

# ATTACHMENT 3

## Compact Growth: Corridor-Focused Development

- When the 1964 “Wedges and Corridors Plan” was adopted, much of Montgomery County was undeveloped. The Plan was visionary in recognizing that land is a valuable resource and should be used efficiently. The Plan specifically states: *“Land should be treated as one of our most precious possessions, using efficiently what we need for accommodating expected urban growth, and conserving the rest for the unforeseeable future. Land is too valuable an asset to be heedlessly wasted by allowing it to be developed aimlessly in a scattered pattern.”*
- To prevent the scattered pattern of development, the 1964 Plan, a bi-county plan for Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, recommended two distinct patterns of growth: the urban pattern and the rural pattern. The urban pattern was envisioned as a compact form of urban development, concentrated in the existing urban ring and proposed corridor cities along significant transportation corridors within the region, including I-270, I-95 and Route 29. Conversely, the rural pattern had four broad purposes as stated on page 44 of the plan: *“1) to help mold the urban pattern into an efficient and pleasant one, 2) to provide and protect large open spaces for the “change of pace” and recreational opportunities needed by present and future generations, 3) to provide a favorable rural environment in which farming, mineral extraction, hunting, fishing and other natural resource activities can be carried on without disruption, and 4) to conserve natural resources and protect the public water supply.”*

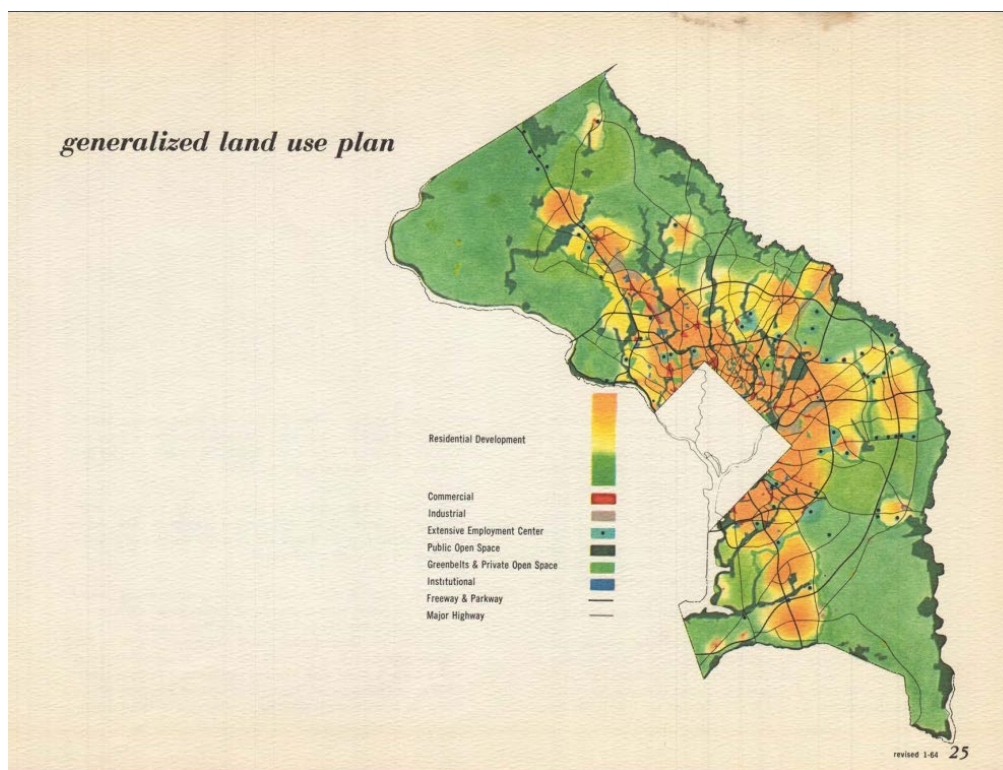


Figure 1: 1964 Wedges and Corridors Plan - Urban and Rural Patterns

- While the 1964 Plan was visionary in recognizing the consequences of sprawl and the value of land preservation, subsequent master plans and land use decisions did not always adhere to its guidance, making growth less efficient and sustainable

- Development was not fully concentrated within the urban ring and corridor cities and sprawling development advanced.
  - The failure to impose more effective limits on sprawl in the decades following the 1964 Plan allowed development to disperse, limiting opportunities for walkable neighborhoods with a mix of uses and transit-supportive densities
  - Sprawl, as predicted by the 1964 Plan, also reduced the amount of land available for outdoor recreation, agriculture and natural resource conservation.

