

**CITY OF ABERDEEN ♦ COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

VISIONING WORKSHOP #3: GROUP EXERCISE COMMENT COMPILATION

The City held its third and last Visioning Workshop on Saturday, February 12, 2022 from 9:00-10:30am at the Aberdeen Boys & Girls Club (100 E Bel Air Ave, 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**

Bethany Ables  
 Jessica Boyle Tsottles  
 Tom Burns, Jr.  
 Peter Daczy  
 Sarah Davis  
 Julius Dow  
 Paul Fullace  
 Julian Gordon  
 Lillian Ishibashi  
 Natalie Johnson  
 Leigh Maddox  
 Indy McGrady  
 Susan Osborn  
 Jackie Smith  
 Linda Snier  
 Tom Snier

**ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND**

Nathan Osborne, Directorate of Public Works Master Planning Division

**HARFORD COUNTY**

Kim Gutierrez, Harford County Public Schools  
 Len Parrish, Community & Economic Development Director

**ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL**

Patrick McGrady, Mayor

**ABERDEEN PLANNING COMMISSION**

Susan Brown

**ABERDEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Steve Horne, Chair  
 Sheryl Kohl

**ABERDEEN STAFF**

Phyllis Grover, Director— Planning & Community Development  
 Vickie Horne, Main Street Coordinator  
 Stefani Specter, Senior Planner  
 Sydnie Trionfo, Planning Assistant

**WALLACE MONTGOMERY—CONSULTANT/FACILITATOR**

Lauren Good, Project Manager  
 Ray Moravec  
 Angela Fleck

**EXERCISE #1**

**NEEDS: WE NEED TO ADDRESS THIS CRITICAL ISSUE**

- Native plant care
  - Vision of care
  - Historic protection
  - Small business > chain
  - Covered bus stops
  - Traffic remediation plan for Old Philadelphia
- Road between Route 715 – traffic circle.  
 Tractor trailer backups 4-5 deep both directions on two-lane rural road with no turning lane.

- Could be caused by business not accepting trucks vs turning movement issue
- Branding (what do you stand for)
- Improve Rt. 40
- Homeless (I see less now than in the past so I do not know if Aberdeen is addressing homelessness)
  - What services are there to address needs of homeless in the community?
- As someone stated, plants in public areas should be sustainable. Should also be native plants to sustain wildlife and helpful in collecting stormwater so that stormwater is directed away from drains. This helps keep our Bay clean.
- Traffic volume
- Affordable housing
- Home ownership
- Hold landlords accountable for their rental property
- Hold landlords accountable for renters not keeping up property
- Signage for tractor trailers going to APG. Often come into Swan Lake residential area and have to back out.
- Better bus routes
- Pedestrian, scooter & bike crossings with attention to road and street design
- Development patterns that allow complete communities
- Government buildings/recreation areas currently replacing plants with same thing every year. Would be cheaper to plant native, come back every year vs planting every year and maintaining. Want less cost/maintenance
- Bus stops not as available – access is an issue
  - Section near Boys & Girls Club has only 2 stops – opportunities for more
- Rt. 22 corridor from 95 to APG Paradise Rd to 40 in need of repaving – potholes
- Focus on more small/independent shops and restaurants vs national chains
- Ripken Stadium is the City's only true attraction. Need to identify additional resources and economic development/marketing opportunities.
- 2 components of City – business district and residential areas
  - Lack of code enforcement in residential areas – need to maintain integrity of community
  - Need commitment from city/prioritize code enforcement throughout; proactive because they're visible
- Focus attention on bicycle/pedestrian connectivity. Currently doing but need more focus. (active transportation)
- Aberdeen Train Station Bus Terminal – problem with loitering inside/outside
  - Signs?
  - People not there for transportation needs, just hanging out
  - Citizens should be safe/comfortable when trying to use – currently a detraction
- S Philadelphia Blvd has people driving the wrong way – need 1-way signage
- With new road improvements, need wayfinding to major areas (downtown, Stadium, 95, etc.)
- Sidewalks without connectivity – need to fill gaps
  - People crossing Rt. 40 in unsafe way
- Vision of care – covers subjects such as homeless, addictive, elderly, released criminals, youth → help address problems encountered
  - Look at what we have and build on (ex. Harford Family Home will help transition people to their own homes)
  - Don't have affordable addiction services
- Have level of elderly care in some of the community but no assisted living or senior care – opportunities for aging in place

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

- Indoor pool at new community center
- Water access to Chesapeake Bay and Bush River
- Farm brewery
- Handyman group to assist homeowners/seniors complete various tasks they can't do and at a reasonable rate
- Playgrounds (better & bigger)
- Improved wayfinding to key destinations (e.g., APG & Rt. 95)
- Aberdeen Train Station is the only public historic building in the City – the area is blighted. Friends of Aberdeen Train Station has effort underway to preserve the station and turn it into a gateway to the City, which could be a transformative attraction
- Better connectivity
- Healthy living (walking trails)
- More homeownership
- More homeowners
- More accessible bus stops
- Local businesses
- Complete communities with commerce & residential instead of blocks of houses and a "downtown" that has all commerce
- Jazz, blues, and other cultural events

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

- More local establishments for entertainment and shopping
- Scoops partner with interested parties and be open in the evenings
- Possible wine/cocktail pub
- High-density community development and investment in real property
- Even out sidewalks
- Not to look like a transient town

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

- Traffic
- Pattern of adding new development without adequate infrastructure
- State & County roads controlled by other entities
- Real estate controlled by outside folks without resources or intent to invest in our community
- Maryland State Highway – administration and improvement needs
- Lack of engagement
- Traffic control
- Volunteer work (getting more active in the community)
- Pedestrian overpass
  - Working on underpass
- What about both? Overpass would provide a view; underpass wouldn't be a physical barrier

