

III. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Over the past two decades, the amount of residential development in Frederick County has grown, increasing at a relatively consistent rate of approximately 3 percent a year. Supporting this growth was a period of significant expansion in the County's commercial and industrial base. According to the 2000 Census and more recent studies performed by the Economic Development Commission, Frederick County remains an in-commute location. The main contributor to the population growth was the migration of people inside the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (WMSA) to Frederick County for a higher quality of life including lower housing costs and a lower tax rate. Because of its location and excellent access to Northern Virginia and Washington, DC, it has become a place of choice to live for those commuters. Frederick County has also become an attractive place to live for retirees.

There is little doubt that Frederick County's housing market was impacted along with the rest of the Nation's in the latter years of the 2000's. New home construction in the County has been impacted the most by the problems with the housing industry. 580 residential building permits for new construction were issued in 1999 and 305 in 2009. The highest number of permits issued was in 2005 (1,261). The average number of permits for the past decade was 789 per year. While this current economic downturn does continue, the number of housing units sold in 2009 (1,041) was nearly equal to the number sold in 1999 (1,052). The highest number was in 2004 when 1,850 housing units were sold.

Residential opportunities exist in both the County's urban and rural areas. In recent years Frederick County has seen approximately one third of its new residential growth constructed in the Urban Development Area and two thirds in the rural areas, including the R5 Residential Recreational Communities.

The Rural Areas are home to the agricultural, forestal and open spaces of the County. Within the rural areas, the predominant types of residential unit are single family dwellings with a density of one house per five acres. In addition to the traditional five acres lots seen in the past, dwellings at the same density can be clustered using a two acre lot size with the remainder being preserved through a 60% preservation tract. Older rural communities exist throughout the rural areas and are typically found within one of the County's Rural Community Centers. These community centers typically have smaller

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lot sizes, higher densities and commercial uses. Residential developments located in the rural area, including Rural Community Centers are on private individual water and sewer systems.

The Urban Development Area (UDA) is the portion of the county which has been identified as the area where more intensive forms of residential development will occur and to accommodate the anticipated residential growth within the community. While this area currently consists of primarily suburban residential types of development, with some multifamily and retirement units, it is planned to accommodate a more intensive mix of land uses and residential housing opportunities. The UDA is designed to accommodate increased residential densities because it can provide the necessary infrastructure and public facilities, such as public water and sewer, schools, emergency services and a transportation network. Within the Urban Areas, planning and development principles, such as Neighborhood Design, have been promoted which are proactive and creative, that will meet the anticipated residential growth of the community, and provide for a high quality of life for the citizens of Frederick County.

To further encourage residential development in the Urban rather than Rural Areas, the County adopted a Transfer of Development Rights Program (TDR) in the spring of 2010. This program allows rural land owners to strip development rights from agricultural land and sell them to developers for use within designated areas within the UDA. More information on the County's TDR Program can be found in the Rural Areas chapter.

FUTURE FOCUS

Future residential growth in Frederick County is anticipated to continue and expand. The County must ensure that land use policies are established to adequately direct and shape that growth to guarantee that it is positive for the community and located in areas that are capable of accommodating that growth. While new residential growth is expected in both the rural areas and the urban areas, new residential growth should be focused primarily with the urban areas of the County. The UDA is better able to accommodate higher density growth and is able to provide public services to those new residents.

The County should continue to establish policies which result in high quality residential neighborhoods which are able to accommodate a growing population and expanding workforce. Such residential development should be comprised of a mixture of housing types and lot sizes to provide options for a range of lifestyles and incomes. The land use policies of the Urban Areas will

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further guide this residential development and community growth.

In the Urban Area, the long-term livability of residential neighborhoods will be enhanced by sustainable development practices that incorporate the principles of Neighborhood Design and Green Infrastructure elements into the community.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Proactive planning efforts are essential in both the Urban and Rural Areas to ensure that the County is able to deal with its future residential growth in a cost-effective and attractive manner.

Proper planning and land use policies enable the County to identify where future residential growth should be accommodated. It enables the County to plan for and provide services in defined areas where they can reach the majority of the population. By focusing growth and services to the urban areas, the County can develop community facilities that become focal points to the residential areas. Focusing new residential development around walkable centers allows people to work, go to school, live, shop, and play in locations that are near each other.

Most importantly these planning steps enable residents, both now and in the future, to choose from an array of housing types that suite their needs. The construction of affordable housing opportunities should also be promoted to ensure that the needs of all residents are met.

POLICIES / IMPLEMENTATION

POLICY: NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE FOCUSED WITHIN THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREA (UDA).

IMPLEMENTATION:

- The county will attempt to maintain a 10-year inventory of housing units in the development supply and will maintain consistency with the Code of Virginia.
- The UDA will be continuously evaluated to ensure that sufficient capacity exists for diversity in housing types, densities, and price points.
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- Higher density residential development is encouraged in close proximity to or mixed with commercial areas to enhance walkable access to employment, shopping, and entertainment. The County's strategic growth areas, the Urban Centers and Neighborhood Villages, are the most desirable locations for this type of development.
- Residential housing types and design guidelines should be flexible to accommodate evolving demographic trends, and to ensure that housing choices are maximized.

POLICY: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPEN SPACES SHALL BE AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE URBAN AND RURAL AREAS.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- When new development occurs in the rural areas, the rural preservation option should be encouraged as the preferred subdivision form and Conservation Design should be implemented.
- The design of new residential neighborhoods should promote sustainable development practices and incorporate the conservation of green infrastructure elements as outlined in the Natural Resources chapter
- New residential neighborhoods will include open space amenities; active, passive, and natural, located in close proximity to all dwellings, with an emphasis on the provision of usable open space for resident use and enjoyment.

POLICY: THE COUNTY WILL WORK TOWARD ENABLING AND ENCOURAGING NEW AND INNOVATIVE HOUSING CHOICES, THAT ALSO ACCOMMODATE A FULL RANGE OF AFFORDABILITY.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- The County will examine existing ordinances and make changes as appropriate to ensure that adequate housing options are available to the development community.

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- Rural Community Centers should be enhanced as viable and desirable places to live, as they can serve an important role as a location with lower development costs, thus reducing the housing costs.
- Promote the completion of a land use plan for the Rural Community Centers and provide incentives to increase the viability of these neighborhoods.
- Maintain an awareness of the public role and how it impacts the cost of housing when promoting housing innovation and affordability.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

- Top of Virginia Building Association
- Community Groups
- Home Owners Associations
- Habitat for Humanity
- Shenandoah Area Agency on Aging
- Access Independence

SUPPORTING MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- 2006 UDA Report
- Rural Areas Report and Recommendations