



## Planning Advisory Board will receive comments on Plan2040 until Jan 6

December 26, 2020

### Gan members are encouraged to submit written or oral testimony to help improve Plan2040

The second draft of Plan2040 has been presented to the Planning Advisory Board, and written public comments will be accepted until January 6. Oral comments will be accepted on Jan 6 and Jan 7. This is an important document that will influence policy and legislation for many years. GAN members are strongly encouraged to review it and provide comments and suggestions.

The Plan is presented in two volumes, with Vol. 1 containing the essence of the Plan and Vol 2 containing background material. **The Plan and supporting information may be downloaded at the [Plan2040 webpage](#) and information about submission of comments to the Planning Advisory Board is also provided there.**

On the whole, Plan2040 is a good document. However, several topics are of concern. **The following areas are suggested for review and possible comment by GAN members:**

### Topics of concern

#### Growth Limits

Unchecked growth in the County over the last several years has caused a general decline in the quality of life. If that growth continues unabated, no amount of planning will reverse that trend. The Plan indicates that the County's population is expected to increase by 50,000 (or 29,000 households) by 2040. While it addresses directing that growth in intelligent ways, the Plan apparently takes that rate of growth as inevitable. It does not articulate clearly any goals respecting overall growth or discuss the desirability or feasibility of measures that would limit growth. **Growth targets and corresponding policy and legislative tools to successfully manage within the targets should be specified.**

#### Fiscal Impact of Growth

Sound land use policies and legislation should be founded on an accurate estimate of the financial consequences of growth. **The Plan should include reliable methods for calculating lifecycle costs for infrastructure and services necessary to accommodate growth and proposals for achieving revenue and expense equilibrium.**

#### A Plan with Teeth

In order to avoid confusion, it would be desirable to modify the statement on p. 12 to make clear that the Plan is more than a general guide. **It should be clearly stated that**

“Plan2040 should be followed as closely as possible while not being elevated to the status of an ordinance, and that deviations from the plan should be rare”.

### Natural Environment section

Plan2040 policies on forest retention, green infrastructure, and the critical area should provide good legislative guidance on these topics. However, some issues are not addressed:

#### **Agricultural preservation**

The plan suggests that RA zoning “protects” 10,000 acres of agricultural land in South County when, in fact, it allows construction of 500 new residences and fragmentation of large parcels into units that are too small for viable farming of many of the current crops. Only 13,961 acres of the 1993 goal of 20,000 have actually been protected with easements. The Draft GDP characterizes the Ag program as a success; the facts say otherwise. The Plan must acknowledge the reality and create a well-researched strategic plan designed to achieve Ag sustainability. It should outline a path toward finding better approaches to agricultural preservation that address the fundamental reasons for decline of the agriculture industry.

#### **Ecosystem services**

The role of forests and well-managed agricultural lands in prevention and mitigation of storm water pollution and in groundwater recharge **must be acknowledged and promoted**. The value of these ecosystem services should be estimated and included in assessing the true costs of development in these areas.

### Built Environment section

#### **Affordable housing**

The need for low-income and workforce housing in the County is acknowledged in the plan, but the County has not included nor performed a Workforce/Affordable Housing plan to determine where these developments should be located. Redevelopment areas, town centers and transportation centers are determined to be attractive options, but the plan should specify target development areas with locations, densities, and rates of development. The plan should also specify height restrictions that will assure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

#### **Regional growth management**

The CE has recently suggested that excess market demand for growth be redirected toward Baltimore, since the city needs redevelopment and new growth. If this is a viable alternative for relieving excess growth pressure in the County, it should be covered with appropriate Land Use recommendations and policies in Plan2040.

### Healthy Economy section

#### **Economic development resources**

County development resources would be best spent attracting jobs and housing for current County residents and in promoting redevelopment and revitalization of areas in need of it. Development near Ft. Meade and BWI airport is unlikely to fall in these categories.

### Regional Plans

#### **Regional Planning details.**

Since the Plan2040 document is presented as guidance rather than regulation, the Regional Planning process will have to recommend legislation specifying local zoning, type and rate of development, environmental preservation, school capacity, and traffic. A description of the Regional Planning process, plan content, and implementation mechanisms, however, is not provided. Consequently, it remains difficult to evaluate the broader Plan2040.

#### **Interim rezoning**

The proposed Regional Planning schedule suggests that plans for the nine regions will not all be completed before 2025, and the stage seems to be set for a parade of piecemeal rezoning bills to be presented to the County Council over the next several years. Since the

Land Use map will have been approved much earlier and zoning must be consistent with it, the Land Use map will effectively become the new zoning map in the interim.

### **Committee composition**

Composition of the Regional Planning Committees will be all-important in determining the content of the Regional Plans. The proposed committee structure appears to be over weighted with developers, brokers, and others representing commercial interests. The County has (more than) 10 times more employees than businesses, suggesting that commercial interests should be restricted to no more than 2 representatives on a RP Committee.

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### **Recording of Dec 14 meeting with Office of Planning and Zoning**

The meeting featured discussions of growth management, Plan2040 comment effects, impact fees and other topics. Click to view a [video recording](#) of the meeting

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### **Coming meetings and events**

- Jan 4, 6 pm – County Council meeting (virtual)
  - Jan 6, End of PAB acceptance period for written testimony of Plan2040
  - Jan 6 and 7, Oral testimony to PAB on Plan2040. Sign up by 5 pm, Jan 4
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