

**Prince George's Platform**

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**BUILDING  
HEALTHY AND VIBRANT  
COMMUNITIES**



**Prince George's Green Power Coalition**

*July 13, 2010*

## Executive Summary

*Building Healthy and Vibrant Communities in Prince George's County* is a comprehensive blueprint to improve the environment and economy in Prince George's County and to secure environmental justice for all of our residents. Policy recommendations are provided for energy conservation, renewable energy, waste management, land use, transportation, green business, sustainable agriculture and water/natural resources.

**Reducing energy consumption and increasing the production of renewable energy in Prince George's County** can have a major impact on our economy. Our recommendations recognize that energy conservation should be the highest priority. The County should mandate energy audits for large energy users in the public and private sector, work with the private sector to create a loan program to promote investing in remediation projects, and require local governments to have comprehensive energy plans. The County can also take steps to promote existing clean/renewable energy sources and foster partnerships to produce renewable energy locally.

**Creating a partnership between the County, local governments and the private sector to improve waste management will provide a cleaner County, save money and stimulate local business opportunities.** In 2008, the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center released a study commissioned by Prince George's County to improve waste management practices. The County must implement the recommendations and go further by committing to a goal of zero waste. Our key recommendations include mandatory and comprehensive residential and business recycling, legislation for a "bottle bill" and a plastic bag fee, a public education program, expanded composting and increased use of recycled products.

**The 2002 Prince George's County General Plan is broken and needs to be revised** to prevent the destruction of our agricultural land and natural resources and direct development inside the beltway and around Metro stations. The General Plan called for more than one-third of growth occurring in the inside the beltway communities and around Metro stations - the Developed Tier. Falling far short of this goal, only 18 percent of growth happened here, with most of the County's development taking place in scattered places across the Developing and Rural Tiers. We need enforceable and sustainable standards that create walkable communities in the right locations, and work hand-in-hand with a multi-modal transportation system.

**Protecting our farmland, improving our farm economy and providing high quality and nutritious local food needs to be a county priority.** Prince George's County can be a model community that seeks the best of metropolitan life while preserving our imperiled agricultural industry. We need to enhance land preservation policies and create a "critical farm" program as in Carroll County, while simultaneously supporting the growth of urban farming. We need to expand farmers markets, foster specialty and organic farming to increase farm revenue and quality, and help create awareness of and demand for local foods.

**To foster the growth of green business, Prince George's County should create an Office of Sustainability.** The Office would promote existing green businesses, encourage green building and business practices and use our existing green business leaders as a resource to develop new opportunities.

**Water run-off pollutes our waterways and drinking water supplies.** The County should implement a policy to ensure that the first 1.7 inches of rainwater during a storm stays on the land where it falls. A fee structure should also be created that discourages the creation of impervious surfaces and encourages redevelopment in areas that already have a high proportion of impervious cover.

**Finally, the Prince George's County Green Infrastructure plan must be implemented to conserve environmentally significant eco-systems.**

## Introduction

**T**HE Prince George's Green Power Coalition is an organization of concerned residents, small business leaders, environmental groups and other community groups dedicated to making Prince George's County a better place to live and work by creating a healthier community and a strong sustainable economy.

We seek to make Prince George's County a healthy community, providing residents with economic opportunity in a clean and safe environment. We believe that all too often our nation and our County are segregated into favored high-income communities and ignored low-income communities. The favored communities have innate advantages that go along with wealth, but governments often contribute to the disadvantages suffered by low-income communities through inequitable distribution of tax revenue, poor zoning practices and by simply ignoring problems. As cornerstones in promoting economic opportunity and a clean and safe environment, we believe that the County must foster environmental justice, encourage the growth of companies and jobs which are socially and environmentally responsible, rebuild inner beltway communities, reform zoning practices, expand public transit use, support the development of renewable energy, encourage energy conservation, and clean up our waterways and communities. Furthermore, we believe that these efforts can be complementary. Comprehensive strategies can and must be developed.

We have drafted this platform for private and governmental action with the hope of educating residents and elected officials about important and viable steps that can be taken to create a better county. We encourage our coalition members and other like-minded organizations to adopt the platform.

### SUMMARY OF THE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PLATFORM

- I.** Addressing Climate Change and Using Clean Energy While Saving Money Right Here in Prince George's County
- II.** Responsible Waste Management to Cut Costs and Reduce Pollution
- III.** Land Use and Transportation: Decisions to Build a Shared, Sustainable Prosperity
- IV.** Encouraging Sustainable Agriculture and Marketing Locally Produced Foods
- V.** Encouraging Economic Growth Through the Development of Green Business
- VI.** Protecting Our Water and Other Natural Resources

### MEMBERS OF THE GREEN POWER COALITION

IBEW, LiUNA, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Prince George's Sierra Club, Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek, UMD for Clean Energy, CCAN, Progressive Cheverly, Clean Water Action, Seat Pleasant CDC, Community Forklift, Engaged Community Offshoots Greater Marlboro Democratic Club, Green Power Living, LLC, Green reVisions, LLC, Green Savvy Consulting, Office and Professional Employees International Union, Prince George's Advocates for Community-based Transit, Anacostia Watershed Society and Clean Currents.

# Addressing Climate Change and Using Clean Energy While Saving Money Right Here in Prince George's County



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**REDUCING** energy consumption and increasing the production of renewable energy in Prince George's County can have a major impact on the finances of residents, businesses and governments.

Conservation efforts help the environment but also have an immediate beneficial impact on household and business budgets. Coal and other fossil fuels for our power plants account for \$1,500 per year in the average family budget, not to mention the fact that the average family gasoline consumption is easily greater than that amount. The costs for these fossil fuels are only projected to increase in the years ahead.

