

CITY OF ABERDEEN ♦ COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW: DAVID DAHLSTROM

Stakeholder: David Dahlstrom, Regional Planner—Upper Shore
Maryland Department of Planning
Date: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 | 1:00pm-1:50pm | Teams Virtual Meeting
WM Team: Lauren Good, Project Manager
Nicky Davis, Planner

STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION

When David took his position at the Maryland Department of Planning, the existing Comprehensive Plan was in place. David and Phyllis Grover (Aberdeen Director of Planning & Community Development) both worked on the form-based code team for the transit-oriented development area. He also directly reviews all water/wastewater amendments as well as grant/funding requests for the City.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

FROM MDP'S PERSPECTIVE, ARE THERE AREAS OF THE CITY OR PLANNING CONCEPTS THAT WE SHOULD FOCUS ON DURING THIS PLANNING PROCESS?

- Current legislation (not adopted yet) by the General Assembly dealing with accessory dwelling units. It would appear be mandating them. The City may want to mention them in the plan so that they're not restricted—have criteria where the City would allow them.
- Housing is a big state concern—generally Maryland has a problem with affordability overall.

AS PART OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS, WE'LL BE SUBMITTING A DRAFT OF THE PLAN TO MDP FOR YOUR REVIEW IN A FEW MONTHS' TIME. WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO SEE INCORPORATED?

- New housing element requirement: make sure there's a plan to update zoning code and clearly identify growth areas.
- WRE updates; changes in land use—how do those changes impact the City?
- Updated Census data. Need to be aware how reliable data is, particularly Census. Make sure to identify if there's a large margin of error.
- Overall the existing plan is well written; perhaps identify things that may seem outdated and identify new challenges.
- What level/amount of parks are there? Are each of the parks appropriate for the age of the community members?
- Thinking about COVID, where do people go to get outdoor recreation?
- Look at commercial standards—is an outdoor environment being promoted? Are incentives needed to facilitate or offset desired situation? Maybe parking reduction?
- Adequate parking is overrated. This is not a reason that a business fails.
- Incorporate Tier Map if haven't already done so. If there are changes to growth areas, the City should identify those. A Tier Map is not as important for the towns as with the county, since there's sewer availability and in the PFA vs areas not in the county.

ARE THERE BEST PRACTICES FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES THAT YOU THINK ABERDEEN SHOULD CONSIDER?

- ARPA funding is supposed to be for infrastructure. What are they using it for? I&I? storage? Capacity? Distribution? The uses need to be spelled out in the

comprehensive plan and water/sewer plan in order to get that funding or at least be eligible to apply.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON ABERDEEN GENERALLY? WHAT ARE ITS ASSETS? WHAT IS IT DOING WELL? WHERE DOES IT NEED TO IMPROVE?

- Very proactive—not a large town, not large staff.
- Embraced TOD (transit-oriented development) and FBC (form-based code)—a lot of jurisdictions would be apprehensive.
- Phyllis has pushed to try and get improvements—wish FHWA would rethink standards since Rt. 40 is such an impediment.
- Video on station area improvements.
- Underpass is a big-ticket item—need more support.
- I-95 study had community involvement—being proactive, about as much as you can be.
- Designated Main Street area is great for the City.
- Sustainable Communities designation is great for the City.
- Applied for Community Legacy funds and received them.
- Harford County TAP grants.
- Implementing what they have about as much as they can bite off—can't really say the City's going in a wrong direction.
- Discussion about train station in current plan needs modification/updating—museum being renovated.
- Maybe consider utilizing some of the ARPA funding for community improvements, state/fed funding for underpass?
- Continuing to work on Main Street.
- Already has a lot of affordable housing; the City is probably looking for more market rate,

- but ADUs are a topic of interest in Annapolis.
- Sustainable Communities funding application just came in—increase in residential 4%? 7.3% reduction in crime. Moving in right direction. 40% increase in vacant housing—not sure if there was a low number to begin with?
- Have had some issues around APG base due to some of the development there—some of the constraints put on them
- From a growth/development standpoint, the comprehensive plan needs to be out with the old and refining some of the new but not drastic changes. Continue existing path.
- Talked about creating a new IBD Zone—big focus in the plan should be getting the zoning code amended. Want to make sure any changes identified to the Code are actually going to be implemented.
- Is there big box/industrial being proposed for technology park? Harford County has a citizen group identified to fight it. Massive facilities have lots of impacts and are not attractive neighbors, especially if losing farmland.
- Maybe in HEAT area, development being proposed not as originally envisioned but still allowed by Code.
- In IBD, development coming in going to try to get max they can unless Code modified to address what's actually desired.
- For WRE, changes in land use and what impacts will be due to those changes. Be

aware of when limited capacities might become problematic. What is the current capacity? Typically MDE wants you to start evaluating allocations once you reach 80%—don't wait until you get to 100%. May need to start looking at this 5 or so years in advance. Growth is going to go where there's sewer capacity. Is treatment plant in need of expansion? What's needed and when? The City needs to consider all constraints and truly put thought into how to address capacity issues in the future.

- Look at water withdrawals and saltwater intrusion. Is Aberdeen near limits? Are new wells or deeper aquifers needed? What happens if there's a drought year?
- Is the City using their APFO as a tool to make sure they're acquiring new capacity to accommodate growth?
- No real reference to APG in Harford County's comprehensive plan. Aberdeen should take that into account. What about their water/sewer needs?

HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH CITY/EXISTING PLAN?

- Existing plan was already in place.
- TOD (transit-oriented development) Master Plan—attended charrette, met Phyllis Grover. One of the recommendations was to adopt FBC (form-based code). Have been on team to assist in that development over about a year.
- Have been reviewing water/ sewer amendments and annexations, sustainable community applications, etc.
- Attended some of the I-95 land use study meetings.
- Involvement directly related to requests for assistance. Phyllis appreciates assistance she gets from Maryland Department of Planning.

Meeting Notes:

Lauren Good, Project Manager

Nicky Davis, Planner

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