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

- Volunteering
- Advertisement of meeting
- Poor representation of minorities
- Access
- Money → priorities
- Funding
- Crime
- Trash/clutter
- Branding/what are you known for
- Aesthetics
- More homeownership
- Stricter accountability of landlords to have tenants maintain property
- Volunteers – lack of \$\$\$
- Cynicism of citizens
- Train station overpass/improvements

- Economic upward mobility
- Expensive baseball stadium with long-term obligations
- Money
- Developing buildings without having appropriate infrastructure in place first
- Need for/knowledge of/education on “city awareness coordination” – what’s going on in the community, programs, volunteer needs, opportunities
- Sale/transfer of real property – “real estate moves glacially;” takes time to transfer “bad” properties to someone to make it better
- Local people focusing on local issues buildings a community that cares about each other so we can do great things together
  - Grassroots effort to get people involved, talk to each other, and build relationships
- Need money for development/community building
- Only so much staff/elected officials can do, especially without support of citizens

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

- Pesticide/herbicide use
- Stricter accountability of landlords to have tenants maintain property
- Drug activity
- Holding landlords accountable for renters not keeping up property!
- Drug dealer @ 50 Aberdeen
- People who whine but don’t take individual action
- Local people to do local things?
- Building a community that cares
- Downtown development district → funding/resources

**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...**

- Sustain balance “speaks to acknowledgement of CoA culture but also preparing for the future”
- The small town “look and feel”
- Safe, attractive, economically viable
- Splashpads, pools, outdoor activities, parks
- Reading at the libraries
- Safe
- The small-town community feel
- Accessibility of the government
- Community facilities
- Dated regarding BRAC component
- Concentrate (focus on community)
- Small-town life
- Accessibility to government
- Libraries/community facilities
- Safe, attractive, economically viable land use
- Sustains a balance between culture and preparing for the future
- Specific to development and land use – critical element

**I DON’T LIKE...**

- Remove BRAC language
- Inevitable growth sounds passive aggressive
- toward people that may want to maintain open space

- The vision statement lacks sense of community and soul
- Rental property not maintained
- Inevitable growth is baloney
- Litter, video games, uneven sidewalks
- Lack of clothing stores
- County's perception of Aberdeen
- Doesn't have a feeling
- Community feel missing
- Language regarding BRAC
- Development – already have buildings

empty/neglected. Need to fix up what we have vs building more (focus on redevelopment versus new)

- Doesn't sound like Aberdeen has soul
- Too focused on business environment/development
- Idea of existing for APG—important to know when/how growing; not main factor for City
- Future of ABD belongs to young people → education for children, raising bar for education/school system

### IT'S MISSING...

- No mention of green spaces!?
- Personality (what is APG known for) – small diverse charming city, great opportunities live, work, and play
- As someone said, a "picture" of the vision
- Main Street businesses and selection
- Ferris wheels, more baseball games, indoor soccer arenas, sports
- Rock bands, music
- Support community members
- Aberdeen is a community that cares about each other and where families can live and our young people don't have to move away when they grow up
- Education
- Education for our children
- What is the culture of Aberdeen?
- Need a picture
- Multicultural hub of services/restaurants – something to make you stop

- Interconnection between multiple travel modes/access/circulation
- Picture of city we want to be
- Pictures of communities we want to see/like to be
- Destinations
- Existing statement is specific within discipline of planning/zoning/land use – not community
  - Sense of community
  - Community development encompasses neighbors
  - Government needs overall vision statement
- Current "home of opportunity" – opportunity needs to be in community development – opportunity to live in an All-American City
- Statement not comprehensive
- Statement too business oriented – needs to encompass more

### WHAT WILL ABERDEEN BE KNOWN FOR IN THE FUTURE?

- As others said, cultural centers/events, financially sustainable
- Local Harford County town where residents care about each other and the town
- Clean, cool town where folks love their community and take care of each other
- Center of healthcare in northeast Maryland
- Opportunities and farmers markets, community events, play, work, live, and retire

- A wonderful place to live, grow, raise children
- Home of community opportunity
- Volunteers that host community activities
- May-Nov go to Bel Air specifically for farmers' market
  - Aberdeen's existing one is very small and repetitive
  - ABD/HDG partner for larger one with significant stuff

- Want similar events with local providers
- Need facility to accommodate
- When young people grow up, they don't have to move away for opportunities
- Regardless of economic standing, quality of life is good for anyone
- Great place to play, work, live, and retire
- Caring people
- Need arts, culture, plays, museums for adults and kids
- Financially solvent
- Open/green spaces – places to rest/rejuvenate that are cared for
- Use Ripken Stadium for outdoor cultural events
- HDG has taken the lead on sponsoring events – why can't we?
- Need community engaged and involved to make events happen – not just attend
- Important to hear from outsiders
- Envision ABD as a growth area with residential north of Ripken Stadium
- Outside of community, not a lot of residential development
- Attractions to downtown area – Main Street
- Iron Birds expansion efforts/Ripken Baseball will utilize local services – hotels, restaurants, other local businesses
- #1 employer in county is APG – don't need more office space. BRAC added 150 offices but limited employees (not as many as expected). Seeing alternate uses of existing office space
- Hospital (#2 job sector in county)
- Northgate – see transitioning to something else in future
- #3 county sector is big box. Currently 2 available spaces with current interests. Once occupied, will be completely occupied. Not really looking for more big-box.
- Want to be known for vision of care