The environmental impact of the unbridled use of fossil fuels is now apparent to almost anyone who reads a newspaper or watches television. We must take immediate action to avoid a global crisis. The cost of producing renewable energy continues to go down and is now often competitive with fossil fuels. Producing renewable energy locally can be done easily for small to medium projects and has the further advantage of supporting our own economy. Larger organizations can pool resources and have an even greater impact on the production of renewable energy.

## **CREATE A COUNTY BLUEPRINT FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR, PRIVATE SECTOR AND INDIVIDUAL RESIDENTS TO REDUCE ENERGY USAGE AND INCREASE THE RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES.**

We believe that opportunities abound to reduce consumption and switch to renewable energy sources. Many of these actions can help our economy at little cost to us. Some require initial investments, which are often recoverable in a reasonable amount of time. Listed below are actions that should be implemented for both the public and private sector:

**1. Mandate energy audits and remediation** for large energy consumers at the residential, commercial, and governmental levels.

The County has begun this for some of its own facilities and needs to complete that process for all county-owned or-operated facilities. The process can be self-funded through future energy savings. For facility remediation, the County should work with the private sector to create an energy savers loan program.

**2. Increase the utilization of weatherization and energy efficiency** for low-income residents. Weatherization funds for public housing have continuously been under-utilized in Prince George’s County. We need a clear plan to utilize the funds, especially since they have grown under the federal stimulus legislation. Prince George’s County Community College has trained technicians to handle this work, but there is little planning and a lack of demand to implement it.

We must increase the use of home energy audits and private weatherization efforts in the County. A public education campaign is needed to raise awareness of the cost savings that can be generated. A public/private partnership should be created to make energy audits more affordable for low-income residents and a loan program could be created so that homeowners could pay off the loans through savings in their energy bills.

**3. Require that the county government and all municipal governments in the county have a comprehensive energy plan,** including:

- a. Each government should conduct energy audits for its own facilities.
- b. Remediation and energy efficiency improvements for each facility should then be prioritized into a government wide plan.
- c. Each plan should incorporate:
  - i. Renewable energy production for its own facilities.
  - ii. Energy conservation rules for facilities and employees.
  - iii. Fleet mileage improvements
  - iv. Bio-fuel use for vehicles.

**4. Create renewable energy partnerships** in the private sector and between the public and the private sectors to produce local renewable energy.

- a. The State of Maryland and the federal government have implemented tax incentives/subsidies for both residential and corporate renewable energy production. We need to increase use of these incentives by increasing public awareness and enhancing regulatory requirements that would encourage their use.
- b. A bridge loan program could be established.
- c. Regulations could be implemented to mandate incorporation of renewable energy for high-use customers.
- d. Private/ public partnerships or inter-governmental partnerships could be created to fund renewable energy production on a much larger scale.

**5. Increase awareness of existing renewable energy options and energy savings programs.**

A public education campaign or a subsidy program could be created to encourage the use of existing renewable energy providers such as Clean Currents, which provides wind energy to PEPCO, BG&E and SMECO customers.



## Responsible Waste Management to Cut Costs and Reduce Pollution

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**REDUCING** the amount of waste in Prince George’s County requires a multi-faceted approach that can reduce operating costs, cut pollution, and save energy. From an environmental standpoint, more trash means that more landfill space is needed to hold it. This not only consumes land, landfills also bring environmental hazards such as groundwater contamination and the release of methane gas and other toxins. Communities that are near landfills are vulnerable to increased health risks. Meanwhile, we are running out of landfill space which will mean paying to truck it elsewhere for dumping. Then there’s the trash that doesn’t find its way into our landfills. It ends up polluting our streams, and scattered along our roads. There are also cost benefits from having less waste to manage. The more trash there is to collect, the more trucks and labor is needed to transport it. The cost to fuel these vehicles adds up, and will rise further as energy prices increase. The contamination of our waterways from waste also increases the operating costs in treating our water supplies.

### **REVIEW THE COUNTY’S PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING CHANGES RECOMMENDED IN THE WASTE MANAGEMENT REVIEW CONDUCTED FOR THE COUNTY BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER IN FEBRUARY 2008.**

In 2008, the University of Maryland released a comprehensive proposal for improving waste management in Prince George’s County. It appears that many of the recommendations have not yet been acted on, or there has not been sufficient progress. The County should authorize a supplemental review using the 2008 study as a guidepost.

### **ADOPT A COUNTY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE WASTE AND PUT THE COUNTY ON A PATH TO “ZERO WASTE.”**

The concept of moving individuals, corporations and whole communities to “zero waste” is no longer simply the dream of a few environmentalists who try to live “off-grid.” Cities like Seattle, Washington and Austin, Texas and governments in Europe are adopting policies that are designed to lead to zero waste. The basic premise is that even the most advanced recycling programs do not in themselves sufficiently reduce the economic and environmental costs of landfills. Comprehensive programs are needed that prevent the creation of waste as well as manage the disposal of waste. (The Institute for Local Self Reliance is championing a waste to wealth program focused around four elements: deconstruction services, electronic recycling, mattress recycling and composting. They are a great source for zero-waste planning.) To

establish a zero-waste partnership, the County and local governments can start by looking at the following options:

**1. Mandate county-wide household and commercial recycling of paper, plastic, metal, and glass.** In 2007, the County renovated the materials recycling facility and instituted single-stream recycling. While single stream recycling increases the rate of participation in the recycling program, the County can do much more by mandating recycling for both residential and commercial pick-ups. To assist businesses in making the transition to recycling, the County should offer training and technical assistance.

