Contact Numbers

Prince George's County Planning Department, M-NCPPC (www.pgplanning.org)

Planning Board Office: 301-952-3561

Public Affairs: 301-952-4314

Planning Director's Office: 301-952-3594

Community Planning North: 301-952-4225

Community Planning South: 301-952-3972

Development Review: 301-952-3530

Planning Information Services: 301-952-3208 and 301-952-3195

Information Management: 301-952-3918

Countywide Planning: 301-952-3680

Environmental Planning: 301-952-3650

Historic Preservation: 301-952-3520

Research/Special Projects: 301-952-3065

Transportation Planning: 301-952-3084

TTY: 301-952-4366

Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation, M-NCPPC: (www.pgparks.com)

Customer Service Help Desk: 301-699-2255

Public Affairs and Marketing: 301-699-2408

Park Permits Office: 301-699-2400

Sports, Health, and Wellness: 301-918-8100

Prince George's County Government (www.princegeorgescountymd.gov)

General Information: 301-350-9700

Office of the County Executive: 301-952-4131

Office of the Clerk to the Council: 301-952-3600

Department of Environmental Resources: 301-883-5810

Department of Public Works & Transportation: 301-883-5600

Office of Finance, Tax Bill Inquiries: 301-952-5025

Office of Community Relations: 301-952-4729

Board of Elections: 301-430-8020

Department of Social Services: 301-909-7025

Department of Family Services: 301-265-8401

Office of the Sheriff: 301-780-8600

Chief of Police: 301-772-4420

Fire Department: 301-583-2200

Clerk of the Circuit Court: 301-952-3318

Board of Education: 301-952-6115

Public Schools: 301-952-6000

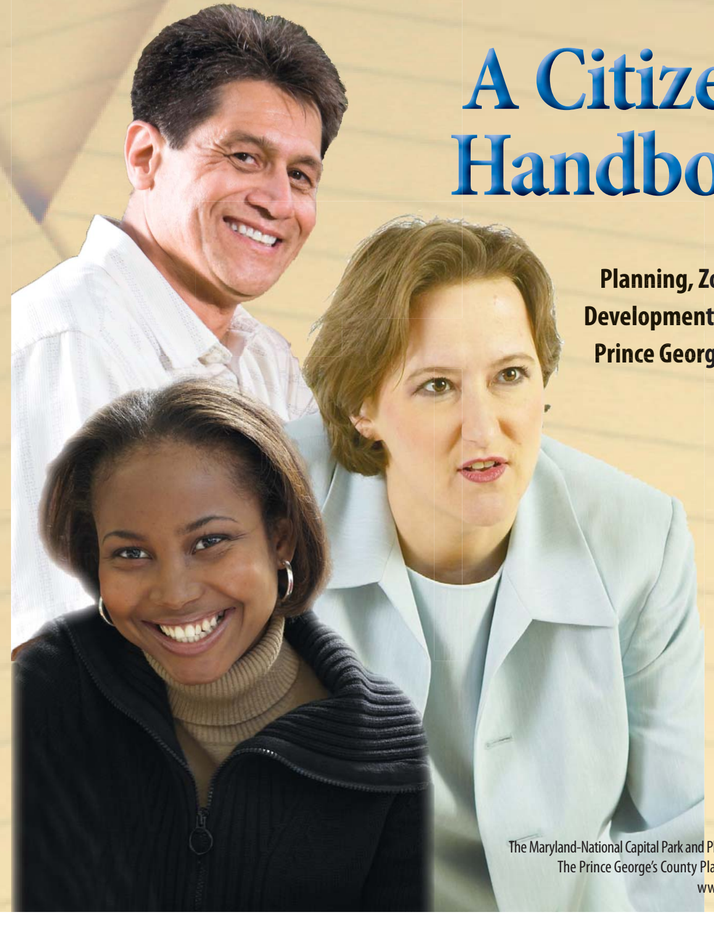
Land Records: 301-952-3352

Tax Assessor's Office: 301-952-2542

Board of Appeals: 301-952-3220

Zoning Hearing Examiner: 301-952-3644

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
The Prince George's County Planning Department
www.pgplanning.org



A Citizen's Handbook

Planning, Zoning, and Development Review in Prince George's County

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
The Prince George's County Planning Department
www.pgplanning.org

Abstract

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Abstract: This publication is designed as a reference handbook for citizens to describe planning, zoning, and development review activities in Prince George's County, Maryland. Much of the information is drawn directly from the county's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations.

The handbook consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the governmental entities involved with planning and zoning decisions and how to become involved in planning and development review. Chapter 2, Planning, describes the planning process. Chapter 3, Zoning, provides an overview of zoning procedures. Chapter 4, Development Review, describes subdivision, site plan, and permit review procedures, as well as other development regulations. Chapter 5 lists web resources, and Chapter 6 contains frequently asked questions.

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60	Northwestern Area	76A	The Heights
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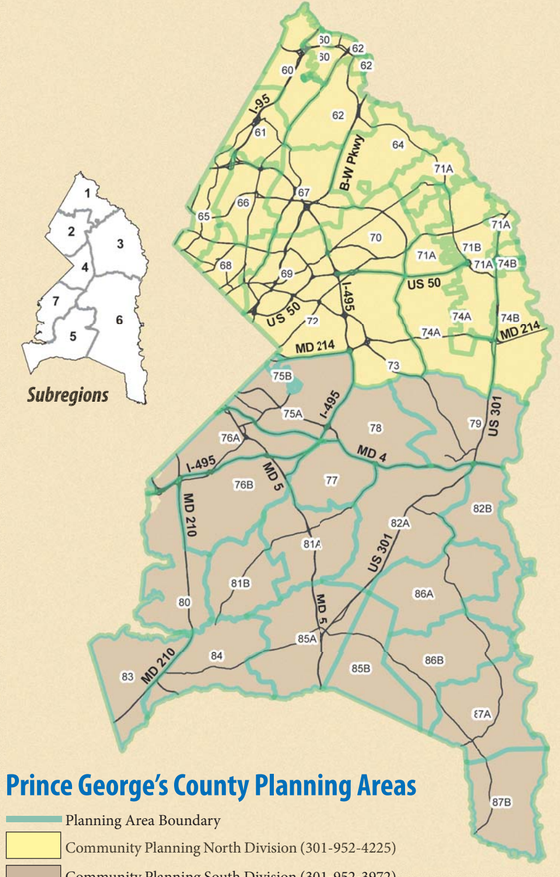
74B	Collington	86B	Baden
75A	Suitland/District Heights	87A	Westwood
75B	Town of Capitol Heights	87B	Aquasco



Prince George's County Planning Areas

Planning Area Boundary

Community Planning North Division (301-952-4225)

Community Planning South Division (301-952-3972)

A Citizen's Handbook

Planning, Zoning, and Development Review in Prince George's County

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
The Prince George's County Planning Department
www.pgplanning.org

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Samuel J. Parker, Jr., AICP, Chairman
Royce Hanson, Vice Chairman

Officers
Patricia Colihan Barney, Acting Executive Director
Al Warfield, Acting Secretary-Treasurer
Adrian R. Gardner, General Counsel

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bicounty agency, created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District;
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire county public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Department of Planning (M-NCPPC):

- Our mission is to help preserve, protect, and manage the county's resources by providing the highest quality planning services and growth management guidance and by facilitating effective intergovernmental and citizen involvement through education and technical assistance.
- Our vision is to be a model planning department of responsive and respected staff who provide superior planning and technical services and work cooperatively with decision-makers, citizens and other agencies to continuously improve development quality and the environment and act as a catalyst for positive change.

Prince George's County Planning Board
Samuel J. Parker, Jr., AICP, Chairman
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John H. Squire

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Foreword

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

On behalf of the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, I am pleased to present our updated Citizen's Handbook. This user-friendly guide provides helpful information on the rules, regulations, and policies governing land use planning and development in Prince George's County. It also highlights the ways that citizens can become better involved in the process, which we hope will lead to more active citizen participation.

Whether you are a resident, property owner, or member of the business community, this guide is designed to provide easy-to-understand information and resources to become a partner in planning for our county's communities to stimulate economic vitality and improve the quality of life.

As you read this handbook, you will find a discussion of the ways citizens can become involved in every level of the planning process, from master and sector plans to zoning and development review for particular projects. The handbook introduces fundamental tools used to guide regulations and procedures in planning and development for the county. It also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various branches of county government as well as the processes for public comment at each stage of development.

As citizen representatives, the members of the Prince George's County Planning Board take very seriously their responsibility to carefully assess development proposals and balance the rights of all parties, including individual property owners and the community at large. Our job is a lot easier when we have the input and involvement of those who live and work in the community we serve. We all have a vested interest in making sure that Prince George's County continues to flourish and in cultivating livable communities today and for the future.

In 2009, county citizens embarked on *Envision Prince George's*—a call to action to develop a long-term vision for the county with a vibrant economy and high quality of life for all. Sound land use planning will play a key role in implementing this vision and in preserving the environment, culture, history, and economic growth of our great county.

Thank you for taking the first step toward getting involved, envisioning the future of Prince George's County, and making an impact in your community by consulting and using *A Citizen's Handbook: Planning, Zoning, and Development Review in Prince George's County.*

Sincerely,

Samuel J. Parker, Jr., AICP
Chairman, Prince George's County Planning Board

1 Introduction

Since its inception, Prince George's County has undergone many changes, including new land developments, community growth, environmental modifications, and the introduction and use of new technologies. Many of these changes were brought about by citizens and governmental bodies collaborating to build a better community. Citizen participation plays a vital role in the planning process. This Citizen's Handbook describes the planning, zoning, and development review processes in a simple manner so that citizens can better understand the processes and become actively involved in decisions affecting the future of the communities. This handbook is a citizen's first step to understanding how she or he can help shape the future of Prince George's County.

Chapter 1 explains how various government bodies are involved in the development and implementation of plans. In Prince George's County the governing bodies are the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Prince George's County Council, the Office of the County Executive, the Zoning Hearing Examiner, the People's Zoning Counsel, and the Board of Appeals. All of these bodies are headquartered in the Prince George's County Administration Building located at 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772.

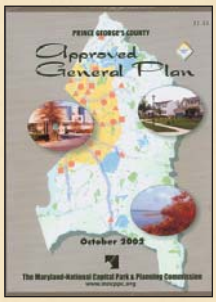
The remaining five chapters describe the planning process, zoning procedures, subdivision and site plan review procedures and regulations, web resources, and frequently asked questions.

Prince George's County Planning Board

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is a ten-member body—five members from Prince George's County and five from Montgomery County. M-NCPPC, its staff, and facilities are often referred to as "Park and Planning." The five members from Prince George's County constitute the Prince George's County Planning Board, whose members are appointed by the County Executive for staggered four-year terms. No more than three members can be of the same political party. The executive's appointments are subject to confirmation by the County Council.

The Prince George's County Planning Board directs the work of the Planning Department and the Department of Parks and Recreation. The Planning Board and its Planning Department staff make up the planning agency. In addition, the Planning Board and its parks and recreation staff acquire, develop, operate, and maintain the public park system as well as the county's public recreation programs and facilities.

