

Part IV: Approved General Plan
Community Development, Housing and
Character Elements



Economic Development

Goal: *Encourage quality economic development at appropriate locations to increase employment opportunities, income, and the tax base within Prince George's County.*

With the exception of the provision of high-quality schools, quality economic development is the highest countywide priority. The benefits of quality economic development to the county's future development pattern include:

- Providing upper income, high value-added jobs for county residents.
- Shifting tax burden (used to provide needed county facilities and services) away from county residents.
- Providing desired amenities for county residents, such as quality retail stores and restaurants.

The development pattern recommendations help set the framework for future economic development. For instance, this General Plan identifies Centers and Corridors that should be cornerstones for attracting new employment and commercial development. Further, the plan's public facilities and transportation recommendations help support future economic development, as well as create and maintain strong communities. Finally, it is important to realize that it is not enough to attract new development on previously undeveloped land; a strategic component of this economic development goal is the retention and maintenance of existing businesses.

Objectives

Increase the jobs to population ratio (J:P) by 39 percent over the next 25 years.

- In 2000, the county's J:P was .38 (303,060 jobs and 801,515 population). Based on the preferred development pattern, 499,445 jobs and 940,888 population are projected in 2025, a J:P of .53.

Close the gap between Prince George's County and similar jurisdictions for the following fiscal and economic measures of condition:

- Median home sales price.
- Average wage per job.
- Per capita income.

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POLICY 1:

Support the Prince George's County Economic Development Strategy.

Strategies

- I. Consider the goals and objectives of the Prince George's County Economic Development Strategy in all land use, development review, and other policy decisions.
- II. Revise the Zoning Ordinance and other land use regulations to facilitate appropriate development and reduce development costs.
 - Simplify development review procedures by eliminating cumbersome and unnecessary steps while ensuring that the process is fair and equitable.
 - Update and reorganize development regulations to make them easier to understand and to remove obstacles to quality development.

POLICY 2:

Retain and enhance the county's existing businesses.

Strategies

- I. Establish a business retention program that includes systematic contact with existing businesses, gathers and monitors data pertinent to them, and responds to issues and problems of concern to them.
- II. Undertake a countywide study to identify major commercial centers, assess their condition, and determine critical factors affecting them. Develop an action plan for improving and/or redeveloping priority commercial centers.
- III. Emphasize the revitalization of older business areas by providing incentives to the private sector and, in selected areas, government participation.
- IV. Encourage the retention and expansion of state and federal government installations, especially those which spin off and support business in the private sector.
- V. Ensure that land use, development review, and other policy decisions support the retention and growth of existing businesses.
 - Revise zoning and other regulatory ordinances to eliminate unreasonable barriers to expansions or renovations.
 - Discourage extension of commercial and employment strips within the Developed Tier beyond the limits of existing and planned Centers.
 - Foster retention and promotion of the agricultural sector.

POLICY 3:

Increase the number of upper income, high value-added jobs in the county.

Strategies

- I. Support continued designation of locations that are suitable for the development of high-quality industrial and commercial service parks.
- II. Promote the synergistic economic benefits of the county’s proximity to the nation’s capital and its strategic location on the Eastern Seaboard.
- III. Use the county’s many marketable assets, such as its transportation system, institutions of higher learning, and cultural attractions as marketing tools.
- IV. Develop incentive programs to attract new businesses that employ high-wage earners.
- V. Support the growth and expansion of professional and technical education facilities.
- VI. Ensure that land use, development review, and other policy decisions support this policy.
- VII. Provide appropriately zoned land to encourage strengthening existing Centers and Corridors.
- VIII. Ensure that adequate amounts of properly zoned land are available for economic development activities while avoiding overzoning that encourages sprawl and inhibits revitalization efforts.

POLICY 4:

Attract quality retail development to the county.

Strategies

- I. Develop a retail plan for the county identifying high-end retail uses that are desired. Include market feasibility studies to support recommendations.
- II. Aggressively market the county to identified high-end retail uses.
- III. Develop incentive programs to attract identified high-end retailer uses.

POLICY 5:

Attract a diversity of new jobs and businesses.