**2. Reduce construction waste by facilitating recycling of construction material and in doing so, create economic opportunities.**

Waste from construction sites is not only clogging our landfills, it is a missed economic opportunity. The County should partner with local green businesses to develop creative ways to increase recycling of construction debris. One simple idea would be to provide a staging area at the land fill, for residents and businesses to inspect and “adopt” recyclable construction debris. Community Forklift, a local business, provides another model for the collection and sale of reusable building materials. Because of the value of used construction material, the County can create business opportunities through incentives for deconstruction instead of demolition. There is a growing demand for recycled lumber products in particular.

**3. Provide support and assistance to multi-family housing communities to encourage greater recycling.** Because of population density in multi-family housing communities, there is a potentially large payoff in providing assistance to encourage recycling in these communities.

**4. Pass a “Bottle Bill”** that establishes a recovery fee on all bottles consumers return to local retailers for recycling.

**5. Establish a plastic bag fee** and dedicate the funds for cleanup of the Anacostia River modeled after the DC bag policy, which rewards consumers for using reusable bags.

**6. Establish a comprehensive composting program for food and yard waste.** According to the EPA, “Yard trimmings and food residuals together constitute 26 percent of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream.” “Composting offers the obvious benefits of resource efficiency and creating a useful product from organic waste that would otherwise have been landfilled.” The County has a good program for pickup and disposal of organic yard waste. Additional steps should be taken to ensure that yard waste is barred from the landfill (and the projected transfer station), and composting of organic food waste is increased, including the possibility of curbside pickup of organic food waste along side of yard waste.

According to the EPA, there are also opportunities for economic development by creating an expanded composting market. “Once dominated by public sector



operations, the composting industry is increasingly entrepreneurial and private-sector driven, led by firms that add value to compost products through processing and marketing. Compost prices have been as high as \$26 per ton for landscape mulch to more than \$100 per ton for high-grade compost, which is bagged and sold at the retail level.”

**7. Encourage a market for recycled materials and products.** In addition to construction waste, there are a number of other economic opportunities available with recycled materials including repairing and reusing wood pallets, and shredding and recycling petroleum-based products such as tires, carpets and carpet pads.

**8. Increase recycling of electronics and appliances through curb-side pickup.** Communities such as College Park and Cheverly have already instituted curb-side pick-up programs for electronics at no cost to the taxpayer.

**9. Create a public education program** to increase awareness of the need to reduce waste and the steps to be taken. Several easy low cost steps can be taken immediately, including increased information and prominence for recycling and waste reduction on the county web-site and the initiation of an awards program for businesses (as in Montgomery County) to highlight best practices.

**10. Create alternative clean energy sources from waste.** Prince George’s County has been a leader in methane retention from solid waste, but more can be accomplished. By separating organic material from landfills, bio-fuels can be created without a negative impact on farming and food production. In fact, British Airways and the US bio-energy company Solena have already announced the establishment of Europe’s first green jet fuel plant in the East End of London based on reclaimed landfill.

**11. Research the viability of a modest fee structure for garbage collection.** A fee structure that rewards low use would need to be high enough to discourage unnecessary waste while not being so high as to encourage illegal dumping. Prince George’s residents now pay for solid waste disposal through property taxes. This payment system encourages excessive disposal and leaves county residents disconnected from the real monetary and environmental costs.

**12. Creating requirements for the County and local governments to purchase products produced with recycled materials.** An increasingly wide range of products, from office supplies to furniture, are made with recycled materials. Local governments should establish guidelines for purchasing such products and give preference to products that are produced locally.

**13. Reducing the volume of packing materials.** Establish a collaborative program between the County, local governments and businesses to encourage the reduction of beverage, food container and other packing materials, by increasing the use of renewable packing materials and reducing the overall volume of packing materials.

**14. Reducing product obsolescence.** Establish a partnership with local businesses to reduce waste by developing “life cycle” plans for products which identify and communicate appropriate ways to recycle, repair or re-use products at point of sale.

**15. Reduce the operating costs of waste management.** Convert sanitation trucks to ones that run on alternative fuels, power facilities that manage waste and recycling through clean energy, and reevaluate truck routing to reduce the distance traveled. Shipping companies have done this and saved millions of dollars. Also, vary the sanitation truck size, sending smaller trucks to rural communities, and larger ones to more densely populated urban communities.

**16. Eliminate harmful coal ash dumping in Prince George’s.** The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) filed suit in April 2010 against Mirant, an Atlanta-based power company, alleging that its coal-ash landfill in Brandywine is polluting groundwater and a nearby creek. The Brandywine coal combustion waste (CCW) landfill contains seven million cubic yards of CCW in multiple, unlined disposal cells. County and state documents show high levels of heavy metal contamination in the surrounding waters that flow into the Patuxent River and threaten the Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary. MDE has been unable to get the company to agree to a timetable for compliance with rules for CCW waste dumping, or to establish a cleanup plan. While CCW can be recycled as a raw material for cement or used as fill for mine reclamation, the suitability of CCW for recycling varies depending on its composition and the level of toxicity. Certain types of coal ash can produce high concentrations of selenium, sulfate, arsenic, iron or manganese in soil that may leach into surface or groundwater. If there must be a CCW landfill in Prince George’s County, we must ensure that safety measures are taken to reduce toxic run-off, but the preferable long term solution is to reduce our dependency on coal and eliminate CCW disposal in our County.



## Land Use and Transportation: Decisions to Build a Shared, Sustainable Prosperity

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### FIFTEEN METRO STATIONS: AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

**PRINCE** George's County has the best economic development opportunity in the Washington, D.C. region – 15 Metro stations in close proximity to one of the nation's leading employment centers. A central issue in the 2010 election should be how to capitalize on these assets. Strategic economic development is the key to building a strong tax base needed to support quality schools, public safety, and employment opportunities for residents.

