

County Council Of Howard County, Maryland

2011 Legislative Session

Legislative Day No. 8

Resolution No. 117 -2011

Introduced by: The Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

A RESOLUTION adopting Guidelines for the 2030 General Plan, promulgated by the Planning Board, to be used by the Department of Planning and Zoning in the preparation or revision of the General Plan.

Introduced and read first time _____, 2011.

By order _____
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator

Read for a second time at a public hearing on _____, 2011.

By order _____
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator

This Resolution was read the third time and was Adopted___, Adopted with amendments___, Failed___, Withdrawn___, by the County Council on _____, 2011.

Certified By _____
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator

NOTE: [[text in brackets]] indicates deletions from existing law; TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS indicates additions to existing law; Strike-out indicates material deleted by amendment; Underlining indicates material added by amendment.

1 **WHEREAS**, Section 16.800(c)(1) of the Howard County Code provides that the
2 Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning shall coordinate the preparation and
3 revision of a General Plan for the County; and

4
5 **WHEREAS**, the General Plan shall follow guidelines promulgated by the
6 Planning Board and adopted by the County Council; and

7
8 **WHEREAS**, Section 16.900(j)(4)(ii) of the Howard County Code provides that
9 the County Council shall adopt the guidelines prior to formulation of the General Plan
10 using the guidelines; and

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12 **WHEREAS**, a citizen task force has provided recommendations to the Planning
13 Board in the preparation of the guidelines; and

14
15 **WHEREAS**, the Planning Board has promulgated guidelines for the General
16 Plan, as attached to this Resolution, and has submitted them to the County Council for its
17 approval.

18
19 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the County Council of Howard
20 County, Maryland this ____ day of _____, 2011 that the County Council adopts
21 the Guidelines for the 2030 General Plan as attached to this Resolution.

Proposed *Guidelines for the 2030 General Plan* Planning Board Recommendations

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Howard County occupies a prime location at the interface of two important and still growing metropolitan areas – Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland this affords many economic and quality of life opportunities. The County also has major new opportunities due to BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) and the expanding roles of NSA (National Security Agency), DISA (Defense Information Systems Agency), and the new Cyber Command – all of which are associated with Fort George G. Meade.

In contrast, some of the foundations for the County's suburban success – raw land, inexpensive fuel, relatively easy commuting – are changing quickly. Global issues such as climate change, economic competition and peak oil are increasingly impacting Howard County and need to be considered as we plan for the next twenty years.

GENERAL PLAN FRAMEWORK

1. Quality of Life and Sustainability

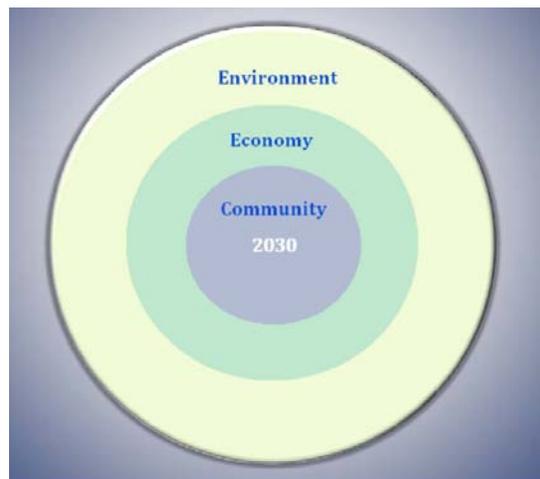
State of Maryland Vision: *A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment.*

County Context: Howard County is currently recognized as one of the best places to live in the country. Maintaining the existing very high quality of life for residents and businesses and recognizing opportunities for improvement are key as the General Plan effort moves forward.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Define quality of life so that it is meaningful to citizens in terms of access to employment, education and health. Increase public awareness of how sustainability will enhance our community services, amenities and open space, etc.
- B. Identify goals and strategies for promoting environmental and community sustainability so that new development and redevelopment mitigate previous adverse impacts on land, water, air and energy resources.
- C. Promote the coordination of sustainability efforts by various County agencies, the business community, non-profit organizations, citizens and surrounding jurisdictions.
- D. Identify and enhance existing, older communities in the County that need improvements.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENTS



2. Public Participation

State of Maryland Vision: *Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.*

County Context: Many of Howard County's residents, business-owners and non-profits from the diverse communities that comprise the County are actively engaged in the County's public processes.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Optimize traditional and new forms of outreach, such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, etc.), to broaden the demographics of participation.
- B. Cultivate opinions from under-represented demographic or special populations and organizations that may not be currently, actively engaged in the process.

CONTENT:

3. Growth Areas

State of Maryland Vision: *Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers.*

County Context: In response to State Smart Growth requirements, Howard County's designated growth boundary and Priority Funding Area (PFA), is comprised of all land within the Planned Service Area for Public Water and Sewerage. This occupies the easternmost 40% of the County. The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) has asked local jurisdictions to refine their Priority Funding Areas by identifying more focused target areas for future growth. This approach seeks to decrease new land consumption via compact development and to focus local and state growth management initiatives.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Evaluate forecasts for employment, household and population to accommodate Howard County's "fair share" of Maryland's growth.
- B. Establish the County's annual limit for growth outside the PFA, as required by recent State legislation.
- C. Designate specific areas within the County's PFA to encourage new compact, mixed-use development as well as other gray field areas with redevelopment potential.
- D. Develop innovative planning tools to promote well designed communities in the PFA.

4. Community Design

State of Maryland Vision: *Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources.*

County Context: Howard County has considerable experience with planned suburban, mixed-use communities beginning with Columbia, and including Turf Valley, Waverly, Emerson and Maple Lawn. Based on the 2000 General Plan, the County has been developing a variety of approaches for creating new compact, mixed-use, walkable communities. Route 1 rezoning and new design standards are promoting Transit Oriented Development nodes at existing MARC stations and Corridor Activity Centers as focal points along Route 1. The Downtown Columbia *General Plan* and

zoning revisions require compact, mixed-use, multi-modal redevelopment. Within the Route 40 Study Area zoning to allow changes allow compact mixed-use on select parcels.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Encourage compact, mixed-use, walkable designs in targeted areas, consistent with surrounding existing community character
- B. Manage infill and provide pedestrian, bicycle, transit, green space or other enhancements for established neighborhoods.
- C. Identify issues to be better addressed in future regulations, such as transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, design quality, health assessments and regulatory streamlining.
- D. Identify means of resolving conflicts among agricultural, residential and commercial uses in the Rural West.

5. Infrastructure

State of Maryland Vision: *Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner.*

County Context: Howard County's Planned Service Area for Water and Sewerage (PSA) has long been established as the urban-rural growth boundary and Priority Funding area for Howard County. As additional growth is contemplated within Howard County's PFA, ensuring sufficient capacity of water and sewerage, storm water management, roads and transit infrastructure as well as appropriate levels of schools, fire, police, libraries, parks, health and other government facilities and services is vital.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Identify new public facilities and services needed to accommodate projected growth.
- B. Evaluate aging Infrastructure and consider alternatives to address the need for on-going maintenance, updates and improvements.
- C. Identify green technologies to enhance County buildings and services and reduce resource demands.
- D. Coordinate General Plan goals with the County's Capital Improvement Program.
- E. Assess whether the Adequate Public Facilities regulations appropriately address current conditions.

