

Questions submitted by attendees (and organizers) at the Cecil Citizen's Land Use Forum II

Eileen – We've seen cluster, mixed and traditional development ideas here tonight. These don't seem appropriate for rural areas – farm areas. What type development is best for rural areas without public sewer/water facilities? Aren't shared facilities, developments far from areas that are served by public water a potential danger in case of failure? Don't these clustered, higher density neighborhoods (with shared facilities) out in the middle of farm country lead to even more development in inappropriate areas?

What is the best way for the community, the local government and the development community to get to a meeting of the minds?

Mr. Benitez – How can we incentivise affordable housing construction? We need both rentals and starter homes in the growth corridor, yet such development is rarely proposed.

What steps is Prince Georges taking right now that we might want to emulate?

Mr. Benitez and Dr. McLellan – With gas at \$3.00 a gallon and rising, how can we get our elected officials in Annapolis to get serious about connecting Cecil to the regional transit net? We have three rail corridors bisecting the county – yet only Perryville station is open.

Karen McJunkin – The city of Elkton has many of the design features of the villages of Watts Creek, right down to the recent streetscape details, but is on the verge of losing our County office building. What is your vision for retaining vibrant viable town centers despite the pressures of commercial sprawl?

It seems from Karen's presentation that most developers need education on the (sales) value of TND – not just communities. When most of the builders in our area are large tract builders like Ryan, Pulte, Toll Bros.; how can we get the type of development Karen does?

At Watts Creek are common spaces maintained by HOA or by the town of Denton? Do you advocate integrating new development management by the towns or by the Homeowners Associations?

As developers, are you concerned of TMDLs and tributary strategy initiatives that could potentially limit growth in the Chesapeake Bay watershed? How much do you know about these federal/state initiatives?

Ellen and Karen- How can we get developers to plan open space connectivity so the bikeways, greenways, horse trails etc. are more far reaching and thereby useful? Are there ways to require or incentivise developers to plan this way?

What can we do in Cecil County to avoid the “law of unintended consequences” that created the current situation in Queen Annes?

County Commissioners – Is it wise to buy water from another state, when four towns: Elkton, North East, Chesapeake City, and Rising Sun could use water wells as a source of water? Could the county work out a plan to allow the town to supply water to the county? Ray Linzy, NE MD

County Officials – Adequate Public Facilities: year after year we approve developer-driven growth without first ensuring schools roads and services are in place and funded to serve the new residents. All five commissioners have served multiple terms – why have we not yet adopted an adequate public facilities ordinance?

All participants – Which counties have had success with TDR and protective zoning changes which have been successful? Both control of growth, and protecting farmers business and land values are goals of legislation currently under review here.

Anybody – Sixty percent of Cecil County workers commute out of County to their jobs. How can we best provide alternatives to one commuter per car driving habits? We need quick and affordable solutions. What’s best; light rail? Regional rail on existing lines? Buses? Carpool incentives (maybe at tolls or parking destinations?)

Mr. Bolender – Do you have a vision for Cecil County when it reaches a population of 125,000? 150,000? Does today’s zoning density and comprehensive plan achieve that vision?

Steve Mapowan – Elkton, - When the “WOW Factor” already exists – such as in Cecil County’s Fair Hill Natural Resource area – do developers ever feel no-growth is reasonable?

Any ideas how County can work with townships to ensure developers don’t play the two entities against each other for their own financial gain?

Delegates and Senators – If impact fees are not going to be enacted by Annapolis, what other tools can we adopt to redirect growth from NAR and SAR and areas outside water/sewer service districts, back to the growth corridor and town centers where the types of development we saw tonight are intended?

Lois Drake asks – Is it possible to put land development on a referendum during a regular election? If so, how could it become something the voters could vote on?

Which Maryland counties have had success with impact fees, graduated to push growth back to designated areas as tools to better control and locate essential growth.

Bruce Cameron North East, - You hear a lot about developing farmland. What about developing woodland? What are the guidelines or restrictions? Why is it a challenge to fill the empty stores and malls around the county instead of building new ones?

How do we fix poorly planned and ill-conceived growth and development after the fact? How do we revitalize and rehab neighborhoods and other areas to make them better and to bring them more in keeping with smart and better growth? How do we tax those problem areas that already exist? Robert Moreland, Elkton MD

It's great to hear about water supply for the towns and county, but what about the large number of people who are rural and supplied by their own wells? In my case it is by a 25' well. What happens to us when our well go dry because of lowered water table because of wells to supply growth? Robert Moreland, Elkton MD

What is the most effective way to compel county planners and developers to work with local municipalities like Chesapeake City for annexation and TND development in the towns designated growth areas? - Jerry Robertson, Chesapeake City MD

Why is it that as families get smaller, houses have gotten (much!) bigger? Mike Burns, Elkton

How can Cecil County change zoning ordinances to create beautiful developments and move away from ugly developments and strip malls pock-marking the countryside at random?