The Prince George's County Planning Department works in close partnership with the citizens of the county to receive and give assistance and advice on the use of land, enhancement of the physical environment, and provision of public facilities and services. The Planning Department performs technical analyses and offers recommendations through the specified work program and budget adopted by the Prince George's County Council. The Planning Department works under the direction of the Prince George's County Planning Board.



Maryland state law authorizes M-NCPPC to prepare and administer a "general plan" to guide the physical growth and development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District. The Prince George's County Planning Board, relying on the technical expertise of the Planning Department staff, performs this function within the county's portion of the regional district. All of Prince George's County is within the regional district except for the City of Laurel, which has its own planning and zoning authority.

The Planning Board's specific responsibilities include preparing comprehensive and functional plans and rezoning maps for County Council approval; advising the County Council on proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations; reviewing and approving site plans; and offering recommendations to the County Council on zoning map amendment applications. The Planning Board is the final authority in administering the Subdivision Regulations. In addition, the Planning Board supervises the preparation of various special studies such as population forecasts and urban design projects.

Planning Board agendas, as well as other information about M-NCPPC, can be found at www.pgplanning.org. The Planning Board administrative office can be contacted at 301-952-3560.

The Planning Board's funding is determined by the County Council, which annually approves the board's operating budget and work program. The County Executive submits comments on these items to the County Council prior to approval.

The Planning Board meets every Thursday (except in August) in the County Council Hearing Room of the County Administration Building in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. These meetings are open to all interested persons. On request, anyone can be placed on a mailing list to receive Planning Board agendas.

Historic Preservation Commission

The Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is a nine-member body responsible for protecting properties listed on the Inventory of Historic Resources in the Prince George's County Historic Sites and Districts Plan. The HPC was created in 1982 following the Planning Board's adoption and the County Council's approval of the Historic Sites and Districts Plan in 1981. The HPC's powers were authorized through Subtitle 29 of the County Code, Preservation of Historic Resources. The HPC is empowered to evaluate historic resources for designation as historic sites or historic districts; to review and approve plans for exterior alteration, demolition, or new construction; and to prevent demolition by neglect of historic resources.

The HPC meets the third Tuesday of each month, except in August, at 6:00 p.m. in the 4th Floor Board Room, County Administration Building in Upper Marlboro, MD. Agendas are available one week in advance of the meeting at http://www.mncppc.org/county/hpc.htm or by calling 301-952-3520.

The Historic Preservation Commission also advises the Planning Board and County Council on planning, zoning, and development issues that impact historic resources or potential archeological sites. An additional HPC responsibility is to approve property tax credits for rehabilitation of designated historic sites and properties within historic districts. The HPC also makes recommendations to the Planning Board on applications for the Planning Board's Historic Property Grant Program.

Members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Members represent the following organizations and special interest areas: the Prince George's County Board of Realtors; the Minority Building Industry Association; the Prince George's County Historical and Cultural Trust; municipal governance; and demonstrated special interest, knowledge, or training in history, architecture, architectural history, or historic preservation.

County Council (District Council)

The County (District) Council can be contacted at 301-952-3600.

The County Council has legislative authority defined as the power to determine the rules and regulations governing Prince George's County. The County Council is made up of nine members elected by citizens of the nine councilmanic districts. Members serve four-year terms and are limited to serving two consecutive four-year terms. Maryland state law enables the County Council to exercise planning and zoning authority. When acting on planning and zoning matters, the County Council serves as the "District Council" and convenes as such in separate sessions. The District Council is also responsible for approving the Prince George's County General Plan, comprehensive plans for subareas of the county, and functional master plans. In the following chapters is a description of the District Council's role in zoning matters and its role in development review.

County Executive

The Executive Branch of Prince George's County enforces the laws and administers the daily business of government. The County Charter vests that power in the County Executive, who is elected to a four-year term concurrent with the term of the County Council. Most government departments, such as police, fire, libraries, etc., are part of the Executive Branch. These departments are consulted regularly during the planning and zoning process in order to coordinate development with the ability to provide public facilities and services. In addition, the County Executive (in conjunction with the County Council) reviews the public facilities element of all plans prepared by the Planning Board prior to release for public hearing. This is to ensure consistency with existing or proposed state or county public facilities.

The Office of the County Executive can be contacted at 301-952-4131.

Building, use and occupancy, grading, and sign permits are the final step in the development process. These are issued by the Department of Environmental Resources, which is one of the Executive Branch departments. The Department of Environmental Resources also has jurisdiction over the county's *2008 Water and Sewer Plan.*

Office of the Zoning Hearing Examiner

The Office of the Zoning Hearing Examiner conducts public hearings on a variety of zoning matters. These include zoning map amendments; applications for the grant, revocation, or amendment of special exceptions; applications for the validation of permits issued in error; appeals from decisions of the Historic Preservation Commission; and other matters as stipulated in the Zoning Ordinance.

The Office of the Zoning Hearing Examiner can be contacted at 301-952-3644.

The Zoning Hearing Examiners are attorneys with experience in administrative litigation and knowledge of administrative and zoning law practice and procedure. They are empowered to swear witnesses and to issue subpoenas for witnesses and documents. A written decision is filed with the District Council concerning each matter upon which a public hearing has been conducted.

Office of the People's Zoning Counsel

The Office of the People's Zoning Counsel can be contacted at 301-952-3186.

The county provides a People's Zoning Counsel, who is a member of the Maryland Bar and experienced in zoning law and procedure. The People's Zoning Counsel is appointed by the County Executive (subject to confirmation by the County Council) to protect the public interest and to ensure the compilation of a complete record in zoning cases. All zoning hearings by the District Council and the Zoning Hearing Examiner are attended by the People's Zoning Counsel, who may summon, examine, and cross-examine witnesses, introduce documentary evidence into the record, file exceptions, and make argument as the law and evidence warrant. These duties are also performed during the review of comprehensive design plans by the Planning Board.

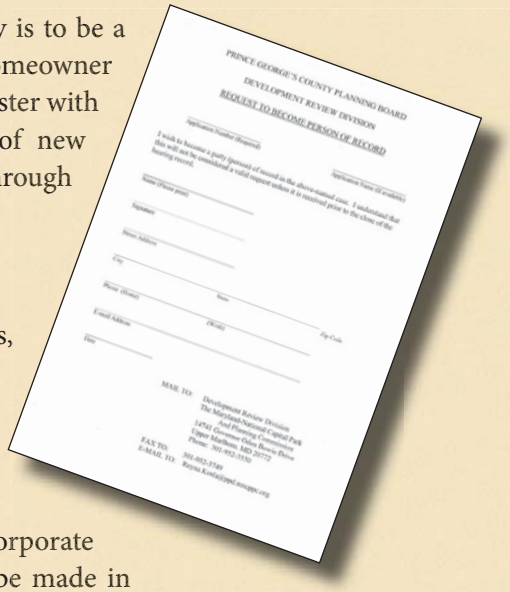
Board of Appeals

The Board of Appeals can be contacted at 301-952-3220.

The Board of Appeals is a three-member body appointed by the County Council. In addition to hearing administrative appeals, the board is authorized to grant variances from the strict application of certain Zoning Ordinance requirements. (The board is expressly prohibited from granting variances from some ordinance requirements.) The board may grant a variance upon a finding that there is some extraordinary circumstance or condition on the property that would warrant a waiver of a Zoning Ordinance requirement, or that strict application of the requirement would result in peculiar and unusual practical difficulties, or exceptional or undue hardship upon the owner. In addition, the variance must not impair the integrity of the county's plans. The board holds a hearing and decides whether to grant the variance. It is also empowered to hear appeals from persons who have had permits denied or who wish to have extensions of time to correct zoning violations.

Getting Involved

One way a citizen can become involved in development in the county is to be a person or party of record to a particular application. In addition, homeowner associations, civic associations, and environmental groups can also register with M-NCPPC. By registering your association, you will be notified of new development early in the process and be informed as the project moves through the various stages.



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW DIVISION

REQUEST TO BECOME PERSON OF RECORD

Application Number (Required)

Application Name (if available)

I wish to become a party (person) of record in the above-named case. I understand that this will not be considered a valid request unless it is received prior to the close of the hearing record.

Name (Please print)

Signature

Street Address

City

Phone (Home)

Name

(Work)

Zip Code

E-mail Address

Date

MAIL TO: Development Review Division
The Maryland-National Capital Park
And Planning Commission
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Md. 20772
Phone: 301-952-3530

FAX TO: 301-952-3749

E-MAIL TO: Payne.Kenley@mncppc.org

Person or Party of Record

A person or party of record is entitled to receive technical staff reports, hearing notices, and written decisions on a variety of development review applications and planning projects. More importantly, person-of-record status ensures the ability to initiate and participate in appeals proceedings.

Any person, municipality, civic association, business organization, or corporate entity can request to become a person of record. The request must be made in writing or in public hearing testimony prior to the close of the hearing record.

The Zoning Hearing Examiner establishes the hearing record for zoning and special exception applications. The Planning Board establishes the hearing record for most other development review applications. The District Council establishes the hearing record for planning projects such as master plans, sector plans, and sectional map amendments.

Automatic persons of record for individual applications include property owners, applicants, correspondents, and affected Development Review District Commissions (Enterprise Road, Piscataway, Westphalia Sector, and Accokeek).

To sign up electronically, go to www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Person_of_Record.htm.

Registering Your Association to Receive Notices of New Development Applications

For information on registering your association, visit www.pgplanning.org/Assets/Planning/Development+Review/Register+Association.pdf or call 301-952-5401.

Applicants for new development are required to send informational mailings for cases to be heard by the Planning Board. These notices are sent to adjoining property owners, municipalities within a mile of the proposal, previous persons of record, and associations registered with the Planning Department. The applicant must send these mailings at least 30 days prior to filing an application.

The notices must contain a variety of information about the application, including the telephone number to call for additional information; a statement to recipients that the applicant will meet to explain the application; an applicant telephone number for persons wishing to meet; and an explanation of how to become a person of record in the case. A municipality, civic association, or other person entitled to an informational mailing can request a copy of the site plan from the applicant.

2 Planning

The purposes of planning by Prince George's County originate in the State of Maryland legislation quoted below:

> **"The making of the general plan, including its parts, amendments, extensions, or additions, the protection of and the carrying out of the plan, and the exercise of all planning, platting, zoning, subdivision control, and all other powers granted in this title…shall be with the purposes of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, comprehensive, adjusted, and systematic development of the regional district, the coordination and adjustment of this development with the public and private development of other parts of the State of Maryland and of the District of Columbia, and the protection and promotion of the health, safety, morals, comfort and welfare of the inhabitants of the regional district."**

To these ends, plans are developed and implemented to guide new development while protecting adjacent properties and significant environmental, historical, or cultural features. Traffic analyses are conducted to determine whether existing roads are adequate to accommodate projected traffic generated by new development. Strategies are developed to help strengthen existing neighborhoods and protect them from deterioration. In Prince George's County, plans vary in scale and level of detail from the 2002 *Prince George's County Approved General Plan* for the entire county down to small sector plans. These types of plans are described below.

