

LAND USE AND MOBILITY TRANSITION TEAM FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

OVERVIEW

Our transition team has been tasked with identifying existing land use and transportation challenges while providing a clear path forward for creating a vital and active City with opportunities for all its' residents. Resetting the City's future direction requires strong leadership and commitment to undertake broad-based outreach and community-wide consensus building. Success is predicated upon Annapolis' many business, residential, non-profit and community groups as well as the city's diverse populace being directly involved in defining new expectations for Annapolis.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

1. Build a Consensus for the Mayor's 'Shared Vision' for Annapolis

"Annapolis must continue to be an active and vital community which respects its' past while embracing a future that ensures a high quality of life for all residents as well as providing the economic opportunity for its' diverse citizenry to thrive".

Build consensus upon a common understanding of what is valued in Annapolis. Engage the community in defining Principles and Expectations for Annapolis to move forward through a series of Speakers and Community Workshops.

2. Create a Proactive and Predictable Development Process while transforming the Permitting Processes to Facilitate Local Businesses.

Establish a 'Conceptual Review Stage' for Development Review to provide early community input while becoming responsive, predictable and clear throughout the entire process. The City will identify the type and location of desired projects, and the anticipated 'public or community benefits' for each project.

Concurrently, the permitting process will be restructured reflecting a sense of urgency, responsiveness and accountability. A 'Business Facilitator' will be identified to encourage local businesses to expand in Annapolis.

3. Introduce a ‘Quality of Life Initiative’ to Enhance Neighborhoods

The Mayor will introduce a ‘Neighborhood Enhancement Initiative’ to support Annapolis’ neighborhoods, identifying the types of benefits and improvements desired to strengthen each community. Simultaneously, the Mayor will charge an in-house task force to coordinate safety, code, and maintenance efforts focusing on neighborhoods in need of support.

4. Emphasize the City’s Commitment to the Maritime Industry

To emphasize the City’s commitment to the Maritime Industry, the Mayor will celebrate the industry’s contribution to Annapolis with a Maritime event/festival.

The City will partner with the Maritime Industry and Advisory Board to identify a more equitable taxing approach and zoning initiatives to support and subsidize the working marinas/boat yards.

MID-RANGE POLICY ACTIONS:

5. Protect the Environment While Ensuring Resiliency

Every resident of the City and our neighbors on Annapolis Neck are impacted by the changes to the environment caused by development. The City must provide consistent stewardship in this area of mutual concern. Foremost in the accomplishment of a successful process is the engagement of a professional environmentalist to coordinate City efforts throughout the process. To expedite the process, this individual may report directly to the Mayor.

6. Alternative Forms of Mobility with Easy Access for Recreation, Jobs and Travel around the City

Consistent implementation and up-dating of a bicycle and pedestrian plan should begin immediately. Redevelopment and new development provides opportunity for this to begin. Partnership with Anne Arundel County and its renewed emphasis on transportation planning is another opportunity to extend and improve transportation options for all residents of the City and adjoining areas of the County.

7. Establish a Proactive Approach to Planning Issues

The City shall be proactive in shaping a framework for guiding future land use actions by establishing an ongoing outreach and education effort tied to specific land use and transportation issues. The vehicle for these workshops could be either the Planning Commission or a specifically designated task force. Within this context, the Comprehensive Plan Update can be initiated, and a Zoning Code Index created to foster a more workable Zoning document.

8. Maintain a City-wide Culture that is professional and responsive to small businesses and residents alike.

Create a culture that is responsive to both the public and applicants. To achieve this, adequate professional staff for Planning and Zoning in addition to making available professional architectural and transportation expertise for complex projects must become a priority.

The Planning Commission and Board of Appeals must have legal expertise available at all meetings and should be trained on their specific roles and legal responsibilities.

I. Our Process

The Land Use and Mobility Transition Team interviewed a broad group of stakeholders, close to 40 individuals, to ascertain a wide-ranging set of actions and recommendations for the new administration. We have worked with a core group comprised of the two co-chairs, Ian Pfeiffer and Eileen Fogarty, and Dr. Wil Scott, Mayor Ellen Moyer and Planning Commissioner Bob Waldman. We have received ongoing comments and great suggestions from our contributing members: Tom Baum, Jim Burdick, Diane Butler, Debbie Gosselin, Tarry Lomax, Vic Pascoe, John Pilli, Alex Pline, Kurt Riegel, Raymond Robinson and Leo Wilson.

