

A RESIDENT'S GUIDE TO

The Land Use Master Plan Process in Montgomery County

8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910, 301-495-4600, TTY 301-495-1331, www.mc-mncppc.org

This is one in a series of brochures designed to help you participate in planning for the future of your Montgomery County community.

This brochure has information on:

- What is a Master Plan and how does it affect you?
- Hearing from residents
- Community participation
- The General Plan
- The Wedges and Corridors concept
- Functional Master Plans
- Sectional Map Amendments

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU?

A master plan is the document that county government uses to guide the development and use of land. Sector plans detail land use recommendations for particular places such as central business districts or areas immediately adjacent to a transit (Metro) station.

Using *A General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District... On Wedges and Corridors* (see page 2) as a guide, the Montgomery County Planning Board creates local master plans and sector plans to set forth the land use vision for those areas. Once approved by the County Council and adopted by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), master plans and sector plans are incorporated into and amend the General Plan.

Master plans play an important role in the lives of county residents. County law requires that prospective homebuyers be informed that a master plan for their area exists, and they have the right to inspect the pertinent master plan. Reviewing master plans or sector plans helps homebuyers know the kind of development that is recommended and anticipated for an area for the next 10-20 years. These plans also focus on the need for and challenges of planning for neighborhood stability and

identity in older, fully developed communities that have little new development potential.

Key elements to look for in a master plan might be, among others, the zoning of a particular area, the transportation recommendations and the location of nearby parks.



Montgomery County Planning Board Meeting

By working closely with affected residents and property owners as well as discussing the professional recommendations of staff, the Planning Board is able to make thoughtful master plan recommendations to forward to the County Council for its public hearing, final review, and approval. *Recommendations in master plans are only a guide for the future.*

HEARING FROM RESIDENTS

Residents' views on land use issues are important to the Planning Board's decision-making process. The Planning Board and staff are committed to providing a fair and equitable procedure so that all interested parties have a chance to express their views.

As concerned residents, you are encouraged to attend and share your views as an individual or representative of an organization through written testimony sent to the Planning Board in advance or through testimony at the Planning

Board's open public hearing held on all area master plans, sector plans, functional master plans and plan amendments. Written testimony may be emailed to: mcp-chairman@mncppc-mc.org; or mailed to: Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board, M-NCPPC, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

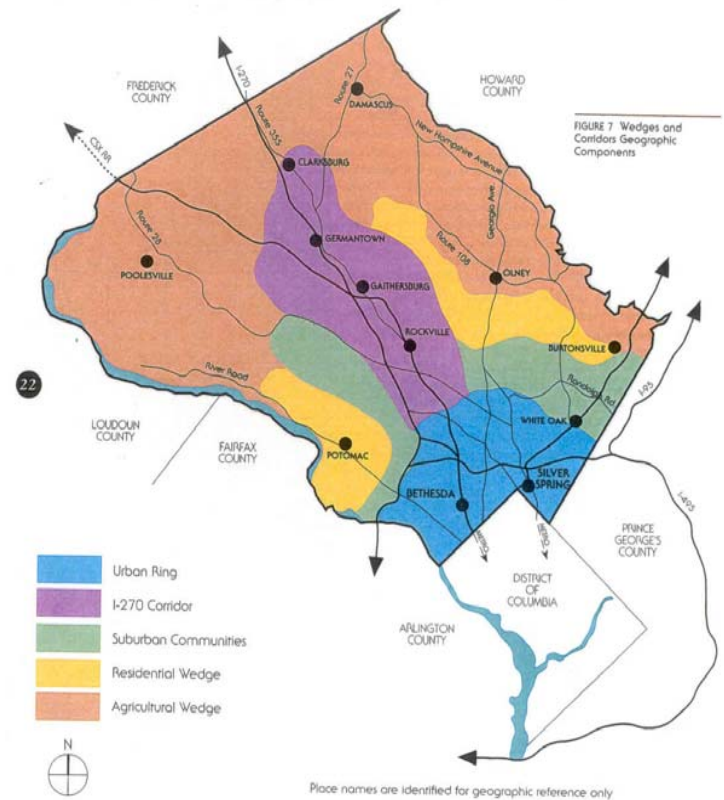
For all master plans, representatives from a broad spectrum of the neighborhood, civic and economic interests in the county provide input. They have an opportunity to express their own and their communities' views when the Planning Board prepares a master plan or sector plan. Knowing community concerns and attitudes helps the Planning Board and staff develop plans that are sensitive to the needs and interests of the community.