Unless otherwise noted, questions about any of the subjects discussed in this chapter should be directed to the M-NCPPC Community Planning Division at 301-952-3972 or 301-952-4225.

Plans are available for purchase at the M-NCPPC Planning Information Services, located in Room L2 of the County Administration Building (301-952-3208 or 301-952-3195). Plans are also available on-line at www.pgplanning/org/projects. Many of the branch libraries have reference copies; however, availability varies from branch to branch. A list of the plans and their supporting documents, as well as other types of Planning Department studies and informational materials, are available free of charge at Planning Information Services. This list can also be accessed on-line at: www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications.htm.

The General Plan

The 2002 *Prince George's County Approved General Plan* is the primary official public policy document guiding the county's physical development.

The 2002 General Plan emphasizes mixed-use economic development around 26 designated centers in the county, most of which are located at existing or planned transit stations. The plan recognizes three development tiers—Developed, Developing, and Rural—and establishes different goals and policies for different parts of the county. It also provides guidance for transportation, environmental protection, economic development, revitalization, urban design, and historic preservation.

The 2002 General Plan does not offer detailed recommendations concerning specific parcels of land or public facilities. This occurs at the next level of planning: area master plans, sector plans, and functional plans. These plans are amendments to the General Plan.

Master Plans

For planning purposes, the county is divided into seven subregions, which are further divided into 36 planning areas. Each planning area is a fairly cohesive district that is typically bounded by a major highway, political boundary, and/or a natural border such as a stream valley. Master plans may be prepared for an individual planning area, group of planning areas, or entire subregions.

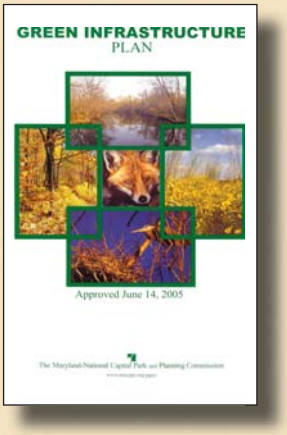
Master plans provide specific recommendations on the environment, historic preservation, living areas and housing, commercial areas, employment areas, urban design, circulation and transportation (including highways and mass transit), and public facilities. Where appropriate, some plans may cover additional issues such as economic development and neighborhood revitalization.

Master plans also address the adequacy of public facilities. Land use proposals are analyzed for their impact on schools, police, fire, rescue, libraries, health, parks, and trails. Recommendations are then made to correct any projected deficiencies of these public services and assets. In addition, an analysis of the balance between the proposed land uses and the proposed transportation system is undertaken.

The master plans are the final authority on highway and mass transit right-of-way land reservations. The planned land uses become the basis for decisions on where new schools, fire stations, and other public facilities will be needed in the future. Master plans are also used to guide decisions on zoning change, special exceptions, and subdivision applications. Probably the most important function of the area master plans is that they are used as the basis for comprehensive rezoning (sectional map amendments), discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Zoning, page 27.

Sector Plans

In some instances it is desirable to prepare a sector plan for an area that is smaller than a planning area or that consists only of portions of several adjacent planning areas. This typically occurs because of some special situation that requires a plan for a limited geographic area. For example, the construction of the Metrorail system has changed the expected land uses in the vicinity of the Metrorail stations. The Planning Board has responded by preparing a number of transit district development plans. These plans establish land use and zoning for properties within approximately a one-half mile radius of the stations. A sector plan often involves a specific land use evaluation for a portion of major corridors or economically viable focus areas such as town centers or highway intersections.



Functional Plans

There are also a number of plans that comprehensively cover specific topics for the entire county. These are referred to as functional plans. There are functional plans for transportation, historic resources, green infrastructure planning and preservation, parks and recreation, trails, schools, public safety, and water resources.

Plan Preparation

The Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance stipulates a process that must be followed in preparing the General Plan, master plans, sector plans, and functional plans. The steps in this process are summarized below. (Some of these steps are not required for two types of sector plans; specifically minor public facility amendments and transit district development plans.)

Preplanning

During this phase the project scope is developed, preliminary data is collected, a professional service contract prepared, if necessary, and the public participation program is developed.

Planning

Step 1: Goals, Concepts, and Guidelines and Public Participation Program

Subsequent to the plan initiation, the Planning Board submits goals, concepts, and guidelines as well as a public participation program to the District Council for authorization to proceed with the plan. The public participation program must encourage a balance of participation by the area's citizens and businesses affected by the plan to include property owners, area civic associations, local business groups, government agencies, and any municipality situated within the area covered by the plan. The program also includes techniques to keep the larger affected community informed.

Step 2: Initiation

The District Council authorizes the Planning Board to prepare a plan when it approves the Planning Department's annual work program. The Planning Board then directs staff to proceed.

Step 3: Preparation of a Preliminary (Draft) Plan

Preparation of the preliminary plan is the responsibility of Planning Department staff. Plans are developed through a team effort, combining the talents of professionals with expertise in such areas as land use, transportation, environmental planning, and public facilities planning. The goals, concepts, and guidelines approved by the District Council provide the general framework that guides staff during the process. Staff consider all feedback arising from the public participation program. Federal, state, county, and municipal agencies whose activities may impact the planning area are also involved.

Step 4: Joint Public Hearing

The District Council and the Planning Board must conduct at least one joint public hearing on the preliminary plan so that members of the public can offer their recommendations before the plan is finalized. The draft plans are made available to the public, free of charge, at distribution points in the community. Notice of the hearing is mailed to all property owners in the planning area and advertised in the county's newspapers of record. Municipalities must receive the notices.

All written and oral testimony and any supporting evidence presented at the hearing become part of the official record. The record is typically, but not necessarily, kept open for a minimum period of 15 calendar days after the hearing, which can be extended by the council. Additional materials may be submitted during this period.

Before adoption, the Planning Board must submit the draft public facility proposals to the District Council and County Executive to determine if there are any inconsistencies between the plan proposals and existing and proposed county and state public facilities. Any inconsistencies must be eliminated or accommodated prior to adoption of the plan.

Step 5: Adoption by the Planning Board

After the close of the public hearing record, Planning Department staff prepare and transmit an analysis of the testimony to the Planning Board. The Planning Board then considers the testimony, makes any changes, adopts the plan, and endorses the sectional map amendment. The adopted plan and endorsed SMA are then transmitted to the District Council for approval.

Step 6: Additional Public Hearing

The District Council can hold an additional joint public hearing to consider amendments to the adopted plan not based on the record of the original public hearing. The notification for the second public hearing is 15 days and advertising requirements are the same as for the original public hearing.

Step 7: Final Action by the District Council

Following receipt of the adopted plan or after the additional public hearing, if held, the District Council either: (1) approves the adopted plan as submitted by the Planning Board, (2) approves the plan with amendments or revisions, or (3) disapproves the plan and returns it to the Planning Board for further consideration. Adopted and approved plans are published and filed with the Clerk of the Circuit Court. The adopted and approved plan then represents county policy until amended.

Post Approval (Sectional Map Amendments Only)

Step 8: Possible Revisory Petitions

If a citizen does not agree with the District Council's decision on a sectional map amendment, the individual may submit a revisory petition within 30 days. The criteria for evaluation of revisory petitions are contained in Section 27-228. The petition will be transmitted to the District Council's legal counsel for review. The maximum time for the District Council to act on the petition is five months. A public hearing will be scheduled on the issue.

Step 9: Notice Requirements

Upon District Council approval of the plan and concurrent SMA, notice must be sent to three newspapers of record and owners of property rezoned in the planning area.

Step 10: Zoning Map Revisions and Publication of the Document

All text and maps in the plan will be revised to reflect the changes made by the Planning Board and the District Council, and all zoning changes will be submitted to the tax assessor. The final document will be published and made available to the public within one month of approval.

Maryland Smart Growth

Detailed summaries and copies of the legislation can be found on the Maryland Department of Planning web site at: http://www.mdp.state.md.us/OurWork/1997PFAAct.shtml.

Since 1992, the State of Maryland has adopted smart growth legislation to address the issue of growth management, including agricultural preservation and the targeting of public resources to areas with existing infrastructure. Several major pieces of legislation have been adopted since 1992. These include the 1992 Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act; the 2006 House Bill 1141 and House Bill 2; the 1997 Priority Funding Areas Act; and the 2009 Smart, Green, and Growing Planning Legislation.

1992 State Planning Initiatives

The 1992 Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act established seven visions and required all new comprehensive land use plans to include the new visions in their plans. An eighth vision was adopted in 2000. These visions were updated and expanded in number in 2009 as described on page 17.

1997 State Planning Initiatives

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Neighborhood Conservation and Smart Growth initiatives in 1997. The 1997 Priority Funding Areas Act directs state funding for growth-related infrastructure to priority funding areas (PFAs) with the goal of providing a geographic focus for state investment. In addition to the priority funding legislation, this act included the Rural Legacy Program, brownfield legislation, the Job Creation Tax Credit Act, and the Live Near Your Work Program.

2006 State Planning Initiatives

In 2006 the General Assembly adopted House Bill 1141 and House Bill 2, which required new planning elements for comprehensive plans, annexations, and land preservation programs. The major new elements are described below:

Water Resources Element: Jurisdictions are now required to prepare a water resource element that evaluates the capacity of water supply; wastewater treatment and disposal; nonpoint source; and stormwater management systems to meet existing and future growth.

Municipal Growth Element: Municipalities are required to identify future growth areas and to coordinate with the county.

Priority Preservation Areas: To help preserve agricultural land and to be eligible for the Maryland Agricultural Preservation Program and funding, jurisdictions are required to include a priority preservation element in their comprehensive land use plans.

Workforce Housing Element: A new comprehensive plan element is required to assess workforce housing needs and to establish goals, objectives, and policies that preserve or develop workforce housing. This element is necessary for a local government to qualify for participation in a workforce housing grant program.

2009 State Planning Initiatives:

In 2009, the General Assembly adopted three major pieces of legislation that address land use and smart growth initiatives.

Planning Visions: The existing eight state planning visions were updated and expanded to twelve new visions for the State of Maryland. The new visions will be incorporated into local comprehensive plans as they are updated.

1. *Quality of Life and Sustainability:* 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.
2. *Public Participation:* Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.
3. *Growth Areas:* Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers.
4. *Community Design:* Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near 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.
5. *Infrastructure:* Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sound manner.

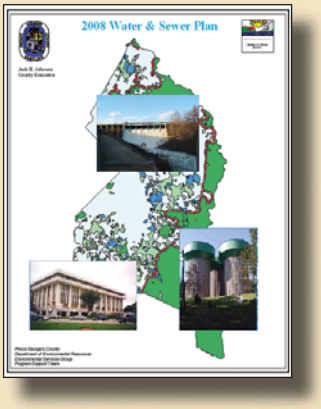
6. *Transportation:* A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers.
7. *Housing:* A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.
8. *Economic Development:* Economic development that promotes employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities is encouraged.
9. *Environmental Protection:* Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake Bay and its coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources.
10. *Resource Conservation:* Waterways, open space, natural systems, scenic areas, forests, and agricultural areas are conserved.
11. *Stewardship:* Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.
12. *Implementation:* 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.

