

MONTGOMERY COUNTY STRATEGIES

Montgomery County plays a critical housing role in the NRV. The county is home to the region's two largest towns, which house 65 percent of the region's population and serve as the epicenter for housing demand. The county also shares borders with each of the four other localities in the region. Therefore, it will be an important player—and leader—for the regional housing solutions described earlier in the plan, especially the prospective community land trust (CLT) and regional housing trust fund. It will play a substantial role in the viability of the regional strategies that require partnership with other localities in the region.

Strategy 1: Streamline and enhance the PUD process for residential development

Montgomery County has successfully used the Planned Unit Development Residential District (PUD-RES) process to guide the siting, design, and development of many homes. For large-scale developments, the PUD process allows the county to take advantage of flexibility within the zoning ordinance while receiving proper feedback from both planning officials and the public. The county can build on this success by creating pathways for enhancement and improvement to help future PUD proposals adequately meet the county's housing needs.

FRAMEWORK

The following goals will allow the PUD process to adapt to changing market trends and housing needs in the community:

- **Increase public engagement and trust in the PUD process and county planning efforts.** The county's priority should be to increase the education and comfort level of the public around the development process. Although COVID-19 has impacted traditional engagement methods, electronic platforms (such as Bang the Table or MetroQuest) or in-person events (once it is safe to gather) can be utilized in many dynamic ways.
- **Proactively and regularly engage residential developers.** The county should maintain its strong working relationship with the development community not just on a transactional basis but also with respect to long-term land use strategy and market forecasts.
- **Identify ways to streamline the provision of more diverse and cost-efficient housing types within development proposals.** The PUD process should continue to facilitate the inclusion of apartments, townhomes, and smaller homes that can be offered at lower prices to expand housing opportunities and create economic diversity. Likewise, the county can consider aligning the PUD process with the proposed CLT to reserve units for low-income households who have trouble competing for units in high-demand areas.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Short-term:

- **Form a working group to monitor the PUD process** and, as needed, make recommendations for changes.

- The work group may be led by county planning staff, planning commissioners, or elected officials, and it should include for-profit and nonprofit developers, lenders, and community representatives.
- The work group should evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the current PUD process, track and monitor PUD development trends (particularly housing types and locations), and investigate similar efforts in leading-edge counties in Virginia.
- Most importantly, the work group should determine whether existing provisions in the current PUD-RES ordinance (e.g., minimum lot area or density) limit the creation of lower-cost housing options.

Mid-term:

- **Develop a “pattern book” companion document** that concurrently shows developers and the public the preferred size, type, and orientation of different housing types within a PUD. This document would not include binding language; rather, it would serve as a conversational tool to quickly build consensus among stakeholders.
 - The pattern book should include renderings and photos of existing developments that meet the preferred criteria and standards for uses outlined in the PUD-RES ordinance, including the following:
 - Single-family dwellings (site-built, detached and attached)
 - Manufactured single-family dwellings
 - Modular construction (single-family and multifamily)
 - Small-scale rentals (e.g., duplexes)
 - Multifamily dwellings (two to four stories)
 - Common areas (e.g., playgrounds and green spaces)
 - Street design elements
 - An example pattern book is the Pulaski County Land Development Guide from June 2020. While this document covers specific design forms for individual zoning districts, its format and presentation may be a helpful reference.
 - Areas such as Roanoke, Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Hampton, and Powhatan also use pattern books to guide developers and builder as well as assist existing homeowners in renovations and maintenance.
- **Add visualizations to future village plans.** Using the pattern book as a guide, incorporate specific visual preference indicators in future village land-use plans.

LEGAL, FINANCIAL, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- There are no known legal challenges or barriers to this solution.
- This solution does not require the creation of a new policy or program and involves the active monitoring and promotion of existing efforts instead. The staff time required to keep the PUD process successful and to develop an eventual pattern book should be built into operational plans and budgets.
- The work group requires some amount of volunteer labor. The county should set clear expectations for monthly/annual time commitments for group members.

