Sustainability Growth Subcabinet
Virtual Public Forum - June 2026

Pre-Forum Registration Questions

1. *Maryland is a great state, due to its variety. How does the Sustainable Growth Subcabinet factor in local culture & history?*

   The Sustainable Growth Subcabinet agencies are working together to help advance the Sustainable Growth Planning Principles, which support local culture and history in a variety of ways -- particularly through the Planning Principles of Equity, Place, and Resilience.

   EQUITY Engage all sectors of the community in the plan development process to ensure diverse voices are heard and the needs of underserved populations are prioritized.

   Communities thrive when every household is engaged in shaping future growth and development through their community plan. Equity in plan development practices requires historical perspective to better understand the current condition that cannot be fully reflected in data alone. It also recognizes that inequitable policies of the past have often established the conditions of the present which often do not favor everyone in the community equally. Community plans that reflect all members of the community will identify areas of needs and priorities based on a whole system, community approach that benefits future generations.

   Subcabinet agencies recognize that local culture and history affect how development has evolved in a place and whether or not that development has been equitable. Local culture and history also plays an important role in determining appropriate responses to inequitable development.

   PLACE Provide public spaces that encourage social interaction and value cultural, historical, and natural resources.

   Placemaking is a process that contributes toward empowering communities to plan, design, and program new or revitalized public spaces. Placemaking efforts build community, contribute to public health, connect our diverse cultural heritages, conserve natural resources, improve climate resilience, and strengthen our local economies. Placemaking also includes placekeeping, the active care and maintenance of beloved public spaces by the people who live and work there, to support the continuation of local ways of life and cultural memories. Public spaces may be publicly owned or private-owned spaces that are open to the public for a designated period of time such as museums, gardens and other spaces that are granted public access. The process of placemaking helps build social cohesion and community engagement by identifying and meeting community priorities through physical space improvements.

Local culture and history are obviously strong factors in both placemaking and placekeeping. The Maryland Historical Trust (part of MDP) and other Subcabinet agencies operate designation and incentive programs to help identify, maintain and enhance these important community spaces.

RESILIENCE Integrate resilience measures that will minimize the impacts of rapid and unexpected natural and human-caused threats on communities.

The Maryland Office of Resilience (MOR) defines resilience as the ability of communities to adapt to the challenges of changing conditions and disasters, including human-caused and natural hazards, and to build, advance, and maintain capacities related to quality of life, health and well-being, durable systems, economic vitality, humanmade and nature-based infrastructure, and sustainable environmental systems. Community plans that integrate these areas of concern will be better prepared for sudden shocks and avoid chronic stresses, making recovery easier.

Subcabinet agencies recognize that local culture and history play an enormous role in a community's resilience. This can connect to environmental justice issues (also related to the Equity principle), where marginalized communities have been made less resilient due to factors beyond their control; the community's use of and cultural relationship to land over time; and the appropriateness (or not) of various resilience measures, given the community's history and cultural context. The Maryland Department of Planning (with the Maryland Historical Trust) works with other agencies in the subcabinet to ensure that these factors are considered in resilience planning.

DHCD and MDP recognize that preservation and adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure are important components of sustainable growth. State policies encourage reinvestment into existing communities, rehabilitation of historic properties, and adaptive reuse where possible. DHCD, for example, leads multiple programs that invest in rehabilitation of existing communities, including the Community Legacy Program, the Seed Community Community Development Anchor Institution Fund and the Catalytic Revitalization Tax Credit, which encourages the preservation of historic structures.

DHCD also administers the Sustainable Communities program, a designation program that supports sustainable revitalization by facilitating revitalization and sustainability planning, and providing a toolkit of community development programs, technical assistance, and public investment incentives. Infill development is an appropriate revitalization strategy for Maryland Sustainable Communities, which focuses targeted reinvestment within Maryland’s community cores.