Smart Growth Measures and Indicators: Jurisdictions will now be required to submit an annual report that documents the amount of new growth in priority funding areas and agricultural preservation acreage preserved.

Smart and Sustainable Growth Act: This new law requires jurisdictions to implement and follow their comprehensive plans by clarifying the link between land use plans and local ordinances such as the Zoning Ordinance.

Overview of the Water and Sewer Planning Process

Maryland state law requires every county to develop a water and sewer plan to ensure that there is adequate public water and sewer service for planned development. The Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources is the author of the county's *2008 Water and Sewer Plan*. In Prince George's County the responsibility for creating a water and sewer plan is shared between the executive and legislative branches of government. The County Executive has the responsibility for ensuring that the goals, objectives, and legal authority are complied with and for creating and submitting the plan and amendments to the County Council. The County Council exercises its legislative powers by preparing objectives and policies that set forth the framework for the plan and ultimately by approving the plan and plan amendments after a public hearing.



State law further requires that the plan be referred to the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), the Prince George's County Health Department, and the Department of Public Works and Transportation among others, for review and comments. It is M-NCPPC's role to provide information on population and employment distribution, growth projections, planning factors, zoning, and other development review standards—and to submit a recommendation for each category change to determine if the change meets county planning objectives and if the amendments to the Water and Sewer Plan are consistent with the General Plan and all master plans prior to adoption by the County Council.

The Water and Sewer Plan was adopted on November 18, 2008. Its text includes critical chapters dealing with such items as policies and procedures for water and sewer planning, descriptions of water and sewer categories, existing water systems, and sewage treatment facilities. It also sets forth the procedures and requirements for

The Department of Environmental Resources maintains the water and sewer category maps, which can either be purchased from DER or viewed at www.PGAtlas.com.

amending the plan and water and sewer service categories. The maps depict the official water and sewer category designations for all properties in the county. These categories determine if and when service is available to the property. There are four water and sewer categories within the plan:

Category 3: Community System—This category comprises all developed land on public water and sewer and undeveloped land with a valid preliminary plan approved for public water and sewer.

Category 4: Community System Adequate for Development Planning—This category includes virtually all properties eligible for public water and sewer for which a subdivision is required.

Category 5: Future Community Service—This category consists of properties inside the sewer envelope that are eligible for public water and sewer but should not be developed until water and sewer lines are available to serve the proposed development.

Category 6: Individual Systems—This category consists of all areas outside the sewer envelope (outside the limit of planned water and sewer service) and for select larger tracts of parkland and open space inside the sewer envelope.

DER can be contacted at 301-883-5812.

The Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources (DER) is responsible for the update of the water and sewer plan.

Plan Implementation

Plan recommendations do not result in change unless they are implemented. Zoning and development review procedures are two of the most important tools used to implement plan recommendations. Chapters 3, Zoning, and Chapter 4, Development Review, are devoted to these implementation tools.

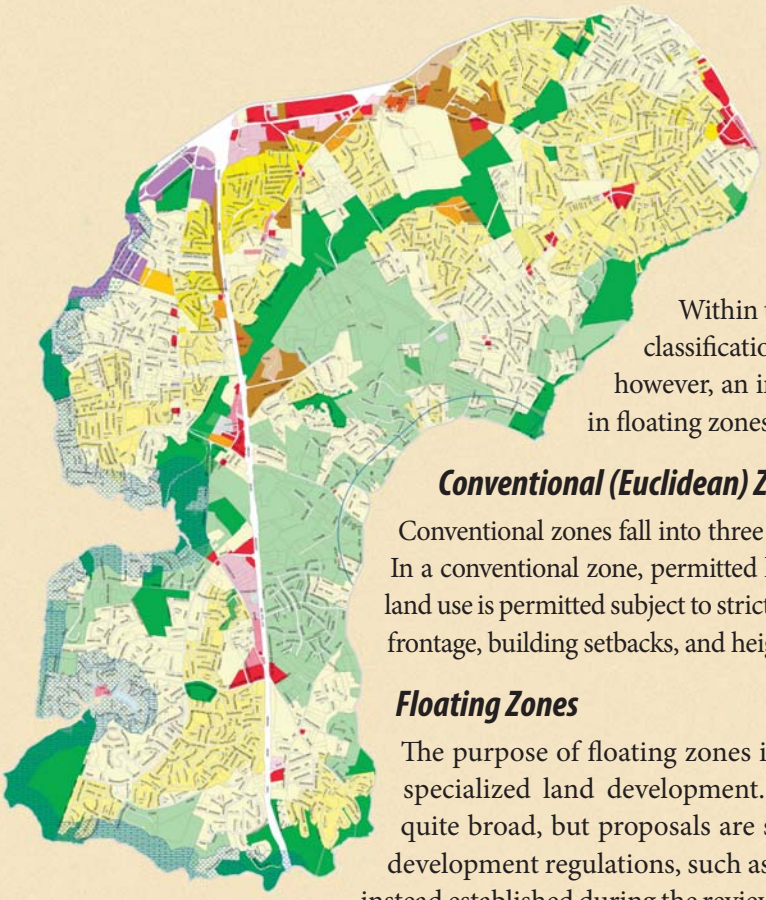
3
Zoning

Zoning is the legal power of government to regulate the use of private property for the purpose of protecting public health, safety, and welfare. It is one of the police powers of the State of Maryland. In Prince George's County, this power is delegated to and exercised by the County Council, sitting as the District Council. The link between planning and zoning is critical. Legally defensible zoning controls are based upon sound planning principles as set forth in adopted and approved plans. Zoning based upon arbitrary opinion or the pressures of vested interests is neither legal nor appropriate.

The Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance (Subtitle 27) is part of the County Code. It describes the various zones, lists the uses permitted in each zone, specifies densities, and sets forth the procedures to change the zones. The ordinance establishes standards for the location of structures, building heights, setbacks, and other area requirements. Zoning categories allow residential, commercial, or industrial uses at varying densities or intensities. Some of the more recently adopted zones permit a mix of compatible land uses, subject to certain standards.

This chapter will first explain the various types of zones and then describe the rezoning processes: zoning map amendments and sectional map amendments. For a complete zone listing, visit www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Zoning_Information/Guide_to_Zoning_Categories.htm. The listing should be consulted for more details about the various types of zones that are discussed below.

Except where otherwise noted, inquiries about any of the items discussed in this chapter should be directed to the M-NCPPC Development Review Division at 301-952-3530.



Types of Zones

Two types of zones are in use in Prince George's County—conventional zones and floating zones. Within these two zones are a variety of individual zoning classifications. Most properties are in conventional zones; however, an increasing number of properties are being placed in floating zones. Each of these types of zones is described below.

Conventional (Euclidean) Zones

Conventional zones fall into three categories: residential, commercial, and industrial. In a conventional zone, permitted land uses and densities are specifically listed. Each land use is permitted subject to strict requirements regarding lot size, lot coverage, street frontage, building setbacks, and height limits.

Floating Zones

The purpose of floating zones is to encourage creativity of design and permit specialized land development. Accordingly, the number of uses allowed is quite broad, but proposals are subject to an in-depth review process. Certain development regulations, such as lot size and coverage, are not specified and are instead established during the review process. Floating zones include comprehensive design, mixed-use/planned community, and overlay zones.

Individual Zoning Classifications

Comprehensive Design Zones

Comprehensive design zones do not have prescribed height, setback, and lot coverage requirements. These zones also allow an increase in residential density or commercial intensity in exchange for the provision of public benefit features, such as a community park or neighborhood bike path that improves the quality of the project.

Development proposals in a comprehensive design zone are approved via a three-phase review process:

Phase I (Basic Plan): Sets forth proposed land uses and general land use relationships, including the approximate number of dwelling units and building intensity. A determination must be made that public facilities are adequate to serve the proposed development.

Phase II (Comprehensive Design Plan): Refines the approved basic plan. Establishes the general location, distribution, and size of proposed structures and includes various standards and guidelines. Proposed public benefit features are described, and a determination must be made that the development will not be an unreasonable burden on public facilities.

Phase III (Specific Design Plan): Includes detailed landscaping plans, tree conservation plans, recreational facilities plans, and exterior building elevations. A determination must also be made that the development will be adequately served by public facilities within a reasonable period of time.

Mixed-Use/Planned Community Zones

There are several mixed-use/planned community zones, each containing its own unique regulations designed to provide for a variety of compatible uses and to create a particular character of development.

The M-X-T Zone is transportation oriented to create a 24-hour environment in the immediate vicinity of major transportation facilities.

The M-X-C Zone encourages a balanced mix of residential, commercial, recreational, and public uses. It also requires the finding that transportation facilities will be adequate to carry anticipated traffic.

The M-U-TC Zone promotes redevelopment, preservation, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings in older commercial areas.

Mixed-Use Infill (M-U-I) promotes smart growth principles by encouraging the efficient use of land, public facilities, and services in areas that are substantially developed. These regulations are intended to create community environments enhanced by a mix of residential, commercial, recreational, open space, employment, and institutional uses in accordance with approved plans. The infill zone may only be approved for property in a transit district overlay zone or a development district overlay zone.

The R-P-C Zone accommodates large-scale community development such as found in Greenbelt and Marlton.

The R-M-H Zone provides for mobile home communities.

Overlay Zones

Overlay zones are superimposed over existing zoning classifications in a designated area and are used to modify certain requirements of the underlying zones.

Transit District Overlay Zone: The transit district overlay zone (TDOZ) was created to encourage intensive land development in the vicinity of Metro stations in order to maximize transit ridership and reduce automobile use. The TDOZ is superimposed over underlying conventional zones in a designated area around a Metro station. The TDOZ may modify certain requirements of the underlying zones, such as permitted uses, parking regulations, sign requirements, and the location and height of buildings. The requirements may be stricter than in the underlying zone, and development in a TDOZ requires approval of a detailed site plan by the Planning Board.

Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Overlay Zone: The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area overlay zone is a mapped overlay area of three zones superimposed over conventional zones. The purpose of these zones is to ensure that future development is environmentally sensitive and in accordance with state and county Chesapeake Bay Critical Area policies and regulations to preserve and enhance the quality of water entering the Chesapeake Bay, to protect wildlife resources, and to enhance recreational opportunities. Prior to approval of permits for development in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, a conservation plan and agreement must be approved, unless the proposed work is minor in nature and qualifies for a staff level review. Development is subject to both the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and the regulations set forth in the "Prince George's County Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program Conservation Manual." Chapter 4, Development Review, page 39, contains additional information.

Development District Overlay (D-D-O): Intended to ensure that development in a designated district meets the goals established in a master plan, master plan amendment, or sector plan, development districts may be designated for town centers, Metro areas, commercial corridors, employment centers, revitalization areas, historic areas, and other special areas as identified in approved plans.

Revitalization Overlay Districts (R-O-D): Intended to ensure the orderly development or redevelopment of land within designated districts, revitalization districts provide a mechanism for the county to delegate full authority to local municipalities to approve departures from parking, landscaping, and sign standards. In addition, limited authority is also delegated for the approval of variances from building setbacks, lot coverage, yards, and other dimensional requirements of existing zoning.