How did you make the approval process easy and streamlined, but at the same time protect against sprawl, poor growth, poor planning, and shoddy development? Robert Moreland , Elkton MD

In planning things like Open Space, is there, or should there be, thought and planning given to things that tie a community together and make for a sense of close and together community such as things like community garden space, etc.? Robert Moreland, Elkton MD.

A number of answers given to the questions from the last land use meeting cited the current land use rules, planning guidelines, water and sewer plans as being the reason for poor and irresponsible growth. The view is that the commissioners hands are tied and they must follow those plans which give little

guidance. How do we correct this issue? How do we revamp those plans and guidelines? And how do we identify and implement much needed new plans and regulations? How do we encourage acceptance and “buying into” good growth and the means of achieving it? Robert Moreland, Elkton MD

A number of people have commented that it is a “free country and you can’t tell people what they can and cannot do with their land” including but not limited to commissioners and other government officials. However, this is not true, people are told everyday what they can and can not do through the use of zoning laws, building codes, environmental laws etc. (Case in point – the recent burn ban). These laws prevent such things as toxic waste dumps, power plants etc from being built in your backyard. How is controlling irresponsible growth any different? How do you help people including government officials to understand that “free country” and “peoples right to do what they want” isn’t a blank check for uncontrolled pell mell growth? How do you work with people, including government officials, to draft plans which both take into account people’s rights and the rights of other not to have uncontrolled growth? Can the two be mutually inclusive? Robert Moreland, Elkton MD

How can we specifically modify current housing development policy and regulation in Cecil County to:

- Limit growth in the north/south rural regions
- Reduce “ugly communities” to foster best practice developments with parks, sustainable technologies and adequate infrastructure paid for by the developer...not passed on to the citizens?

The following questions were posed by members of the organizing committee in advance as possibilities for the forum (with the realization that only a small portion could actually be posed on the evening of the Forum given time considerations. Nevertheless, we feel they are all worthy of discussion.

General:

A question for all

- What do you consider Cecil County’s most valuable asset? And what are the County’s top three greatest needs?

Infrastructure:

Schools:

A question for all, starting with the County Commissioners

- Cecil County utilizes trailers to meet schoolroom capacity demands. Is that the best policy? If so, why? If not, what should we do?

Water & Sewer:

A question for all, starting with the County Commissioners

- What area of the county is most in need of expanded public water and sewer facilities?

A question for the County Commissioners

- Once the water and sewer infrastructure is in place in the Growth Corridor, how will you prevent its creep into the adjoining rural areas? Or can't you do that? And if not, why not?

Growth Corridor:

A question for the County Commissioners and the Municipalities

- What are the boundaries of the Growth Corridor, and who set them?

Follow-up question

- Are there any other designated growth areas? (Library Trustees BDC presentation mentions a Route 1 / Rising Sun / 276 Growth Corridor)

Infrastructure - General:

A question for all

- Thinking of Infrastructure as not only water and sewer but also schools, roads and services, how should we pay for future infrastructure needs?

Impact Fees:

A question for the Delegation – one on which all our County Commissioners agree:

- Given our infrastructure needs, why are you opposed to the imposition of an Impact Fee on new development?
- County Commissioners! How do you respond?

Annexation:

A question for all, starting with the Municipalities, and ending with the Delegation

- What are the benefits and downsides to the Municipalities of annexation by the Municipalities?
- What are the benefits and downsides to County Government or County Citizens of annexation by the Municipalities?

Follow-up question

- How is the rate and scope of annexation “controlled” / managed? And who is accountable?

Potential follow-up question

- How is the Urban Growth Boundary Plan “enforced”?
- Who is accountable?

Growth:

A question for all, starting with the County Commissioners

- How much growth can our natural resources (water supply, wetlands, recharge areas) bear?
- How much can our infrastructure support?
- Can the rate of growth be “controlled” / managed?
- Is it being “controlled” / managed? If so, how?
- Is our 1990 Comprehensive Plan adequate for present growth? Is it adequate for projected future growth? When will we need to revise it?

Water Supply:

A question for all, starting with the County Commissioners

- Why do you rely so heavily on MDE for water supply assessments?
- Are they adequately staffed?

Keeping Farmers farming:

A question for all, starting with the County Commissioners

- What pro-active programs do you have to educate the farmer regarding the alternatives to housing development?
- How are these programs promoted?

Infrastructure:

Roads:

- Should Cecil County turn all county road responsibility over to the State Highway Dep’t
- Can bus and rail transit successfully reduce road congestion in Cecil County?
- What about all those closed bridges everywhere?

Emergency Services:

- Will volunteer fire company services be adequate to supply Cecil County’s future fire protection needs
- Do you think the jurisdictional split between State & County police forces will continue to work in the future?
- Is a centralized hospital in Elkton sufficient for the county’s needs?

Growth:

Business Development

- Do we need more jobs in Cecil County?
- What type of industry should we encourage?

Residential

- What type of housing is best for Cecil County?

