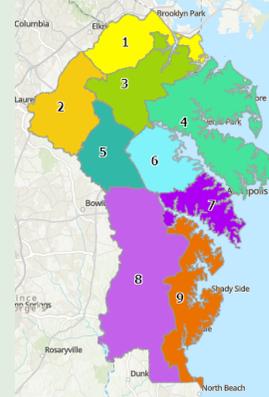




ALLIANCE
FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

What is a Stakeholder?



Frequently, a County committee that is convened to review and make recommendations on a particular set of issues, is described as being comprised of Stakeholders. But, what, exactly, is a Stakeholder? The international standard providing guidance on *social responsibility*, called [ISO 26000](#), defines a stakeholder as an "individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization."

There are obviously many types of Stakeholders that might be considered for committees convened by the County. In the case of long-term planning advisory committees, such as the CAC for Plan2040 or the Regional Area Planning committees, the work of the committees will affect all long-term residents of the County or Region, and all of these residents are stakeholders. Socially responsible selection of Stakeholder committees should assure that all adults are proportionally represented, demographically, geographically, and economically, to the extent possible. This concept of proportional representation will nearly always exclude residents with specific financial interests that are not shared by the resident population as a whole.

Now let's consider the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) compositions that have been specified by the County Council for the Regional Area Plans. The recommended composition of the 15 member SACs specified by the Council in Plan2040 is shown in the chart at the right. Composition is based on occupation or group association, but it is difficult to imagine any Region with this proportional composition of citizens.

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

If the goal of establishing a committee of Stakeholders is to assemble a proportionally representative group of citizens of each Region, the chart above compromises the objective at the outset. The problem is further complicated by a

limited size of the applicant group and any biases that the selection officers may bring to the process. The net result is that the composition of stakeholder committees like those selected for the AA County's Regional Area Plans are very likely to widely miss the goal of proportional representation.

Socially responsible community representation in the Regional Plans is best achieved through broad outreach and extensive engagement by all segments of the community. However, outreach efforts must take into account that people are generally busy and may not even be aware of the planning process. Initial contact efforts should utilize venues such as citizens' organizations, social media, church, etc. And gathering input on a topic needs to be done in a way that is simple and almost effortless for the community member.

Use of internet technology allows citizens to easily voice their opinions directly on issues of interest to them through internet surveys of various types. To be effective, this approach requires the availability of the online surveys to be well-publicized through outreach efforts. Techniques are also needed for validating key characteristics of respondents and for preventing multiple responses, since it is tempting for special interest groups to try to hijack online surveys. Response validation could be simplified in County government surveys, by requiring entry of a driver's license number as a unique id code. Multiple responses could then be easily identified, and the MVA will check validity of driver's license numbers and provide zip codes and other information to government entities at no charge.

An appearance of poor citizen representation in Stakeholder Advisory Committees can result in perceptions of unfairness in the associated Regional Area Plan and affect its credibility. The Regional plans have been described as a way to allow community control of the planning process. To achieve that goal, we must improve and constantly optimize our approach to citizen engagement.

ALC asks all citizens to participate in their Regional Area Plans and to encourage others to do so.

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.

Anne Arundel Alliance for Livable Communities

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ALC | 4445 Nicole Dr., Annapolis, MD 21012 410-544-1454

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Sent by arundel.livable@gmail.com