6. Transportation

State of Maryland Vision: *A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers.*

County Context: Howard County is well located in terms of access to the state and interstate highway system, rail service, BWI airport and the Port of Baltimore. Access to public transit is, however more limited. Commuter bus and rail service to both Baltimore and Washington is available at several locations in the County. The County's Howard Transit provides fixed route and paratransit service to many locations in the PFA. However, the frequency and reliability of both regional and local service limits use. Howard County is currently evaluating organizational and funding options to improve local transit via a new Office of Transportation. The County has a Pedestrian Master Plan and is working towards a Bicycle Master Plan.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Increase public awareness of the relationship between personal vehicle miles traveled and highway congestion, air quality, greenhouse gases, and energy independence, as well as how compact multi-modal development patterns contribute to a healthier environment and lifestyles.
- B. Develop and implement strategies to make the County a hub in a regional mass transit system.
- C. Implement strategies to encourage more citizens to choose transit, walking, bicycling or ride sharing as alternates to the automobile.
- D. Promote modal shifts via employer involvement and incentives.

7. Housing

State of Maryland Vision: *A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.*

County Context: Howard County's success as a location of choice for families and individuals has created high housing demand and prices. While Howard County has innovative affordable housing programs that provide options for many households with incomes below the County median, many people who work in the County commute long distances to obtain more affordable housing. Howard County has a wide variety of housing types, densities and designs. Based on limited land resources and County growth policies, the ratio of new townhouses and apartments has been steadily increasing. This trend has been reinforced by the recent economic downturn and lender financing preferences. The trend to higher density housing should help increase affordable housing choices.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Develop housing growth targets that respond to employment growth and workforce housing needs.
- B. Promote affordability and diversity in new housing, innovative green design and aging in place.
- C. Encourage public-private partnerships to provide amenities in affordable housing and future redevelopment.
- D. Develop strategies for homelessness and special needs housing.

8. Economic Development

State of Maryland Vision: *Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services and public facilities are encouraged.*

County Context: Howard County is extremely well located and has been very successful in attracting and growing diverse businesses. While the County has been impacted by the economic downturn, this has been to a much lesser degree than most of the country. Growth associated with Fort Meade will accelerate recovery. The Howard Economic Development Authority (HEDA) has been very effective in working with the business community to establish innovative programs such as the technology incubator. EDA's 2011 Strategic Plan identifies some issues that should be explored in The General Plan.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Identify actions to implement EDA's 2011 Strategic Plan, particularly optimizing Ft. Meade/ cyber technology related growth.

- B. Identify options for promoting green industries and natural resource-based business such as solar, wind and other alternative energy sources.
- C. Encourage workforce development and training for high demand and emergent fields, scholarships in sciences and grants for innovative research.
- D. Promote innovations in farming operations, training and marketing; cultivate young and new farmers.

9. Environmental Protection

State of Maryland Vision: *Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources.*

County Context: Howard County is a leader in exploring ways to address environmental concerns such as: establishing an office and commission of Environmental Sustainability; developing a Climate Action Plan; adopting Green Building and Green Neighborhood regulations; aggressive recycling programs; purchasing hybrid buses and other fleet vehicles; and numerous public education strategies. The General Plan update is an opportunity for the County to envision an environmentally sustainable future and promote strategies to attain it.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Identify options for greater State-regional collaboration and cost sharing for Bay restoration and other environmental programs.
- B. Promote increased participation by private and non-profit sectors in diverse initiatives to improve air quality, land conservation and environmental preservation.
- C. Promote innovative technologies such as ground water re-charge, permeable pavement, gray water capture systems, water conservation plans, water conservation programs and water runoff policies.

10. Resource Conservation

State of Maryland Vision: *Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.*

County Context: Howard County preserves land by a wide variety of means including: public parkland; Columbia Association and HOA open space; agricultural preservation; environmental and forest conservation easements; and floodplain, riparian buffer and steep slope regulations within private developments. 36% of Howard County land is preserved by some type of land conservation measure.

General Plan Guidelines:

EVALUATE ...

- A. Expand the agricultural preservation program to support future farming, farm industries and farming culture.
- B. Establish resource conservation priorities and strategies for the Planned Service Area, as well as the Rural West.