Architectural Overlay Districts (A-C-O): Intended to ensure that development and redevelopment efforts preserve and protect the architectural or design character of neighborhoods in accordance with an approved architectural conservation plan, conservation districts may be designated in areas where the majority of properties have been developed and exhibit distinct, unifying elements, characteristics, design, or other physical features.

Rezoning

Changes to existing zones occur either through zoning map amendments (ZMA) or sectional map amendments (SMA). Zoning map amendments may be requested by a property owner for a single parcel of land. Sectional map amendments are initiated by the District Council and can cover an entire community. The District Council has full authority and responsibility for all rezoning decisions.

Zoning Map Amendments

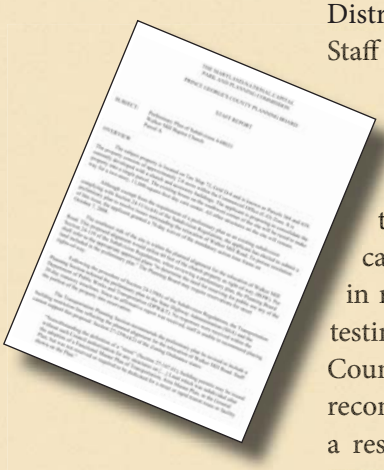
Before approving a change to a conventional zone, the District Council must determine that there has either been a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood or that a mistake was made in the original zoning or the most recent sectional map amendment. The change or mistake finding does not apply to floating zones. Approval of a floating zone depends upon demonstrating conformance to required findings for approval of that zone as stipulated in the Zoning Ordinance.

Applications for zoning map amendments are processed as follows:

Filing: Applications are filed with the Development Review Division of the M-NCPPC Planning Department. The offices are located on the fourth floor of the County Administration Building in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Any person may review and copy an application and supporting documents. Applicants are required

to send informational mailings to registered civic associations, municipalities within a mile of the property, adjoining property owners, and previous persons of record at least 30 days before filing applications. Any individual can become a "person of record" by requesting such in writing or by testifying before the Zoning Hearing Examiner. Persons of record are notified of all upcoming hearings and receive copies of the technical staff report and the results of all decisions made with regard to the application.

Technical Staff Report: The Planning Department analyzes the request and prepares a technical staff report recommending approval, approval with conditions, or denial. The report is submitted to the Planning Board, Zoning Hearing Examiner, District Council, all persons of record, and any interested person requesting a copy. Staff reports are available two weeks prior to the Planning Board hearing.



Planning Board Review and Action: Zoning applications are considered by the Planning Board during its regularly scheduled Thursday meetings. The Planning Board may vote to hold a public hearing, but a hearing before the Planning Board is not mandatory. If the Planning Board votes to hear the case, the applicant and interested persons may testify before the Planning Board in response to the technical staff report. Testimony may be oral or written. All testimony becomes part of the official record that will be forwarded to the District Council. The board may concur with the technical staff report or make a different recommendation. The Planning Board recommendation is provided in the form of a resolution and is transmitted to the Zoning Hearing Examiner and District Council, along with copies of all other official record materials.

Notice of Public Hearing: The Zoning Hearing Examiner establishes the hearing schedule for zoning cases (zoning map amendments and special exceptions). The examiner sends hearing notices to persons of record and the applicant posts the property with sign(s) indicating the time and place of the hearing.

Public Hearing: The Zoning Hearing Examiner conducts the official county zoning hearings. All materials and testimony presented before the examiner constitute the official record in the case. This includes the Planning Board resolution, the technical staff report, and all other materials forwarded by the Planning Board. After the hearing, all persons of record receive a written decision, which contains findings of facts, conclusions of law, and the recommended action. The Zoning Hearing Examiner's decision is forwarded to the District Council.

Oral Argument: Within 30 days of the filing of the Zoning Hearing Examiner's decision with the District Council, any person of record or the People's Zoning Counsel may file exceptions to any portion of the decision and request oral argument before the District Council. Oral argument allows persons of record to speak to the District Council about the case. Only issues contained in the official record may be discussed during oral argument.

District Council Action: The council may (1) grant the proposed rezoning; (2) grant a less-intensive zone for all or part of the property; (3) deny the application; (4) return the application to the Zoning Hearing Examiner or Planning Board for further evidence; (5) dismiss the application; or (6) allow it to be withdrawn. Notice of action taken by the District Council is transmitted to persons of record. District Council actions may be appealed to the Circuit Court.

Conditional Zoning: In approving any individual zoning map amendment, the District Council may adopt reasonable requirements and safeguards known as conditions that are designed to protect the neighboring area from adverse effects that might result from the rezoning or to enhance the quality of the new development. The applicant must accept or reject the zoning classification as conditionally approved. If the conditions are rejected, the zoning map amendment is voided and the property reverts to the prior zone classification.

Comprehensive Rezoning (Sectional Map Amendments)

The preceding section describes the rezoning process, which is followed when an individual property owner makes application to change the zoning on his/her property. However, zoning may also be changed at the initiation of the county government through a process called comprehensive rezoning. Unlike zoning map amendments, comprehensive rezonings are not undertaken for individual properties. Instead, all of the zoning within an entire geographic area, such as a subregion, sector, or planning area is examined. The result of the comprehensive rezoning process is a new zoning map for the subject area that is called a sectional map amendment (SMA).

The purposes of comprehensive rezoning are: (1) to implement the master plan or sector plan recommendations; (2) to provide for a systematic review of zoning and land use and how it conforms to the principles of orderly comprehensive land use planning, staged development, and planned public facilities; (3) to limit piecemeal rezoning; and (4) to limit the zoning map amendment cases heard by the Zoning Hearing Examiner.

Typically, the comprehensive rezoning process results in a change of zoning for only some of the properties in the subject area. The remaining properties are left in their previous zones either because they are already developed or because a zoning change is not deemed appropriate. The Zoning Ordinance contains some limitations on the ability to rezone and on the zones that may be used.

For further information about comprehensive rezoning, please call the Community Planning North Division at 301-952-4225 or the Community Planning South Division at 301-952-3972.

The Zoning Ordinance stipulates three procedures that may be followed in preparing sectional map amendments. The procedure most commonly used today is the preparation of a sectional map amendment concurrent with preparation of an area master plan. In this instance, a zoning proposal is prepared as one of the area master plan elements and is subject to public hearing along with the area master plan. At the conclusion of the process, the District Council simultaneously approves both the area master plan and the sectional map amendment.

Special Exceptions

Applications for special exception uses require a site plan showing all proposed improvements. These applications are reviewed to ensure that the proposed use is compatible with surrounding uses and the general neighborhood. Many special exceptions must also conform to their own unique set of requirements. Once approved, the property must be developed in accordance with the approved site plan. Processing procedures are similar to those described for individual zoning map amendments. However, in the case of a special exception, the Zoning Hearing Examiner is empowered to make the final decision unless a person of record appeals the case to the District Council.

Variances

A variance is a mechanism to obtain relief from the strict application of requirements such as building height, building setback, and yard requirements. Variances are appropriate in situations where strict conformance would result in unusual practical difficulties or undue hardship for the owner of the property. For example, a lot might be so narrow as to make it impossible to observe the side yard setback requirements when building a home. The Board of Zoning Appeals is authorized to grant variances. The Planning Board and District Council are also authorized to grant variances associated with development applications on which they take the final action. State law also permits the District Council to delegate authority to grant variances to municipal governments. As of this writing, this authority has been granted to the Cities of Bowie, College Park, Greenbelt, and New Carrollton.

Departures

A departure grants relief from the strict application of requirements for: (1) the design of parking and loading facilities; (2) the number of parking and loading spaces; (3) sign regulations; and (4) landscaping, buffering, and screening requirements of the Landscape Manual. The Planning Board is authorized to grant departures. State law also permits the District Council to delegate authority to grant departures to municipal governments. As of this writing, this authority has been granted to the Cities of Bowie, College Park, Greenbelt, and New Carrollton.

Nonconforming Uses and Structures

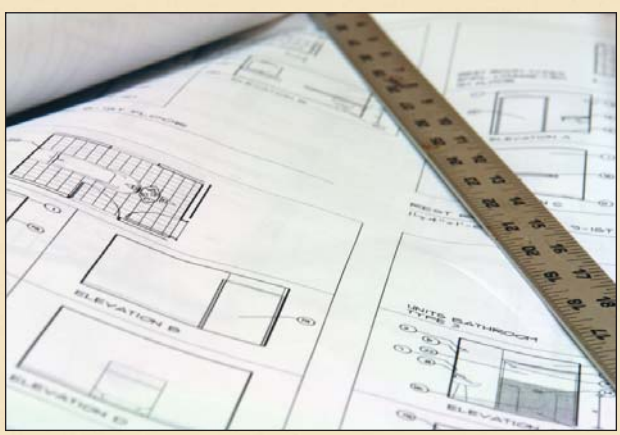
Some land uses and/or structures in existence do not meet current requirements. These uses or structures are termed nonconforming. This has occurred in a variety of ways. In some cases, a land use was established prior to the initial zoning of the property. In other cases, a use was once permitted in a zone but has subsequently been disallowed or allowed only by a special exception. Also, there are some structures that were originally built according to all of the parking, setback, sign, etc., requirements but no longer meet these requirements because of a subsequent change in the regulations. The nonconforming uses and structures are considered to be grandfathered and allowed to remain as long as the use has never ceased for a period longer than 180 days.

Questions about nonconforming uses should be directed to the Permit Review Section at 301-952-3530.

Text Amendments

The Zoning Ordinance is subject to review and amendment solely by the District Council, which may amend the text to create new zones or repeal zones. This process is called a text amendment. Similarly, it may add permitted uses to a zone, eliminate permitted uses from a zone, or require the grant of a special exception. Indeed, any of the regulations may be changed through the text amendment process. A text amendment may be requested by the County Executive, the Planning Board, or any interested individual or organization. In some instances, the council may initiate an amendment itself. Amending the Zoning Ordinance is a legislative process requiring a public hearing and approval by a majority of the council.

The Subdivision Regulations (Subtitle 24 of the Prince George's County Code) are subject to review and amendment by both the District Council and the County Executive. Similar to changes to the Zoning Ordinance, amending the Subdivision Regulations is a legislative process requiring a public hearing and approval by a majority of the District Council and the signature of the County Executive.



4 Development Review

The final steps in the land development process consist of the review and approval of subdivision plans, site plans, and permits.

Subdivision

The Subdivision Regulations control the subdivision of land for purposes of sale or development. Subdivisions are controlled through a process known as platting. A plat is a map of a parcel of land that shows features such as lot lines, streets, stormwater management facilities, easements, topography, and building restriction lines.

Preliminary Plans of Subdivision

The first step in the subdivision process consists of reviewing a preliminary plan. One of the major purposes of reviewing preliminary plans is to ensure that adequate public facilities are available, or will be available in the foreseeable future, to serve the proposed development. Determination of adequacy is made for fire and rescue facilities, police facilities, public roads, public water, and sewer facilities. The Planning Board determines adequacy based on an analysis of information generated by staff, submitted by the applicant, or submitted by the agencies responsible for building required facilities or supplying the necessary services.