2. *How will state agencies help resource-strapped MD towns implement the 8 new Sustainable Growth Planning Principles?*

   MDP is developing checklists, best planning practice examples, and consolidated resource guides for each Principle. These will be designed for an audience of small-town staff and planning commissioners. MDP is partnering with other state agencies to incorporate guidance respective to their areas of expertise and review authority. As much as possible, MDP aims to publish the resources prior to the October 1, 2026, effective date of SB 197/HB 243 and HB 240. In addition to publishing the resources on MDP's website, MDP is developing a coordinated system with other state agencies to tailor guidance specific to individual contexts of each jurisdiction, in response to the 10-yr comprehensive plan update notifications required by HB 240.

3. *Is the state developing any planning tools to address the hazards of pluvial or flash flooding?*

   DNR encourages local partners seeking to address precipitation-induced flooding to review trends described in the Northeast Chapter of the Fourth National Climate Assessment and consult the Projected Intensity-Duration Frequency (IDF) Curve Data Tool for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and Virginia.

   DNR's Community Flood Planning grant supports local government partners in their assessment of pluvial flooding risk. The next round of project applications will open July 15, 2026. Review the Grants Gateway page for more information.

   MDE is in the process of undertaking the A-Storm initiative. The effort is statewide and comprises: (1) report on the most recent precipitation data available, (2) investigate flood events since 2000, and (3) update Maryland's stormwater quantity management standards for flood control. MDE has met or is meeting all of these A-StoRM requirements.

   MDE recommends comprehensive flood management watershed studies to model precipitation-based flooding and formulate flood management plans to address those risks. MDE is developing the framework for comprehensive flood management watershed studies at the HUC-12 scale in Maryland and initiating two pilot watershed studies.

   Counties and local governments will be able to use MDE's framework and contract for watershed studies using either their own funds, or they may apply for Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Funds or DNR's Grants Gateway Community Flood Planning Grant to fund their watershed study. A comprehensive flood management watershed study will provide County and local governments with the tools they need to identify precipitation-based flood risk, prioritize mitigation activities, and adopt higher standards to reduce the risk.

MDOT SHA has developed the MDOT Climate Change Vulnerability Map to help implement resilience strategies and initiatives to address the impacts of climate change related hazards, e.g., flooding, on transportation infrastructure. The map tool showcases geospatial data products related to climate change and the potential impacts on State transportation infrastructure. The purpose of this map application is to support efforts to avert and mitigate potential impacts of sea-level rise, including flooding, on State roadway and bridge infrastructure. MDOT also provides climate change programs (please visit MDOT Climate Change Site for more information) to support local efforts in addressing flooding impacts on transportation infrastructure.

4. *How are they factoring protection, revitalization & reuse of MD vast historic built fabric into sustainable planning & revitalization?*

   The state's commitment to Sustainable Growth is guided by the intent statements of its eight Planning Principles. For economic development, Maryland's Planning Principle is to "allow for adaptive reuse, mixed-use, and context appropriate new development that responds to changing markets and innovations." Maryland supports revitalization and adaptive reuse of historic buildings through its State Revitalization Programs, a suite of capital grant programs designed to assist local governments in community development, historic preservation, and sustainable growth.

   The Maryland Historical Trust's (MHT) *Heritage2031, Maryland's statewide preservation plan (2023-2031)*, sets a course for preserving historic places, archaeology, and cultural heritage in the state through 2031. This plan includes goals, objectives, and strategies for nonprofits, government agencies, cultural resource professionals, and others involved in historic preservation and archaeology. MHT also offers a variety of state incentive programs, such as the Maryland Historic Revitalization Tax Credit Program, the Historic Preservation Capital Grant Program, the African American Heritage Preservation Program, and the Maryland Heritage Areas Program, which help support historic preservation and revitalization by providing funding and resources to care for historic places and culturally significant sites.

5. *Why the property tax increased even the house did not have any upgrade or any renovation?*

   Property tax assessments are not executed by DHCD, but these taxes may increase based on increases in property values. Property values can increase even if no improvements have been made to an individual property -- for example, if the local real estate market experiences changes. We recommend reaching out to the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation with any specific questions.

