



To: Jon Laria, Chair, Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission
Maryland Sustainable Growth Commissioners

From: Derick Berlage, Chairman, Concentrating Growth Workgroup

Subj: Workgroup Activities

Date: March 24, 2014

This report is current through March 10, 2014, the date of our most recent conference call. The Workgroup is continuing to pursue initiatives using three subcommittees.

Financing Smart Growth

Funding for Smart Growth programs in this year's state budget seems to be holding up, although there is a chance that Neighborhood Business Works could take a cut. There have been over 80 letters of support to maintain or increase funding for these programs. The budget will be adopted April 3.

The Smart Growth Investment Fund Task Force report was received by the Commission at their January meeting. Recommendations on equity and capital funding are a good part of the report with a focus on real estate projects targeted to Sustainable Communities and TODs.

Sustainable Growth Indicators and Status Check

This task continues with the design of a suite of smart growth, community and conservation objectives and associated indicators and display tools that can be used to assess and measure progress statewide and, in some cases, for individual jurisdictions or other smaller geographic areas, and to help serve the purposes and needs of the Commission, the Department, and the National Center.

Four primary considerations were used to produce the initial set of objectives and indicators. First are those objectives most germane to PlanMaryland and the responsibilities of the Sustainable Growth Commission. Second is the ability to compile data and produce indicators that legitimately measure progress toward those objectives. Third is that said data will continue to be available in the future. And fourth, is to avoid expanding the suite of objectives and indicators beyond the purview and responsibilities of the Department and the Commission.

The preliminary set of objectives and indicators is organized in five categories:

- Growth, Development and Redevelopment

- Rural, Agricultural and Environmental Resources
- Socio-Economic Equity
- Transportation – Land Use
- Economic Development

To ensure that a statewide “status check” by region will be useful as a starting point for measuring progress, the task includes the following:

- Determining ways to display and/ or standardize indicators so they can be used for geographic areas smaller than regions, such as individual jurisdictions, PFAs, etc.
- Developing examples of conditions represented by the range of each indicator, to help show what places with high or low values of a particular indicator might look like in real world terms.
- Determining how incremental progress (e.g., on a one or two year time frame) toward objectives might be measured, given that some indicators might take years to change appreciably, particularly those based on cumulative values. Ways to do this might include the use of “programmatic” indicators, i.e., steps that are being taken by state or local agencies or programs to help achieve an objective and which, given enough time, might be expected to change indicator values; and use of indicator values for individual years, to isolate and distinguish what is occurring now and going forward from what has occurred cumulatively over time until now.

These efforts should support the sort of annual or biennial status checks that the Commission would like to have available.

Streamlining

Research has been done on state level best practices for streamlining in Maryland and nationally. Local comprehensive plans in Maryland contain a good deal of material on streamlining, however, there seems to be a lack of implementation.

Examples of recent efforts in Maryland include Prince Georges County’s TOD legislation, Montgomery County’s zoning rewrite and Baltimore City’s zoning rewrite.

There are two ULI efforts underway that 1) will look at adaptive reuse of existing and/or historic buildings and 2) will involve focus groups to identify potential solutions to obstacles to developing in Priority Funding Areas.

Governor’s Letter to the Commission on Infill, Revitalization and Redevelopment

The Governor’s letter to the Commission asks for recommendations on infill, revitalization and redevelopment, as well as on regulatory relief, funding, financing, TOD, and design. The Concentrating Growth Workgroup will be involved in developing some of these recommendations over the next few months.