

Memo

To: Derick Berlage, Chair, Concentrating Growth Work Group, MSGC, and Jon Laria, Chair, Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission

From: Joe Tassone and Shelly Aprill

CC: Richard Hall, Commissioners, MDP Staff

Date: September 22, 2014

Re: Update on Indicators

Since the previous Commission meeting at which we spoke about indicators, the Department has worked with the National Center for Smart Growth and more recently the Concentrating Growth Workgroup on this effort. In addition, MDP staff members have done a great deal of additional work internally.

Accordingly, the attached summary of the objectives and indicators on which we are currently working has evolved since our last discussions.

As noted in an April 30 memo to you on this subject, we began with the Commission's Indicators Work Group final report, and made use of the ongoing efforts of MDP and the NCSG to develop and apply indicators in various contexts.

The fundamental strategy we followed is to design 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
- Help serve the purposes and needs of the public, local governments, and the Commission, Department, and National Center.

Four primary considerations were used to produce the set of objectives and indicators itemized in the attachment, which we'll present on Monday at the September 22 Commission meeting.

- Include objectives most germane to PlanMaryland and the Sustainable Growth Commission
- Include indicators that legitimately measure progress toward those objectives
- Be fairly confident that said data will continue to be available in the future
- Keep the objectives and indicators within reasonable purview/ responsibilities of the Department and Commission

As a result, we eliminated many of the objectives and associated indicators we had originally considered.

The current 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

Three important issues that should be discussed at the meeting on Monday are:

1. Adequacy of the current suite of objectives & indicators
2. How the Commission might use the indicators to check status & measure progress
3. How might appropriate benchmarks/ targets be developed for different regions

The first issue is a natural part of the discussion. For the second and third issues, I will offer suggestions at the meeting.

For issue #2, the key will be practical ways to comprise a statewide “status check” by region or jurisdiction and to measure progress. One possibility I will illustrate is the use of either a single “composite” indicator for each objective or, in a few cases, one or two individual indicators where a composite is not needed or feasible.

To do this, it will be necessary to use the details –individual component indicators that comprise composites – to look more closely at what the composites mean in specific instances, and individual “measures of progress” to gauge progress – or lack thereof – toward a given objective. On Monday, we will present the information in a way to illustrate these suggestions, as well as a few thoughts about the third issue, setting appropriate benchmarks.

We hope these efforts will support the sort of annual or period status checks that we understand the Commission would like to have available.