The Obama Administration has made sustainable communities and the integration of housing, transit, and the environment, particularly through transit-oriented development, a top investment priority. The market for walkable, mixed-use and transit accessible development continues to grow as our demographics change. By 2025, 72 percent of U.S. households will be empty nesters, retirees and young professionals without children. Also, with public resources strained, the national and state focus will increasingly be on making the most of existing infrastructure such as our Metro stations, and on renewing aging water, sewer, road, and school infrastructure in existing communities.

Targeting public policy and resources to revitalization of the Prince George's "Developed Tier" and its 15 underutilized Metro stations would capitalize on these opportunities and should be a local, regional, state and national priority. This cannot be achieved without the unified commitment of the next County Executive and County Council.

### THE COST OF SCATTERED DEVELOPMENT

Despite many county land-use policies that make revitalization of the Developed Tier and transit-oriented development top priorities, too many land-use decisions have fueled scattered development. Development that is spread out across the County cannot be well-served by transit and results in overburdened roads and longer commutes. When combined housing and transportation costs are considered, the burden on families of long auto commutes can be significant. In contrast, jobs, housing, and investment around existing Metro stations increases access to travel options (e.g., walking, biking, transit, or driving) for workers at all income levels, reduces overall transportation costs, conserves commuting time, lessens the need to build additional (and wider) roads, and allows families to enjoy a higher quality of life. Scattered development also undermines the quality of Prince George's rural communities, beautiful parks and natural areas.

## GENERAL PLAN GOALS HAVE NOT BEEN REALIZED

The 2002 Prince George’s County General Plan designates an 86 square mile area called the “Developed Tier” as the top priority area for medium-density to high-density, mixed-use, transit- and pedestrian-oriented development. This area is generally bordered by the Capital Beltway and the District of Columbia boundary, and it is 25 square miles larger than the District of Columbia. The General Plan calls for growth to be focused at transit stations, designated focal areas called “Centers” and selected points along key corridors. The General Plan allows for an oversized “Developing Tier,” an astounding 237 square miles. This area could easily accommodate over one million people (the entire population of Fairfax County), a number which is far more than projected growth. While less than one percent is designated to take place in the 150 square-mile Rural Tier in the southern part of the County, the plan fails to provide effective protection for that area. As a result, the plan undermines efforts to guide investment to the Developed Tier or at Metro stations.

Even by the General Plan’s own standards, growth and development in Prince George’s County has not occurred as envisioned. From 2002 to 2007, the expansive Developing Tier received 79 percent of the County’s new housing development instead of its projected maximum of 66 percent. Contrary to the General Plan guidelines, much of the development in the Developing Tier was scattered. Only 5 percent of growth occurred in designated centers and corridors, even though the General Plan goal called for directing 20 percent of growth to Developing Tier centers. Only 18 percent of new housing development occurred in the Developed Tier during that same period, although the General Plan set a minimum development goal of 33 percent. The Rural Tier, where very little development was supposed to occur, received three percent of housing units, or three times more than the one percent goal set by the General Plan.

Since adoption of the General Plan, the County Council has approved numerous plans and projects that further increase the already extensive development capacity of the Developing and Rural Tiers. With so much land open to development, coupled with a permissive planning and development review process, there is little incentive to invest in the transit-rich Developed Tier. Moreover, given the increasing sprawl, the County has experienced challenges in providing adequate transit, school, police and fire services to all of its residents.

### DEVELOPMENT PATTERN — GENERAL PLAN GOAL VS. ACTUAL, 2002-2007 (NEW DWELLING UNITS)

Tier	Goal for percent of overall development captured in	2007 actual	Goal for percent of development in centers & corridor nodes	2007 actual
	Tier			
Developed	Over 33%	18%	Over 50%	34%
Developing	Less than 66%	79%	Over 20%	5%
Rural	Less than 1%	3%	--	--

Source: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, *The General Plan Growth Policy Update*, September 2008. <http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Studies.htm>

## PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY MUST ADOPT NEW AND ENFORCEABLE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS TO CREATE GREAT WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

**1. Commit to investing in the Developed Tier communities and the County's 15 Metro stations** by reorienting the location of two-thirds of new housing and employment to Developed Tier centers, 15 Metro station areas and existing towns and cities. The County must do the following:

Incentivize investment at all 15 Metro stations by coordinating with state and local agencies to remove barriers and encourage revitalization. Provide economic incentives such as targeted tax increment financing (TIF) districts, low-interest loans, expedited development review, and reduced development review fees. These investments should foster mixed-use walkable places that can attract more employment over time and strengthen the tax base.

Implement pedestrian-oriented building design, zoning and land use policies including form-based codes ("Urban Centers & Corridor Nodes Development Code" & "Mixed Use Zone" design standards) through a full public involvement process.

Focus initially on those station areas that provide the most immediate opportunities for near-term development and stations with greater economic development benefit potential. Develop comprehensive urban design, pedestrian/bicycle access, economic development, and land assembly strategies for each station area.

Prioritize state transportation funding to repair and maintain existing infrastructure ("fix it first"), and support transportation projects to catalyze transit-oriented development-related infrastructure investments.

Partner with Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to remove obstacles to joint development of Metro station sites and set clear and realistic priorities for attracting and implementing quality transit-oriented development.

**2. Prioritize public funds to address backlogs in maintenance, repair and upgrade of services in all existing communities.** With the fiscal strain on local, state and federal government, the County cannot afford to meet the demands of extensive new infrastructure in the Developing and Rural Tiers, and also address aging infrastructure in all tiers. To do so, the County must:

Commit public infrastructure funds and services to reinvestment and growth in the Developed Tier, Metro stations, cities, and towns, while also addressing the backlog of public service needs in existing communities in the Developing and Rural Tiers.

