



Plan2040 must better address over-development

Topics and issues for long range planning ...



Growth rates are not addressed in the current Plan2040 draft

Growth management and control is recognized as one of the key long-term issues for Anne Arundel County. Citizens in many areas feel that there has been too much development that has happened too quickly. This has been confirmed by numerous polls, surveys, and visioning sessions, and our County Executive used growth control as part of his campaign platform.

We had high expectations that detailed growth management strategies would be provided in the new GDP, Plan2040. In fact, however, the first draft addresses only half of the problem. Its Built Environment policies and draft land use map make it clear that growth will be directed to targeted areas like town centers, transit-oriented locations, and redevelopment sites. This can be claimed as a step toward smart growth, but it doesn't address the full problem. There is nothing about determining growth limits, description of avenues for community involvement in growth rate decisions or identification of tools for community control of rate of growth for various types of development.

Effective growth management must address two equally important issues: WHERE growth is permitted, and the maximum RATE that is permitted. Like the current Plan2040 draft, most of our prior planning documents, including the 2009 GDP, placed strong emphasis on the WHERE issue, but left the RATE issue to be resolved by market forces. Basically, development that meets zoning and APFO requirements is permitted whenever the developer desires. This approach works well in areas like West Texas and North Dakota where almost any development is welcome anytime, but it is clearly not a good solution in a market like Anne Arundel where citizens consider the pace of development in many areas to be excessive.

Prior planning efforts have had a dismal history of disregarding the RATE issue. We probably should not have expected that early drafts of Plan2040 would provide an adequate response to the problem. Almost any solution will be new and may appear innovative and risky. But, if we really want to control development, we should specify a strategy in the GDP, and act to assure that the strategy is implemented.

The risk of unintended consequences of new strategies can be reduced by a review of responses to the challenge of over-development by other jurisdictions. For example, Boulder, CO; Petaluma, CA; Eliot, ME; and Sanibel, FL have all been faced with this challenge for decades. All of these have found that setting annual limits on the

number and type of building permits is an effective solution. There are likely different approaches in other jurisdictions, and a more extensive review is encouraged. We should remember, though, that a feasible, effective solution will need to be adaptable to local needs and capable of producing an impact on timescales of months or years rather than decades.

In view of the size and diversity of the County, Both the WHERE and RATE of growth should be determined by local communities. Fortunately, the GDP will be quickly followed by Regional Plans, which should be well-suited to setting acceptable rates and locations of development. These Regional Plans will be guided by the preceding, broader GDP. Responsibilities and suggested procedures for generating needed growth information and implementing citizen desires should be described in the broader Plan2040.

The Alliance for Livable Communities encourages the AACo Administration, Office of Planning and Zoning, Citizens Advisory Committee, and County Council to assure that a detailed strategy for addressing local RATES of development is included in the coming GDP.

Review and Comment on the first draft of Plan2040

The first draft of [four major sections of Plan2040](#) have been posted online at the [Plan2040 Community Engagement portal](#). The posted sections are available for comment until Sept. 10. Additional public comment periods are planned for later drafts, and ALC members and guests are encouraged to carefully review and comment upon each draft as it is released.

A [video tutorial](#) is available to assist site navigation, and opportunities are provided to respond to an opinion survey of plan goals recommendations on changes in land use. In addition, the County Executive will host virtual Town Meetings on Aug. 17, 18, and 20, to review the Plan and discuss use of the portal. Go to [this web page](#) to register..

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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