6. *How does Sustainable Growth include working lands as multi-revenue economic infrastructure, not simply land preservation assets?*

   The Land principle includes the following phrase: “optimize productivity of working landscapes, including farms and forests, and fisheries”. Optimizing productivity of these working landscapes means not only preserving and preventing the fragmentation of working lands. Optimizing productivity also means supporting state and local efforts that enhance the vitality of resource-based industries, such as economic development policies, programs, and projects.

7. *What can we do as Maryland communities to stop solar development that negatively impacts our Towns?*

   Rather than aiming to completely stop all solar energy development, which is an essential component of Maryland’s renewable energy portfolio, Maryland communities should partner with adjacent jurisdictions, property owners, and energy providers to incentivize and streamline solar development in areas where it will have lessened negative impact on communities, such as brownfields, grayfields, parking lots, and land outside of municipal growth areas and prime agricultural areas. Here are a few state links that might be useful:

   MDP Solar Facility Siting Guidance (https://planning.maryland.gov/Pages/OurWork/RRP/envr-planning/solar-siting/solar-siting-home.aspx)

   Public Service Commission Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (https://psc.maryland.gov/regulated-utilities/electricity/cpcn/)

   Department of Natural Resources Power Plant Research Program (https://dnr.maryland.gov/pprp/pages/default.aspx)

   Additionally, local governments can familiarize themselves with COMAR 20.79.01.05A(2) about the applicant's requirement to reach out to the county and/or municipality a minimum of 90 days prior to filing an application for a CPCN. This part of the process ensures that the local government's site development requirements, community benefit requests, and feedback on comprehensive plan and zoning consistency are included in the case jacket.

8. *Does MD ‘Sustainable Growth’ densifying redevelopment displace existing affordable homes or explicitly include affordable homes?*

   Maryland's Sustainable Growth framework envisions densification, redevelopment, and affordability as compatible planning objectives and strategies. The state’s commitment to Sustainable Growth is guided by the intent statements of its eight Planning Principles. For housing, Maryland’s Planning Principle is to “enable a mix of quality housing types and affordability options to accommodate all who want to live in the state.” Accessory dwelling

units, inclusionary zoning, middle housing development, density bonuses accompanied by affordable deed restriction, community land trusts, opportunity to purchase policies, and other anti-displacement strategies can help align growth, affordability, and equity for a more sustainable Maryland.

Maryland's Sustainable Growth strategy encourages thoughtfully planned higher density development in existing communities that are already served by infrastructure and transit, and provide access to jobs. By increasing housing supply and housing choices, denser development can reduce prices across the market and make more efficient use of existing infrastructure. The State also recognizes that redevelopment can create displacement pressures if not carefully planned, this is why most DHCD programs prioritize or exclusively fund the preservation and creation of affordable housing, the rehabilitation of existing homes, and encourage local planning to expand housing while protecting existing residents.

9. *Are the agencies considering a shift from the status quo property tax to a split rate tax to reduce development barriers?*

   During the 2026 legislative session, the General Assembly tasked MDP with creating a report on the feasibility, fiscal impacts, and policy design for applying a split–rate or land value tax within defined areas adjacent to rail stations served by MARC, MTA Metro SubwayLink, MTA Light RailLink, or the Purple Line. MDP shall consult with the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT), the Maryland Department of Transportation, and the Department of Legislative Services in preparing the report. MDP will submit the report to the General Assembly no later than December 1, 2026.

10. *What policies has the Sustainable Growth Subcabinet studied to promote infill development in our cities?*

    Maryland's approach to sustainable growth is centered on directing growth to existing communities and areas with infrastructure already in place, while preserving our agricultural land and natural resources. The Sustainable Growth Subcabinet has explored a range of strategies to encourage infill development and urban redevelopment, including reducing barriers to housing construction in Maryland cities, supporting the redevelopment of vacant sites, aligning infrastructure investments with designated growth areas, and coordinating State resources to strengthen our existing communities and neighborhoods.

