



What we have done

The Concentrating Growth Workgroup has held five meetings. In the first phase of our work, we engaged in fact-finding. We received excellent presentations from workgroup members and outside speakers on the following topics:

- Best practices for sustainable projects in urban locations
- Best practices for sustainable projects in rural locations
- Regional innovation clusters and urban economic revitalization
- Summary of January 2010 “Sustainable Maryland” Report prepared for Task Force on Growth and Development
- Summary of the draft of Plan Maryland as it relates to concentrating growth.

In the second phase of our work, we considered a long list of topics that the workgroup might make recommendations about, and narrowed the list to three broad areas:

1. Defining rural growth centers
2. Streamlining development approvals in sustainable “smart growth” centers
3. Making sustainable growth centers attractive places to live, work and invest.

What we intend to do next

At our most recent meeting, we created three subcommittees to prepare specific recommendations in each of the issue areas. Subcommittees will look at the following questions:

1. Rural growth (Chairperson: Duane Yoder)
This group will prepare recommendations on how to practice sustainable growth in rural areas. Possible topics include:
 - changing the minimum PFA density from 3.5 dwelling units per acre to something else
 - strategies for economic development and job growth in targeted rural locations
 - transportation linkages among rural growth centers and major community facilities
 - strategies for preserving and/or growing historic town centers
 - best approach to septic-based development.
2. Streamlining the development approval process in target locations (Chairperson: Sean Davis).

For those locations where we know we want more growth and more density (be they urban, suburban or rural locations), how do we make it easier for good development projects to get through the approval process?

3. Making sustainable growth places attractive, desirable and “finance-able” (Chairperson: Carol Gilbert).

How do we persuade people and businesses to select sustainable locations when they are choosing where to live, work and play? Possible topics include

- infrastructure financing
- education of community and local zoning authorities about the benefits of sustainable communities and the long- term costs of sprawl
- explain the importance of better schools and public safety in urban areas to the sustainable growth objective
- examine tax policies that make it more expensive to locate in sustainable areas and less expensive to locate in “sprawl” locations.

When we intend to do it

Subcommittees will bring preliminary recommendations to the August 1 meeting of the Concentrating Growth Workgroup. I anticipate that the workgroup will need two to three meetings and/or conference calls to prepare formal recommendations for the full Commission. We will endeavor to complete that process in time for the Commission’s September 26 meeting.