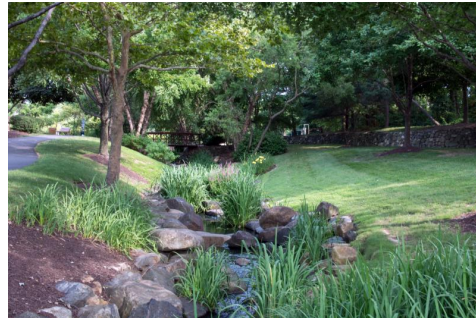




Where is the Conservation Plan 2040?

**Topics and issues for long
range planning ...**



Land Use Planning is incomplete without a Conservation Plan

The County is working hard to develop a Land Use Plan for 2040 as a part of the General Development Plan (GDP). Most of the focus is on how lands will be used to achieve growth and development goals, and the County is divided into Policy Areas for Targeted Growth, Neighborhood Preservation, Critical Economic, etc. An overlay will be used to define Resource Sensitive Areas intended for conservation or preservation from the adverse effects of development. But an overlay tells only part of the story of how natural resources could be addressed in the GDP. The tendency is to treat Resource Sensitive areas simply as a constraint to development, rather than an opportunity to manage our undeveloped lands – including our “Resource Sensitive Areas” -- to use them to contribute to public health, the health of our environment and the Bay. To do so, we should look at the natural resources of the county not simply as constraints to development, but as assets that can help improve water quality, connect forested landscapes, improve developed neighborhoods, and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. And this should be detailed in a Conservation Plan for the county that explains how these parts of the “unbuilt” environment will be used to achieve environmental goals.

The Resource Sensitive Area overlay is a good start. And, some people might say that the County’s parks plan, a greenways plan, agricultural preservation, and standards for minimizing the impacts of development is enough. But simply mapping and labeling parcels, even with a plan to preserve them, fails to capitalize on how we can use, collectively, the county’s natural resources, sensitive areas, parks, greenways, and lands not committed to development to achieve goals like water quality, improvement of public health and fitness, preserving wildlife habitat, or increasing climate resilience. Failing to consider how these parts of the County landscape can be managed together over the next two decades to contribute to the County’s conservation and environmental goals is a missed opportunity to progress toward making the County “the best place for all”.

These, too, are land use issues. Deciding not to develop a piece of land but to commit it to other purposes such as filtering storm water runoff, improving fragile shorelines, connecting open areas for recreation and wildlife conservation, and preserving forests and wetlands are decisions that should be part of the land use process. And, since many of the undeveloped features of the County land base have already been mapped, it shouldn’t take too long to construct a comprehensive Conservation Plan in concert with the County’s overall land use plan.

These land use decisions – for the purpose of addressing the many environmental concerns that currently exist in the county – should be made with the assistance of professionals with expertise in natural resource and environmental management, landscape design, and land conservation. And, this analysis must be done in an holistic

way, not on a parcel by parcel basis. For example, meeting the clean water goals to which the county has committed for the many rivers in our county requires planning on a watershed basis. In some respect, this is no different than planning to meet projected housing needs for the County in 2040. Except, in the context of a Conservation Plan, the goal should be achieving long-standing water quality objectives for that watershed and complying with commitments to reduce storm water runoff to achieve that goal.

The Conservation Plan associated with the Land Use Plan should (1) make clear the conservation, public health, and safety goals the county seeks to achieve through judicious use of our existing “undeveloped” lands and better management of the developed landscape, (2) detail how existing parks, forests, and undeveloped county lands will be managed collectively to contribute to those goals; (3) explain how the network of undeveloped lands that remain could contribute to a healthier, more livable and resilient county in 2040; and (4) specify strategies to be used to correct the impacts of environmental “injustice” in the past and avoid or minimize the impacts of future development on the plan goals.

Creating a Conservation Plan in conjunction with the Land Use Plan currently in development, would permit the County to generate a more complete and comprehensive strategy for how the County’s landscape – both developed and “undeveloped” -- could be managed to help achieve public health and safety, environmental, and climate resilience goals while meeting projected needs for residential housing and commercial development. And, it could provide residents, citizen associations, communities, and developers with an opportunity to work together to ensure that we are truly “the best place -- for all”.

Comment on Land Use Change Applications

Land Use Change Applications for the new GDP can be viewed at the [Plan2040 website](#) . Changing the Land Use designation is the first step toward rezoning of a property. Comments on each application can be made by clicking on the relevant property in the Land Use Change Application viewer. The comment period is open through March 13.

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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