11. *How are regional and national trails being incorporated into transportation corridor projects?*

    This question is likely referencing transportation shared-use paths. The largest regional natural surface trail in the area is the Appalachian Trail. MD DNR participated on the MDOT Transportation Trail Strategic Plan that addresses this topic.These types of trails are outlined in the Maryland Department of Transportation's Strategic Plan, which DNR contributed to. (Full URL:

https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/index.aspx?PageId=215). As part of the recommendations, DNR will evaluate opportunities to connect these regional trails to our public lands.

Questions during the Public Forum

The following questions were answered during the forum:

1. *The traditional property tax inflates housing prices/rents and encourages land speculation which promotes urban sprawl. Some PA cities remedy this by reducing the tax rate applied to privately created building values while increasing the rate applied to publicly created land values. MD law prohibits Baltimore City and Maryland counties from implementing this reform. This spring, HB 78 & SB 457 were introduced to remedy this problem but the Moore Administration ignored this legislation. Will the Administration support this legislation next session?*

   MDOT responded: I believe that these approaches are currently under review as possible mechanisms for promoting TOD.

2. *"Is any part of this Sustainable Growth Program linked to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 169 subgoals within these. The SDGs are a comprehensive, holistic, and synergistic approach that is affordable and achievable...and urgently needed to address the root causes of most preventable forces that have no respect of US borders, independent states, or any so called independent agencies - in our irreversibly interdependent global reality. If not? Why Not?*

   MDP responded: The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development has no relationship to Maryland's Sustainable Growth Planning & Policy Principles (SGP3). Sustainable growth in Maryland builds on the success of smart growth over the past 27 years. Sustainable growth is a framework to balance Maryland's economic growth needs with our environmental responsibilities through community resiliency and neighborhood vitality while deepening our commitment to equity to ensure that no one is left behind. These 8 principles modernize and replace the former 12 Planning Visions. These new principles guide Maryland's shift from Smart Growth to Sustainable Growth, a more balanced way of managing land use and development. The eight Planning Principles aim to make sustainable growth policies simpler, clearer, and easier for everyone involved in planning and development to use effectively.

3. *A Washington Post article in today's paper is on Churches building into and onto their churches housing units. Would HB894 or a future bill encourage such wise and compassionate construction projects?*

   NCSG Responded: Virginia recently passed a YIGBY (Yes in God's backyard) law that facilitates by right construction of affordable housing. That said, there are several churches actively working on this in the Purple Line - but there are still a lot of challenges in process that could be assisted through legislation. https://housingforwardva.org/news/fwd-253-yigby-bill/

   DHCD responded: In 2024, the Governor sponsored the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act. This legislation allows for multifamily housing to be built on non-profit owned land (including faith based institutions). The legislation allows for greater density to be built if the development sets aside a portion of the units for affordable housing.

4. *Does DHCD plan to bring similar legislation to Starter and Silver Homes next year, and if so, are they planning to include provisions related to PFAs, other smart growth locations, from the start?*

   DHCD Responded: We are currently in the planning stage for legislation for 2027. DHCD does plan on bringing back the Starter and Silver Homes with slight revisions.

5. *Can Andrew provide a one paragraph summary of the value of each bill on the Recap for us to read.*

   MDP responded: Yes, I will get that together and send it off with the materials from today's meeting.

6. *Can Andrew provide a one paragraph summary of the Sustainable value of each bill on the Recap for us to read and plagiarize from?*

   MDP responded: Live answered – Yes

7. *What is the status of the study on land value tax and TOD?*

   MDP responded: An internal MDP team is currently in the information gathering phase to inform the final report. This phase has included engagement with SDAT and counsel from the Ways and Means Committee which has previously studied the potential adoption of land value taxes in the state.

8. *HB 78 / SB 457, if enacted, would greatly facilitate TOD!*

   MDP responded: This bill did not pass the General Assembly this year, however the study MDP must conduct on the potential adoption of a land value tax system near transit stations will help inform future legislation like HB 78/SB457. Our report is due December 1st.

