

CITY OF ABERDEEN ♦ COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

VISIONING WORKSHOP #1: GROUP EXERCISE COMMENT COMPILATION

The City held its first Visioning Workshop on Wednesday, January 26, 2022 from 4:30-6:00pm at Mt. Zion Baptist Church (200 Post Road, Aberdeen). Following is a compilation of the workshop’s discussions and comments. A summary of all Visioning Workshops—including Boards—is provided separately.

ATTENDEES

PARTICIPANTS

Beth Boyson
 Roberta Clay
 Amy DiPietro
 Norm Fegel
 Bob Hartman
 Quentin Johnson
 Don Kern
 Shirley Kern
 Denita McDaniels
 Mack McDaniels
 Chris Petsko
 Joe Snee
 Malcolm Whyte
 James Williams

ABERDEEN PLANNING COMMISSION

Mark Schlottman, Chair
 Dominique Gillis, Vice Chair

ABERDEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Holly Bennett
 Sheryl Kohl
 Chuck Jacobs

ABERDEEN STAFF

Phyllis Grover, Director—
 Planning & Community
 Development
 Rolla Chng, City Engineer
 Stefani Specter, Senior Planner
 Sydnie Trionfo, Planning
 Assistant

**WALLACE MONTGOMERY—
 CONSULTANT/FACILITATOR**

Lauren Good, Project Manager
 Ray Moravec
 Nicky Davis

EXERCISE #1

NEEDS: WE NEED TO ADDRESS THIS CRITICAL ISSUE

- Adequate roads
- Need a City Planner to guide City Council on all things growth
- Get rid of the walking bridge to East Bel Air Avenue
- Upgrade Amtrak train station
- Affordable rental properties
 - Maintenance can be an issue
 - Affordable single occupant dwellings
- More public transportation so people can get to work at all hours/days
- Cleaning of streets/curbs, especially on Rt. 40 Frontage Road (at night?)
- Code violations
- Extension of Main Street designation
- Rental property issues with County law enforcement
- Climate design – flooding/drainage
- Neglected/abandoned properties
- Water tower – West Side
- Comprehensive Transportation Plan (public transit, roads, bike, sidewalk connections, ADA)
- Public and road transportation (transit, bike lanes, pedestrian)
- Convenient parking downtown and well-marked (wayfinding sign for public parking)
- Revolving loan fund to demolish properties

in the downtown (Strategic Demolition fund)

- Expansion/extension of Main Street properties w/DHCD (*State Department of*

Housing & Community Development)

- Removal of derelict properties – State Strategic Fund to remove

WANTS: IF WE HAD THE CHOICE, WE WOULD CHOOSE TO HAVE...

- Better/more restaurants and shops
 - Sit down restaurant/pub
- Broad range of housing options
 - More housing to support APG and hospital employees
- More parking downtown Main Street to support businesses
- Brewery
- Department store – Kohls
- Michael's
- Professional offices – legal, real estate, medical
- New US Post Office and personnel
- Trader Joes
- Whole Foods
- Red Lobster
- Big box stores
- Post office with adequate access (handicap) and parking
- Safe streets
 - Speed limits
 - Revisit plans/criteria

- Walking trails – incorporate playground, better utilization of Festival Park; indoor walking path
- Train station renovation
- Rehab/parole probation locations – no more in downtown
- 22/40 better coordination with Federal Highway/SHA for streetscape (visual appeal)
- Better/proactive code enforcement
- Commercial recycling initiatives/incentives
- Good mix of housing moving in a good direction
- Revisit zoning by new/incoming hospital
- Park at community center (waiting)
- Charging stations for electric vehicles
- Preserving open space/nature (natural habitats)
- Craft store
- District courthouse
- Walking paths – active transportation
- Better utilization of parks
- Baseball, pickleball, etc. – outside recreation

DESIRES: WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF..., BUT IT'S OK IF WE DON'T GET IT