Strategies

- I. Facilitate the installation of a modern communications infrastructure.
- II. Expand the county’s minority businesses.
- III. Use public and private resources and partnerships to attract, support, and train employees in all employment sectors.
- IV. Encourage the development of business incubators at appropriate locations that can support other employment or community revitalization goals.

Housing

Goal: *Enhance the quality and character of residential neighborhoods through the planning and provision of a high-quality mix of residential development that provides a choice of housing types.*

The housing recommendations of the General Plan are guided by the need to provide for a greater balance of housing types and values throughout the county while creating and maintaining strong neighborhoods. The housing recommendations of this plan also reinforce other plan policies such as strengthening the county's fiscal well-being and making efficient use of the county's existing infrastructure.

The county should encourage high-end valued housing and provide for a balance of housing choices throughout the county. High-value housing contributes to the county's tax base by generating more in tax revenues than is demanded in county services and provides "move-up" opportunities for county residents. Provision of this type of housing will also meet the projected regional demand. In addition to families and individuals wishing to live in single-family homes on suburban lots, those desiring easy access to transit should be able to find housing close to the county's Metro stations. Seniors should be able to continue to live within the county without the burden of maintaining single-family homes. Low- and moderate-income families should be able to find safe, affordable housing. People with disabilities affecting their mobility and families who have a member with a disability should be able to find housing in all price ranges that incorporates the features of Universal Design. To meet these needs and desires, this General Plan provides policies that seek to strengthen existing housing stock and provide a variety of new housing choices.

Mixed-use development is integral to this General Plan. Aside from the opportunity to provide a variety of housing choices, mixed-use development can help establish healthy communities where housing, employment, retail and civic uses are located close to each other. Mixed-use development can occur in a development of multiple buildings or within one building. It must be noted that mixed-use development means more than different land uses located next to each other; the uses should be complementary to each other and pedestrian connections within and between uses should be emphasized. Aside from providing quality neighborhoods and promoting a diverse range of housing types, mixed-use development can help limit the length and number of trips that must be made by automobile and, therefore, reduce energy consumption and air pollution.

While providing for quality, new residential development, the county is committed to strengthening existing neighborhoods. Public facilities, transportation, revitalization, environmental, and development policies should all work together to maintain and strengthen good neighborhoods. Efforts to strengthen existing neighborhoods may include, in addition to providing new housing choices or other types of development, rehabilitation and/or redevelopment of existing housing stock.

Mixed-use development is integral to this General Plan.

Objectives

- Increase the average home value in Prince George’s County.
- Increase opportunities for higher-density multifamily dwellings in Centers and Corridors.
- Reduce high concentrations of distressed, low-income rental housing by 30 percent by 2025.
- Increase the percentage of mixed-use development so that one in ten new dwellings are located in a mixed-use development by 2005, two in ten new dwellings by 2015, and three in ten by 2025.

POLICY 1:

Provide opportunities for high-density housing within Centers, at selected locations along Corridors, and in mixed-use areas.

Strategies

- I. Designate areas within Centers and Corridors for high quality, transit- and pedestrian-oriented higher-density and mixed-use development via sector and master plans. Discourage higher-density housing in areas outside of Centers, Corridors and mixed-use areas in the Developing and Rural Tiers.
- II. Define mixed-use development quantitatively and qualitatively in area/sector plans to establish a benchmark for development and redevelopment proposals.
- III. Provide incentives such as innovative financing for infill and redevelopment.
- IV. Incorporate Smart Codes in the county’s building codes to facilitate revitalization of existing buildings that lend character to existing neighborhoods.

POLICY 2:

Ensure quality housing for all price ranges while encouraging development of a variety of high-value housing.

Strategies

- I. Identify opportunities and areas for high-value housing in planning and development review processes.
- II. Increase the supply of high-value housing to address local and regional demand.
- III. Rehabilitate existing single-family and multifamily housing stock using a variety of federal, state, local and private sector resources.
- IV. Encourage the development of active retirement housing through the planning and development review processes.

- V. Reduce high concentrations of distressed, low-income rental housing through public/private partnerships for acquisition, rehabilitation or demolition through county housing programs and private sector redevelopment efforts. Offer residents of distressed housing alternative housing in existing and newly rehabilitated properties.
- VI. Encourage new housing development to incorporate features that will enable people of all ages to easily use the housing and to remain in such housing as they age or develop disabilities that affect their mobility.
- VII. Strengthen existing neighborhoods through programs encouraging home ownership and maintenance of affordable housing stock.