Stakeholders and elected officials have been very generous with their time and with their commitment to bring Annapolitans together for the City's best interests. Those interviewed include: Anne Arundel County Council members, Annapolis City Council members, former City Council members, Planning Commissioners, Severn River Association members, builders, architects, attorneys, business owners, civic and community representatives, working maritime industry representatives, boat yard and marina owners, Marine Trades Association, transportation officials, public and private sector transportation

experts, environmental experts/advocates and past and present City Planning Directors.

What has been most encouraging from these many interviews has been the convergence of ideas and areas of consensus for immediate actions for the City to move forward.

II. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING ANNAPOLIS

We have heard consistent agreement that a ‘Shared Mission’ or agreed upon future direction for land use issues in the City is lacking. Despite the adoption of the 2011 Annapolis Comprehensive Plan to provide guidance for the location and intensity of future development, there is wide disagreement about the intent of the policies in the Comprehensive Plan. Without any agreement about the direction of and expectation for future development in the City, both advocates and opposition groups believe the development review process is ‘rigged’ against them, and have lost confidence in the City’s land use processes.

The situation has further deteriorated due to the absence of the political leadership needed to provide clear and consistent support for the professional staff, contributing to a lack of respect for and reliance on the Planning Department professionals. Given this vacuum, the process is viewed as having become politicized at the council district level with interference occurring frequently during the development review process. The Council and the Mayor should be setting the policy guidelines for the professional staff to implement as opposed to direct involvement in the application review process.

As a result of this external interference, rules can change during the process, creating a lack of any certainty or clear path forward for applicants. Conversely, some residents believe that the process is not sufficiently transparent to provide meaningful input. With this context in mind, the following issues and challenges have been identified as obstacles to consensus building in the future:

1. There is a climate of distrust surrounding the development review process. This polarization produces a process which lacks clarity, certainty and predictability for resolution of issues and disagreements.

Residents feel their understanding of projects and input into the process takes place too far into the process (While O-35-17 attempts to address this

issue it creates new hurdles and obstacles).

Applicants receive no clear directions upon which they can proceed in good faith. From their perspective, the process itself may change, basic determinations rendered early in the review process may be negated or superseded, there is no accountability for prior directions given, no penalty for ignoring deadlines and no predictability upon which they may rely.

2. The Planning Director is currently consolidating application intake and cross-training staff to expedite the permitting process. The permitting process for building permits, grading permits and certificates of occupancy has taken several months, rather than weeks, to navigate in the past. While experienced applicants seem to be able to advance through the system, generally there is a lack of urgency complicated by limited accountability, and an absence of clear schedules or committed turnaround times. These issues, coupled with a linear process with significant backlogs in the review of storm water management, create a hostile environment for businesses and residents alike.
3. The Planning Department is woefully understaffed, stemming from the staffing cuts made during the 2008-9 recession. As a result, they do not have the capacity to undertake the kind of extensive community outreach that is essential to build the trust and respect necessary for the Planning Department to function optimally.

Given the long-standing practice of underfunding the Planning Department, the department cannot avail itself on an ongoing basis of the professional expertise needed to evaluate the more complex and contentious projects that have come forth in recent years. Architectural expertise would enable the Department to provide specific recommendations to applicants to address the mass, scale and community character issues that frequently arise in Annapolis.

4. The Department of Planning lacks the funding to systematically engage the community in an ongoing and concurrent planning effort. The Department cannot implement existing plans or undertake sorely needed neighborhood plans, transportation plans, zoning code revisions and an update to the comprehensive plan to provide the framework for future land use decisions.
5. The Transportation Planning efforts in the City have been limited in scope

as they have not emphasized alternative modes of transportation which tie into the County or regional efforts to connect residents with jobs.

