



ALLIANCE  
FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

## Plan2040: Is its growth plan truly smart?

**The new GDP should emphasize planning that will benefit the people here now**



After much anticipation, the [first complete draft of Plan2040](#) is available for public review. It is very nicely presented and contains some desirable goals and policies aimed at topics such as environmental protection, rural preservation, and redevelopment. However, it is built around the assumption that overall growth of the county's residential population will continue at market driven rates, with an overall population increase of 50,000 residents by 2040. This assumption must be questioned.

**Input solicited from current residents** in visioning sessions and surveys and the successful campaign of the County Executive that included limiting development have all demonstrated that growth rates experienced during the prior administration were unacceptably large. However, the housing market projection used in Plan2040 corresponds to an almost identical growth rate.

**Policies in Plan2040 are intended to focus growth toward town centers, transit centers, and redevelopment areas** in the northern and western parts of the county and Parole, and to preserve low density neighborhoods, agricultural areas, and undeveloped environmental areas. This is so-called smart growth, and if growth is inevitable the concept is smarter than allowing continuing sprawl. Growth, however, is not an inevitability. It is something that current residents allow either explicitly by supporting policies conducive to growth or implicitly through lack of political involvement. Growth is smart only when it serves the needs of citizens here now.

**The Healthy Economy section of the plan** details policies and strategies aimed at marketing and incentivizing development in the designated growth areas and particularly in the area near Ft. Meade. Marketing programs to attract businesses and developers, prioritization of capital budgets to assure adequate public facilities, and development guarantees in return for private investment are proposed. While these may be desirable for redevelopment and revitalization areas, development in support of Ft. Meade is not in

this category. Many of the Ft. Meade employees and contractors are relatively transient white-collar workers. Expanding communities in West County to accommodate them will have little benefit for the current residents of the area or the County, and employment opportunities for currently unemployed blue-collar workers would see little improvement.

**The desired quantity and type of development in the various areas of the County varies widely and there is a fundamental need for local control of these issues.** The move toward extensive use of Regional Plans in long range planning is encouraging, but previous experience with Small Area Plans prior to the 2009 GDP has demonstrated that the Regional Planning Committees must be empowered to actually make decisions and have them implemented. They must specifically be empowered to specify the rates and types of local development.

**Smart growth is not smart without buy-in of the areas impacted.** Anne Arundel County is a very desirable location, and many areas will experience market demand for development that exceeds residents' desires. Growth limits will be needed. There are a variety of techniques for instituting growth limits and many other jurisdictions have utilized combinations of these. Restrictions on building permits, down zoning, adequate public facilities requirements, physical growth boundaries and other approaches to growth control are at the disposal of local governments willing to implement them.

ALC recommends that members and citizens advise the Administration, the Planning Advisory Board, and the County Council that strong local control over residential and commercial growth is needed and expected in the new GDP, Plan2040.

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## **Tentative schedule for Plan2040**

The *tentative* schedule for Plan2040 is:

- November 15, Close of the public comment period
- December - January 2021, Draft revision completed and 2nd draft presented to Planning Advisory Board for review and public hearing
- February 2021, Final draft delivered to County Council
- March - May 2021, First Council public hearing

ALC members and guests are encouraged to carefully review and comment upon each draft as it is released.

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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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