



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

6611 Kenilworth Avenue • Riverdale, Maryland 20737

September 16, 2026

To: The Commission

Via: Tracey Harvin, Corporate Policy and Management Operations (CPMO) Director

From: Michael Beckham, Corporate Policy and Archives Chief
Michael Doaks, Senior Policy Analyst

Re: Proposed Amendments to Practice 1-50A, Organization and Functions of the Montgomery County Planning Department

Requested Action

The Commission is asked to approve proposed amendments to Administrative Practice 1-50A, *Organization and Functions of the Montgomery County Planning Department*, that mirror changes to the Department's internal structure reflected in the Commission's budget materials.

These amendments were presented to and supported by the Leadership Committee. With the Commission's approval, staff will finalize and promulgate the proposed amendments.

Background

The Montgomery County Planning Department requested revisions to Administrative Practice 1-50A to reflect the Department's reorganized structure and functions, as shown in the Commission's budget materials.

The proposed amendments reorganize the Department's organizational structure by creating, renaming, or restructuring divisions. Key changes include the following six (6) divisions:

1. **Design, Placemaking and Policy Division:** Provides Department-wide expertise on matters related to design, placemaking, zoning, and countywide policy addressing housing, schools, and impact taxes.
2. **Environment and Climate Division:** Serves as the environmental arm of the Planning Department and leads the Department's climate initiatives, including the development of climate policies and studies.
3. **Historic Preservation Division:** Manages all historic preservation functions under county, state, and federal laws related to historic preservation activities in Montgomery County.

4. **Transportation Planning Division:** Leads all transportation planning activities for the Department.
5. **West County Planning Division:** Covers the geographical portion of the county west of Rock Creek Park and I-270, between Washington, DC, and Seneca Creek.
6. **East County Planning Division:** Covers the geographical portion of the county northeast of Washington, DC, and east of Rock Creek Park. It shares a border with Prince George's County.

The West County Planning and East County Planning Divisions replace the Downcounty and Midcounty Planning Divisions, respectively.

The proposed amendments also remove the Countywide Planning and Policy Division and the Intake and Regulatory Coordination Division and reassign their functions among the Department's remaining divisions.

The proposed amendments also assign oversight of the Department's Equity Initiatives to the Deputy Planning Director responsible for administration, policy, and research. These initiatives advance the Department's Equity Agenda for Planning by aligning resources with community needs and embedding equity throughout planning processes.

Attachment A: Proposed Amendments to Practice 1-50A, Organization and Functions of the Montgomery County Planning Department

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE 1-50A,
ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF
THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

Key to Revisions:

Grey Highlighted: Recommended additions.

Strikeout: Recommended deletions.

Bold Italics: Comments to Draft Reviewer

AUTHORITY Pursuant to Division II of the Land Use Article of the Code of Maryland, this Practice was last amended by the Commission on [TBD] ~~October 18, 2023~~.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND This Administrative Practice was originally approved by the Executive Committee on June 30, 1978, to establish the organizational, administrative, and functional aspects of the Montgomery County Planning Department. The Montgomery County Planning Department operates within The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) which is the agency responsible for overall operations and functions of the bi-county agency of which the Montgomery County Planning Department is part. The Commission is the governing body of the bi-county agency comprised of ten (10) members from the Montgomery County and Prince George's County Planning Boards.

The Montgomery County Planning Department, managed by the Planning Director, is subject to the oversight of the Montgomery County Planning Board, the Commission, and the annual capital and operating budgets that define its work program. These budgets are approved by the Planning Board, the Commission, and the Montgomery County Council.

Since its inception, this Practice has been amended as follows:

- October 18, 2023: Amended to update the organizational structure and functions of the Montgomery County Planning Department including the creation of a Communications Division and to update the legal citations for its authority.
- [TBD]: Amended to reflect the reorganization of the structure and functions of the Montgomery County Planning Department to better address current priorities. The reorganized structure includes the following divisions: Director's Office, Management Services Division, Communications and Engagement Division, Transportation Planning Division, West County Planning Division, East County Planning Division, Upcounty Planning

Division, Environment and Climate Division, Information Technology and Innovation Division, Research and Strategic Projects Division, Historic Preservation Division, and Design, Placemaking and Policy Division.

