



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item #5
June 30, 2011

DATE: June 23, 2011

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mary Dolan, Acting Chief ^{MD}
Functional Planning and Policy Division

FROM: David Anspacher, Senior Planner (301-495-2191) ^{DA}
Functional Planning and Policy Division

DISCUSSION: PlanMaryland Draft

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Montgomery County Planning Board *transmit the following major comments* to the full Planning Commission to be adopted as part of a joint letter to the Maryland Department of Planning:

1. Support the intent of PlanMaryland to align state and local programs to incentivize Smart and Sustainable Growth and redevelopment.
2. Amend the Initial State Designations for Montgomery County as shown in Attachment A, prior to finalizing PlanMaryland.
3. If the changes to the Initial State Designations shown in Attachment A are not made prior to finalizing PlanMaryland, clearly state in PlanMaryland that State agencies should not make funding decisions based solely on the Initial State Designations until local governments have the opportunity to amend them as part of the State/Local Designation process.
4. Assign and consolidate funding programs with each Designated Place and develop a simplified application process for local jurisdictions.
5. Provide additional mapping for Priority Natural Resources Areas and Priority Water Resources Areas prior to finalizing PlanMaryland.

6. State that projects such as the Purple Line and the Corridor Cities Transitway strongly advance the goals of PlanMaryland because they encourage transit-oriented development and economic development. They should continue to be high priorities for State funding, even though they pass through some areas that are not designated as GrowthPrint.
7. Streamline and reorganize PlanMaryland to make it more readable for the public.

We recommend that the Montgomery County Planning Board transmit the detailed comments in Attachment B to the full Planning Commission to be adopted as an attachment to the joint letter to the Maryland Department of Planning.

If, for any reason, the full Planning Commission declines to send these comments forward, the Planning Board should forward comments directly to the Maryland Department of Planning.

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTIONS: None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maryland Department of Planning released the PlanMaryland Draft Plan in April 2011. This plan provides a framework, process, and actions for furthering Smart Growth and for implementing the 12 planning visions stated in the Smart, Green & Growing Legislation of 2009. It is a strategy for directing the actions of state agencies and coordinating the Smart Growth efforts of state agencies and local governments. The 120-day comment period for the Draft Plan ends on September 1, 2011.

BACKGROUND

The 1997 Priority Funding Areas Act identified areas where local governments want the State to deploy its resources to support future growth. This Act intended to concentrate growth in the Priority Funding Areas (PFAs), by prioritizing them for state-funded projects that encourage growth, such as highways, water and sewer, and economic development assistance. However, the Act has not successfully focused growth in the PFAs. According to the PlanMaryland, "In many counties, as much or more development is occurring outside PFAs as inside." A 2009 study by the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education found that the PFAs were not achieving expectations for three reasons: 1) PFA boundaries do not always support Smart Growth planning, 2) many state agencies are not targeting their actions toward the PFAs, and 3) local governments have not fully integrated PFAs into their decision making.

PLANMARYLAND OVERVIEW

Acknowledging the shortcomings of the PFAs, PlanMaryland aims to geographically and programmatically align the programs, policies, and procedures of state agencies and local government. As its foundation, PlanMaryland identifies three goals that capture the outcomes the Plan aspires to achieve:

- Goal 1: **Concentrate development** and redevelopment in towns, cities, and rural centers where there is existing and planned infrastructure.
- Goal 2: **Preserve and protect** environmentally sensitive and rural lands and resources from the impacts of development.
- Goal 3: Ensure that a desirable quality of life in Maryland’s metropolitan and rural communities is **sustainable**.

Geographic Alignment through Designated Places

As shown in the table below, all areas in the State will ultimately be included in one of three categories, although many areas are currently unassigned. These include Growth & Developed Areas (also known as Priority Funding Areas), Priority Resource Areas, and Other Designated & Planning Areas. These categories are further subdivided into eight subcategories as shown in the table.