6. The land use boards and commissions do not consistently have legal expertise available to guide them in rendering their official determinations. New members are not consistently trained for their role and responsibilities in which they officially represent the City of Annapolis.
7. There is no agreement as to where and what type of new investment would benefit the community.
8. New investment and development is not seen by the community as an opportunity to provide benefits for the community. Rather, it has historically been viewed in a negative context due to the overriding concern of bringing traffic through neighborhoods.
9. Opportunities are not pursued to connect and expand open spaces or pedestrian and bike paths to enhance the livability for Annapolis's residents.
10. Local serving businesses investing or expanding in Annapolis do not receive the level of assistance or facilitation needed.
11. The Maritime Industry, which remains under threat, is not valued, celebrated or encouraged by the City.
12. The Environmental Community does not feel that environmental issues, protection of natural resources and preparation for resiliency are addressed cohesively at the onset of the development review process.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

To transcend the existing contentious approach toward land use issues in the City, it is essential to bring the entire community together to agree upon basic principles and expectations from which Annapolis will move forward. This effort requires the full commitment of the Mayor and his leadership to make it clear that the destructive tactics which have been tolerated in public debate will no longer be welcome in Annapolis.

Transforming the dialogue in the community and the culture within the city government necessitates a comprehensive approach toward broad-based outreach and community-wide consensus building. Initially, this effort will be galvanized and led by the Mayor, going forward the on-going participation of

Annapolis' many businesses, residential, non-profit and community groups should be formalized.

Mayor's 'Shared Vision' for Annapolis

"Annapolis must continue to be an active and vital community which respects its' past while embracing a future that ensures a high quality of life for all residents as well as providing the economic opportunity for our diverse citizenry to thrive."

Consensus Building

Consensus must be built upon a common understanding of what is valued in the community, how the City can prosper and ways in which future development can contribute to the fabric of the City. Immediate actions include:

- Holding a Speakers Series to engage the community on such topics as Mobility and Connections, Community Character and Creating Active Cities and Spaces;
- Engaging the community in workshops to identify Issues, Opportunities, Principles and Expectations for Annapolis to move forward;
- Providing an opportunity for the Council, Planning Boards and Commissions to contribute to developing the Principles and Expectations for future investment;
- Establish an ongoing dialogue with the Council, through work sessions, to ensure that land use Policies, Principles and Expectations reflect their input;
- Establishing these 'Principles and Expectations' as the basis for future investment' in Annapolis: and,
- Creating a forum on an on-going basis for discussing land use and transportation issues which impact the community.

Culture of Professionalism and Service to the Public

Create a culture throughout the city staff that is professional and responsive to both the public and applicants.

- Commit to adequate professional staffing for Planning and Zoning to ensure that they can undertake and sustain the neighborhood planning and community outreach that will be essential to the success of the City's Planning Initiatives;

- Commit to adequate staffing for Permitting, Storm water Management and Environmental Review to ensure a timely and professional review of applications;
- Provide a ‘Professional Expertise’ budget for the Planning Department to make architectural and transportation expertise available for complex projects; and,
- Support the Planning Commission and Board of Appeals by providing legal expertise for all meetings and offering training on the members roles and responsibilities.

Transition from a Reactive to a Proactive Planning Agency

Through extensive outreach to the community, the City must be proactive in identifying issues and opportunities and establishing a framework for guiding future land use actions.

- Establish a ‘vehicle’, Planning Commission or designated task force, to involve the community in discussion of Land Use and Transportation Issues;
- Initiate the Comprehensive Plan Update;
- Create a more workable Zoning Code document by developing a Zoning Code ‘Index’; and,
- Hold workshops in each community to craft ‘expectations’ for each neighborhood.

Initiative to ‘Enhance Neighborhoods’

Introduce a ‘Neighborhood Enhancement’ Initiative to support Annapolis’ neighborhoods. Partnering with the neighborhood associations, the City should encourage each group to identify the types of benefits they would to see to strengthen their communities. These could range from additional or connecting open spaces, pocket parks, landscaping, water access or pedestrian/bike/recreational trails. Communities may also want to focus on safety or having access to local serving retail uses.

‘Quality of life’ Initiative

The Mayor will charge an in-house team of department heads from fire, public works, police, planning and parks and recreation to undertake a coordinated effort to focus on neighborhoods in need of support. This team would address code violations, life safety issues as well as maintenance of the city’s natural

resources and open spaces simultaneously to enhance the quality of living in each neighborhood.