Ensure that sewer and water capacity is sufficient in existing communities and target investment to renewing aging sewer infrastructure in need of repair and reconstruction.

Prevent the extension of sewer and water services to the Rural Tier or undeveloped parts of the Developing Tier outside centers.

Reassess existing plans for substantial new development of designated centers and corridors outside of the Developed Tier for their fiscal impact on the County.

**3. Build a multi-modal transportation system** that fosters reinvestment in existing communities, fully utilizes the County’s 15 Metro stations, offers viable alternatives to driving for every trip, and supports sustainable economic development for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy. To do so, the County must:

Implement complete streets standards and green streets standards to ensure walking and bicycling can become safe and convenient modes of travel, while reducing polluted runoff. At Metro stations and other centers, street design standards should provide sidewalks, bicycle facilities, narrowed crossing distances and travel lane widths, and other low-speed design features to increase the safety and attractiveness of walking and bicycling.

Adopt minimum multiple street connectivity standards for any major development or subdivision connected to state or county roads. Local street connectivity is essential to reducing traffic and providing shorter travel routes.

Adopt transportation demand management requirements for major new developments to reduce vehicle trips and traffic, and increase the share of walk, bicycle, transit and carpool trips. For urban centers and corridor nodes, use multi-modal level/quality of service performance measures that include service for pedestrians, bicycles and transit.

Require the construction of adequate pedestrian and bikeway facilities as a part of all development reviews, and require such facilities both on-site and off-site to encourage more people to walk, bicycle and access transit, thus reducing vehicle traffic.

Adequately fund local transit services. The County lacks sufficient operating and capital funding for a high quality bus system. Continued cuts in service for The Bus and Metrobus need to be reversed.

Commit to land use decisions that ensure viable transit service. If the County continues to permit scattered development outside the beltway, there will be no economic way to provide transit service with sufficient frequency to encourage ridership. Funding and service will be diluted while trying to serve far-flung developments, leaving residents, especially commuters, seniors and children, without sustainable transit options.

Increase frequency: locating development in more regionally accessible places with compact and walkable designs, the County can improve bus service frequency so that bus travel is more convenient and attracts “choice riders,” in addition to transit-dependent riders.

Champion the state and U.S. Congress funding for the Purple Line Light Rail and rail on the Wilson Bridge. Plan future Purple Line extensions to connect Developed Tier communities and Prince George's Community College Largo Campus.

Prioritize the County's major bus lines in WMATA's 24-route Priority Corridor Network. Implement signal priority, queue jumps and dedicated bus lanes on these routes to give new and existing riders reduced travel times and increased reliability.

**4. Revise the General Plan to substantially reduce the development capacity of the Developing Tier and conserve the Rural Tier.** To do so, the County must:

Allow no more than 33 percent of new housing and commercial development to occur in the Developing Tier. Most of this growth should be restricted to designated centers and corridor nodes within the Developing Tier.

Commit to following the General Plan's restrictions on new development in the Rural Tier and prevent removing properties from the Rural Tier to expand development potential.

**5. Protect farmland, open space, forests, and natural areas in the Developing and Rural Tiers by restricting extensions of public infrastructure, funding preservation and the transfer of development rights.**

Protect undeveloped lands in the Developing and Rural Tier by restricting sewer and water extensions, upzonings, road extensions and other public actions that encourage land conversion.

Commit to protecting farmland, forests, open space, and natural areas by increasing funding for open space, sensitive lands and agricultural preservation.

Examine a program for transfer of development rights (TDR) that significantly reduces development capacity in the Rural Tier and protects farm and forest lands from development by requiring development fees in the Developing Tier to support rural preservation.

**6. Create inclusive housing and workforce policies** to ensure all Prince George's residents share in the emerging prosperity. To do so, the County must: Establish a county-wide inclusionary zoning law (also known as "Moderately-Price Dwelling Unit program) that requires 12 percent of units in residential developments to be moderately-priced (affordable to households earning 65 percent of the area median income (AMI) in exchange for a 22 percent density bonus).

Establish housing affordability preservation priorities. Identify federal and state resources to assist in rehabilitating and maintaining affordability of key apartment buildings, especially those close to Metro stations, other transit hubs and corridors. These policies are designed to ensure that high value transit-oriented development

fosters and protects a diversity of housing choices, including those for low-wage working families. In addition, the County should follow through on foreclosure assistance and foreclosure prevention programs in coordination with state and federal agencies.

Require local workforce development and hiring for all government-assisted development projects.



# IV.

## Encouraging Sustainable Agriculture and Marketing Locally Produced Food

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**T**HE Prince George's County agricultural industry is concentrated in the southern part of the County and faces three challenges that threaten the very existence of the industry. First, the national trend of dropping farm commodity prices and increasing production costs has made it difficult to sustain small farms. Second, despite efforts to create "smart growth" policies in the County, the southern farming communities continue to experience the fastest development rates in the County. Third, the decline of tobacco as a crop in the County has left agriculture in a state of transition and uncertainty. While these trends are discouraging, Prince George's County also has a number of natural advantages which can promote local agriculture. All across America, the demand for local food is increasing. Prince George's County is in close proximity to the wealthy and well-educated Baltimore-Washington market. Urban agriculture offers new models for growing food on a commercial scale in rapidly urbanizing areas. Local governments and local businesses represent a valuable resource and market for local agriculture. Vineyards/wineries, value-added agricultural products including cheeses and other dairy products, agritourism and renewable energy are emerging opportunities for the County. We need clear, strong leadership and support services to assist our farmers in remaining economically viable so that we can preserve our land and build a new agricultural economy. In order to have sustainable agriculture, we must:

### IMPROVE FARMLAND PRESERVATION POLICIES

Existing "smart growth" policies have not worked. As outlined in the Land Use and Transportation section, we need to drastically improve county policies to discourage development of the Rural Tier where farming is concentrated. To do so, we need to evaluate the County's usage of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund (MALPF) and ensure that we establish a county-wide priority preservation area that meets certification requirements and we must establish a program for county purchase of development rights with dedicated funding. To further enhance farmland preservation, Prince George's County should create a "critical farm" program modeled after Carroll County's program. That program assists buyers who want to use preservation funds to help acquire working farmland. The program is designed to provide 75 percent of easement value in a relatively short period of time. After receiving this county minimum easement payment, the new owner puts the farm in the regular MALPF program.