FUNDING SCOPE REQUIREMENTS AND PROJECTED IMPACT

- Although the funding required for the workgroup is minimal, it will require additional staff time.
- For the pattern book, the planning department will need to decide whether it will be produced in-house or contracted out to a third-party consultant. The price will depend on the size and scope of the document.
- The ideal outcome of this solution is that the county's PUD process remains flexible, attractive to developers, and able to produce high-quality developments that further the county's housing goals.

METRICS TO EVALUATE SUCCESS

- A working group is formed and sets a regular meeting schedule.
- The working group produces findings on the efficacy of the current PUD process, and these findings are consumed by staff, planning commission, and board of supervisors.
- The development of a pattern book by the county in three years to guide development in PUDs.
- Developers continue to use PUDs to produce new housing supply in the county.
- Homes developed in PUDs are offered at a range of prices, including those affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

RESPONSIBLE ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES

- Planning department staff will support the work group and guide the creation of a pattern book.
- Planning commissioners, supervisors, developers, and other stakeholders will serve on the work group.

Strategy 2: Reimagine manufactured home communities

Montgomery County's housing stock includes more mobile and manufactured homes than any other jurisdiction in the region. These communities provide low-cost housing options but may be susceptible to inadequate management and limited options for wealth building. Along with support and participation in Regional Strategy 5 for conducting a comprehensive assessment of these communities, the county can take additional steps to explore ways to elevate this unique type of housing.

FRAMEWORK

Due to its large population of manufactured home communities, Montgomery County can become a leader in the revitalization and reimagining of these neighborhoods. Coordinated efforts to "rethink" mobile and manufactured home parks across the state began in the last 5 years, and the county can take advantage of the related growing momentum among state housing institutions, nonprofit organizations, and other localities.

The county's objectives for manufactured home communities in the coming years should include the following:

- **Elevate the role of parks in the county.** In addition to supporting the regional manufactured housing assessment (detailed in Regional Strategy 5), the county can engage park owners and residents, evaluate conditions and needs, and identify opportunities for both the revitalization of existing parks and the creation of new, high-quality ones.
- **Evaluate how the existing zoning promotes or limits manufactured home community revitalization.** Land use plays a critical role for park owners to revitalize or expand their community or to replace existing units. The county can examine and modify its zoning ordinance to support private and nonprofit activity to improve parks.
- **Connect with experts across the state (and beyond) for technical assistance and guidance.** Over the past 5 years, Virginia has seen a growing interest in the reimagining of mobile and manufactured home parks among nonprofit housing organizations, legal aid groups, and state housing officials. This groundswell has led to several nonprofits purchasing parks to redevelop or preserve and to new funding and financing options for this work. The staff should develop strong relationships with these stakeholders to bring new ideas and best practices to the county. There is a longer history supporting and reimagining mobile and manufactured home parks across the country, and innovative, aspirational examples can be drawn from many successful revitalization or newly planned and established communities nationwide.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Short-term:

- Support the regional study effort described in Regional Strategy 5. Specifically, the county could use the study to accomplish three things:
 1. **Begin comprehensive engagement with owners and residents.** This is a prerequisite before any meaningful changes to county policy or programs. As best able, collect contact information for park owners and managers along with any resident associations.

For each park, try to establish an accurate count of households. Use this contact list for regular updates regarding county efforts around manufactured housing.

2. **Determine conditions and needs in parks.** Along with the data collection and analysis to be completed in the regional study, the county should review all information on record about zoning violations, building code violations, and infrastructure issues in mobile and manufactured home parks. These findings can be used to determine which parks may be at-risk and/or failing to provide quality housing to their residents.
3. **Identify opportunities for revitalization of parks.** Such prospects may include parks where the owner is looking to sell (so that a mission-oriented purchaser can be identified), high-performing parks with room to expand (either via added density or new land), or poor-performing parks that may require complete redevelopment.