An Inclusive, Predictable and Proactive Development Review Process

1. Establish a 'Proactive' Development Review Process that provides for early community input while being responsive, predictable and clear throughout the process.
 - Identify a 'Conceptual Review Stage' during which both community input and Planning Commission comments will be provided;
 - Staff will integrate all agency and environmental comments as well as public input at the onset of the process to provide clear direction to the applicant for project expectations and desired modifications;
 - Both the staff and the applicant will agree to a schedule and will be held accountable to meet those deadlines;
 - Public and Community Benefits will be identified at this 'Conceptual Review Stage';
 - The Department's expectations and all major issues should be identified at this 'Conceptual Review Stage' to enable the applicant to move forward with acceptable revisions or to abandon the project prior to submitting costly detailed construction drawings;
 - Commitments should be made in writing so the City, applicant and public all have access to the same information; and,
 - The next stage, formal submittal and review, should reflect a more technical and streamlined process to bring the application to the Planning Commission.
2. Transform the Permitting Process to reflect a sense of urgency, responsiveness and accountability. The Permitting Processes should:
 - Incorporate the Planning Director's streamlining efforts;
 - Commit to greatly shortened turn-around times;
 - Bring all departments together at onset to Identify all major issues at first review;
 - Institute a concurrent rather than a linear process; and,
 - Additional inspections should be instituted to avoid major delays at the final inspection.

Incentivize Projects to Provide Benefits and Contribute to Annapolis's Quality of Life

1. The City should be clear regarding the type and location of desired projects as well as the type of ‘public or community benefits’ that are anticipated for each project. Projects that are ‘desired’ and meet the City’s and community’s expectations for benefits should be incentivized.
2. In addition to identifying open space, environmental or recreational benefits, each community should identify those ‘community benefits’ that are most appropriate for their neighborhoods. An expedited review process, after the ‘Conceptual Review Stage’ is completed, should be instituted for projects that are determined to be ‘desired’.
This expedited review could also apply to an entire category of projects such as maritime use or local serving business retail use to encourage these uses to build and expand in Annapolis.

Facilitate Local Businesses

Create a ‘Business Facilitator’ in the Mayor’s Office to assist local serving and maritime businesses to locate or expand within the City.

Embrace the Maritime Industry in Annapolis

Annapolis has been a maritime center for centuries with the Maritime Industry continuing to serve as a pillar of Annapolis’ economy today. Maritime businesses contribute \$96 million dollars in both direct and indirect spending in Annapolis. The working boat yards create the ambiance that is uniquely Annapolis while providing open space, water access and view sheds for our residents. It is critical that the City partner with and incentivize this vital industry if Annapolis is to remain the Sailing Capital and compete with other maritime cities along the East Coast.

- To emphasize the City’s commitment to the Maritime Industry, the Mayor should celebrate the industry with an event that involves all Annapolitans;
- The City should partner with the maritime Industry in actively marketing Annapolis as the Maritime and Sailing Center for the East Coast;
- The Mayor should initiate an immediate review of the impact the current State taxing polities are having on Annapolis’s Maritime Industry;
- The City should identify uses to support and subsidize Annapolis’ working maritime industry. The 1987 Adopted Maritime Strategy and Zones has been successful in protecting waterfront land for the working maritime uses such as boat yards. However, since the Maritime Strategy and Zones are

thirty years old, they do not reflect the needs of today's industry. Incentives should be provided to retain Annapolis's working boat yards and marinas;

- An initial action to support the Maritime Industry should be to partner with the Maritime Advisory Board to identify uses that are compatible with marinas/boat yards. One area where there appears to be a need and clear support is to broaden the very restrictive definition for restaurants in the Maritime Industrial District for Back Creek. This action would serve to subsidize the larger scale working yards on Back Creek; and,
- Partner with the Marine Trades Association of Maryland to bring work force Development options for the maritime industry to Annapolis. This effort would provide skilled labor to the industry while providing good jobs for Annapolis' youth.

Connecting the City's Open Spaces

The City has 41 parks which should be connected by pedestrian and bike paths, creating a 'Ribbon' of active and passive open spaces throughout the Annapolis. By tying small open space parcels, walking trails, creek access and seating areas around Annapolis, every resident will be able to access some open, green space to enjoy and recreate.

The City percentage of Open Space Funds are passed through thru Anne Arundel County. To maximize benefit to Annapolitans, the City should initiate the following actions:

- Identify Open Space Funds currently available to the City and prioritize Open space projects;
- Recommend the State Legislature directly allocate Open Space Funds to the City rather than have the funds passed through Anne Arundel County; and,
- Emphasize providing Park and Recreation amenities for neighborhoods without their own existing facilities and without access to recreational facilities.