REFERENCES

- Annotated Code of Maryland, Land Use Article Division II

MISSION

The mission of the Montgomery County Planning Department is to collaboratively plan for equitable, sustainable, and economically healthy communities, improve quality of life, and encourage healthy lifestyles in Montgomery County by planning the natural and built environments for current and future generations.

ORGANIZATION

The Montgomery County Planning Department is headed by the Planning Director, also known as the “Department Head,” with assistance from two (2) Deputy Planning Directors and eleven (11) ~~nine (9)~~ Division Chiefs.

The Planning Director reports to the Montgomery County Planning Board.

The following divisions report to the Deputy Director responsible for administration, ~~policy county-wide planning~~, and research:

1. Management Services Division
2. Communications and Engagement Division
3. Information Technology and Innovation Division
4. Research and Strategic Projects Division
5. Design, Placemaking and Policy Division ~~Countywide Planning and Policy Division~~

The following divisions report to the Deputy Director responsible for functional planning, area-wide planning, and development review:

1. Environment and Climate Division ~~Intake and Regulatory Coordination (IRC) Division~~
2. Historic Preservation Division
3. Transportation Planning Division

4. ~~West County~~ ~~Downeounty~~ Planning Division
5. ~~East County~~ ~~Midcounty~~ Planning Division
6. Upcounty Planning Division

As necessary, the ~~Planning~~ Director of ~~Planning~~ may reorganize the structure of the Department. The Department's organizational structure shall be accurately depicted in each annual operating budget submission.

See: Attachment A, Montgomery County Planning Department Organizational Chart

FUNCTIONS

A. Planning Director

The Montgomery County Planning Director or designee:

1. Administers the planning program policies.
2. Coordinates the general program scheduling of the Montgomery County Planning Board.
3. Exercises general administration over the Department's organizational units.
4. Provides leadership and executive oversight of the Planning Department's work program, policies, procedures, and strategic planning and provides planning, supervision, and coordination of all planning services.
5. Provides leadership on strategic planning and design issues.
6. Oversees and directs the preparation of the annual departmental budget request, reviews and approves the needs of divisions, and submits requests to budget authorities.
7. Provides coordination with county agency department heads, the Maryland Department of Planning, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, and other public and private sector organizations throughout the Washington D.C. Metropolitan area as well as the State of Maryland and surrounding jurisdictions.
8. Communicates decisions and recommendations to the County Council, the State Legislature, stakeholders in the planning/development process,

legislative bodies, the local development industry, and private citizens.

9. Coordinates with the Parks Director in Montgomery County and other officials in the full commission.

B. The Office of the Planning Director

The Office of the Planning Director:

1. Provides leadership and executive oversight for the Department's work program, policies, procedures, and strategic planning and provides planning, supervision, and coordination of all planning services.
2. Leads updates to the county's adopted General Plan which provides countywide, long-range, and high-level policy direction on Countywide development. The General Plan is implemented through area and functional master plans, zoning, capital improvements, private development, and other tools.
3. Performs community outreach oversight, legislative oversight, and budget management (including management of tax and non-tax revenue sources).

C. Deputy Planning Director

The following functions are ~~conducted~~ ~~carried out~~ by the divisions that report to the Deputy Planning Director responsible for oversight of management services support, design, placemaking and policy, research and strategic projects, ~~countywide planning activities, data analysis, research, and special studies, administrative~~ communications and community engagement, and information technology support and innovation:

1. The Management Services Division (MSD):

- a. Provides financial, budgetary, and procurement services by overseeing resource allocation, monitoring expenditures, preparing budgets, and coordinating purchasing processes ~~Supports a variety of policy, financial, budgetary, procurement, and personnel needs, while ensuring the Department's ability to attain its goals and objectives.~~
- b. Manages all levels of human resources services, including recruiting qualified staff, facilitating professional development, leading the Department's diversity efforts, and providing employee relations support to ensure the Department is better equipped to fulfill its mission. ~~Leads the Department's organizational development program and diversity efforts.~~

- c. Provides a variety of services that directly support other departmental divisions and assists the Director's Office with implementing internal policies and procedures to support the administrative functions within the Department.