County zoning regulations must also be reformed to protect lot size and to prevent zoning exceptions that undermine existing policies.

## **ENCOURAGE AND EXPAND FARMERS MARKETS TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITY FOR LOCAL SALES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS**

Establishing local farmers markets is often a difficult process which requires identification of a site, attraction of vendors and marketing to the public. The County needs to conduct an assessment of current farmer markets and new opportunities. To enhance opportunities, we need to evaluate and reduce un-needed regulation, such as ensuring our Health Department regulations align with statewide rules meant to ease the burden on farmers, such as the recently passed exemption to certain requirements for the sampling of foods at farmers markets.

The Cheltenham Farmers Market functions as an important market outlet for Southern Maryland produce, but it is considered by many local farmers to be a market of last resort. Improved functionality of the market to match the operational characteristics of Southeastern Pennsylvania's markets may help to expand the opportunity for produce, hay, and horticultural product growers by creating greater market liquidity. The market is currently owned by the Department of Agriculture and managed by a volunteer board without a long-term development plan.

## **FOSTER NICHE/SPECIALTY AND ORGANIC FARMING OPPORTUNITIES THAT CREATE HIGH VALUE PRODUCTS**

Specialty farming, such as the production of micro-greens for restaurant use or the farming of crops specific to various ethnic cuisines, is an expanding part of the agricultural industry, because it meets untapped demand for quality products and creates higher revenue opportunities for farmers. Prince George's County must foster such opportunities if we are to have a vibrant farming community. Prince George's County dairy farmers could be encouraged to participate in the statewide raw milk cheese processing pilot program. The organic food movement is booming in America, but too often, the expansion is driven by large-scale and long-distance operations. We must encourage our own organic farming industry. Allowed uses of agricultural land should also be expanded to include value-added processing and marketing activities.

## **ENHANCE LOCAL FOOD MARKETING AND INCREASE DEMAND FOR LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS**

**1.** Prince George's County has a huge unmet potential for marketing local foods. We have farms in close proximity to population centers. We have both high-end markets and public markets that can be easily tapped, and we have an opportunity to improve the diet and health of lower-income communities. A number of actions are required to enhance the marketing and demand for local food products including:

**2.** Create a local food purchasing preference standard for public institutions based on the Woodbury County, Iowa, model. While the school year does not coincide with the local growing season, the Prince George's County Public Schools should adopt a local food procurement policy to maximize the use of local foods. Such a policy will support farming, and also provide students with a healthier diet.

- 3.** Increase local food in restaurants and retail locations by identifying local restaurants and retailers with an expressed interest in providing year-round local products to customers.
- 4.** Develop a list of target products for marketing purposes and create a buy local marketing program or leverage existing campaigns being promoted at the regional and state level, such as Buy Fresh Buy Local Chesapeake Region and the Maryland Buy Local Challenge. By publicizing “food miles” (the distance traveled from farm to table) we can also help raise awareness and sales of local foods.
- 5.** Publicize and foster “community supported agriculture” (CSA). CSA is a way for the food buying public to create a relationship with a farm and to receive a regular share of produce or other farm products. By making a financial commitment to a farm, people become “members” (or “shareholders,” or “subscribers”) of the CSA. Most CSA farmers prefer that members pay for the season up-front, at the beginning of the growing season when costs are high and income is low.

#### **CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM TIED TO LOCAL FARMERS**

In much the same way that local production has become the driving force in the food industry, alternative energy production is driving change in both the agricultural and energy sectors. Development of a program to support alternative energy crops and distributed energy production in the community may prove beneficial to both agricultural and general audiences. The Biodiesel Co-op is a great Prince George’s-based green business that could supply fleet vehicles for the County, but they need a permanent location.

#### **SUPPORT URBAN FARMING EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Urban farming is a growing opportunity to improve the diet and health of urban neighborhoods as well as economic development, while significantly lowering food miles by producing food as close as possible to those who will eat it. Americorps has initiated urban farming programs including a 2.5 acre urban farm in St. Louis which employs homeless and indigent citizens. National models such as Milwaukee’s Growing Power demonstrate that urban agriculture improves local food security and creates economic opportunities for residents. High property values in urban areas can be an impediment to developing urban farms. House Bill 1062 was passed in the Maryland 2010 legislative session to authorize county governments to adopt property tax credits for urban agriculture. Prince George’s County should pass legislation to implement such tax credits. The County should also look for ways to support the efforts of the Park and Planning Department in finding publicly-owned land that can be used to create urban farms as in the pilot project with Engaged Community Offshoots in Edmonston.



## Encourage Economic Growth Through the Development of Green Business

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We applaud Prince George's County's efforts to encourage sustainable practices through its green building and energy efficiency programs. However, the County also has a valuable asset in its green business sector.

Green businesses are those operated in ways that solve environmental and social problems. These businesses are socially and environmentally responsible in the way they source, manufacture, and market their products and run their offices and factories. This can range from businesses that provide green products or services (for example, a recycling company) to businesses that provide traditional products using more sustainable methods (for example, a cement block company that uses biodiesel to operate its forklifts).