In open meetings, participants work first with staff through the Staff Draft Plan and then with the Planning Board when staff presents the draft. Participants may testify as individuals or as a group at the public hearing. The Planning Board takes this advice seriously. The Planning Board considers the Staff Draft and public testimony during worksessions before finalizing their recommendations to the County Executive and County Council. The County Council has the final authority on approving the master plan. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission then adopts the Council's approved master plan to be integrated into the General Plan (see below).

Please participate in the planning for the future of your community. Contact the Community-Based Planning Division for more information, 301-495-4555.

THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is a comprehensive guide to the county's development. The Planning Board developed the General Plan for land use, transportation and circulation, in conjunction with residents throughout the County and the County Council approved it. Because of its long-term nature, the General Plan includes broad policy guidelines natural resources, conservation, open space, water and sewage systems, employment and housing. It envisions a development concept of "wedges and corridors" for the county.



General Plan

THE "WEDGES AND CORRIDORS" CONCEPT

The "corridors" portion of this concept represents concentrations of development along major transportation spines or "corridors" that radiate out from the District of Columbia. In Montgomery County, these transportation corridors include Interstate 270 and Interstate 95, part of which lies in the eastern portion of the county along US 29.

Green "wedges" are the spaces between the corridors reserved for predominantly low-density and rural development, except for certain "satellite" towns such as Damascus, Olney and Poolesville. In the green wedges, the Planning Board and County Council have successfully preserved a vast and viable agricultural preserve, primarily through effective planning, zoning and the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. (See *A Resident's Guide to Zoning of Land in Montgomery County*.)

You may purchase a copy of the General Plan through the Information and Publications section at the M-NCPPC at 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, 301-495-4610, or view it online at www.mc-mncppc.org. For additional information on the Commission and its planning work, check out the website, www.mc-mncppc.org.

Based on the General Plan, and following the process for input from staff and the public, the Planning Board creates local area-specific master plans and sector plans to set the land use vision for local areas. The Planning Board also creates systems-oriented functional master plans (see next section) that are incorporated into the General Plan.

For more detailed information on the master planning process, please refer to the free publication, *The Master Planning Process, Montgomery County, Maryland: A Guide for Citizens, Planners, and Government Officials*, September 1997. This document outlines the process and includes information about community participation. Copies of this document, as well as most master plans, may be obtained from the second floor Information and Publications Section at 8787 Georgia Avenue in downtown Silver Spring, 301-495-4610, and may be in your local library. All master plans and sector plans are now online at www.mc-mncppc.org.



FUNCTIONAL MASTER PLANS

Functional master plans are important because they focus on specific “systems” that support and tie master plans together, such as: general circulation systems (transportation, bikeways and trails), parks and recreation, environmental systems, watershed protection, stormwater management and agricultural preservation. The preparation, approval and adoption of functional master plans are the same as with other master plans.

The Master Plan Process in Brief

Planning Board submits and County Council approves:

Semi-annual Work Program

Staff initiates community participation and prepares:

Purpose and Outreach Report

Staff presents this report to the Planning Board and then prepares:

Staff Draft Master Plan

Planning Board reviews Staff Draft and, with modification as necessary, approves the plan as suitable for public hearing:

Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Master Plan

Planning Board reviews public hearing testimony, receives County Executive comments at Planning Board worksessions, and adjusts the Public Hearing Draft to become:

Planning Board (Final) Draft Master Plan

County Executive reviews Planning Board Draft and forwards fiscal impact analysis and comments to County Council:

Planning Board (Final) Draft Master Plan is transmitted to the County Council

County Council holds public hearing and worksessions and approves, disapproves, or amends Planning Board Draft, which is forwarded to the M-NCPPC to be adopted, to become:

Approved and Adopted Master Plan

SECTIONAL MAP AMENDMENTS

The implementation of master plan recommendations does not occur until the County Council approves a Sectional Map Amendment (SMA). An SMA is a comprehensive action covering a section of the County, usually the same as a master plan. It proposes various zones to be applied to individual tracts of land, as recommended in the master plan. All property owners affected by any recommended change in zoning are notified individually to testify at the County Council's public hearing on a proposed Sectional Map Amendment. Approval of the SMA is by majority vote of the Council.



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-495-4600
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The M-NCPPC encourages the participation of all individuals in its programs and services. For accommodations, please call 301-495-4600, TTY 301-495-1331.

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