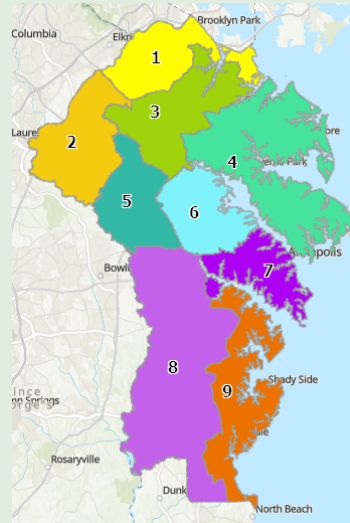




ALLIANCE

FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

## Experiments in Regional Planning will soon begin



### **Expect Regional Planning to be a learning process**

Plan2040 has been approved by the AA County Council and now the planning process will focus on the Regional Area Plans (RAP's). Although planning for 16 small areas was carried out prior to the 2009 GDP, Regional planning in this round will occur after the broader general plan. It will involve dividing the County into 9 regions, shown in the map above, and planning will be carried out for three of these at a time. The order of the plans was established by Amendment 2 and the first three will be Regions 2, 4, and 7.

This type of small area planning is new for the County, and we should expect the first plans to be the products of a learning process. How are Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) members selected, how is information gathered from the local region, what degree of influence will the SAC have on the actual content of the plan, and many other issues will have to be resolved.

### **Who is a stakeholder?**

Composition of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee's will have a strong influence on the content of the RAP's. SAC members for each region will be selected by the County Executive with input from the County Council. If the goal of the RAP's is to plan for the people who live in the Region now, we should hope that the SAC's would be composed of a cross-section of current residents.

Amendment 55 of Plan2040 requires that the SAC's be composed of 9 to 15 members, only 2/3 of whom must be residents of the Region. Recommended backgrounds of SAC members are shown in the chart below.

<u>Long-time resident property owner/renter (over 20 years)</u>	<u>Recent resident property owner/renter (less than 10 years)</u>	<u>HOA or Civic Association Board Member</u>
<u>Local business representative</u>	<u>Home builder/ real estate developer</u>	<u>Military, Department of Defense, or Other Relevant Government Agency or Contractor</u>
<u>Environmental organization</u>	<u>Community/ social organization</u>	<u>Affordable Housing Advocate</u>
<u>Member from a Commercial or Maritime Association</u>	<u>Real Estate broker</u>	<u>Member of a School Organization</u>
<u>Young adult representative</u>	<u>Member of a Local Recreation Council or Group</u>	<u>Farming and Agriculture representative"</u>

### *Council-recommended SAC composition*

We note that the chart contains a strong representation of commercial interests, but is weak in representation of simple salaried workers who constitute the large majority of the population. We can only trust that the County Executive will vet prospective SAC members very carefully to assure representation of all citizens of the Region.

### **Surveys and data collection**

Past experience with Plan2040 and several Master Plans has shown that the engagement of citizens that is required to develop community visioning can be challenging. It is not enough to simply hold a couple of town halls and encourage unstructured comments from the 30 or 40 people who attend. More extensive and specific citizen input will be needed, and this will be facilitated by making it as easy as possible.

OPZ has begun using online surveys as a means for information gathering, and these show promise for assessing the opinions of regional residents. It would be desirable to construct extensive email lists for each region using lists currently available to the County, augmented by contributions from the SAC members, and opt-in opportunities presented in other avenues of communication. These could be used to distribute short surveys characterized by questions with answers that can be quantified and statistically analyzed (for example, options ranking or multiple choice).

Email contact information for SAC members should be publicly available, much as it was for CAC members. All SAC meetings also should be open to the public with time reserved for public comment.

### **Councilmanic courtesy**

Regional Area Plans will require approval by the County Council, which will also act upon recommendations made for comprehensive rezoning. Council deliberation of Plan2040 showed that Councilmanic courtesy often prevailed in the land use decision process. Since each region will be associated with one or two Councilmembers, it seems possible that ultimate approval of each RAP may effectively be at the discretion of just one or two Councilmembers. This could create extensive lobbying opportunities for special interests and threaten the representation of the broader community.

**The Alliance urges all Anne Arundel County citizens to monitor and engage in the Regional Planning process.**

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### **About the Alliance**

*The Anne Arundel Alliance for Livable Communities is a non-partisan coalition of 25 local and state organizations advocating for sustainable growth and environmental protections to safeguard and enhance residents' quality of life.*

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## Anne Arundel Alliance for Livable Communities



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