2. The **Communications and Engagement Division (COM)**:

- a. Serves as a resource for the department, empowering leadership, planners, and staff to effectively engage all members of the community; and to gain public and private understanding, approval, and consensus on planning work.
- b. Plans, develops, and facilitates communication and promotion of the Montgomery County Planning Department's identity, purpose, priorities, projects, and research.
- c. Crafts strategic communication approaches and campaigns by working with planners to understand Montgomery Planning's diverse audiences and to design and activate audience-focused outreach.
- d. Provides consultation, advice, training, tools, and resources to enable staff to communicate in a unified voice about the Department's mission and values.
- e. Manages the Information Counter and provides the public with access to current and historic development application records, zoning maps, plats, and department publications.
- f. Bridges the gap by managing the Community Planning Academy (CPA) and developing tools that foster transparency and trust.

3. The **Information Technology and Innovation (ITI) Division** is an interdepartmental entity serving both the Montgomery County Planning and Parks Departments. The division:

- a. Maintains a secure and reliable state-of-the-art data infrastructure.
- b. Supports mission-critical applications, telecommunications, mobile computing, and desktop support to guide land development decisions and recommendations for the Planning and Parks Departments as well as the County Council.

e. Maintains the Planning Department's geographic information system (GIS)

c. Provides digital and information infrastructure and services.

d. Provides 24/7 technology support to the Planning Department, Commissioners' Office, and Department of Parks.

4. The **Research and Strategic Projects (RSP) Division:**

a. Conducts policy-relevant research and special projects for the Planning Department.

b. Supports the development of master plans and land use policy decisions by gathering and analyzing data on a range of topics, including demographics, housing, local economy, development, employment, and real estate markets.

c. Oversees special studies requiring outside expertise.

d. Informs and helps guide decisions by Planning staff, the Planning Board, the County Council, and the public on policy and planning questions.

e. Develops the County's forecast of jobs, households, and population.

f. Provides analyses of census demographics, residential and commercial markets, and land use trends as well as research and analyses of trends, economic impacts, and public policy issues for the Planning Board, Planning Department, County Council, and County Executive departments.

g. Provides information on land use that is useful to the County's fiscal impact analysis for master plans and text amendments.

h. Maintains the Planning Department's geographic information system (GIS). Including serving as the authority for GIS layer files related to land use and zoning. This work also includes developing and maintaining web applications, reports and special projects related to GIS mapping.

1 **5. The Design, Placemaking and Policy (DPP) Division:**
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- 3 a. Provides department-wide expertise on matters related to design,
4 placemaking, zoning, and countywide policy addressing housing,
5 schools, and impact taxes.
6
7 b. Partners with county agencies, resident groups, and private property
8 owners to implement short-term public space improvements that
9 demonstrate the potential of recommendations developed within
10 ongoing masterplans.
11
12 c. Takes the lead in developing design guidelines, conducting design
13 review of development applications, and ensuring masterplans, studies
14 and countywide initiatives meet the goals of the department's Design
15 Excellence program.
16
17 d. Promotes good design, where placemaking and zoning policies orient
18 buildings, streets, public spaces and civic institutions around people and
19 their natural settings, attracting businesses, residents, and social activity,
20 and elevating the experience of daily life.
21
22 e. Prepares and evaluates zoning and subdivision text amendments and
23 prepares legislative responses.
24
25 f. Provides specialized design expertise, analysis, and policy coordination
26 to the geographic Regional Planning teams.
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28 In addition to the five divisions above, the Deputy Planning Director also
29 oversees Equity Initiatives for the Planning Department. These Equity
30 Initiatives include the following:
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- 32 1. Advancing the department's Equity Agenda for Planning by understanding
33 local populations and their experiences and implementing tools and trust-
34 building activities such as interpretation and translation services; hybrid and
35 in-person engagement logistics; and responsive engagement adjustments
36 based on community feedback.
37
38 2. Aligning resources with community needs, fostering collaboration across
39 departments, and embedding equity into all planning processes.
40
41 3. Ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed and that
42 equity is embedded in all planning processes.
43

1 4. Focusing on historically underinvested regions and vulnerable
2 communities. Foster community capacity to participate in the planning
3 process.

4
5 5. Supporting the implementation of adopted plans through monitoring
6 development approvals, staging, and public projects to ensure alignment
7 with long-term goals for growth, equity, and sustainability.