Preliminary plans are also reviewed for environmental issues, such as woodland conservation, sensitive environmental features, and stormwater management; proper legal description of lots; and the general design of the subdivision including access, circulation and lotting pattern. Certain residential subdivisions are required to provide land for public parks and recreational facilities or money to supplement existing facilities. The majority of preliminary plans are heard at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Board. These are known as major subdivisions. However, certain residential subdivisions containing four or fewer residential lots may be approved by the Planning Director. These are known as minor subdivisions.

Conservation Subdivisions

The purpose of a conservation subdivision is to protect the character of land through the permanent preservation of farmland, woodland, sensitive natural features, scenic and historic landscapes, vistas, and unique features of the site in keeping with the General Plan and the *Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan*. The purpose of a public benefit conservation subdivision is to prioritize site characteristics that conserve important features such as open space networks and contiguous woodland habitats adjacent to other existing open space tracts. Intermodal trails that provide a link to adjacent properties as an enhancement of recreational opportunities are encouraged.

A conservation subdivision is required in the Rural Tier (R-R, R-E, R-A and O-S Zones) when a subdivision has five or more lots. A conservation subdivision is optional in the Developing and Developed Tiers. Public benefit conservation subdivisions are only permitted in the R-R Zone and are intended for the Developing Tier where more flexibility is necessary on smaller lots.

Final Plats of Subdivision

Final plats include all pertinent engineering data necessary to locate every street, lot, block, and boundary line on the ground. Final plats are reviewed by staff to ensure conformance with the approved preliminary plan. They are approved by the Planning Board at regularly scheduled meetings, but advertised public hearings and preapplication notices are not required.

Record Plats of Subdivision

Once the final plat is approved by the Planning Board, it is forwarded to the Land Records Department of Prince George's County. A plat book and page number, which are always preceded by the initials of the then-current Clerk of the Circuit Court, are assigned to the final plat. From that time on, it is referred to as a record plat of subdivision. The recordation of a final plat establishes the subdivision of the land and permits the conveyance of individual properties created by that plat.

Procedures for Subdivision Review

The process through which subdivisions are approved consists of the following steps:

1. **Pre-Preliminary Submission:** This step is optional, but is encouraged for all subdivision applications. The applicant meets with staff prior to formal submission of the preliminary plan in order to discuss concerns unique to the site.

2. **Application:** A general scheme of the proposed development is submitted to the Planning Department. The applicant must show the location of the property and access to it; existing topography, utilities and rights-of-way; proposed layout of roads, parkland or utility sites; designated historic sites; open spaces; floodplain areas; and provisions for stormwater management. In many cases, depending upon the magnitude of the proposed impact, a traffic study is required to address the adequacy of the surrounding transportation network.

3. **Technical Review:** Planning Department staff and relevant public agencies review the proposal with the applicant during regularly scheduled Subdivision Review Committee meetings. Staff then prepare a report recommending approval, approval with conditions, or denial. Staff's recommendation is based upon the project's conformity with the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, required findings for adequate public facilities, and the approved area master plan. The report is submitted to the Planning Board and mailed to all parties of record and any interested person requesting a copy.

4. **Planning Board Action:** Public hearings on preliminary plans are conducted by the Planning Board after the property is posted with a sign advertising the hearing. At these hearings, any interested person may comment. The Board will approve or disapprove the proposal as submitted, or approve it subject to specified conditions. At this stage in the subdivision process, the Planning Board may also require the applicant to set aside land for future public use such as roads, schools, and parks within the subdivision. Under state law, the Board must act within 70 days of plan acceptance. This time period may be extended another 70 days (with the agreement of the applicant) in order to address unresolved issues. The Planning Board's action on the preliminary plan may be appealed to the Circuit Court.

Depending upon the size of the development, an approved preliminary plan is valid for either two or six years from the date the resolution is adopted. Under certain provisions, extensions of the initial validity period may be granted. If a final plat has not been accepted within the validity period of the preliminary plan, the applicant must resubmit a new preliminary plan and repeat the approval procedure.

After preliminary plan approval, the applicant may request engineering studies leading toward a commitment for water and sewer service from the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), which determines what water and sewer extensions are necessary and under what conditions any extension will be constructed. An applicant may obtain a commitment from WSSC for service with an approved preliminary plan, but construction cannot begin until the plat is recorded in the county's land records. If septic tanks and/or wells are to be used, permission must be obtained from the Prince George's County Health Officer based upon the results of ground percolation tests.

Variations

In some instances, extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties may result from strict compliance with the Subdivision Regulations. In such cases, the Planning Board may modify requirements provided that certain findings are made, as stipulated in the Subdivision Regulations. Such waivers are known as variations and should not be confused with zoning variances.

Questions concerning subdivisions should be directed to the M-NCPPC Development Review Division at 301-952-3530.

Vacation of Plats

Recorded plats of subdivision may be vacated (abandoned) upon petition by the owner of the property. All owners of abutting properties must be notified in writing of the proposed vacation petition. Notice of a vacation hearing is posted on the property and the Planning Board's action is sent to the county's land records and the state's Department of Assessments and Taxation.

Site Plan Review

Some development applications are subject to a special review process called site plan review. In most cases, site plan review is triggered by a Zoning Ordinance requirement attached to a particular zone or use, such as townhouses, multifamily housing, day care centers, and employment parks in the I-3 Zone. Site plan review may also be required as a condition of the preliminary plan, special exception, or zoning map amendment approval. This process involves an in-depth review of the site plan and is based primarily on design issues, such as buffering, landscaping, grading, and architecture. The plan must conform to the design guidelines stipulated in the Zoning Ordinance. These guidelines are performance standards for the design of parking, loading, and circulation; lighting; views; green area; site and streetscape amenities; grading; service areas; public spaces; and architecture.

A public hearing before the Planning Board is scheduled for site plan review cases. Properties are posted with a sign advertising the hearing and all persons of record are notified by mail. Any interested person may speak on the proposal at the hearing. Staff prepare a report and make a recommendation to the Planning Board, which may approve, approve with conditions, or deny the plan.

The Planning Board's decision may be appealed to the District Council by any party of record or the District Council may, on its own motion, choose to review the decision. The District Council will then hold a public hearing and affirm, reverse, or modify the Planning Board's decision.

Several types of plans are subject to the site plan review process:

Conceptual Site Plans/Comprehensive Design Plans

Conceptual site plans and comprehensive design plans show basic relationships among the proposed uses and illustrate approximate locations of structures, parking areas, streets, site access, open space, and other major physical features. They may be somewhat detailed, or may be more schematic and depict proposed uses as areas connected with arrows or other graphic symbols. Conceptual site plans and comprehensive design plans must be approved before a preliminary plan of subdivision may be approved. They are valid indefinitely.

Detailed Site Plans/Specific Design Plans

Detailed site plans and specific design plans show the exact location and design of all buildings and structures, streets, parking lots, open spaces, landscaping, grading, and other physical features.

Questions concerning site plan review should be directed to the M-NCPPC Development Review Division at 301-952-3530.

These plans contain the same level of site information that is necessary to obtain a permit. They must conform to any preceding conceptual site plan or comprehensive design plan, and to an approved preliminary plan of subdivision. Most detailed site plans are valid for three years; a specific design plan is valid for six years. No building permits can be issued until a required detailed site plan or specific design plan has been approved.

In addition to the plans described above, the Zoning Ordinance provides for detailed site plans and specific design plans for infrastructure that shows grading, stormwater management, tree conservation areas, sediment and erosion control, and utilities such as sewer and water. Approval of a detailed site plan or specific design plan for infrastructure allows an applicant to go forward with grading the property and making infrastructure improvements before all the architectural details are complete.

Permit Review

Building, use and occupancy, grading, and sign permits are issued by the Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources (DER). DER refers such applications to other local agencies, including the Soil Conservation District, Department of Public Works and Transportation, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and M-NCPPC. Grading permits are issued by the Department of Public Works and Transportation.

The purpose of the referral to M-NCPPC is to ensure conformance with the Zoning Ordinance, Historic Preservation Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and the Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance. This referral of the permit to M-NCPPC involves the review of the proposed uses, parking and loading requirements, required setbacks, landscaping, conditions attached to zoning, conditions attached to subdivision approvals, and any other conditions imposed by any other public hearing process. DER and DPW&T must refer all permits to M-NCPPC or the permit will be deemed to have been issued in error. To check the status of a permit, call the M-NCPPC Permit Review Section at 301-952-3530 or www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Tools_On-line/Permits.htm.

Historic Area Work Permits

Exterior alterations, demolition, grading, sign or new construction projects affecting a historic site or property within a historic district require a historic area work permit (HAWP). This permit is not required for interior work or certain ordinary maintenance projects that will not alter the exterior features of the historic site or its setting. The Historic Preservation Commission and/or staff review the applications to determine if the proposed work is compatible with the historic character of the property.

HAWP applications can be obtained from http://www.mncppc.org/county/hpc.htm or by calling 301-952-3520.

Historic site owners and property owners within a historic district are encouraged to contact the staff to informally discuss the proposed project before filing an application.

Other Regulations

Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation

The Prince George's County Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance was adopted in 1990 to conserve woodlands and protect wildlife habitat. The Maryland Forest Conservation Act was passed by the General Assembly in 1991, which adopted woodland conservation as a statewide policy and established minimum local standards to apply during development. All development activities that require a grading permit in Prince George's County must demonstrate compliance with the Woodland Conservation Ordinance, either through submittal of a letter of exemption from woodland conservation or an approved tree conservation plan.

A project is exempt from the requirements of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance if the site is less than 40,000 square feet in area or contains less than 10,000 square feet of woodlands; or if the proposed activity will disturb less than 5,000 square feet of woodlands. Letters of exemption are issued for eligible sites by the Environmental Planning Section (EPS) of M-NCPPC after submittal of a signed application form, documentation necessary to identify and evaluate the development site and activity, and payment of a required application fee.

A letter of exemption cannot be issued for a site if these criteria are not met or if there is a previously approved tree conservation plan (TCP) for the site. A TCP is a plan approved by EPS that indicates how the woodland conservation requirements for a site will be met and how woodlands will be protected before, during, and after construction. Development activities on sites subject to the Woodland Conservation Ordinance must be in conformance with an approved TCPII, and fines or mitigation may be imposed by the county when unauthorized clearing occurs.

Whether a property has a TCP can be determined by consulting EPS or the environmental features layers in PGAtlas.com. Copies of approved TCPs can be obtained from EPS, where permanent files are maintained, with the submittal of a copy request form and payment of a copying charge. If a property is subject to a TCP, the seller is required to provide a copy of the TCP to the buyer at the time of the contract signing under the county's Consumer Protection Code.

The enforcement of the Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance is the responsibility of the county. For further information, consult "A Technical Manual for Woodland Conservation with Development in Prince George's County," available at Planning Information Services on the lower level of the County Administration Building; the Planning Department web site (www.pgplanning.org/About-Planning/Our_Divisions/Countywide_Planning/Environmental_Planning.htm; or call the environmental planner on duty at 301-952-3650.

Suspicious or unauthorized woodland clearing can be reported to the DPW&T customer service line at 301-499-8520.