9. *Are rural areas served by buses eligible for TOD designation? Or is TOD only reserved for rail-served communities?*

   MDP responded: Yes, they would be eligible but will need to meet the state's TOD guidelines to be officially designated. For instance, a TOD designation can be considered for an area that is adjacent to an existing or planned transit corridor. You can read more here: https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=226

10. *While the updated TOD Designation Program unlocks the State's Capital Grant and Revolving Loan Fund, jurisdictions like Prince George's County—which possess Maryland's highest concentration of transit assets but face systemic revenue constraints—face structural disadvantages in matching infrastructure capital and attracting market demand. What flexible regulatory models or targeted state-backed financial incentives will the Subcabinet deploy to ensure under-resourced, high-capacity transit corridors can equitably compete for TOD funds against wealthier jurisdictions?*

    MDOT responded: The TOD designation doesn't require local government financial contributions and getting the designation enables localities to access state financial resources.

    For more information on state financial resources for TOD, visit (1) the link –"Benefits of Designation" on the MDOT TOD Designation Program site and (2) the TOD in Maryland site for state agency programs that support TOD, and (3) MDP's Planning Tools for TOD web page.

11. *Can you please clarify the specific timing when impact fees are now collected per bill HB 548*

    DHCD responded: Impact fees are usually collected at the beginning of a development process, during the permitting phase. The Housing Certainty Act shifts collection of fees to the end of the process, when construction is complete. This should help reduce the cost of financing, allowing for more homes to be developed and at a lower cost to the homeowner.

12. *What programs are available that encourage regenerative agriculture?*

    MDA responded: Regenerative agriculture is a critical component of Maryland agriculture, and like all agricultural systems the theory must be adapted to the farm's cropping systems, topography, climate, soil type, etc. MDA's Conservation Grants program offers key cost sharing opportunities and incentives to farmers looking to incorporate regenerative practices into their operations. Please refer to our Office of Resource Conservation page for a more elaborate list of opportunities (https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/default.aspx)

13. *Hi Geoff, just to make sure i'm clear on your response or maybe I'm unclear - Under Maryland statute, to win a design or construction grant, applicants must provide "credible funding strategies that demonstrate full funding... upon award of the grant". The state wants to ensure that if they give a jurisdiction $2 million for a transit plaza, the jurisdiction or developer already has the matching capital to build the actual housing or retail surrounding it. State funds are meant to act as a catalyst. The Subcabinet scores applications higher when local jurisdictions demonstrate "skin in the game" via local tax increments (TIFs), county bonds, or private equity commitments. In other words we can't get the state TOD money without market demand, and they can't attract market demand without the infrastructure the state money is supposed to pay for.*

    MDOT responded: Thanks for the follow up Mark, I was talking about the TOD designation. The other pieces you are talking have varying requirements depending which programs we're talking about. Probably makes sense to set up a call. I'd be happy to follow up with you and also bring our TOD folks into the conversation if that's useful from your perspective. You can email me to follow up at gaderson4@mdot.maryland.gov

14. *What policies is MDE putting in place to protect the Bay and its waterways from data center pollutants? Will the Bay take precedence over data centers?*

    MDE responded: Thank you for your questions. Data Centers are subject to water and air permits and in some cases to land impact regulations. MDE is working closely with communities to set and enforce pollution limits in order to protect the Bay.

15. *There are proposed data centers in Calvert County where buildings are over 200,000 sq feet. Are they required to be net zero as well?*

    MDE responded: "Yes, data centers are regulated. They are treated as buildings over 35,000 square feet and must follow state energy rules. The net-zero mandate only applies to emissions created at the site. The electricity pulled from the power grid does not count toward the net-zero cap. Data centers must track energy use and meet efficiency targets, but the grid power they consume is not subject to the net-zero rule.

The following questions were answered by Subcabinet agencies after the forum:

1. *Unconstrained data center development is unsustainable. What is Maryland doing to manage data center development in the long run (post-moratorium)?*

   The state is conducting a study - in conjunction with the Maryland Energy Administration, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Legislative Services, and the University of Maryland School of Business as required under Senate Bill 116/House Bill 270 of 2025 – analyzing potential impacts of data center development. This analysis will include potential impacts on the state's natural resources, energy supply, revenues and expenditures, and climate related goals. The findings will be published by September 1, 2026 and will inform future state legislative action surrounding data center development. Further, the Department of Planning recommends researching the actions of your local government surrounding data center development as they have the primary say on land use developments within their jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions have implemented temporary moratoriums while others have enacted out-right bans, so the landscape of how data center development may impact your community varies.