Designated Places and Planning Areas	Designated Places	Primarily for			Tools Informing Initial State Designation
		Growth	Preservation or Protection	Maintenance or Conservation	
Growth & Developed Areas (PFAs)					
- GrowthPrint	X	X			GrowthPrint
- Established Communities				X	
Priority Resource Areas					
- Priority Agricultural Resources	X		X		AgPrint
- Priority Natural Resources	X		X		GreenPrint
- Priority Water Resources	X		X		
Other Designated & Planning Areas					
- Cultural & Historic Resources	X			X	
- Lands Subject to Effects of Climate Change	X			X	
- Other Areas Outside PFAs				X	

PlanMaryland classifies some of these areas as Designated Places to help state agencies and local governments determine how to best focus their resources to achieve the Plan’s goals and objectives. **Designated Places are geographic areas that will be the target of State funding for growth and preservation / protection of agricultural, water, and natural resources and include GrowthPrint, Priority Agricultural Resources, Priority Natural Resources, Priority Water Resources, Cultural and Historic Resources, and Lands Subject to the Effects of Climate Change.** They can best be viewed by using the PlanMaryland Interactive Map located at: <http://plan.maryland.gov/draftPlan/inputMap.shtml>. The Interactive Map shows four of the subcategories:

- GrowthPrint is illustrated in RED and are targeted for the “vast majority” of future growth.
- Established Communities are illustrated in ORANGE and are targeted for community maintenance.

- Priority Resources Areas are illustrated in shades of GREEN, including:
 - Priority Natural Resources
 - Priority Agricultural Resources

The Designated Places Process begins with the Initial State Designations, which were identified by the State based on existing places named as part of state legislation and programs. In Montgomery County, most of these places and programs were established by the County Executive in response to state legislation and program funding. The Maryland Department of Planning does not intend to modify the Initial Designated Places as part of the final plan to be published later this year. Further designations are proposed to be developed in coordination with local jurisdictions and will be added during subsequent updates of PlanMaryland.

Programmatic Alignment through Implementation

The Maryland Department of Planning recognizes that it is vital to align state agency and local government programs, policies, and procedures to achieve PlanMaryland’s goals and objectives. To this end the Smart Growth Subcabinet (or state agency representatives) will develop agency and interagency strategies for supporting the Plan, as a future step. Plan implementation will need to be further developed after the plan is finalized.

Next Steps

After PlanMaryland is finalized in October 2011, the Maryland Department of Planning will begin a process to align state agency programs, policies, and procedures with the goals and objectives of the Plan. It is envisioned that some changes can be made by Executive Order but that others will require action by the legislature.

While the State does not intend to make changes to the Initial State Designations, there is a process for amending the Designated Places once the Plan is finalized. Local Designations will be considered by the State as part of the State/Local Designation Process based on criteria established in the Plan. Those areas that the State agrees to designate will become State/Local Designations. The State intends to consider Local Designations annually.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff supports PlanMaryland’s goal of concentrating growth around existing and planned infrastructure and protecting rural and environmentally sensitive lands from development. By aligning the programs, policies, and procedures of state agencies and local governments around these goals, we can ensure that Maryland remains among the leaders in Smart Growth. In fact, with the establishment of the Agricultural Preserve and focus of development around metrorail stations, Montgomery County has been engaged in the type of growth PlanMaryland seeks to encourage, for several decades.

While we fully support the intent of the Plan, we have several concerns about specific elements.

Initial State Designations

Because funding will be tied to Designated Places and targeted toward GrowthPrint and Priority Resource Areas, it is critically important that PlanMaryland accurately reflect

local comprehensive plans and resource mapping. However, the Maryland Department of Planning developed the Initial State Designations with limited collaboration from local governments, based on designations from existing programs. This has led to some notable omissions. For example, GrowthPrint excludes many areas that can be expected to accommodate the “vast majority” of future growth: existing activity centers such as the Bethesda CBD and Friendship Heights CBD, recently approved master plan and sector plan areas including White Flint I and the Great Seneca Science Corridor, ongoing master plan areas such as Kensington, Chevy Chase Lake, and East County Science Center, and future master plans such as White Flint II, Glenmont, and station area planning for the Purple Line and Corridor Cities Transitway. Furthermore, many established communities outside of the activity centers on the eastern side of the County are considered GrowthPrint areas, even though they are unlikely to absorb much additional growth.

The Maryland Department of Planning believes it is unnecessary to incorporate County feedback into the Initial State Designations because they are based on existing designations under state legislation. While they will consider nominations for these areas as part of the State/Local Designation Process, this will occur after the Plan is finalized. **Staff is concerned that state agencies may begin making decisions based on the Designated Places once the Plan is approved, which could restrict funding to many County growth areas.**

Additionally, mapping has not been completed for Priority Natural Resources, Historic and Cultural areas and Priority Water Resources Areas making it difficult for the County to provide comments on these areas.