R evitalization

Goal: *Ensure a healthy climate for private sector investment and an improved quality of life for residents in the county's older communities.*

There are neighborhoods within Prince George's County with substandard housing or underutilized/deteriorating commercial and industrial areas. Parts of the Developed and Developing Tiers consist of older communities that have stable residential areas that are adversely affected by deteriorated commercial strips and/or blighted industrial areas. In other areas, residential structures are in need of revitalization or redevelopment. These areas are experiencing disinvestment and obstacles to investment, and thus are showing evidence of decline.

Revitalization means a revival of the physical, social, and economic vitality of a community. It improves the quality of life for citizens and businesses. Revitalization efforts should not be limited to physical improvements only, but should include a community's social and business concerns as well as address regulatory issues. Revitalization of blighted and deteriorated areas is a primary concern of citizens and is a key to strengthening the economy of and maintaining healthy communities in Prince George's County.

The revitalization overlay is a method of designating a limited number of areas that will be targeted for revitalization assistance. Designations will be temporary (generally from five to ten years), limited in size (generally no larger than ten acres), and will focus attention on neighborhoods that are experiencing: (1) problems with attracting investment due to obsolescent infrastructure and facilities; and/or (2) concentrated levels of household poverty with elevated levels of social and economic distress. This focused approach is intended to produce substantive positive change and plant the seeds for further revitalization. Included in the designation process will be strategies to address specific issues facing the area and indicators to track progress and evaluate success.

Objective

Revitalize a countywide total of 15 revitalization overlay areas by 2025.

Revitalization of blighted and deteriorated areas... is a key to strengthening the economy of and maintaining healthy communities in Prince George's County.

POLICY 1:

Designate revitalization overlay areas.

Strategies

- I. Establish specific criteria and procedures for the designation of revitalization overlay areas that consider the following factors:
 - Areas with substantial obsolescent commercial, industrial, or office space.
 - Residential areas with concentrations of substandard or abandoned dwellings, high vacancy rates, and high foreclosures.
 - Areas designated by the state or federal government as in need of revitalization assistance.
 - Areas with indications of private sector disinvestment.
 - Areas with deteriorated public facilities and infrastructure.
 - Areas with a demonstrated spectrum of community support and commitment and the presence of one or more solid economic development anchors.

POLICY 2:

Provide financial and other assistance to revitalization projects within the revitalization overlay areas.

Strategies

- I. Establish special capital project financing for revitalization projects.
- II. Provide incentives, including financing assistance where appropriate.
- III. Use condemnation authority, if necessary, to consolidate property for redevelopment.
- IV. Encourage the creation of public/private partnerships to further community-driven economic development.
- V. Provide funding and financing tools for public facilities, infrastructure, and other amenities.
- VI. Target grants assistance for priority projects.

POLICY 3:

Streamline the development process for projects within the revitalization overlay areas.

Strategies

- I. Adopt flexible zoning and land use tools to implement redevelopment projects.
- II. Expedite necessary rezoning for redevelopment.
- III. Expedite permitting process.

U rban D esign

Goal: *Use urban design principles to achieve quality development throughout the county.*

Urban design is a key element in realizing the goal of the Development Pattern chapter to enhance the quality of character of communities in Prince George's County. Urban design is an important component of the master planning and development review processes and is where a community can articulate a vision and standards for the design of the physical environment. Design plays a major role in establishing a sense of place and community identity. Design elements include: architecture (facade and massing); layout; views; circulation and parking; public spaces and other amenities; pedestrian orientation; safety; landscaping; lighting; and signage. Design is one of the keys to successful development. For example, the more pleasant the walking environment, the further people will walk to their destinations. Design quality ensures that developments are functional and attractive. Design contributes to economic vitality, mobility and sustainability.

In all parts of the county, development should be of high quality. However, there are distinctions that can be made between the three policy Tiers and the designated Centers and Corridors. Each of the policy areas have unique characteristics and opportunities in which specific design principles are needed to help guide the physical form of new development and redevelopment. The vision for the physical form is guided by the:

- Use of urban design principles to guide development patterns in ways that fulfill the goals of this plan.
- Promotion of excellent urban design through strengthening area/sector plan recommendations and standards in development districts.
- Provision of design collaboration of county agencies with responsibility for different design elements.

