



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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County Executive

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING
Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

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Housing Element Advisory Group Meeting 5 January 9, 2025, Meeting Minutes

I. Meeting Details

Meeting date and time: Thursday, January 9, 2025, at 2:00 PM

Meeting location: 30 North Market Street, Frederick, Maryland 21701

II. Attendance

Advisory Group members present: Danielle Adams, Hillary Champman, Hugh Gordon, Mike Hatfield, Mary Ellen Mitchell, Barb Trader, Ruth Waxter

Advisory Group members present virtually: Mayor Nathan Brown, Teresa Dowd, Ken Oldham, Jodie Ostoich, Vincent Rogers

Advisory Group members absent: Bruce Zavos

County staff: Karin Flom, Kimberly Gaines, Andrew Stine, Denis Superczynski

III. Call to Order

Ms. Flom brought the meeting to order at 2:01 PM and welcomed the advisory group members.

IV. Brief Summary of Advisory Group Meetings #1-4

Since the advisory group last met in November, Ms. Flom provided a summary of the first four meetings. Meeting #1 included a visioning exercise and identifying housing strengths and challenges in the County. Meeting #2 identified the various tools and programs available to create and retain affordable housing. Meeting #3 was a mapping exercise in which advisory group members mapped potential housing types across County Community Growth Areas and answered various supporting questions about their housing strategy. Meeting #4 involved prioritizing the affordable housing tools identified in Meeting #2. The summary slides can be viewed in the PowerPoint presentation for Meeting #5 on the Plan's webpage at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/HousingElement under the "Documents" heading.

V. Discussion of the Intersection of Housing with Economic Development and Green Infrastructure

At the previous meeting (Meeting #4), the Advisory Group began a discussion of the intersections of the Housing Element with two other plans currently underway: Investing in Workers and Workplaces (economic development) and Green Infrastructure. The agenda item was carried over to Meeting #5 to provide an opportunity for input from the many members unable to attend Meeting #4 and to cover the Green Infrastructure questions. The questions are included below, with a summary of responses and discussion included for each.

Investing in Workers and Workplaces

Question 1: “Area Median Income” If this metric isn’t working well in Frederick County from an affordable housing perspective, what is a better definition within the County?

Advisory group members suggested United Way’s “ALICE” metric (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) which uses the idea of a survival budget. Members also offered additional data or resources on measuring households strained by housing costs, including from the National Association of Realtors, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and Yes In My Backyard. Members also discussed the importance of considering the costs of electricity, heating, and other utilities, property taxes, and insurance. Partnership with the City of Frederick’s rental registration program was identified as a way to learn more about how many properties exist at what rent levels or are available for individuals with a record.

Question 2: When thinking about the jobs available in Frederick County, where (geographically) in the County do we have housing affordable to these households?

Discussion included that people who need lower cost housing are getting pushed further out into Frederick County and that these individuals then often face compounding problems related to time and cost of transportation and childcare. These locations may also not have the infrastructure needed to support increasing populations.

Question 3: When considering the needs of workers, what are some positives and negatives about these locations?

Members discussed that some areas are experiencing overcrowded schools. Frederick County also has many positive amenities such as being walkable and bikeable, public transportation (TransIT, MARC), high speed internet, healthcare and groceries, parks, green space, and open space. However, these amenities are not necessarily equitably distributed and able to be enjoyed by everyone. Local governments (staff and elected officials) also experience pushback on housing proposals and must balance many competing needs when considering public spending. The potential to revisit how Frederick County allocates recordation taxes was discussed.

Question 4: What programs, investments, or partnerships can have the most impact on providing safe, attainable, and affordable housing for workers?

Populations who may have specific affordable housing needs were mentioned, including those with physical or mental disabilities or sober living. The families of workers were also noted as needing to be considered in these discussions (community infrastructure and services). Suggestions were made for efforts to promote more housing construction including expedited approval processes, reducing impact fees, or donating land for affordable housing developers.

Helping people stay in their housing, such as landlord/tenant programs or an ombudsman, were also discussed.

Question 5: How can the County and business community collaborate on the housing crisis?

Land trusts were discussed as a solution (it was noted that Habitat for Humanity Frederick County is authorized to operate as a land trust). Utilizing the private sector for some functions currently performed by the public sector (or proposed to be) was suggested, such as housing quality inspections or a rental ombudsman. Private investment in targeted areas was also suggested, such as the Johns Hopkins development around their campus in East Baltimore for their workforce. Such efforts were noted as opportunities for public-private partnerships (P3s).

Green Infrastructure

Question 1: What should be the County's guiding principles when recommending land use or zoning changes to a more intensive use?

Advisory group members identified a focus on land that already has appropriate land use and zoning designations and is served with the necessary infrastructure, increasing density or building taller to save green space, allowing for flexibility and nimbleness with zoning (for example, rules related to ADUs, tiny homes, or parking requirements). Members also identified the importance for equitable access to green space and being innovative with on-site green infrastructure like green roofs or green walls.

Question 2: We do not exist separately from nature. When designing and building our homes and neighborhoods, what are the most important things for a healthy "human habitat?" How can these be incorporated into new and existing neighborhoods?

A common theme to this discussion was how green infrastructure can and should create a sense of community. There should be places that are physically comfortable (shaded, places to sit, and gather) and revisiting what stormwater management can be (for example, Carroll Creek and examples in Philadelphia of shifting stormwater from "grey" infrastructure to green infrastructure).

Question 3: Where in Frederick County do residents need increased access to nature either for passive enjoyment or recreation?

The need for more equity in terms of type of amenities and access was reiterated. One example was pools. Pools are typically only in a private HOA or apartment or other membership facility. The County has some partnerships (such as the YMCA in Urbana) but there is not a general public pool. The cost of maintaining and operating HOA facilities (not just pools) is also increasing which gets passed on to residents.

VI. Fair Housing & Access to Opportunity

Due to time constraints, this topic was deferred for the next meeting. It was suggested the next meeting also address Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

Adjournment

The meeting will be January 23, 2025. With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.