Plan Structure

The Plan is inaccessible to all but the most committed readers due to its length (188 pages), repetition, and a structure that appears at first to lack coherence. If this plan is difficult for professional planners to follow, it will be even more difficult to implement.

Implementation

An Implementation Plan is largely nonexistent. The Plan describes a process for developing an implementation plan, but this will occur after PlanMaryland is finalized. During the development of the Implementation Plan, there needs to be a thorough evaluation of all state programs and policies to align them with the PlanMaryland’s goals and objectives and the Designated Places. This will enable local governments to better understand what funding will be available for each Designated Place.

Recommendations

Staff recommends transmitting the following comments to the full Planning Commission for consideration:

1. Support the intent of PlanMaryland to align state and local programs to incentivize Smart and Sustainable Growth and redevelopment: This effort is long overdue and parallels the efforts of Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties to reinforce smart and sustainable growth.

2. Amend the Initial State Designations as shown in Attachment A prior to finalizing PlanMaryland: Staff believes it is inappropriate to wait until after PlanMaryland is finalized to amend the Initial State Designations. The Maryland Department of Planning should work with Montgomery County to amend these Designated Places based on local comprehensive plans.

The Initial State Designations for GrowthPrint should include:

- a. Friendship Heights
- b. Bethesda CBD
- c. National Institutes of Health / BRAC
- d. Rock Springs
- e. Grosvenor Station area
- f. White Flint I and II
- g. Great Seneca Science Corridor
- h. Chevy Chase Lake
- i. Kensington
- j. Montgomery Hills
- k. Glenmont
- l. Olney Town Center
- m. Additional Purple Line and Corridor Cities Transitway station areas
- n. East County Science Center Master Plan
- o. Burtonsville Town Center
- p. County Service Park
- q. Webb Tract

Furthermore, many established communities outside of the activity centers on the eastern side of the County are considered GrowthPrint areas, even though they are unlikely to absorb much additional growth. These areas should be designated as Established Communities:

- r. Cloverly
 - s. Burtonsville (area shown is much larger than necessary)
 - t. Areas along the MD-97 corridor outside of Glenmont Sector Plan, Wheaton CBD, Silver Spring CBD, Long Branch Sector Plan, Takoma-Langley Crossroads Sector Plan, Montgomery Hills commercial area, and the Lyttonsville station area.
3. If the changes to the Initial State Designations shown in Attachment A are not made prior to finalizing PlanMaryland, clearly state in PlanMaryland that State agencies should not make funding decisions based solely on the Initial State Designations until local governments have the opportunity to amend them as part of the State/Local Designation process.
 4. Assign and consolidate funding programs with each Designated Place: There are a myriad of state programs designed to support growth and revitalization, maintain established communities, and preserve natural resources. Thoroughly evaluate all state

programs and policies to align them with the PlanMaryland's goals and objectives and the Designated Places. This will enable local governments to understand the funding available for each Designated Place. The process for applying for funds in Designated Places should be simplified, so that one application could be used for all eligible fund sources.

5. Provide Additional Mapping for GreenPrint, Historic and Cultural Areas, and Priority Water Resources Areas prior to finalizing PlanMaryland: Staff cannot provide detailed comments on the areas designated because they are incomplete.
6. State that projects such as the Purple Line and the Corridor Cities Transitway strongly advance the goals of PlanMaryland because they encourage transit-oriented development and economic development. They should continue to be high priorities for State funding, even though they pass through some areas that are not designated as GrowthPrint.
7. Streamline and reorganize PlanMaryland to make it more readable for the public: The Plan is difficult to follow for all but the most committed readers due to its length (188 pages), repetition, and a structure that appears to lack coherence.
 - a. Consider organizing the Plan based around the three processes in Attachment C, provided at the June 8, 2011 briefing with planning staff from Montgomery County and Prince Georges County. These processes are:
 - i. Trends (Chapter 2), visions, goals, and objectives (Chapter 3), and metrics (Chapter 6)
 - ii. Designated Places (Chapter 4)
 - iii. Implementation Plan (Chapter 4 and 5)
 - b. Create an appendix that contains the bulk of the Plan material.

The staff recommends that these comments be blended with the comments of the Prince Georges County Planning Board and brought forward to the full Planning Commission for transmittal to the Maryland Department of Planning. In the event that the full Commission declines to do so, staff request permission to transmit the comments directly to the Maryland Department of Planning.