



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING

Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

Deborah A. Carpenter, AICP, Division Director
Kimberly Gaines, Director

Investing in Workers & Workplaces Advisory Group Meeting 5 July 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes

I. Meeting Details

Meeting date and time: Tuesday, July 9, 2024, at 2:00 PM

Meeting location: 585 Himes Avenue, Frederick, Maryland 21703

II. Attendance

Advisory Group members present: Andrew Brown, Chris Smariga, Danielle Adams, Brian Morris, Lisa Graditor, Karen Cannon, Don Pleasants, Matt Holbrook, Tony Checchia, Brian Sweeney, Kai Hagen, Eric Soter

Advisory Group members absent: Louise Kennelly, Taylor Davis

County staff present: DPP: Kimberly Gaines, Denis Superczynski, Karin Flom, Andrew Stine; DEO: Beth Woodring, Patty McDonald, Troy Bolyard; Office of Agriculture: Katie Stevens, Shannon O'Neil

III. Call to Order

Denis Superczynski brought the meeting to order at 2:00 PM and welcomed the advisory group members and guests.

IV. Purpose of the Plan

Denis reminded the group of the purposes of this plan, which include: expanding the non-residential tax base; being selective and prioritizing targeted industries; having an adequate supply of land developable for employment sites; and maintaining the character of the County. Denis summarized the process to date and next steps. The advisory group has been meeting since May and will have one additional meeting on July 23 at this stage in the planning process. A public outreach process will follow in September, with opportunities for members of the public to offer their insights and perspective on the issues this planning effort seeks to address. The advisory group will again be convened for a check-in after drafting begins.

V. Follow-Up: Land Use Discussion

Denis described existing growth areas, which are designated through County and municipal comprehensive planning processes. Accordingly, growth areas are amended through a comprehensive planning process. The Planning Commission submits a recommended plan to the County Council, which may approve, deny, or modify the Planning Commission's recommendation. There are opportunities for public input at each stage of the process.

Denis noted that there is a process for property owners to apply for a floating zone. Staff is not dispensing with the idea of a floating zone at this stage of the process. Denis described the importance of reconciling the County plans with the municipal plans and taking care to plan for municipal annexation as appropriate.

Denis reminded the group of the importance of considering our workforce, transportation, and housing needs throughout this process.

VI. Small Group Strategic Mapping Exercise – Focus Areas

Denis described the mapping exercise and the accompanying questionnaire responses from the June 25, 2024 advisory group meeting. He noted that there was a lot of agreement among the four small groups on focus areas for employment opportunities, and some differences. Denis then described the first category of these areas – the municipal growth areas for the City of Frederick, the City of Brunswick, the Town of Thurmont, and the I-70 / Route 75 area in the New Market growth area.

Denis noted that each municipality has its own comprehensive plan and its own zoning authority. It was noted that there are many ways that the County can undermine implementation of municipal plans, including zoning land just outside of the municipality for low-density development which discourages property owner interest in annexation. Denis suggested that the County could develop a new land use designation for properties that have been identified for annexation and partner with the municipalities on infrastructure improvements.

Preservation of land designated for growth by the County or a municipality through a comprehensive planning process was also identified as an impediment to economic development, smart growth, and plan implementation. A specific example of a property that was preserved in the City of Frederick's growth area and has blocked the extension of a comprehensive planned street was described.

In response to a question about the scoring of applications for agricultural land preservation, Katie Stevens noted that points are awarded for properties adjacent to a growth area. Shannon O'Neil stated that the agricultural land preservation program does not recognize growth areas designated by the municipalities in their comprehensive plans. Kimberly Gaines noted that the municipal plans and the growth areas contained therein have the same legal status as the County comprehensive plan and the County-designated growth areas. The County is currently in the process of reconciling growth areas, with Myersville having been reviewed by the Planning Commission in May and the review of Middletown scheduled for the July 17, 2024 Planning Commission meeting. Reconciliation for Thurmont, the City of Frederick, and the City of Brunswick could occur through the IW2 planning process.

Kimberly Gaines stated that County staff has been in touch with the municipal planners about this planning effort, which will be coordinated with them to ensure that the IW2 plan appropriately supports and is consistent with municipal planning.

It was suggested that the IW2 plan include a policy statement that the County will prioritize support of municipal needs, like utility infrastructure, to foster implementation of the municipal plans and Livable Frederick.

It was noted that housing must be considered and employment opportunities should be sited in areas where housing for employees exists or is planned. The importance of protecting and maintaining green infrastructure was described.

The Jefferson Tech Park area and the Mount Phillip Road/Elmer Derr Road/Mount Zion Road areas were next discussed. The proximity of I-70 was noted as a strength for its ability to mitigate real or perceived impacts of development. Interstate access at McCain Drive was discussed, though questions were raised about the ability to construct an urban interchange at this location because of the proximity of other interchanges. The possibility of a fly-over was noted.

The Urbana area and the I-270 corridor were discussed. Denis noted that these areas will be the subject of a separate planning effort described in the Livable Frederick Work Program and planned for 2026. The core of Urbana is approaching buildout. The Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan was discussed, and it was noted that the planning area extended to the west side of I-270. It was noted that the Data Center Workgroup recommended that data centers not be permitted within Priority Preservation Areas or Treasured Landscapes, such as Sugarloaf. Traffic congestion on Route 80 was identified as an issue. It was recommended that the IW2 plan address the ORI along the east side of I-270. It is recognized that the ORI

land use and zoning designations, which support office park development, are outdated. Sewer capacity was discussed, with a dosed pumping station offered as a potential solution to the limitations associated with the Monocacy Battlefield to the north. The need for flow monitoring was noted. Sewer clubs, like road clubs, were suggested as a way to share the costs associated with the utility infrastructure needs in this area. A tax increment financing (TIF) district and a public private partnership (P3) were also suggested for consideration. The Araby area was discussed. It was stated that care should be taken to avoid having the growth areas merge together and form a continuous strip of development; the growth areas should be distinct and separate to maintain their character and the character of the County.

It was stated that thousands of acres will be needed to meet the goals of this plan, which include increasing the non-residential tax base and increasing employment opportunities in the various target industries. It was noted that some of this need will be met in the South Frederick Corridors planning area, though there may be some displacement that creates need elsewhere. Potential acreage amounts discussed to increase the non-residential tax base to 28% ranged from 6,000 to 10,000 acres. The idea of setting a target – like the agricultural land preservation target of 160,000 acres – was suggested. It was noted that generally 60% of acreage is developable, so gross vs. net acreage should be considered.

The issue of planned industrial development was raised, specifically buildout of the Quantum datacenter campus and the impact that this will have on the non-residential tax base. This development should be considered as part of the calculation that will help to get to 28%.

The importance of maximizing the value per acre of development was discussed. Concerns with potential impacts to the agricultural industry were stated, though it was noted that a portion of the transfer tax supports the agricultural land preservation program. Concern was expressed with using the Priority Preservation Areas and land preservation to box-in growth areas and, ultimately, encourage leap-frog development.

VII. General Discussion & Next Steps

The Ballenger/New Design area north of the Eastalco/Quantum site will be discussed at the July 23 meeting, which will be the last advisory group meeting for this information gathering stage of the planning process. Public outreach will commence in September.

In terms of process, it was asked if the advisory committee will be voting on discussion items. Denis stated that the advisory committee will not be asked to vote. Staff will note areas of agreement and areas of disagreement and present them as such moving forward.

VIII. Adjournment

With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.