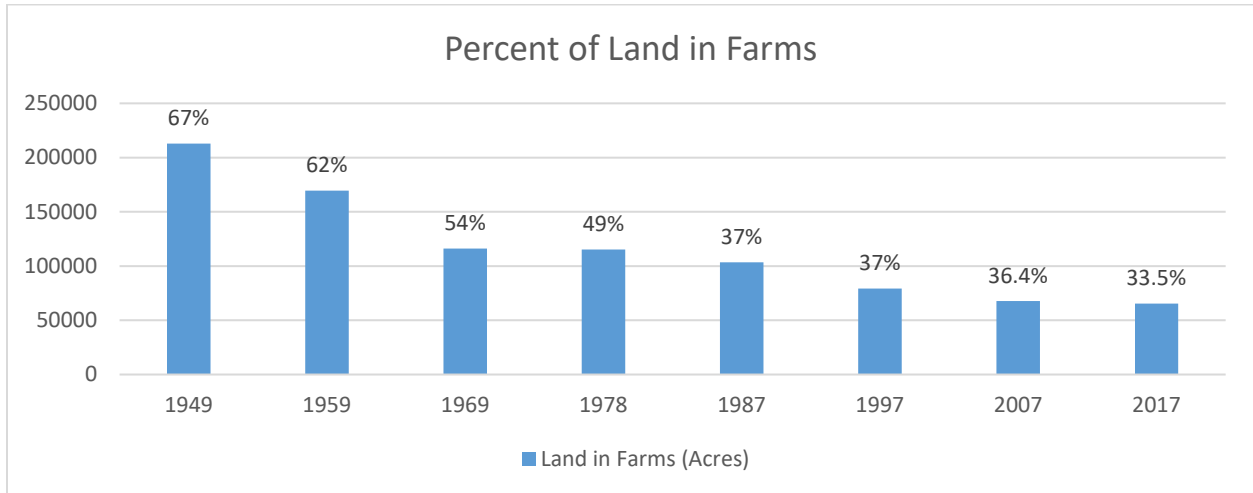


Figure 2: Acres and Percent of Land in Farms (Census of Agriculture 1949-2017)

- The Plan did not fully elaborate the benefits of the rural pattern for the larger public. Specifically, it did not identify how people who live in urban parts of the county would access, experience and enjoy the advantages of rural parts of the county
- Subsequent planning exercises, including the 1993 General Plan Refinement disregarded and eventually removed the growth corridor along Route 29 and I-95 outlined in the 1964 plan, including the recommendation for a corridor city near Fairland, in the eastern portion of the county. The excision of the Route 29 corridor effectively directed new public and private investment away from the East County and toward the south and west to the urban ring and along the I-270 corridor. As a result the I-270 corridor has benefitted from successive cycles of investment and reinvestment even as other corridors in the county were left behind. This pattern aggravated the racial and economic disparities between the eastern and western portions of the county.
- The failure to focus development more tightly in a compact footprint has made road, water and sewer, and other public infrastructure more expensive by limiting economies of scale and limited opportunities to meet emerging demand for walkable neighborhoods served by transit. As visible in many locations in the Washington Metropolitan Region, locations that have invested in transit have achieved a transit-oriented compact form of development.
- If the inefficient use of land is permitted to continue, the county will quickly diminish the supply of available land for growth, outdoor recreation, agriculture and natural resource conservation. Continuing sprawl will also increase the cost of infrastructure, services and amenities and exacerbate issues such as traffic congestion and climate change.
  - Similar to the 1964 Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes to facilitate growth through the efficient use of land by concentrating growth along corridors, limiting growth

beyond corridors to compact development in Complete Communities and preserving land for recreation, agriculture and natural resource conservation.

*Insert Corridor-Focused Growth Map Here*

- The Compact Growth: Corridor Focused Development theme is an important organizing element for Thrive Montgomery 2050, as it recognizes the value of the built and natural environments and identifies the location and type of growth desired for the county in 2050. The scale of development, building types and diversity of uses that exist within the compact form of development are discussed in the Complete Communities theme and the design of compact form is discussed within the Design, Arts and Culture theme.

**PART 2: Therefore, Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes the following policies and actions.**

In order to maximize the efficiency of land use and public investment, the county will pursue the following policies and actions:

- Concentrate growth along corridors through compact infill development and redevelopment commensurate with transit to maximize efficient use of land.
  - Amend land use, design and zoning regulations, including the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, to remove regulatory barriers and permit corridor-focused compact development.
  - Improve the environmental sustainability of growth by encouraging infill and redevelopment to curb sprawl and bring areas built out in an era with little or no environmental regulations up to robust standards for stormwater management and other state-of-the-practice environmental standards.



*Figure 3: Improved Environmental Performance of Infill Development in the Pike District*

- Promote and prioritize public investment in infrastructure along growth corridors and leverage it to attract future private investment in a compact form.
  - Adopt new methods of financing public infrastructure, such as value capture, tax increment financing, and other mechanisms to facilitate investment in areas identified as appropriate for more intensive development and accompanying infrastructure.
  - Implement dedicated transit along growth corridors through capital investment and ensure reliable service through operational investment.
  - Leverage federal, state and local incentive programs, publicly owned land and land investment opportunities for corridor infill development and redevelopment.
  
- Limit growth beyond corridors to compact, infill development and redevelopment in Complete Communities to prevent sprawl. Apply principles of urbanism at appropriate scale along a rural-to-urban transect as outlined in the Complete Communities Chapter.
  - Sustainably manage land outside growth corridors and Complete Communities to increase biodiversity, improve the health of natural habitats, preserve privately-owned forests, protect watersheds and aquifers, and improve water quality while providing expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation.
  