Even in tough economic times, companies are responding to a growing consumer demand for greener options (for example, MOM's, the local organic grocery chain, opened a new store in Bowie just four months ago). There are currently over 50 businesses in Prince George's County that provide green products or services (see list at [www.CommunityForklift.com/greenbiz.cfm](http://www.CommunityForklift.com/greenbiz.cfm)) – and that's not counting the traditional businesses that have made efforts to green their operations.

Although the Prince George's County Going Green Steering Committee's 2009 report identified several positive accomplishments of county and local government agencies, there is still a great deal to be done. There are numerous opportunities for green economic growth in Prince George's County, including green housing/business construction and support, green governmental contracting, materials recycling and reuse, renewable energy installation/development and weatherization. Fostering this economic opportunity is critical for the financial and physical health of our communities.

### **CREATE A PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY TO PROMOTE GREEN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

To support the development of the County's green economy, we feel strongly that an Office of Sustainability must be created. This office would be responsible for coordinating sustainable practices across county agencies, serving as a resource for present and future green businesses, and increasing communication among county employees, local governments, businesses, and residents.

The experience of other jurisdictions has shown that a significant part of the cost of this new office could be covered by resource and energy savings in county

government operations. In addition, increased tax revenue can be expected as more green businesses and consumers are attracted to the County.

The Office of Sustainability would:

**1. Improve the sustainability of county practices and operations.** The County's Going Green Steering Committee has been working on this already, with the improvement of infrastructure (including the building of green schools and the reduction of energy use in county buildings through partnerships with Energy Services Companies). The next logical step is to improve the practices of county employees and agencies.

The Office of Sustainability could speed the accomplishment of the County's Going Green goals, promote education and awareness of sustainability throughout the local government and the larger community, and manage sustainable activities such as recycling, greener behaviors, and water conservation. It could provide research and technical assistance to all departments, and evaluate the costs and benefits of more sustainable choices in county procurement decisions.

**2. Evaluate existing county services and programs to identify waste and inefficiencies** and re-direct practices that could create green business opportunities.

For example, county home owners, businesses and construction firms increase our waste disposal costs by clogging our landfill with construction debris that is often valuable and could be re-used. County and local governments must partner with green business to take advantage of markets for this material. This could be accomplished by placing collection containers at landfills and transfer stations, which has been successful in Montgomery and Howard Counties.

**3. Ensure that the County solicits input from our existing green businesses when evaluating federal government funding opportunities,** such as the recent federal recovery act and jobs bill.

**4. Promote the existing green businesses in Prince George's County.** Our existing green businesses face a visibility problem. It is common for county governments to publicize parks, strong schools, local newspapers, volunteer groups, and other local resources in order to attract visitors, residents, businesses, and investors. The green, sustainable, and small businesses of Prince George's County are valuable assets, and it would be wise to promote this sector through the County's website, tourism office, press efforts, and educational events, as well as the annual Green Festival.

**5. Bring together local stakeholders to create green development and energy improvement initiatives.** For example, San Diego has a creative program offering no-interest loans to small businesses to make energy efficiency improvements. The San Diego Clean Enterprise program is a joint project of the city,

the non-profit CleanTECH San Diego, and the San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E). Note that the funds are provided by SDG&E, with borrowers repaying through their monthly SDG&E bill. (<http://www.lajollalight.com/news/256122-energy-efficiency-initiative-announced-for-small-businesses>).

**6. Educate local businesses and the community about existing green incentives,** such as those listed at the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency ([www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org)). Also, assist businesses to take advantage of existing federal and state grant and loan programs related to energy efficiency and sustainability.

**7. Research, create, and promote incentives for businesses to make energy efficient and sustainable improvements.** For example, the Office of Sustainability could present annual awards to recognize businesses and property management companies that improve recycling rates, energy use, composting, or other green practices. This could be cheap and easy to do.

The Recycling Awards given by Montgomery County's Division of Solid Waste is a good example. Businesses voluntarily report their recycling rates, and the County holds a yearly luncheon to recognize the winners. It costs very little for the County to implement, but businesses appreciate the recognition and the good press that results. They also use it as a way to motivate their employees and tenants to participate (<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/swstmpl.asp?url=/content/dep/solidwaste/education/sorrt/awards/2009-bus-recycling-ach-awards.asp>).

**8. Promote greener behavior among county residents, which will lead to the growth of our green businesses.** Much more information could be provided on the County's website to guide residents in greener behavior. For example, our County and local jurisdictions should provide more extensive information on public works websites about recycling and reuse options, including contact information for local recycling companies and thrift stores that accept donations.

**9. Increase utilization and improve county weatherization programs.** Prince George's County has forgone opportunities to greatly increase energy efficiency, by under-utilization of weatherization funds. This has also cost the County jobs.

**10. Encourage and mandate green buildings.** Many of the existing green businesses in Prince George's County provide goods and services related to green construction. The County can support their growth by encouraging greener buildings. Often, opportunities for cost savings and other benefits of green building are missed due to lack of knowledge about the benefits. We must improve upon the County's existing green building policies by:

- a) Requiring LEED Silver certification for all new commercial buildings over 10,000 square feet.
- b) Requiring compliance with Green Communities standards for all residential buildings over 10,000 square feet.

- c) Requiring all major construction projects to contribute to a Green Building fund. This fund can then be used to:
  - i. Educate builders, renovators, businesses, and residents who want to learn how to build green; and
  - ii. Expand the County's capacity to conduct green building plan reviews and inspections.

