

The members of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) envision the National Capital Region as a great place to live, work, play and learn. Currently ranked the 4th largest economy in the nation and 7th in population this region has much from which to be proud. From its booming economy and highly educated and diverse population to its world class Metrorail system, natural resources, renowned system of parks and recreation and quality of life, this region is -by most accounts- flourishing.

Slowly chipping away at this success however, are the issues of aging infrastructure transportation gridlock, rising energy costs, and climate change - each projected to worsen in the coming decades. Regionally adopted forecasts for job and population growth show a tremendous influx of people to this region in the next half century. They also show a region where congestion, sprawl and environmental degradation will be the norm if the current patterns of development remain unchanged. To shape our future and to maintain and improve our quality of life, this region deserves bold action, not business as usual.

The Greater Washington 2050 Initiative presents a unique opportunity to create a framework for sustainable growth and development over the next 50 years. Inherent in this process is the development of a set of shared regional principles to respond to the issues of land use, economic growth, environmental quality, transportation, affordable housing, population and demographics, education, health, climate and energy. Through comprehensive analysis of our member jurisdictions' local comprehensive plans, we have identified principles from which future planning and development should be founded.

Aspirational Principles

Conservation of resources; efficient use of energy; effective integration of transportation and land use; reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; maximization of economic potential; all to create sustainable communities and an environment that supports the public health and welfare.

- Encourage communities designed and developed in concert with a broad range of public and private transportation choices.
- Encourage compact development in currently developed areas to capitalize on existing infrastructure, and to reduce travel demand, land consumption, and impervious surface and to encourage a diversity of uses, including housing types and employment opportunities.
- Encourage preservation of open space, farmland, and critical environmental resources.
- Encourage economic development and educational investments that enable a diversified, stable, and competitive economy to ensure continued prosperity and the future provision of jobs for all residents of the region.
- Encourage green and location-efficient building, renewable energy sources, alternative fuels, and other techniques for minimizing negative environmental consequences of community life.

Strategic Principles

Adoption of plans, policies, and regulations concrete enough to ensure advancing the Region's aspirations and flexible enough to allow the Region and its communities to adapt to unanticipated economic, environmental, and social changes.

- Provide a mix of land uses in a walkable environment through more creative and flexible zoning and development regulations.
- Provide a range of housing opportunities and choices for residents of different incomes and needs.

- Provide transportation solutions and other public infrastructure designed to encourage and service development consistent with the Region's aspirations.
- Provide for mutual consultation with the federal government to capitalize on the critical role the federal government plays in the Region, particularly in job creation and location.

Social Principles

Consideration of fair and equitable distribution of costs and benefits associated with providing public good and services and which promoting regional equity and reduce local and regional disparities.

- Design and support greater access to a range of jobs, quality healthcare, education, and social services.
- Design and support adequate social services to accommodate the Region's diverse population, including the aging, immigrant, and special needs populations.
- Design communities that enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within a community.
- Design and support funding mechanisms that recognize, as a general rule, that people, businesses, and institutions should pay in proportion to benefits received or in proportion the costs their activities impose on others.
- Design and support subsidies where warranted for equity, environmental, or public policy reasons, but recognize that such subsidies should be transparent and explicitly justified and approved.

Participatory Principles

Ensure transparency and extensive community and stakeholder participation in planning decisions and other public actions affecting regional development.

- Such decisions should include actions on comprehensive planning, zoning, capital improvement programs, infrastructure timing and location, and bonded indebtedness.
- Information about such decisions – local and regional – should be broadly distributed and mechanisms for public input maintained and enhanced.