- Preserve and enhance the Agricultural Reserve.
  - Maximize the benefits of the Ag Reserve through policies designed to ensure the continued viability of farming as an economically productive and sustainable activity, discourage sprawl, encourage recreation and tourism, conserve land and natural resources, and promotion of practices that advance environmental quality.
  - Improve access to the Agricultural Reserve for the public to experience and directly benefit from this valuable resource for locally grown food, outdoor recreation and tourism.

**PART 3: The rationale for how these policies and actions will further the key objectives of Thrive Montgomery 2050.**

A compact form of development coupled with land preservation is critical to achieving Thrive Montgomery’s key objectives.

- First, compact growth will allow continued growth in the county, which supports our economic competitiveness.
  - 85 percent of the county’s land is already developed or otherwise constrained, but we are continuing to grow. If the county does not commit to and encourage concentrated, compact growth, the county will be unable to accommodate growth without detriment to rural resources and ultimately will be unable to accommodate growth at all. Compact growth creates a critical mass to establish centers of activity, rather than dispersing activity and focus, which is essential to economic competitiveness.
  - While a significant portion of the county’s land is developed or otherwise constrained and consuming this remaining land with sprawling development is discouraged, compact, infill development and redevelopment is encouraged and desired to accommodate the population growth anticipated in the next 30 years and beyond.
  - The concentration of growth along corridors through compact, infill development and redevelopment will direct population and employment to locations served by infrastructure, services and amenities – including transit.

- Compact development is desired by businesses and employers, and employers are seeking walkable, transit-oriented communities.
- Second, compact, corridor-focused development increases access to housing, jobs and services and establishes a built environment that fosters social interaction.
  - Focusing growth on corridors in the East County provides an opportunity to reallocate public and private investment and reduce racial and economic disparities among the county's neighborhoods.
  - The investment along I-270 spurred economic development and employment as well as upper-income residential neighborhoods and established the foundation for the racial and economic disparities that exist between the eastern and western portions of the county today.
    - In the *Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream* author Christopher B. Leinberger asserts that the development of metropolitan areas focused on an extension of a major city's traditional downtown within the wealthiest portions of the metropolitan area, known as the "favored quarter." The favored quarter received significant infrastructure investment and therefore attracted employment. The wealth, coupled with public and private investment, resulted in inequitable investment, concentration of poverty and lack of access to jobs.
  - Concentrated growth reduces the cost of infrastructure and increases the cost effectiveness of public and private investment. Public investment spurs private investment and provision of desired public benefits.
- Third, the efficient use of land, which includes compact, concentrated growth and land preservation, plays a significant role in the Climate Action Plan's goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions.
  - Compact growth reduces vehicle travel, both by allowing trips to be completed by walking, biking and transit, but also because development is closer to the center of activity which enables shorter trips, even if completed by car.
  - Compact growth results in more environmentally sustainable, dense, walkable neighborhoods with increased ability for walking, biking and transit use and reduced reliance on automobiles, vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.
  - Compact growth also improves environmental performance of both buildings and sites, as it allows the conversion of previously developed areas characterized by significant impervious surface, and often developed prior to modern stormwater control.
    - A compact form of development can reduce stormwater runoff and heat island effects using green roofs, other green cover, and building design and orientation to reduce urban temperatures.
- Fourth, compact, corridor focused development allows the continued preservation of the Agricultural Reserve and land for environmental stewardship and recreation
  - As the population expands and the region continues to develop, pressures on our natural systems increase.
  - The preservation of the Agricultural Reserve reinforces the concentration of growth and maximizes land available for farming and recreation as well as natural resource conservation including forests, wetlands, meadows and streams.

- While the primary use of the Agricultural Reserve should remain farming, this valuable resource provides opportunities for recreation, tourism and conservation of natural resources, and these uses must also be acknowledged and supported.
- Ensures economic viability of farming and local food production.
- Improves the attractiveness and livability of the county because it provides opportunities for locally grown food, outdoor recreation, education and tourism.
- Supports biodiversity and natural habitats and protects watersheds, aquifers and water quality.

**PART 4: How will we know we are making progress?**

- Percentage of infill development / redevelopment along priority corridors.
- Percentage of new population and employment within a mile (or half-mile) of priority corridors.
- Number of employers and employees retained and attracted.
- Percentage increase in Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (walking, biking, transit use) and corresponding reduction in VMT.
- Public investment in infrastructure, services and amenities along corridors, overall and by area of county.
- Acres of farmland, natural habitats, forests and environmentally sensitive areas protected
- Economic productivity of farming
- Amount of space for outdoor recreation and variety of activities supported
- Percentage increase in environmental performance of buildings and sites, overall and by area of county.
- Number of visitors from outside the Ag Reserve
- Improvement in measures of stream water quality.
- Reduction in impervious cover