IMPLEMENTATION VISIONS

11. Stewardship

State of Maryland Vision: *Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.*

County Context: Howard County is a community characterized by activism, a respect for the land and an appreciation of all resources and the concomitant responsibilities of citizenship. Recent initiatives such as the Climate Action Plan focus on the community's role of active participation and responsible stewardship by including areas of responsibility for both the County government and for private citizens and businesses.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Define stewardship responsibilities for the County government, the business community and private citizens for conservation of natural resources, energy and natural habitat.
- B. Encourage Howard County Public School System and Howard Community College to become leaders in environmental education including curricula in stewardship, sustainability and agriculture.
- C. Assess the need for a historic preservation plan to broaden awareness of our heritage and encourage renovation and re-use of historic resources.

12. Implementation

State of Maryland Vision: *Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state and interstate levels to achieve these Visions.*

County Context: The County's General Plans have been effective in establishing a broad range of growth management policies and implementing actions. However, as the scope and complexity of issues has increased, The General Plan has grown in size, become less readable and less clear about implementation priorities. The 2000 General Plan established select implementation indicators and reporting requirements, which were helpful, but not sufficient. Given current budget constraints, it will be important to establish clear implementation priorities.

General Plan Guidelines:

- A. Establish short, medium, long term implementation priorities.
- B. Identify separate implementation strategies for government, residents, businesses and non-profit organizations.
- C. Identify collaborative approaches that combine federal, state, county, non-profit and private resources for implementation, including "friends" groups to provide a volunteer pool for activities.
- D. Identify benchmarks for monitoring progress, with flexibility to adjust to changing conditions.

VIII. POTENTIAL TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| access to jobs | Green Business Council | public health |
| agri-businesses | green industries | public parkland |
| agricultural preservation | Green Infrastructure network | Public School System |
| agricultural tourism | Green Neighborhoods | public-private partnerships |
| air quality | greenhouse gases | quality of life |
| alternate modes of travel | ground water re-charge | redevelopment potential |
| amenities and open space | health assessment impact | regional multi-modal transportation |
| Bicycle Master Plan | healthy communities | resource conservation |
| BRAC | highway congestion | right-to-farm |
| Capital Improvement Program | historic preservation plan | roads / transit infrastructure |
| Chesapeake Bay restoration | housing affordability | rural zoning |
| Climate Action Plan | Howard Community College | scenic areas |
| community goals | HowardJobs.com | scholarships in sciences |
| community initiatives | hybrid buses | single parents |
| community services | innovative capital funding | storm water management |
| compact development | innovative technologies | sustainable communities |
| compact growth patterns | jobs: housing balance | sustainable, green technologies |
| conserving rural character | land assembly | tax incentives |
| curricula in stewardship | land management tools | tax increment financing |
| Cyber Command | LEED standards | TMDLS – total maximum daily loads |
| eco-tourism | live/work balance | traffic congestion |
| EDA 2011 Strategic Plan | MARC service | transfer of development rights |
| emergent fields | mitigate previous adverse impacts | transit mode options |
| empty nesters | multimodal transportation system | transit planning |
| energy conservation | natural resource-based | transportation demand management |
| energy alternatives | natural systems | unified code |
| enhanced recycling | nutrient reduction targets | urban design assistant teams |
| environmental protection | older uses and buildings | volunteer clean-up programs |
| environmentally healthy balance | open space | water conservation plans |
| existing, older communities | para-transit service | Watershed Improvement Plans |
| financing mechanisms | Pedestrian Master Plan | watershed restoration strategy |
| floodplain and riparian buffers | permeable pavement | workforce housing options |
| forest conservation easements | Planned Service Area | workforce training |
| full spectrum housing | Planned Unit Development | young workforce |
| grants for innovative research | prevent encroachment | zoning innovations |
| gray field areas | Priority Funding Area | zoning regulations |
| gray water capture systems | public awareness | |
| Green Building regulations | public education | |