

Cecil County Citizens Land Use Forum Questions and Concerns January 9, 2006

The questions and concerns below have been transcribed from the 3x5 cards distributed and collected during the Cecil Citizens Land Use Forum at the Cecil Community College. Some people have volunteered their names and signed their questions in which case, they are so noted. Most chose not to sign their cards.

Bonus Density:

Why do we reward developers with higher bonus density in our agricultural areas? Shouldn't we be giving these kinds of incentives for building in the growth corridor?

Comprehensive Plan:

What is the County's plan to provide the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of growth? Don Craig Rising Sun

In the Cecil County Planning Process, it seems the only document taken into consideration is the zoning regulations. According to Maryland law, how does the County comprehensive plan fit into the Planning Commission's deliberations?

County Commissioners:

Why is Cecil County pro-development at all costs?

Four years ago I was in this very same room at a Forum discussing the very same issues. Nothing I have seen has changed as far as the County Commissioners (Democrat and Republican) response to uncontrolled growth. It still appears that developers and realtors have a stronger influence than citizens. Even if this is only a perception how do we get them to listen? We still have a chance to do it right!

APFO – Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance - what are the holdups in getting this implemented? Why hasn't this been done already?

Downzoning:

Would changing the NAR/SAR five acres/house to 30 acres per home help or hurt efforts to maintain our quality of life? If so, how much can we influence our commissioners?

Farmers Concerns:

What can be done to protect the small (30-100 acres) farm owner who wants to keep his farm but is slowly being assessed and taxed at higher and higher rates?
George Balog- North East

Choice is of paramount importance to all landowners especially farmers. How are you proposing to protect farmers land use choices? Mary Scheeler

What can residents of Cecil County do to ensure all of our farm land is not developed?

Growth Corridor:

Along with incentives provided to developers to build in the growth area, shouldn't there be restrictions and detriments to building outside those areas?
Robert Moreland Elkton MD

Why with current growth areas designated, is more growth occurring outside the growth areas? James Baker Elkton MD

Developers will want to develop in areas that the general public wants to be: Seashores and rural pastoral tracts of land. How do we make the growth corridor a more desirable place to live to relieve pressure on these other areas? Michael Goetz.

Housing:

How do you answer the rising cost to rent a decent place to live in Cecil County? Poor are using more of their income to pay rent. What is your answer to least cost?

Impact Fees:

Why doesn't Cecil County have an impact fee per each new house when most MD counties have enacted a fee?

Jobs /Opportunity:

How can we best capitalize economically on the opportunity to foster "rural industry" such as equine, tourism, farming etc... to avoid ending up looking like New Castle County?

Can economic progress at the same rate under either "smart growth" or "poor growth"? Does "smart growth" stunt the economy?

Open Space:

As population increases and open space declines, preservation of parkland becomes more vital than ever. How can this fit with the required growth in housing to support a growing population?

Parkland should be maintained for its primary purpose: recreation, open space and wildlife preservation and unfettered access to those that paid for it: private citizens. None of these goals or purposes should be compromised for the purposes of economic development. What will Cecil County be doing to maintain parkland for future generations without resorting to privatization? Michael Goetz

Planning and Zoning Commission:

It's not unusual for Cecil C. planning commission/commissioners to review between 15-20 developments per month!

There should be a minimum specified time period for the details of any proposed changes to County Plans or Ordinances to be reviewed by the Office of Planning and Zoning, and examined by the public. Currently, at least for amendments to the master Sewer and Water Plan, this is not the case. Details for MS&WP do not have to be available prior to the hearing before the Planning Commission either for OPZ staff or public review. cursory review by OPZ the night of a Planning Commission hearing is inappropriate and a disservice to County residents.

The Planning board often says it must rule for a project because they have to follow the rules, not public sentiment. How are rules established and how can they be changed to let public sentiment play a role?

Should there be a residency requirement to serve on the Planning and Zoning Commission?

The Planning and Zoning Commission appears to represent developer's interests. Why don't we make them accountable to the citizens and elect them?

Often during the construction of new development there are questions/concerns regarding violations or potential violations of codes or good building practices with regards to protection and conservation of the land and water resources of Cecil County. i.e. improperly installed or no silt barriers and other protections. How many resources are dedicated to identifying these issues and correcting them? Both through stop work orders, fines, sanctions and county bans for further business within the county?

Does County planning have a process for citizen input similar to this process (tonight)/ How do they institutionalize citizen input pro-actively?

Resources:

Water Supply – Is the State concerned? Is the county? I have neighbors in those \$300,000 houses that can't use /access water aquifer. Shouldn't we consider this a fundamental resource for growth?

What will be added to the plan to correct the county landfill problem which will be compounded by additional growth? Despite the odor problem – the life of the landfill should be shortened because of the added intake.

What is the County's plan to provide the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of growth? Don Craig Rising Sun

Schools:

At what rate are the schools going to be able to keep pace with growth?

Where is the County going to place all the new incoming children within the existing schools and districts?

Please comment on the important consideration of our public school system when developing. R. L. Price

Taxes:

Is development increasing traffic, our taxes, and burden on our schools?

How can we continue to allow development of houses that generate about \$2000 in real estate taxes and cost about \$17,000 per year (2 children) in school expense alone, plus other infrastructure costs?

Transit:

Can you talk about the impact of extending MARC service to Elkton and possibly linking MARC to SEPTA in Cecil?

Visual Heritage:

For those areas slated for housing development, why not require more aesthetically pleasing designs; incorporating more open spaces and sustainable environmentally friendly technology?

Zoning:

Approval or disapproval recommendations by the Office of Planning and Zoning for zoning ordinance or plan changes should not reside solely with the Director of the Office of Planning and Zoning. They should have a carefully weighed staff review. Decision making by one person, after perhaps only cursory review of such important matters is simply not appropriate and can lead to erroneous interpretations and oversight errors detrimental to the County.