

# HOUSING PLAN

## BACKGROUND

The ability to offer housing of varying types and prices to residents in a wide range of socioeconomic strata is a key component in measuring Montgomery County's overall quality of life. The 1993 *General Plan Refinement* set out as its Housing Goal that the County "encourage and maintain a wide choice of housing types and neighborhoods for people of all incomes, ages, lifestyles, and physical capabilities at appropriate densities and locations." This Plan endorses that goal, as well as the objectives designed to achieve that goal, which include providing choice in design and construction, encouraging housing near employment centers, maintaining the quality and safety of neighborhoods and encouraging adequate supplies of affordable housing.

These goals and objectives are the foundation of the County's Housing Policy, which guides implementation of housing programs and policies. In addition to those objectives articulated in the General Plan Refinement, the Housing Policy stresses the provision of affordable housing, of assistance to those with diverse housing needs, such as the elderly, the physically disabled and those with mental illness, and of equal opportunity in seeking housing. This Plan endorses the County's Housing Policy.

At the same time, this Plan recognizes other important policies in the Upper Rock Creek Area. The General Plan Refinement places much of Upper Rock Creek in the Residential Wedge, where low densities are recommended to protect environmental resources and to provide housing on large lots. The Refinement's Environmental objectives include protection and improvement of water quality and the preservation of sensitive or ecologically unusual areas. These land use and environmental goals and objectives are the backbone of planning in Upper Rock Creek.

Low densities in Upper Rock Creek and the desirability of maintaining open space as a means of enhancing stream quality mean that there are relatively small numbers of affordable housing units in the area. There are 160 subsidized or mandated affordable housing units on Crabbs Branch Way in the Shady Grove Sector Plan Area. This Plan does not substantially increase zoning densities in the area, which means that Upper Rock Creek will remain generally less conducive to affordable and elderly housing than other areas with more extensive infrastructure and zones that permit higher densities.

Nevertheless, the Montgomery County Council has determined that provision of affordable and elderly housing is an important public policy goal. To further this goal, this Plan makes recommendations that designate specific properties as suitable for Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) or institutional uses and it incorporates the required provision of MPDUs into recommendations for several large undeveloped properties.

These recommendations are the result of an areawide analysis of land potentially suitable for affordable housing, elderly housing or MPDUs that was done as part of an increased focus on housing policy in the County. The analysis looked in particular at specific properties that might be suitable for affordable housing, at undeveloped land in public ownership and at the large undeveloped properties in the Upper Rock Creek master plan area.

This Plan makes recommendations for properties in each of these broad categories. Two specific properties are deemed suitable for some form of affordable housing. An undeveloped public school site is recommended for housing over the long term if the school system opts not to build a school there. Should the Zoning Ordinance be amended to expand the MPDU program to large lot zones, three large undeveloped properties recommended for cluster development with sewer service would be required to provide MPDUs.

#### Recommendations—Specific properties

- This Plan recommends, over the long term, residential development for the WINX property, adjacent to the City of Rockville. This recommendation will facilitate annexation by the City, which is necessary for any development requiring community water and sewer service. The Plan also deems the WINX property suitable for an elderly housing project if such a project can be done compatibly with the adjoining Lincoln Park community.
- This Plan also encourages assembly of land currently in or recommended for townhouse zones that is located adjacent to the Redlands commercial center as a way of maximizing the area's ability to provide Moderately Priced Dwelling Units.

#### Recommendations—Undeveloped properties in public ownership

- This Plan recommends long-term residential development of Sherwood Elementary School Site #6, if Montgomery County Public Schools does not build a school on the site. It is suitable for affordable housing.

#### Recommendations—Large undeveloped properties

- This Plan recommends four undeveloped properties in the master plan area—the Dungan, Casey, Freeman and Woodlawn properties—for cluster development with community sewer service. Should the Zoning Ordinance be amended to expand the MPDU program to the large lot zones, three of these properties would be required to provide MPDUs. The fourth, the Woodlawn property, could provide MPDUs voluntarily.

A pending zoning text amendment would require MPDUs in the RNC Zone. If the amendment is approved this Plan recommends that MPDUs be provided in accordance with Chapter 25A of the County Code as follows:

0.2 dwelling units per acre or less—No MPDUs would be required under standard method development without community sewer service;

0.33 dwelling units per acre or less—12.5 percent MPDUs required under optional method development with community sewer service;

0.33 to 0.4 dwelling units per acre—MPDUs required under optional method development with community sewer service using a sliding scale from 12.5 percent MPDUs required at 0.33 dwelling units per acre to 15 percent MPDUs required at 0.4 dwelling unit per acre.

This Plan is not dependent on approval of the text amendment. If it is not approved, the maximum density using community sewer service is 0.33 dwelling units per acre. The maximum density will be permitted only if adequate open space is provided.