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9 **5. ~~The Countywide Planning and Policy (CPP) Division:~~**

10
11 ~~a. Serves as the comprehensive planning and countywide policy arm of the~~
12 ~~Department, addressing issues and plans that affect more than one area~~
13 ~~of the county, such as the transportation network, zoning, housing,~~
14 ~~growth management, historic and natural resources, and water quality.~~

15
16 ~~b. Develops functional master plans on countywide topics.~~

17
18 ~~c. Develops and evaluates countywide policies, answering policy~~
19 ~~questions.~~

20
21 ~~d. Updates and implements the county's quadrennial Growth and~~
22 ~~Infrastructure Policy that informs Planning Board decision making on~~
23 ~~development projects and ensures development complies with the~~
24 ~~county's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance.~~

25
26 ~~e. Participates in studies conducted by local, state, or regional agencies,~~
27 ~~keeping current on policies and regulations affecting the county.~~

28
29 ~~f. Prepares and/or evaluates zoning and subdivision text amendments and~~
30 ~~prepares plans or legislative responses.~~

31
32 ~~g. Provides specialized expertise, analysis, and policy coordination (as~~
33 ~~needed) to the geographic area divisions.~~

34
35 **D. Deputy Planning Director:**

36 The Deputy Planning Director responsible for area-wide planning and
37 development review oversees the Environment and Climate Division, Historic
38 Preservation, the Transportation Planning Division, and the ~~Downcounty,~~
39 ~~Mideounty~~ West County, East County, and Upcounty Planning Divisions and
40 Intake and Regulatory Coordination (IRC) Divisions.

41
42 **1. The Environment and Climate (ENV) Division:**

- a. Serves as the environmental arm of the Planning Department and leads the department's climate initiatives, including the development of climate policies and studies.
- b. Reviews environmental regulatory plans, drafts environmental Master Plans, plans for climate resilience, provides public guidance on managing trees and easements, and enforces the forest conservation law and other plan approvals.
- c. Participates in the countywide group addressing the Climate Action Plan and other countywide environmental initiatives including floodplain designations, water quality, and heat mapping.
- d. Performs inspections and enforcement actions to comply with the Forest Conservation Law, Subdivision Plans and Site Plans.
- e. Provides expert tree and forest advice to residents with conservation easements; manages the Reforest Montgomery Program to increase the tree and forest canopy in the County.
- f. Provides resources to support planting trees on individual lots or parcels and manages contractors to ensure the plantings occur and are maintained.
- g. Responsible for Forest Conservation legislation and Subdivision Regulations legislation.
- h. Implements the department's climate assessment responsibilities under county code to ensure they are completed in a consistent and thorough manner.
- i. Ensures that climate recommendations are integrated throughout each master plan and through the development review process.
- j. Addresses the disproportionate effect of climate change on people of color, vulnerable populations, and low-income households.

2. The **Transportation Planning Division (TPD)**:

- a. Leads all transportation planning activities for the Department.
- b. Prepares, reviews, and implements transportation functional plans, the transportation element of areas master plans, transportation policies and

1 legislation, the transportation element of regulatory projects and
2 transportation planning studies and mandatory referrals.

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4 c. Reviews transportation alternative analyses and mandatory referrals.

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6 d. Intra- and inter-agency coordination and collaboration on transportation
7 planning issues and initiatives.

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9 e. Coordinates with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation
10 and the Maryland State Highway Administration on the development and
11 review of transportation planning studies and capital projects.

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13 f. Reviews the transportation element of regulatory projects.

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15 g. Prepares the Biennial Travel Monitoring Report, including the Bicycle
16 Master Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan reports.

17
18 h. Provides transportation policy guidance on Vision Zero and Complete
19 Streets.

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21 i. Develops the transportation Capital Improvements Program and
22 Consolidated Transportation Program.

23
24 j. Develops the transportation adequacy element of master plans.

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26 **3. The Historic Preservation (HP) Division:**

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28 a. Manages all historic preservation functions under county, state, and
29 federal laws related to historic preservation activities in Montgomery
30 County.

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32 b. Responsible for regulatory, master planning, and archaeological work,
33 which address all historic preservation, cultural resources, and burial
34 sites/archaeological matters countywide.