## Protecting Our Water and Other Natural Resources

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**FOR** the last four decades, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware and the federal government have recognized the critical danger faced by the Chesapeake Bay, but failed to stop the deterioration. This failure is part of our overall failure to serve as responsible custodians for our natural resources. For too long we have developed our forests, meadows, wetlands and other natural spaces without regard to the full consequences of those lost ecosystems. In recent years, the importance of ecosystems to sustainability has become clear. The key to ecosystem health is biodiversity. “The ecosystems that support us - that determine the carrying capacity of the earth and our local spaces - are run by biodiversity. It is biodiversity that generates oxygen and cleans water, creates topsoil out of rock, buffers extreme weather events like droughts and floods, pollinates our crops, and recycles the mountains of garbage we create every day” - Doug Tallamy in *Gardening for Life*. It is not enough to have biodiversity somewhere else - in National Parks or National Forests - we need it right in the communities where we live. As custodians of the environment we live in, we must develop and implement policies to protect and restore the Anacostia, Patuxent and Potomac rivers and their tributaries and connect water and energy efficiency to effectively manage our water resources.

### MAINTAINING SAFE AND AFFORDABLE DRINKING WATER

We often take the most basic ingredient for a healthy life for granted. We assume that clean, safe and affordable drinking water will always be available, but we can't ignore that threats to our drinking supply are present and growing.

**1. Implement a land use policy that protects supplies of drinking water, including wellhead protection** for those who rely on wellwater or groundwater. Wellhead Protection is a way to prevent drinking water from becoming polluted by managing potential sources of contamination in the area which supplies water.

**2. Maintain or expand the buffer around the T. Howard Duckett Reservoir in North Prince George's County.** We also need to encourage Montgomery and Howard Counties to protect Prince George's drinking water supplies in the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers.

**3. Ensure that the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) uses the most health protective drinking water treatment** at its plants on the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers, and minimizes use of chlorine and other deadly chemicals in the treatment of bacteria.



**4. Adequately fund WSSC to ensure the safe distribution of drinking water** through its pipes to residences, businesses and other taps, to minimize leaks, ruptures or contamination.

**5. Develop a water conservation policy that minimizes the waste of water through conservation, re-use and effective monitoring of water withdrawal permits.**

## MANAGEMENT OF RAINFALL FOR GARDEN-FILLED COMMUNITIES

The urbanization of Prince George's County has resulted in a clear and present danger to our environment and our waterways. Runoff from building and impervious surfaces washes tons of pollutants and garbage into the Anacostia, the Potomac and their tributaries.

**1. The County should implement a policy to make sure that the first 1.7 inches of rainwater during a storm stays on the land where it falls,** instead of washing into storm drains and downstream where it washes chemicals off streets and parking lots and erodes stream beds.

**2. Building permit regulations should be implemented to require vegetation as part of building design,** including the expectation that developers feature green roofs, green walls, trees and other landscaping designed to reduce runoff as part of projects that are subject to county approval.

**3. A fee structure should be implemented to discourage the creation of new impervious surfaces** and encourage redevelopment of existing impervious areas. Impervious surfaces send water downstream with negative consequences and keeps rain from draining into the soil.

**4. Steps should be taken to promote increasing the tree canopy throughout the County,** with special emphasis on increasing forested buffers of rivers and streams.

**5. The County should update the outmoded flood management policy** and address flood control by more than channeling water downstream.

**6. The County should create local funding strategies to retrofit old and outdated storm water management systems,** including the leverage of private sector funds.

**7. All county, local and private storm water drains should include signage to prevent dumping and should include traps** to prevent debris from washing into our waterways.

## REDUCTION OF WATER WASTE TO SAVE MONEY AND ENERGY

Water is a precious resource, and must be conserved. There is also a direct connection between water conservation, energy conservation and decreasing pollution. Our water and waste water policies do not sufficiently address conservation and the need to lessen waste water treatment to conserve energy. We need to ensure that WSSC is adequately funded for the safe collection of waste water through its pipes from residences, businesses and other facilities that produce wastewater, and to minimize leaks, ruptures and the resulting contamination of receiving waterways.

## IMPLEMENT THE COUNTY'S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN THROUGH LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

The Green Infrastructure Plan is a comprehensive vision for conserving significant environmental ecosystems in Prince George's County. The green infrastructure plan would create a network divided into three categories: *Regulated areas* containing environmentally sensitive features, such as streams, wetlands, buffers, the 100-year floodplain and steep slopes, that are currently regulated (i.e., protected) during the land development process; *Evaluation areas* containing environmentally sensitive features, such as interior forests, colonial water bird nesting sites and unique habitats, that are not currently regulated (i.e., not protected) during the development review process; *Network gaps* comprising areas that are critical to the connection of the regulated and evaluation areas and are targeted for restoration to support the overall functioning and connectivity of the green infrastructure network.

The establishment of the green infrastructure network would allow land management and policy decisions to be made with a larger picture in mind and goals are to be set to prevent the loss of forested acreage and wetlands and improve water quality, stream and watershed habitat. While the green infrastructure plan is extremely important, it is meaningless without concrete actions to implement the recommended policies.

***Front Cover Photos:***

Left: Photo from Town of Edmonston, MD Website, <http://edmonstonmd.gov/GreenStreetGroundbreaking.html>

Right: Photo by Kristi Bahrenburg Janzen

***Back Cover Photos (Clockwise):***

Photo by Casey Kneipp, Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek, [www.friendsoflowerbeaverdam.org](http://www.friendsoflowerbeaverdam.org)

Photo by Cheryl Cort, Coalition for Smarter Growth: [www.smartergrowth.net](http://www.smartergrowth.net)

Photo by Renee Catacalos, taken at From the Ground Up CSA at Clagett Farm in Upper Marlboro

Photo from Maryland Office of the Governor's Press Office, <http://www.govpics.maryland.gov/>