Design plays a major role in establishing a sense of place and community identity.

Design contributes to economic vitality, mobility and sustainability.

POLICY 1:

Provide urban design that promotes the Development Pattern and Economic Development goals of this plan.

Strategies for the Developed Tier

- I. Ensure that the design of infill development maintains or enhances the character of the existing community
- II. Emphasize and encourage design of pedestrian-friendly environments

Strategies for the Developing Tier

- III. Ensure that the design of new development is attractive and vital and that the design of contiguous development maintains or enhances the character of the existing communities.

Strategies for the Rural Tier

- IV. Ensure that the design of new development in rural areas maintains or enhances the existing rural character

Strategies for Centers and Corridors

- V. Ensure that compact mixed-use projects have the highest quality of urban design:
 - Ensure that ample amenities such as plazas, public open space, public art, and civic uses are provided.
 - Require special signage, lighting, landscaping, street furniture, and architecture.
 - Require pedestrian-oriented design elements.
 - Emphasize the need for the overall design and amenities to create a special sense of place.

Strategies for the County

- VI. Provide master plan and sector plan design recommendations, guidelines or standards that are appropriate for each area. Investigate and develop new ways to ensure implementation.
- VII. Develop mechanisms that would educate, inform and encourage increased interest by private developers and the general public in the importance of good urban design.
- VIII. Require the installation of streetscape improvements that respond to the design character of the neighborhood.
- IX. Include information and analysis of crime prevention through environmental design as part of master plans and development review.
- X. Provide innovative funding and financing mechanisms for the undergrounding of existing utilities as a way to remove visual clutter.

Historic Preservation

Goal: *Identify and evaluate all historic resources for designation as historic sites or as contributing to historic districts.*

The protection of historic sites and districts within Prince George's County accomplishes more than just providing reminders of the county's past. Historic buildings, structures, and sites can provide the architectural and cultural context for new development and for the preservation of a sense of place. Their protection provides a link to the county's past while recognizing their role in the county's present and future. For instance, designation of local historic districts can help strengthen and provide identity to existing communities and help set a desired character for new development. Individual historic sites can provide focal points for new and existing development. In some instances, historic sites can also be used for alternative, desirable commercial and residential development. Protection of historic sites and their settings can help protect the character of their surrounding neighborhoods.

Historic buildings, structures, and sites can provide the architectural and cultural context for new development and for the preservation of a sense of place.

POLICY 1:

Integrate historic sites and districts into the county's development pattern.

Strategies

- I. Identify and survey historic resources through the master and sector planning processes or through an amendment to the *Historic Sites and Districts Plan*.
- II. Establish policies for the use, protection and reuse of historic sites and districts through the master and sector planning processes.

POLICY 2:

Protect historic resources through appropriate regulation and enforcement measures.

Strategies

- I. Consider amending the county's land regulations to require new construction in a county-designated historic district to be consistent with the district's character regarding design, height, scale, bulk, and setbacks.

- II. Develop regulations and policies in the development review process to provide appropriate environmental settings to retain the character of a historic site.
- III. Evaluate historic site density transfers in the Zoning Ordinance and subdivision regulations as an incentive to preserve settings around historic sites.
- IV. Consider creative ways to address the use and maintenance of historic structures.
- V. Study the potential for creating transition overlay zones surrounding historic districts to ensure compatible development.

POLICY 3:

Encourage stewardship and adaptive use of historic sites and districts.

Strategies

- I. Expand the ability of a property owner to adaptively use a historic site.
- II. Form partnerships with not-for-profit and commercial entities to encourage the adaptive use of historic buildings.
- III. Establish a Historic Preservation Fund to be used to assist in stabilizing and restoring historic properties.
- IV. Evaluate legislation to freeze assessments following a restoration project for a certain period of time.
- V. Evaluate legislation to provide property tax relief for preserving environmental settings.
- VI. Promote historic resource stewardship to ensure that Prince George's heritage as the oldest of the Washington area's communities is evident to all residents in the county.