



Maryland Department of Planning

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Secretary

Matthew J. Power  
Deputy Secretary

May 30, 2012

Mr. Eric Soter, Director  
Frederick County Division of Planning  
12 East Church Street  
Frederick, MD 217001

Dear Mr. Soter: *Eric*

Re: Draft Frederick County 2011 Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Review

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) would like to take this opportunity to supplement our prior comments dated November 16, 2011. The MDP has analyzed the draft comprehensive plan and zoning review and the proposed modifications to the Fall 2011 draft. The MDP is concerned that the Frederick County Board of County Commission may not have provided adequate opportunity for the public to fully evaluate the impact of the proposed comprehensive plan amendment and rezoning. We agree with the Commissioners previously expressed support for public input. Consistent with the Board of County Commissioners position on PlanMaryland as adopted in Resolution 11-21, MDP respectfully requests that the Commission defer action on the plan amendment and rezoning to allow the public reasonable time to analyze the impacts and discuss their concerns with the Commission.

It remains unclear to MDP what conditions have changed in Frederick County over the past two years to warrant proposing such a dramatic shift in policy in the comprehensive plan. The draft plan still proposes to significantly increase the supply of low density residential development. The need for this additional supply has not been sufficiently documented as to the impact on existing growth areas and impact on community services and facilities. Low density residential growth will increase demand on the Fredrick County Government services and budgeting for additional, schools, roads, water and sewer infrastructure, and fire and rescue services. We have included additional concerns related to the fiscal impact of the current proposed changes in our attached supplemental comments.

Frederick County's rural and agricultural landscapes are significant features unique to Maryland and the local economy. Greater care should be taken to maintain and protect the County's agriculturally significant lands. As you are aware, the MDP and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation MALPF jointly administer the Program for the Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs. The Certification Program lets counties keep more locally generated agricultural land transfer tax in exchange for creating effective local land preservation programs and

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continually evaluating and improving them. Adopting this Plan in its current state may impact Frederick County's Certification.

Again, MDP respectfully requests that the County carefully assess the implications and impacts of these proposed land use changes in relation to Smart Growth practices and policies. The attachment includes supplemental comments and recommendations from the MDP.

Please contact me at (410) 767-4553 or David Cotton, Regional Planner for the Western Maryland Office, at (301) 777-2161.

Sincerely,



Peter Conrad, AICP  
Director, Local Government Assistance

Enclosure: Supplemental Comments on the Draft Frederick County 2011 Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Review

cc: Board of County Commissioners (5)  
Jim Gugel, Frederick County  
David Cotton, Regional Planner  
Rich Josephson, Director, Planning Services  
Rita Elliott, MDP Clearinghouse  
File



**Supplemental Review Comments from the Maryland Department of Planning  
Draft Frederick County 2011 Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Review  
May 30, 2012**

MDP has reviewed the Draft Frederick County 2011 Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Review and offers the following comments.

**Priority Preservation Area**

The impacts of the Draft Frederick County 2011 Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Review on the county's rural landscapes are significant. The table below illustrates the relationship between the land use planning changes and the rural landscape areas currently planned/zoned in Frederick County and is based on the county Planning Department staff report.

<b>Land Use Planning Change</b>	<b>Priority Preservation Area</b>	<b>Rural Legacy Area</b>	<b>Agricultural &amp; Resource Conservation Zoning District</b>
Re-zoning	2 Requests 502 Acres	8 Requests 1,836 Acres	92 Requests 3,609 Acres
Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation	4 Requests 620 Acres	10 Requests 2,039 Acres	110 Requests 8,713 Acres
Community Growth Area Designation	1 Designation 705 Acres	None	9 Designations 3,742 Acres

The magnitude of changes to the Priority Preservation Area and Rural Legacy Area generates some concern. These are areas targeted for conservation and preservation, and the proposed up-zoning, land use reclassification and growth area designation is inconsistent with these conservation strategies. Further, when reviewing the proposed impacts on the county's larger agricultural and resource conservation areas, future conservation funding efforts may appear unfavorable based upon this precedent to negatively impact rural landscapes.

In addition, the overall impacts on the county's Agricultural and Resource Conservation zoned lands are very significant. These areas are not currently planned or programmed for water/sewer infrastructure and are being re-zoned/reclassified for low density residential development. This sprawl-style development on well and septic is inconsistent with Smart Growth principles.

Of particular significance is the designation of 705 Acres of Community Growth Area within the Walkersville Priority Preservation Area. The adopted county PPA includes a significant greenbelt

around the town of Walkersville. The proposed growth area designation is very large in size and will sever the PPA, disconnecting the contiguous network of this targeted preservation area.

Furthermore, there is little evidence that the county has worked with the municipalities of Frederick and Walkersville to identify if this growth area is needed to accommodate future annexations. MDP recommends that the county work with these municipalities to inform this process.

### **Fiscal Impacts of New Community Growth Areas**

According to the “Approved Requests Analysis” report, the Draft Frederick County 2011 Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Review includes the adoption/expansion of three significant growth areas. These include Liganore, Monrovia and Urbana. The report details the potential number of new dwelling units as well as anticipated pupil yields.

MDP recommends that the county conduct a fiscal analysis prior to the adoption/expansion of these growth areas. The “Approved Requests Analysis” report outlines a number of significant infrastructure needs, including fire stations, parks, road construction, new school construction, and water/sewer facilities/connections. These infrastructure investments represent a significant cost; both initial and long-term maintenance.

Using schools as one example, the county report details that seven new schools will be needed to serve these three new and/or expanded growth areas. These include 4 elementary schools, 2 middle schools and 1 high school. The table below illustrates MDP’s estimated cost to construct a new school facility, not including land acquisition costs:

Facility	Cost Per Unit	Total
4 Elementary Schools	\$30,000,000	\$120,000,000
2 Middle Schools	\$50,000,000	\$100,000,000
1 High School	\$80,000,000	\$80,000,000

Here, MDP estimates that it could potentially cost \$300,000,000 to construct 7 new schools to serve these expanded growth areas.

Other necessary fiscal impacts identified by the county report include potentially significant expenses, including an interchange at Interstate 270 and Park Mills Road. MDP recommends that the county review infrastructure needs and engage in a thorough fiscal analysis prior to approval of these growth areas.