35
36 c. Serve as the staff for the Historic Preservation Commission, reviewing
37 and processing Historic Area Work Permits, administering the County's
38 historic preservation tax credit, and managing the Planning Board's
39 Burial Sites Inventory and Burial Sites program.

40
41 d. Manages historic preservation planning and capital grants, oversees the
42 county's historic preservation easement program, and coordinates all
43 matters involving the countywide Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

- e. Provides specialized expertise, analysis, and policy coordination (as needed) to the geographic Area divisions.
- f. Evaluates zoning and subdivision text amendments, prepare legislative responses, and manage the Certified Local Government accreditation for the Department.
- g. Coordinates with the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) and the Department on Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) regarding violations of Chapter 24A, site inspections, and other permitting and enforcement matters concerning historically designated properties and sites on the Burial Sites inventory.
- h. Implements programming related to the countywide functional Master Plan for Historic Preservation and the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites.

1. ~~The Intake and Regulatory Coordination (IRC) Division:~~

- ~~a. Manages the procedural requirements for development applications, including assignment, tracking, and monitoring of all development applications.~~
- ~~b. Provides the sole point of entry for developer applicants.~~
- ~~c. Ensures public access to development applications and information on development.~~
- ~~d. Chairs the inter-agency Development Review Committee.~~
- ~~e. Manages public noticing requirements for development applications.~~
- ~~f. Assigns street names and addresses.~~
- ~~g. Conducts building permit sign-off and plat review and recordation.~~
- ~~h. Manages the Information Counter and provides the public with access to current and historic development application records, zoning maps, plats, and department publications.~~
- ~~i. Performs inspections and enforcement actions to comply with the Forest Conservation Law, Subdivision Plans, and Site Plans.~~

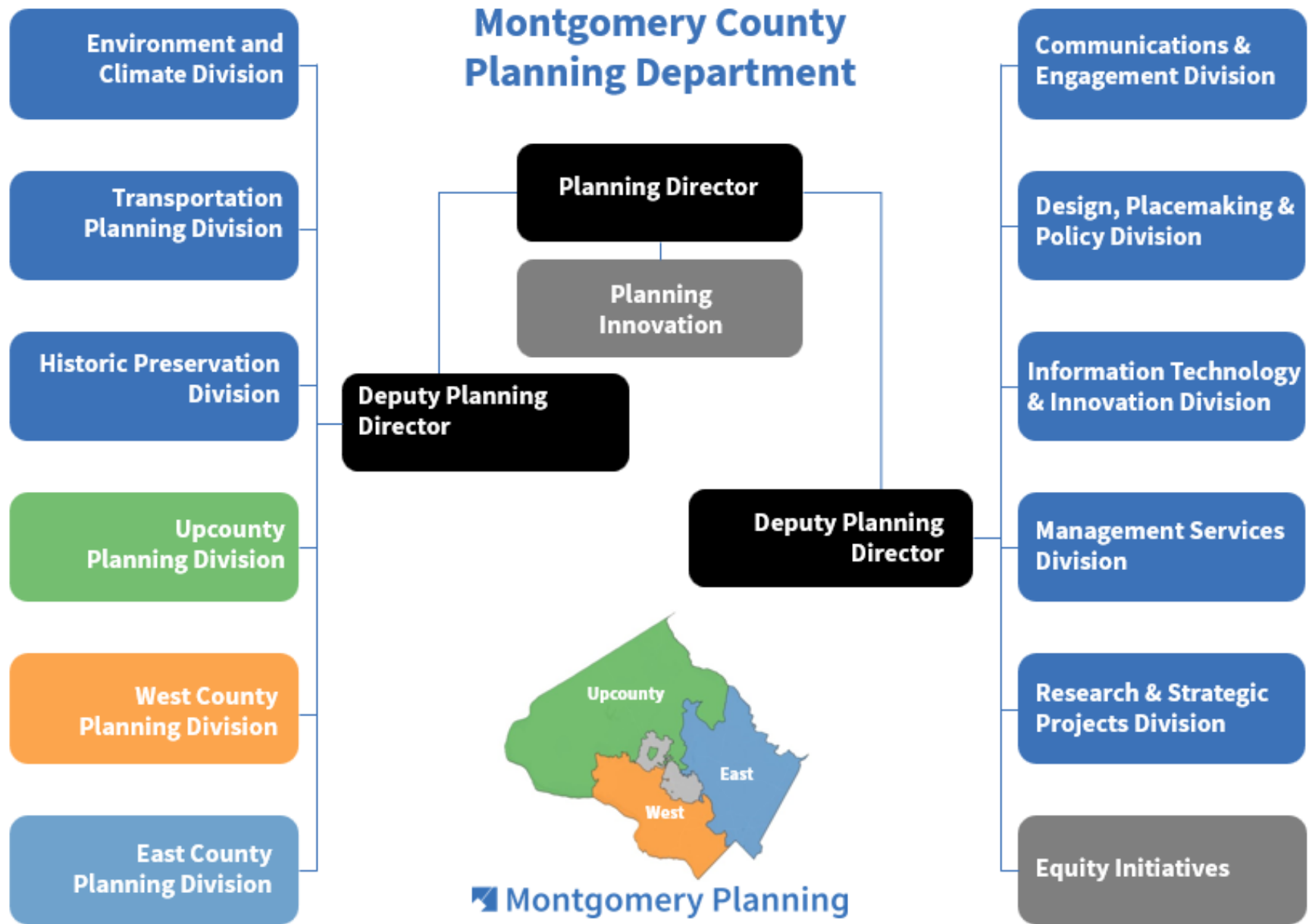
j. ~~Manages the Reforest Montgomery Program to increase the tree and forest canopy in the County. This program identifies places to plant forests on public land and within recorded but unforested conservation easements, provides resources to support planting trees on individual lots or parcels, and manages contractors to ensure the plantings occur and are maintained.~~