Mid-term:

- **Determine how manufactured home communities in the county are zoned.**
 - **Evaluate existing zoning districts** (i.e., the PMR Planned Mobile Home Residential Park district) to determine how many current communities are confirming and non-confirming. Identify major “conflict points” where zoning language does not align with existing conditions. Determine if such conflicting language is worth preserving for health and safety purposes or if it can be revised to better allow for park revitalization or development.
 - **Create case studies** of parks in the county (or elsewhere in the region) with recent improvements. These changes may include changes that require rezonings or special permits, such as major infrastructure investments and expansion/addition of units. For each example, discuss the pre-intervention conditions, the process for improvements, financial resources necessary, and the result.
 - **Revise PMR district.** Consider significant revisions to, or a total rewrite of, the PMR district to create a new special district for “21st-century” parks. This district would recognize improvements to the construction quality of new manufactured homes and promote the inclusion of high-quality amenities to create strong communities.
- **Seek out best practices.** Network with experts across the Commonwealth (and, by extension, the country) to ensure that the county is pursuing all opportunities for knowledge, funding, and best practices.
 - Nonprofit sector:
 - The Manufactured Home Community Coalition of Virginia (MHCCV) is a statewide organization committed to improving conditions in mobile and manufactured home parks across Virginia. MHCCV has advised housing providers and local governments on best practices since 2017 and regularly convenes meetings to discuss issues with stakeholders and outside experts. MHCCV’s primary objective for the next 3 years is to facilitate the acquisition of mobile and manufactured home parks by nonprofits and resident cooperatives.
 - project:HOMES is a Richmond-based community development corporation that builds new affordable housing, conducts home repairs, and provides weatherization services. In 2020, it purchased a 50-unit park in poor condition in

Chesterfield County to preserve its affordability and improve conditions for residents.

- Catholics for Housing (CFH) is a Manassas-based housing provider that purchased an at-risk park in 2018. The park faced closure by the city due to significant wastewater infrastructure challenges. CFH successfully secured support from the locality and private donations/financing to acquire the community and complete needed repairs to not displace residents.
- Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville purchased two mobile home parks in the past decade. It has successfully redeveloped one and is undertaking redevelopment of the other (Southwood Mobile Home Park).
- Regional and local legal aid groups (coordinated by Virginia Poverty Law Center and Legal Aid Justice Center) have been conducting outreach in some parks throughout the state and may be a useful resource to understand resident needs.
- Public sector:
 - Chesterfield County planning and community enhancement departments have identified mobile home parks along the Route 1 corridor as a revitalization priority and have supported nonprofit activity to study and improve these communities. The county has also exercised its zoning enforcement capacity to steer owners toward fixing poor conditions in parks.
 - Virginia Housing (formerly VHDA) and DHCD have both increased their interest in and support of manufactured housing in recent years. Both entities are seeking ways to help localities improve mobile home parks and preserve them as affordable housing.

LEGAL, FINANCIAL, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- There are no known legal challenges or barriers to this strategy.
- There are limited financial pathways for homeowners in parks to build equity in their homes. While the county cannot singlehandedly resolve this problem, it can support efforts by other organizations and entities to help develop more equitable options.
- The county can reduce administrative burden for some of these activities by leveraging the involvement of MHCCV and other partners.

FUNDING SCOPE REQUIREMENTS AND PROJECTED IMPACT

- A condition report on all manufactured home communities in the NRV is addressed in Regional Strategy 5 and likely has significant cost. Much of this county-specific strategy may be absorbed in a large-scale regional effort, if funded.
- The impact of this strategy should be that manufactured home communities are recognized as an important source of affordable housing in the county and are therefore given opportunities to become high-quality neighborhoods. This applies both to the revitalization/preservation of existing communities and to the potential creation of new ones.

METRICS TO EVALUATE SUCCESS

- The county participates in regional efforts to study and addresses the needs of manufactured home communities.
- The county has a reliable, updated contact list and inventory of mobile and manufactured home parks.
- The current zoning ordinance is evaluated and revised as needed to support high-quality, innovative park revitalization efforts.
- Manufactured housing parks get newer units, better infrastructure conditions, and relative affordability—without displacing existing residents.

RESPONSIBLE ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES

- Planning department and other relevant county staff can coordinate and assist with the regional study, determine how the zoning ordinance may be improved with respect to manufactured housing communities, and engage with outside experts.
- Manufactured Home Community Coalition of Virginia (MHCCV) and other nonprofit organizations will advise the county on best practices and serve as technical assistance providers as needed.