Streams and Wetlands

The Prince George's County Subdivision Ordinance (Subtitle 24) requires that streams and wetlands be preserved during construction, with exceptions being made for necessary site features such as road crossings and utility installations. Impacts to streams and wetlands for a proposed subdivision are subject to approval by the Prince George's County Planning Board.

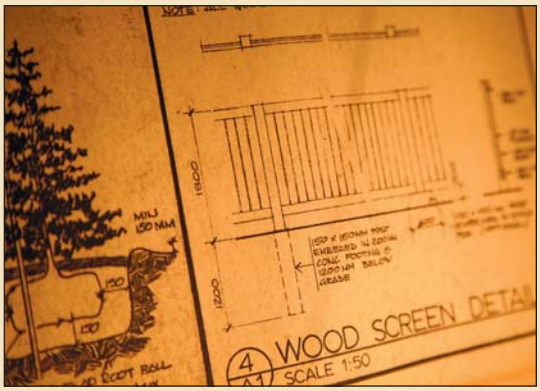
Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program

The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area (CBCA) encompasses the land that is within 1,000 feet of the mean high tide line of the Patuxent, Potomac, and Anacostia Rivers. The program requires the approval of a CBCA conservation plan conforming to special development standards, which focus on limiting total amounts of impervious surfaces, improving water quality, and preserving woodlands, prior to issuance of most permits. Permit applications that are minor in nature may qualify for a staff-level review process and a conservation plan is not required.

For more information, see the current Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program Conservation Manual. Conservation plans are reviewed by M-NCPPC staff and approved by the Planning Board.

Questions regarding the requirements for a conservation plan can be directed to the Environmental Planning Section at 301-952-3650. Questions regarding the overall program, the staff-level review process, and enforcement can be directed to DPW&T at 301-883-5710.

Landscape Manual and Alternative Compliance



The Landscape Manual establishes mandatory minimum standards for planting on residential lots and for commercial landscape strips, perimeter strips, and internal landscaping in parking lots. Buffering incompatible uses, screening the views of the rears of houses from the road, and screening loading spaces and other undesirable views is also required. The Landscape Manual also includes a list of recommended trees, as well as planting specifications and details.

Copies of the Landscape Manual can be purchased at the M-NCPPC Planning Information Services, Room L2, County Administration Building. Questions should be directed to the M-NCPPC Development Review Division at 301-952-3530.

In cases where circumstances prevent strict compliance, there is a procedure to allow other designs that equal or exceed the requirements. This procedure is called alternative compliance. Staff review these cases and make recommendations to the Planning Director in the case of permits, or the approving authority, such as the Planning Board, in other cases. An alternative compliance application must be accompanied by another application, such as a permit, detailed site plan, or special exception.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater management is administered by DPW&T, which can be contacted at 301-883-5710.

Development of land generally causes an increase in stormwater runoff that can damage public and private property through increased flooding, accelerated channel erosion, and degraded water quality. To prevent these problems, stormwater runoff resulting from development activities must be managed in accordance with the county's Stormwater Management Ordinance. All development, with some exceptions, requires a stormwater management plan. A concept plan is required prior to subdivision approval and a technical plan is required prior to issuance of a grading permit. Measures typically used to control runoff include special infiltration practices, stormwater retention structures (wet ponds), engineered detention structures (dry ponds), and environmental site design techniques.

Sediment Control

The Prince George's Soil Conservation District administers the Maryland Sediment Control Act, which was established to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation in developing areas. Any applicant planning to clear, grade, or otherwise disturb the land is required to develop erosion and sediment control plans for review and approval.

Prince George's Soil Conservation District: 301-574-5162.

The Department of Public Works and Transportation subsequently issues permits for above-ground grading and sediment control and is responsible for inspection and enforcement. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission is responsible for issuing and enforcing sediment control permits for underground utility construction.

Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission: 301-206-8072.

Archeological Review

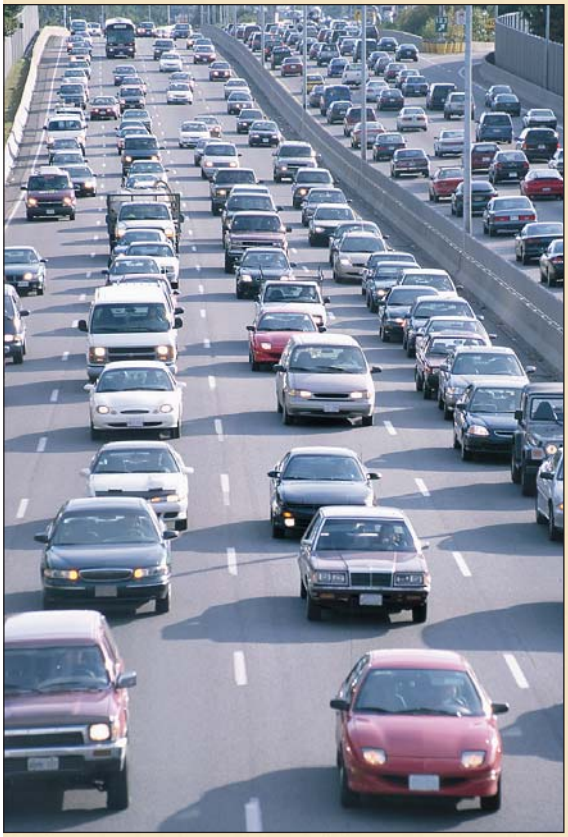
The document, "Guidelines for Archeological Review," was adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board in May 2005. The guidelines were developed to assist applicants in addressing the Planning Board's policy with respect to the documentation and preservation of archeological sites.

Mandatory Referral of Development Proposals on Federal and State Properties

Federal and state governments are not legally obligated to conform to the county's regulations with regard to properties they own. However, federal and state laws require referrals of facility development proposals to the Planning Board for review. The Planning Board's comments are then considered by the government agency as it finalizes plans for the project. Agencies attempt to conform to the county's plans and regulations insofar as possible.

Transportation Analyses

A preliminary plan of subdivision must be accompanied by a traffic study if the development generates 50 trips or more during any peak hour. Traffic studies are prepared by the applicant and reviewed by staff in accordance with the required adequacy finding. In cases where a development generates fewer than 50 trips, the transportation staff must still make the required findings and may request (but not require) a limited traffic study or traffic count to assist in making these findings. Developments generating five or fewer peak-hour trips may be deemed to have a minimal, or de minimus, impact, and if so deemed, are not required to provide traffic-related information.



The Planning Board publishes the "Guidelines for the Analysis of the Traffic Impact of Development Proposals." This document establishes criteria by which staff and applicants with land development proposals can assess traffic impact. Traffic is examined in detail during review of mixed-use and comprehensive design rezoning applications. Certain types of special exceptions require limited traffic analyses. As noted earlier, detailed site plans are intended to review design issues, and as such, generally do not involve the review of transportation adequacy issues.

5 Web Resources

PGAtlas

PGAtlas (www.pgatlas.com) is a web site containing numerous geographic layers of information as well as aerial imagery. Users are able to pan and zoom around the map; display and print attribute information; search and display data by map location; measure distances; search for development activity; query the database; and print maps. A comprehensive help button connects users with a tutorial, a data dictionary describing the maps available, a GIS glossary, and general help. Citizens can ask for assistance or offer suggestions by e-mailing ppd-gis@ppd.mncppc.org.

Prince George's County Planning Board Agendas

The Planning Board meets every Thursday (except in August) in the first floor hearing room of the County Administration Building. These meetings are open to all interested persons. To access the weekly agenda, go to www.pgplanning.org/Planning_Board/Agendas. You can also sign up to receive the agenda via e-mail (www.pgplanning.org/Planning_Board/Agenda_Subscribe.htm), to testify at a hearing (www.pgplanning.org/Planning_Board/Testify_at_Hearings.htm), and be a person of record (www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Person_of_Record.htm).

Guide to Zoning Categories

Properties are zoned for a variety of uses, including single-family residential, multifamily residential, retail commercial, office commercial, industrial, and mixed use. For a complete listing and definition of zoning districts within Prince George's County, go to www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Zoning_Information/Guide_to_Zoning_Categories.htm.

Legislative Information System

The Legislative Information System (LIS) provides convenient and searchable access to bills and resolutions considered by the Prince George's County Council and the enacted County Code at http://egov.co.pg.md.us/lis. For questions, contact the Office of the Clerk of the County Council at 301-952 3600.

Development Review Applications, Instructions, and Forms

A listing of all of the various application forms, checklists, and fee schedules can be viewed on-line at http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Development_Review_Form.htm.

On-line Permit Tracking

The on-line permit tracking web site shows the status of any permit as it is distributed and reviewed within the Planning Department. To access on-line permit tracking, visit www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Tools_On-line/Permits.htm.

Publications On-line

For a listing of available Planning Department publications, go to www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications.htm.

Development Activity Monitoring System (DAMS)

DAMS is the Planning Department's online Development Activity Monitoring System. This system allows you to check the status of development activity. It contains applications accepted by the Development Review Division from January 2000 to the present. DAMS can be viewed online at http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Tools_On-line/DAMSWEB.htm. For question regarding DAMS, contact Planning Information Services at 301-952-3208 or 301-952-3195.

6
Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How is the Prince George's County Planning Board selected?

A. The Planning Board's full-time chairman and four part-time members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. They serve overlapping four-year terms.

Q. When and where does the Planning Board meet?

A. The Planning Board meets in public sessions every Thursday (except in August) in the County Council Hearing Room of the County Administration Building, 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Q. Why is the County Council sometimes referred to as the District Council?

A. Under law, the nine-member Prince George's County Council is called the District Council when acting on planning and zoning matters and convenes as such in separate sessions.

Q. If I have a permit denied can I have it appealed?

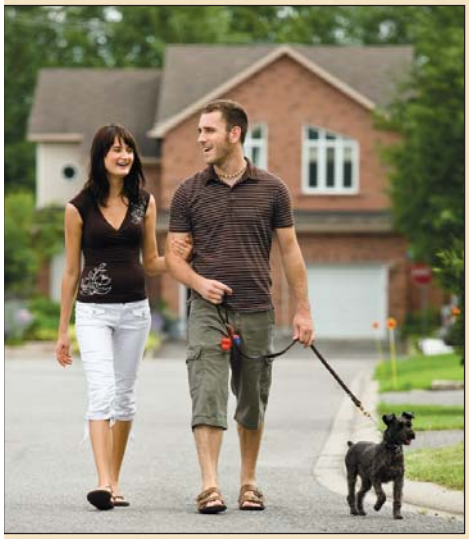
A. Yes, the Board of Zoning Appeals is empowered to hear appeals from persons who have had permits denied or wish to have extensions of time to correct zoning violations.

Q. Where can I get more information on planning and zoning in Prince George's County?

A. Visit our web site at www.pgplanning.org or the Planning Information Services counter located in Room L2 of the County Administration Building in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. You can also call 301-952-3208 or 301-952-3195.