- Community Center

BARRIERS: IMMOVABLE OBJECTS OR OBSTRUCTIONS THAT WE MUST GO AROUND—WE CAN'T SIMPLY ELIMINATE THEM

- Pedestrian overpass
- Day shelter
- Truck traffic
- Bel Air Avenue improvement
- Vagrancy/homeless people congregating in downtown (need a day shelter)
- State rules
- Harford County—need improved relationship
- Borders are “unmoveable” (ex. State Highway, federal institutions, etc. block movement)
- Pedestrian walkway/overpass removal
- Warehousing and truck traffic
- Clear understanding for businesses/owners
- Route 40 – no identity
- Annexation procedures

OBSTACLES: THINGS GET IN THE WAY OF WHAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH, BUT CAN BE CHANGED

- Promoting the vision
- Annexation procedures – too time consuming
- Rt. 40/MD 22 – transportation issues
- Vacant buildings; commercial and residential

- Pitiful school system in Aberdeen
- Developers
- Landlords in downtown content with current conditions; will not promote Vision of Main
- Street
- I-95
- Lacking code enforcement

ANNOYANCES: THINGS WE JUST DON'T LIKE; TEND TO BE NUISANCES AND PERSONAL; DO NOT PREVENT YOU FROM ACHIEVING GOALS

- Need increased police presence downtown to address traffic violations: U-turns in the middle of the street, parking on City streets all day and are marked 2-hour parking
- Keep tractor trailers out of downtown
- Perception of Aberdeen not being safe; Rt. 40 Corridor is bad

EXERCISE #2

2011 Comprehensive Plan Vision: Aberdeen will concentrate development in a manner that ensures a safe, attractive, and economically viable land use pattern that sustains a balance between the City's current footprint and the inevitable growth that will occur.

I LIKE...

- Family focus
- More professionals moving here and not just working here
- Live/work/play
- Easy access
- Walkable community
- Small town feel - 2
- Feedback from Mayor and Council
- Accommodating to change
- Pivot depending on circumstances affecting Aberdeen – Upper Chesapeake Hospital
- Work/life balances
- Aberdeen is the "Center of Activities" in Harford County
- I-95 interchange
- Train Station
- Post office
- Inevitable growth
- Sense of community
- Local elected official response
- Interconnected with focal points to area
- Center of many areas
- Relationship to planning areas

I DON'T LIKE...

- Eliminate BRAC statement
- Need more community events (speakers at park, draw families in)
- Not enough parking downtown
- Not enough connection between sections of the City
- Revitalize properties, not build new
- Focused too much on development activities
- Ignoring underutilized "old" development
- Inevitable growth sounds negative
- Walking bridge by Amtrak - eyesore

IT'S MISSING...

- Vibrancy – need to make it feel like a City
- Current vision statement is boring

- Revamp “old town”
- Main Street feel
- Feel good about walking around/spending time in Aberdeen
- Fun places to hang out/eat
- Interconnectedness between developments, parks, businesses; cohesive feel
- Sense of place
- Human element; need more people that live here – connections
- Affordable housing opportunities
- Environmental impact
- Environmentally friendly designs and recognizing the environmental importance of our location
- Inclusivity of all generations
- Senior housing options/elderly care
- 55+ age targeted
- Develop infill
- Lacking parking downtown
- Lacks a sense of “downtown feel”
 - Nothing to walk to
 - Think of Havre de Grace
- Make Aberdeen a place of access
- More professional housing (work and live in Aberdeen)
- Additional housing – single-family homes
- Needs to address sustainable growth
- Infrastructure (water, police, etc.)
- Sidewalks
- Downtown business district
- SHA/County/City coordination
- Sense of community
- Safety

WHAT WILL ABERDEEN BE KNOWN FOR IN THE FUTURE?

- Place of access
- Creativity to draw people in
- Housing for young professionals
- Safe
- Diverse Community
- Youth Baseball
- Convenience
- Small town feel
- High tech jobs
- Military presence
- Science and Math Academy
- Amtrac and MARC train station
- BVO train Depot
- Historic houses
- Community Events
- Community Communication Weekly Newsletter
- Hopefully a City that Cares
- Good Quality of Life
- Stay incorporated as a City Government to control what we can
- Work/improve our image as a City
- Recreation
- History
- Community coordination