Protect the Environment while Ensuring Resiliency

Throughout our interviews there was a consistent recognition of the value of sound environmental stewardship. The value of a clean and safe environment is a fundamental aspect of the quality of life in the city. There are opportunities to raise the bar and move further towards a standard of excellence in this area as

well as plan for future sustainability and resilience from rising waters which threaten the downtown. Recommended actions include:

- Employ a qualified environmentalist who shall review all applications for code compliance, guide all stakeholders toward best practices in forest preservation, urban tree utilization, critical areas, stormwater management, resiliency and any other relevant aspects of environment protection and enhancement. This individual would have sufficient authority to convene meetings to review environmental progress and would be part of the review processes discussed above. If budgetary limitations preclude hiring a new full-time professional, all environmental functions should be coordinated consistently by an in-house professional;
- Review the Forest Conservation Act requirements for tree replacement considering the limited land available for such replacement within the city limits and in consideration of the impact development and redevelopment projects have on county land and waterways. Coordinate tree conservation efforts with Anne Arundel County;
- Strengthen commitment to the aspirational goal of 50% tree canopy by 2030 and create City programs to assist property owners in participation in this effort. This goal is unlikely to be achieved without the cooperation of private property owners; and,
- Consider a No Discharge Zone in consultation with Anne Arundel County, Maritime Advisory Board, and related river and creek protection groups.

Mobility

Since the last transition team on mobility and transportation was undertaken four years ago many of the challenges remain unmet. Our bus system is still underutilized and doesn't connect well enough to where better jobs are found in the region. Our long-planned bicycle infrastructure has not been built out, and the rapidly growing influence of technology platforms on mobility has not yet impacted enough of our procedures and planning processes.

Fundamentally, our ability to tackle the challenges of how to make our community more livable and vibrant have been impeded by not embracing more innovative parking and mobility solutions, throughout our urban core and city wide.

With all of that said, there are many reasons to be optimistic that this cycle can be broken in the next four years through the following actions:

- Partner with Anne Arundel County Department of Transportation

For the first time, Anne Arundel County has launched a parallel transportation department. For too long, our bus service was forced to provide vital bus service to County residents with little coordination from the County. In recent years, the County has begun contributing towards the cost of delivering this service. Now, Anne Arundel County has assembled a team to provide bus service and complete transportation planning initiatives across the county. There is now an important opportunity to begin a conversation about how to work together, creating better mobility solutions for our residents.

- Create a Transportation Planning and Program Manager position

It is clear from our interviews that there is a need for additional personnel to focus on a wide range of transportation-related topics that the City faces daily. Be it working with our parking vendor, bringing forward innovative intelligent transportation projects and providers, implementing our bicycle master plan, or revamping our development traffic plan process, there are many exciting initiatives that could be launched with an additional, experienced professional in the Department of Planning and Zoning and working with the Department of Transportation.

- Implement the City's Bicycle Master Plan

In 2011 the City adopted a Bicycle Master Plan. Sadly, very little of it has been implemented. We recommend launching an initiative in the next year to ramp up implementation of this plan. If the City's Road Design Manuals and related policies can be revised to ensure that bike and pedestrian infrastructure are considered in future development projects, planning processes and Capital budget project formulation, it will go a long way towards taking this important study off the shelf and offering the City residents better biking and walking infrastructure.

- How We Move People vs. How We Move Cars

At the outset of the Buckley Administration there are many large-scale capital projects and redevelopment plans that will need to be addressed. From the future Hillman Garage to Forest Drive and the re-bricking of Main Street to the City Dock Master Plan, there are many contentious projects. To consider them fairly and fully, a new mobility

policy paradigm is needed. Decisions to commit to large-scale capital spending on these projects or any others should be curtailed by the Mayor and Council until a community vision can be formulated about how to shift our focus from moving people vs. moving cars.

Monitor and Measure Progress

The Mayor will measure the progress on his initiatives through an annual “Report Card’ which will be presented to the public and City Council. Topics as varied as the following list may all be measured for progress:

- Environmental Resources, Stormwater runoff, tree canopy
- Open Spaces and Pedestrian/Bike Connections,
- Maritime and local Businesses,
- Public Benefits,
- Water Access; and,
- City’s Economic Health.

Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Fogarty
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