Community Planning

Q. What are subregion and area plans?



A. The county is divided into seven subregions that are further divided into 37 planning areas, excluding the City of Laurel, which has its own planning authority. Each planning area is typically bounded by a major highway or natural border such as a stream valley. Subregion plans encompass several planning areas and establish recommendations that guide the more specific land-use recommendations offered in area plans. Area plans then typically examine individual parcels of land and other very specific recommendations regarding their use or physical design. The basic components of subregion and area plans include the following: goals and objectives, existing and recommended land uses, existing and proposed zoning, and recommendations for economic development, housing, community character, environmental infrastructure, transportation, and public facilities. Demographic information, including data on population, dwelling units, and employment, may also be included. The plans include maps and text. (See Chapter 2, Planning, page 11, for more information).

Q. What is a sectional map amendment (SMA)?

A. An SMA is a comprehensive rezoning amendment for properties within an entire geographic area, such as a subregion, planning area, or part of a planning area. The purpose of an SMA is to revise zoning patterns to conform to recommendations of an area plan or sector plan. SMAs are adopted for most plans with the exception of the general plan and functional master plans. (See Chapter 3, Zoning, page 27, for more information.)

Development Review

Q. As a county resident, how can I participate in the development review process to ensure the protection of my home and community?

A. You can contact the Development Review Division at 301-952-3530 to obtain information about development activities and become a person of record in pending development applications. You can also phone the resident planner assigned to your area of the county at the Community Planning Office, 301-952-4225 or 301-952-3972, to obtain information about on-going planning projects. (See Chapter 1, Introduction, page 7, for more information.)

Q. I noticed a sign posted at the end of my street advertising a hearing. Can you please tell me what this is all about?

A. Call the phone number printed on the sign to obtain more information about the pending application. All signs are posted 30 days prior to the hearing. Hearing signs can be for the Planning Board, Planning Director, the Zoning Hearing Examiner, or the Board of Appeals. Each sign has a case number and phone number. (See Chapters 3, Zoning, and Chapter 4, Development Review, for more information.)

Q. What is a site plan, and why do I need to submit one with my permit application?

A. The Zoning Ordinance requires that each application for a building or use and occupancy permit be accompanied by a site plan. The site plan is a graphic illustration of the site and all improvements, including buildings, parking facilities, landscaping, etc. The site plan is required to demonstrate compliance with zoning regulations. Without a complete site plan, action on permit applications cannot be taken because compliance with zoning regulations cannot be determined. (See Chapter 4, Development Review, page 37, for more information).

Q. May I have a business in my home, and do I need a permit for it?

A. It depends on the type of business. Some home occupations require use and occupancy permits and some do not. Call 301-952-3208 or 301-952-3195.

Q. How do I find out the zoning classification of my property?

A. Contact or visit Planning Information Services in Room L2 of the County Administration Building, 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, or call 301-952-3208 or 301-952-3195. In order to obtain the current zoning you will need to provide an accurate legal description of the property. A legal description consists of the lot and block number, subdivision name or the tax map number, grid, and parcel number. This information can be obtained from a deed or tax bill. Other information, such as the address, tax ID number, or a site plan, is helpful for locating the property. (See Chapter 5, Web Resources, PGAtlas, for more information.)

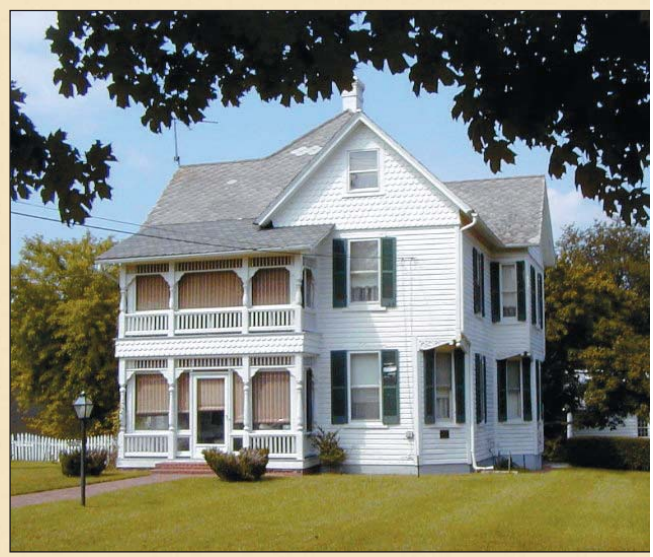
Q. I have a large parcel of land. Can it be subdivided into smaller lots?

A. Individual parcels of land may be subdivided if the new lots meet the requirements of the zone within which they are categorized. Each zone requires a certain minimum lot size, street frontage, and building line (yard/setback). If these requirements (together with those of the Subdivision Regulations) can be satisfied, new lots may be created through the subdivision process. (See Chapter 4, Development Review, page 31, for more information and Chapter 5, Web Resources, for the PGAtlas web site.)

Q. My lot has no frontage on a public street. Is there any way I can build on it?

A. Under certain circumstances, subdivision plans may be approved for development served by private streets, or the Department of Public Works and Transportation may authorize permit issuance for one-family detached dwellings on lots served solely by private rights-of-way or easements. In all other instances, the County Executive must recommend and the County Council (by resolution) must approve authorization for the issuance of a building permit on a lot served only by a private right-of-way or easement. The county's Permit Office of the Department of Environmental Resources (301-952-5776) should be contacted for further information on the procedure for seeking such authorization. (See Chapter 4, Development Review, page 31, for more information.)

Historic Preservation



Q. How are historic sites and historic districts created?

A. The Historic Preservation Commission can designate a property listed in the county Inventory of Historic Resources as a historic site if the property meets specific criteria of architectural or historical significance. The process for designation involves preparing a research report documenting the history and architectural characteristics of the building or district. (See Chapter 1, Introduction, page 3, for more information.)

Q. How do I find out whether my property is designated as historic?

A. To find out whether your property is a historic resource, a historic site, or is located within a historic district, you can: (1) consult the Historic Sites and Districts Plan; (2) contact staff at 301-952-3520; or (3) e-mail HistoricPreservation@ppd.mncppc.org. When calling, please provide the exact address of the property in question.

Q. When do I need a historic area work permit (HAWP) for work on my historic property?

A. An HAWP is required when making substantive changes to the exterior of a historic site or a contributing property in a county historic district. If you have questions, please contact staff at 301-952-3520. (See Chapter 4, Development Review, page 37, for more information.)

Q. Who can answer my questions regarding county history and property research?

A. The Historic Preservation staff maintain a small library of research materials and assist the public in methods of research and sources of documentary materials on county history. For information call the staff at 301-952-3520.

Q. How can I become more involved in county preservation activities?

A. Attend Historic Preservation Commission meetings; subscribe to the Friends of Preservation Newsletter produced by the Prince George's County Historical and Cultural Trust; or become a member of the Prince George's County Historical Society. Contact staff for additional information at 301-952-3520.

Transportation

Q. What is the Master Plan of Transportation?

A. The Master Plan of Transportation is the network of key transportation facilities needed to serve existing and future development. These facilities include existing and planned roadways that interconnect our neighborhoods and commercial and employment centers.

Q. What is the existing, or planned, right-of-way for a particular street?

A. Existing rights-of-way along state highways can be verified by the Maryland State Highway Administration. Along county roadways, existing rights-of-way can be verified by the Department of Public Works and Transportation. Within municipalities, the local municipal office should be contacted. Future rights-of-way can be obtained by logging on to www.pgatlas.com or contacting staff at 301-952-3084.

Q. How do I obtain traffic counts along roadways?

A. Counts of average daily traffic for state highways in a map format can be obtained from the State Highway Administration or from its web site (www.marylandroads.com). Counts along county roadways are available from the Department of Public Works and Transportation (http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov.

Q. How can I find out how many accidents occur along a particular roadway?

A. The county has database listings of all accidents reported to state and local authorities. Although this database is not readily accessible to the public, requests for information may be submitted to the Department of Public Works and Transportation, Office of Traffic, at 9400 Peppercorn Place, Largo, Maryland. Call 301-883-5600 for additional information.

Q. Whom can I call about a maintenance problem on a roadway?

A. Potholes and other maintenance problems along state highways should be reported to the State Highway Administration's District 3, Office of Maintenance. Call 301-513-7339 or e-mail SHA District3 @sha.state.md.us. Along county roadways, problems should be reported to the Department of Public Works and Transportation, Office of Maintenance, at 301-499-8520. Within municipalities, the local municipal office should be contacted.

Q. When are the planned transportation facilities in the master plan going to be built?

A. Master plans determine facility needs at the time that development potential is reached; therefore, there is no target year given for construction of transportation facilities. Some larger facilities may be needed to serve needs beyond those of adjacent property owners; these facilities will be constructed by state or local transportation agencies as priorities suggest they are needed and as money becomes available. (See Chapter 2, Planning, for more information.)

Public Facilities

Q. How is the availability of public water and sewer service determined?

A. Every piece of property is designated in a water and sewer category. This determines where private well and septic systems must be used and where public water and sewer service is or will be available. Depending on certain conditions, these categories may be changed by the County Council as properties begin to develop. To verify water and sewer categories in your area, call the Department of Environment Resources at 301-883-5810. (See Chapter 2, Planning, page 19.)

Q. How can I find out about public facilities serving my community?

A. Information regarding public facilities can be obtained from the county's web site at www.princegeorgescountymd.gov or by contacting the following departments:

Police Stations: Prince George's County Police Department, 301-333-4000

Fire Stations: Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department, 301-583-2200

Public Schools: Prince George's County Public Schools, 301-952-6000

Libraries: Prince George's County Memorial Library System, 301-699-3500

Research

Q. How can I obtain statistics on population, social, and economic characteristics?

A. Quick, up-to-date statistics can be obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau at http://www.census.gov/. Similar information is also available from the Maryland State Data Center: call 410-767-4450 or visit http://www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc/.

For help navigating these sites or finding additional information, contact staff at 301-952-3065.

Q. How can I find information about future growth?

A. The Cooperative Forecast depicts the Planning Department's assessment of the timing and location of population, household, dwelling unit, and employment growth. The forecast is available at http://www.pgplanning.org/About-Planning/Our_Divisions/Countywide_Planning/Research/Facts_and_Figures.htm. For further information, contact staff at 301-952-3065.

Environmental

Q. Do I need a permit to cut down trees in my yard?

A. Removal of one or two individual trees to protect life or property is allowed without a permit or plan. Photos should be taken of the trees before they are removed to document why they needed to be removed. Removal of trees in an area 5,000 square feet or greater may require a tree conservation plan. Contact the planner on duty in the Environmental Planning Section at 301-952-3650 for information related to the requirements. (See Chapter 4, Development Review, page 38.)

Q. My basement has flooded from all this rain. What can I do?

A. Contact the Department of Environmental Resources at 301-883-5830.

Q. What can I do about nuisance or injured wildlife in or around my home?

A. Contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services at 1-800-442-0708. If deer are causing crop damage, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources should be contacted at 301-855-1748.

Q. How do I register my boat or obtain information about hunting and fishing licenses?

A. You can contact the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at 301-855-1748.

Q. Is there a floodplain on my property?

A. The official source for floodplain information is the Department of Public Works and Transportation. Call 301-883-5777 for additional information.