

"Federation Corner" column  
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### **Montgomery County needs a coordinated long-range development plan**

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It is time that our county produce a coordinated and focused "general development plan" like those done by Howard and Prince George's counties. A *Montgomery 2040 Plan* would provide an integrated look at the entire county, evaluate and set achievable transportation priorities and better anticipate the allocation of limited county resources. If done well, a 25-year countywide vision would make a stronger, more unified Montgomery.

Both of the plans created by our neighboring counties, *Howard 2030* (<http://planhoward.org>) and *Prince George's 2035* (<http://www.planpgc2035.com/>), are based on their respective land-use plans, but they are also informed by economic development goals for those jurisdictions. These General Plans establish an integrated, reasoned and focused action plan for growth over the next 20 to 25 years.

In contrast, Montgomery County's General Plan, the big "wedges and corridors" document, is an overarching policy document which has chapters that are occasionally updated. The Housing Element was rewritten in 2011. The link to access this document online is:  
[www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/general\\_plans/general\\_plan\\_refinement1993/gen\\_plan\\_refinement1993.shtm](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/general_plans/general_plan_refinement1993/gen_plan_refinement1993.shtm)

Some may say that another plan is unnecessary since Montgomery produces too many detailed planning studies. Recently Council approved the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan along with area master plans for White Flint, Chevy Chase Lake, Takoma-Langley, Long Branch and Glenmont. Soon Council will consider the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan, the Ten Mile Creek Amendment to the Clarksburg Plan, and embark on the White Flint 2 Sector Plan. Several smaller, mini-master plan amendments are also in the works. All these area and sector master plans are necessary to set specific zoning and guidance for development projects, but these plans all compete for limited county resources in an ever-increasing politicized arena.

A *Montgomery 2040 Plan* would take a big view of all the plans and provide a blue print for how we reach our development goals. A new 25-year development plan would not preclude any allowed development; it would however set the parameters of where public resources would be focused for strategic reasons.

I encourage our county officials and residents to look at the Prince George's plan which is in the final stages of the approval process. *Prince George's 2035* builds upon County Executive Baker's recently completed *Targeted Economic Development Strategic Plan*. I attended the community participation event at the University of Maryland last June and was impressed with the information presented and methods used to get feedback and buy-in. There was a wide range of interests and diverse participants from across the county who came together to discuss and reach consensus on a common Prince George's future.

The only Montgomery document that attempts to set specific countywide transportation/transit priorities is the county's *Transportation Priority Letter* which is sent to Maryland state officials by the County Executive and Council every few years. (Most Maryland counties submit these transportation priority letters to the MD Department of Transportation annually.) Remarkably a new Montgomery letter is in the works now. The Planning Board is scheduled to comment on staff recommendations on January 9, and the Council's Transportation Committee will hold a worksession on January 23. There are some notable changes in this year's priorities.

Members of the County Council's PHED (Planning, Housing and Economic Development) Committee should take the lead in beginning an effort to create a coordinated long-range *Montgomery 2040 Plan*.

There needs to be "buy in" by all Councilmembers to add this effort to the Planning Board's work program for 2014/15. And to add value to the effort, PHED should be pressing the Director of the Department of Economic Development, Steve Silverman, for a realistic long-range plan for the future economic development of the entire county, along with specific expectations for targeted growth areas.

Without a reasonable countywide development plan that coordinates allowed growth, anticipated economic activity, and needed supportive infrastructure and services, we will continue to engage in a fractured and segmented process with "hit or miss" results. For instance, areas of the county around existing Metro subway stations have seen much of their planned development be approved and constructed. Yet the growth anticipated in the 1992 Germantown Plan did not take place over the ensuing two decades, possibly because the market would not support new construction in an area for which the needed and planned transit, the Corridor Cities Transitway, was not provided.

We need a process for creating a long-range county plan for allocating precious resources, to insure that the infrastructure and services needed to support coordinated construction and economic activity are provided. The current system is subject to politicians chasing the latest/greatest opportunity that may or may not make fiscal sense for county residents or businesses.

*The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to the [montgomerycivic@yahoo.com](mailto:montgomerycivic@yahoo.com)*