

# Montgomery could stop development cold

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Council president wants no building permits issued until new growth policy's in place

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To control the staggering growth projected in Montgomery County, controversial new limits on development might not be far away.

And in the meantime, new development could be stopped dead in its tracks.

As one of her first duties as County Council president, Marilyn Praisner on Tuesday premiered resolutions that would require the Planning Board to alter the county's growth policy as well as halt new building permits from going through the board until that happens.

The first, which was batted back and forth by most of the council members, will be voted on Dec. 12 and essentially mandates that the Planning Board prepare a complete plan for directing growth in the county by next May. In that



A new house takes shape in the Potomac View development in Potomac. Montgomery County Council President Marilyn Praisner introduced a resolution Tuesday that would require the planning board to alter the county's growth policy.

— Andrew Harsik/Examiner

plan, Praisner said she wants them to take into account affordable housing goals, traffic generated by federal institutions in the county and public school facilities.

"This is a challenge of management, not of limit," she said. "Really, this takes no action other than to charge the Planning Board to go to work."

According to forecasters, Montgomery County is expected to see a 200,000-person population increase by 2030 and to add 170,000 jobs to its economy.

What that signals to Council Member Phil Andrews is that the need for stronger growth controls is urgent.

"The old policy explicitly added

more jobs than housing," he said Tuesday. "Right now 60 percent of the people in Montgomery County live and work here. It's in our interest to push that number up to improve traffic flow."

But Council Member George Leventhal pointed out that any policy that basically "builds a wall around Montgomery County" will do little to ease roadway congestion and could even drive up existing home prices.

The Council has asked the Planning Board to propose a progressive growth policy, but Praisner said what the board came back with was insufficient — a policy that mandated an allowable percentage of growth for targeted areas.

Her resolution encompasses a much more complex formula. A related item she also introduced Tuesday — and which will be considered in a January public hearing and then in February by the council — would temporarily suspend approval for new subdivisions until the growth policy could be finalized.

Council Member Nancy Floreen said that move would affect about 80 projects.

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