2. *Can we require solar panels be constructed over parking lots of 80 spaces or more to generate electricity for communities? This is done in Europe. It would be similar to what IKEA did in College Park*

   While there are no known examples of parking lot solar canopy mandates in the United States, several states and municipalities are encouraging or requiring them through local legislation and zoning codes. The Maryland Energy Administration ("MEA") anticipates including solar canopies as an eligible measure under its competitive Commercial & Community Buildings Grant Program. The program is expected to launch in September 2026 and will provide solar canopy funding opportunities for eligible non-profits, congregations, local governments, and schools. Alternatively, sites interested in hosting community solar can expect to apply for canopy mounted systems under the upcoming Community Solar Grant Program, which is also planned to open in September 2026. To learn more, please review MEA's General Notice of Intent for Upcoming Fiscal Year 2027.

   The Brighter Tomorrow Act of 2024 encourages developers and property owners to construct solar panels over parking lots by granting permanent personal property tax exemptions for non-residential parking canopies and rooftop solar installations, and allows them to qualify for a 150% Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC).

3. *Please tell me who is interested in developing a plan to implement Balcony Solar (Utility Relief, Section 7-321)?*

   The balcony solar provision within the Utility RELIEF Act allows a resident to install a single portable solar unit, so long as it is certified by Underwriters Laboratory, or an equivalent nationally recognized testing laboratory, to ensure safety. There is no program, or requirement for one to be developed. There is no requirement for a permit or interconnection agreement, but notice to the electric company providing service in the service territory in which the generating system will be installed is required before installation.

4. *This is specific to DHCD and MDOT SHA RE: new housing on state lands, and doesn't require an answer on this call, but I'd like to call attention to a property at the northeast corner of Old Columbia Pike and Fairland Road (Montgomery County) as a candidate for housing development. Development on this state-owned property is also identified in the Approved and Adopted 2024 Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan.*

   Thank you for this suggestion! DHCD and the Maryland Department of General Services are in the process of identifying and selecting appropriate state-owned properties for housing development. We will share this recommendation with the appropriate policy-makers for consideration as housing opportunities on state-owned land are evaluated.

   Awaiting response from DHCD and/or MDOT

5. *RE: Education...what about pre-school?*

   Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) is responsible for coordinating postsecondary education and cannot speak with authority on initiatives related to early childhood education. We work closely with our sister agency, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and they are the agency that supports early childhood education in Maryland

   Additional Information:
   Regarding pre-school education, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) works collaboratively with the State Board of Education and stakeholders to ensure the promise of an excellent and equitable education for all students, especially those who have been historically underserved. MSDE is implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, a once-in-a-generation opportunity that provides the policy and investment needed to realize the department's mission. The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* was passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2021 to transform public education in the state into a world-class education system. *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* is organized into five distinct pillars. Pillar 1: Early Childhood Education. Initiatives identified in Pillar 1 address full day Pre-K at no- or reduced-cost for more families, public-private Pre-K partnerships to expand options for

families, expansion of wraparound services for students and families through Judy Centers and Patty Centers, increased funding for the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program to support students with special needs, and more funding dedicated to elevating the quality of student experiences in early childhood education.

6. *While the historic HBCU settlement funds have provided vital programmatic support to institutions like Bowie State University, these funds are legally restricted and do not solve structural, baseline operational resource gaps. Under the new 2026–2030 State Plan for Higher Education, what specific administrative and financial backstopping will the Commission provide to Maryland's HBCUs to ensure they can successfully build out the data-tracking systems required for these new workforce and equity KPIs without diverting resources from core student support?*

   Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) will continue to work with the public colleges and universities to obtain the data necessary to inform KPIs developed for economy and equity in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible, to include any additional or more granular data collection that may become necessary over time. However, the intent is not to make data collection a burden or to divert any available funding from programs or student services in any effort to track data.