



looking ahead

We are at a second defining moment in setting the course for the future of Montgomery County.

In the 1960s, the County committed to the Wedges and Corridors General Plan. A national emblem of effective planning, it has served the county well.

Following that strong framework, we fashioned the policy tools that guided the County's expansion over the following decades from a largely suburban county of about 300,000 to mature, urban county of close to 1 million residents.

Those tools include our strong and transparent master planning process linked to comprehensive rezoning; one of the nation's first adequate public facilities ordinances enacted by a biannual growth policy; a national model for affordable housing; the development of our central business districts and corridor cities; one of the nation's great park systems; and the nationally admired Agricultural Reserve.

We got a lot of things right.

But we are significantly different than we were a generation ago. No longer a bedroom community of workers in federal agencies in the District of Columbia, Montgomery County has evolved into the economic engine of Maryland. And with a highly educated public and access to some of the nation's best research universities and federal scientific institutions, the County is well positioned to lead in America's knowledge-based economy.



Changing demographics and a limited supply of developable land are shifting the demand for housing from low-density detached homes in homogeneous suburban neighborhoods designed around driving, to higher density, mixed-use urban communities oriented toward walking, biking, and transit.

The implications of global warming, the immanent peaking of oil production, economic restructuring, demographic changes, and a revolution in

information technology and bioscience are rapidly changing what we do, how we do it, who does it, where it is done, and where and how we live.

The future of the county depends on rethinking and reinventing our growth, planning, and development.

Sustainability must be the foundation of our future policy. But sustainable development is not something we "do." It is what will happen when we get the fundamentals right. A generation ago,

we got most of the fundamentals right, but some of the old fundamentals no longer work. We've identified the following concepts as critical to achieving sustainable growth:


- Energy efficiency
- Environmental conservation and enhancement
- Connectivity
- Diversity
- Livability
- Flexibility

We will elaborate on all of those fundamentals in this semi-annual report and in the months ahead.

In planning and building well-connected urban systems, special attention must be given to our parks, trails, and open spaces. A vibrant urban system requires strong networks connecting built and natural environments. As we redevelop our centers, we must establish a finer grid of consistently designed and well-landscaped streets and urban parks. We must continue to connect those centers to biking and hiking systems in stream valley and regional parks for commuting and recreation, and providing for and inviting bikes into our downtowns and uptowns.

The choices we make now are as critical to the next generation as those made some 40 years ago were to this one. We have the opportunity to make the county a model of sustainable growth if we are willing to rethink our approaches and reinvent some of the key policy tools we use.

Respectfully,



Royce Hanson

Planning Board Chairman