie State University, open space, and its potential for mass transit linkages. The community center is located on the properties north of and including the Bowie State MARC Station. This location ensures that citizens within the project area and surrounding communities have reasonable access to the center.

## **Community Center**

**Definition:** *Community centers are concentrations of activities, services, and land uses that serve the immediate community near these centers.*

*They typically include a variety of public facilities and services-integrated commercial, office, and some residential development and should be served by mass transit.*

The center is intended for a mix of medium-intensity nonresidential and residential uses that are consistent with the existing or planned investment in the public infrastructure. The proposed community center is envisioned as a mix of residential and nonresidential uses that are community-oriented in scope, with development and redevelopment encouraged around the MARC Station. Land use recommendations promote the evolution of the center into a successful place where residents and citizens want to live, shop, work, and recreate.

In order to accomplish the vision for this plan, the Rural and Developing Tier boundaries are amended as follows:

The Developing Tier is extended by approximately 163 acres to include 95 acres of the 219 acre county-owned land and all properties north of Bowie State University, east of MD 197, south of the Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge, and west of the Fran Uhler Natural Area. (**See Map IV-2: Proposed Development Pattern, facing page.**) The General Plan identifies these properties as part of the Bowie State MARC Station Community Center designation. These properties are also designated as a community center marketed towards neighborhood-oriented commercial, residential, sports, and recreation facilities primarily serving the Bowie area, with some regionally marketed employment and higher educational facilities.

Map IV-2: Proposed Development Pattern