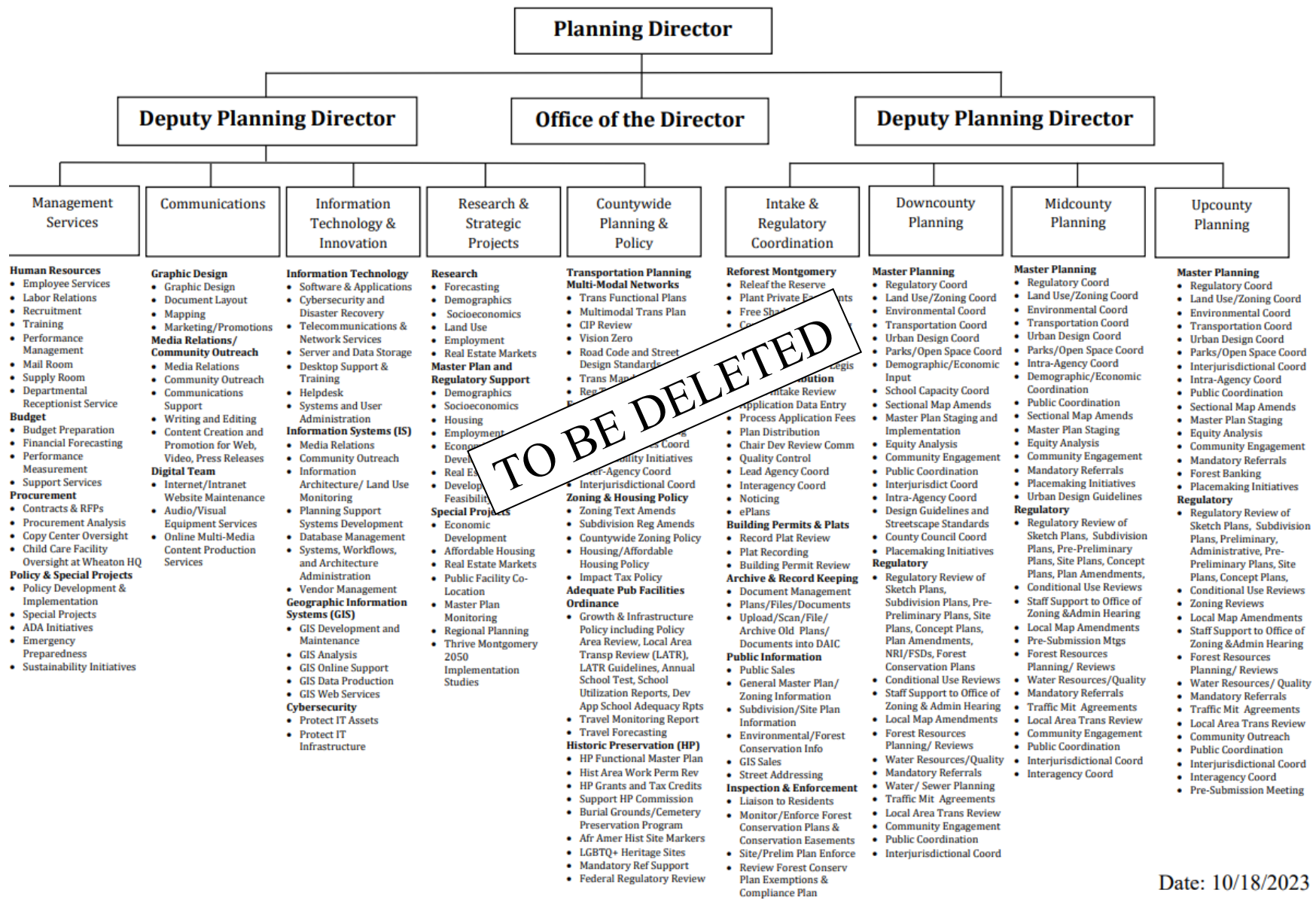
4. The **West County (WCP), East County (ECP), Downcounty, Midcounty and Upcounty (UCP) Planning Divisions** each perform ~~carry out~~ the following functions:

