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Doug Duncan talks development in Prince George's

Washington Business Journal - by [Mara Lee](#) Staff Reporter

Former Montgomery County Executive **Doug Duncan** didn't pull any punches in an Oct. 29 speech to developers, economic development officials, politicians and boosters of redevelopment in Prince George's County's older towns such as Bladensburg, Mount Rainier, Riverdale Park and Hyattsville.

There is a magnificent opportunity to grow these older towns in a smart growth TOD fashion without destroying them at the same time — but only if government re-engineers itself along the lines proposed in my [Woodmont Triangle](#) [Bethesda] “Petri dish.”

***We do not zone land properly** — rail-served areas **MUST** maximize sources and destinations of pedestrians within walking distance of stations. Design is key **NOT** formulas.*

***The public realm is government's job.** Government often fails miserably by getting lost in micro-minutia. The miserable state of the economy **DEMANDS** that we fix government now.*

Duncan, who worked on economic development projects for the **University of Maryland** for 18 months until recently, told the audience at the *Urban Edge conference* that the **county's greatest obstacle to growth is the demands it makes of developers.** There are green building standards, local ownership requirements, local worker requirements, labor standards, retail neutrality agreements, community benefit agreements and so on.

*Government has failed to realize that the health of the private sector is critical to government's health. **Only profit-making companies hire people and pay taxes.***

Government's job is to write the rules so that companies find it easier to make money doing the right thing, rather than the wrong things.

“I don't see a real sense of partnership here” between the private and public sector, he says. Instead, he says county officials' attitude is: “We'll tell you what to do.”

Heads nodded in agreement, and he was just warming up. Duncan says one elected official told him the philosophy is: “You squeeze the developer 'til you get everything you ask for — and then squeeze some more, because you haven't gotten enough.”

*This is a self-destructive attitude that is based on ignorance. It is a consequence of the failure to govern at the right level — **BIG PICTURE** and **LONG TERM.***

Contentiousness, distrust and delay hurts government even more than it hurts the private sector.

*Please go to the [Woodmont Triangle](#) page of my website www.VirtualAdjacency.com and read section 15: **Party's over in Montgomery** and section 16: **County's dirty little secret***