- a. Prepares master plans, sector plans, studies, and guidelines.
- b. Provides orderly, functional, and well-designed development consistent with sector or master plans.
- c. Provides timely and coordinated analysis of development applications, including but not limited to zoning, conditional uses, and regulatory reviews (including reviews of project plans, sketch plans, preliminary plans, and site plans), to implement area master plans, sector plans, and other public plans and policies.
- d. Provides recommendations to assist in conserving environmental resources.
- e. Provides the integration of environmental and transportation considerations from the earliest phases of the planning and development process.
- f. Provides guidance on multiple modes of transportation consistent with the best land use development and planning practices.
- g. Reviews proposed projects for consistency with County plans, policies, and guidelines and compatibility with surrounding development.
- h. Provides recommendations for innovative environmental practices.
- i. Assists community advisory committees, as necessary.
- j. Promotes the creation of equitable, vibrant, sustainable, and resilient communities that are inclusive, interconnected through multi-modal transportation networks, and offer a variety of affordable and attainable housing types.

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5. The **West County Division** covers the geographical portion of the county west of Rock Creek Park and I-270, between Washington, DC, and Seneca Creek. This area includes Friendship Heights, Chevy Chase Lake, Bethesda, Westbard, North Bethesda, the Great Seneca Science Corridor, and Potomac. Many of these areas contain stations for the Metro Red Line, as well as future Purple Line transit stops in Bethesda and Chevy Chase Lake, providing new opportunities for additional transit-oriented housing, jobs, urban parks, and other community facilities and amenities for county residents ~~Downcounty Division covers the geographical portion of the county south of Interstate 495 (Capital Beltway), including the Silver Spring, Bethesda, and Friendship Heights Central Business Districts (CBDs), Takoma Park, Chevy Chase Lake, Greater Lyttonsville, Long Branch, Montgomery Hills, and Westbard.~~
 6. The **East County Division** covers the geographical portion of the county northeast of Washington, DC, and east of Rock Creek Park. It shares a border with Prince George's County ~~Midecounty Division covers the geographical portion of the county north of I-495, including areas along Georgia Avenue north to Norbeck Road, the Wheaton Central Business District (CBD); along US-29 east to Cherry Hill Road/Randolph Road; along Rockville Pike (MD-355) and the I-270 corridor through Gaithersburg. This includes the central portion of Montgomery County, between developed urban centers south of the Capital Beltway and more rural areas to the north.~~
 7. The **Upcounty Division** covers approximately 75 percent of Montgomery County, including most of the county's rural areas. This includes the county's 93,000-acre Agricultural Reserve, the environmentally sensitive Special Protection Areas, and several communities, such as Fairland, Burtonsville, Sandy Spring, Ashton, Olney, Damascus, Clarksburg, Germantown, Darnestown, and Potomac.

Refer to the annual program budget for further details about current projects and staff allocations.





Date: 10/18/2023