

January 15, 2018

Dear Planning Commission Members:

Keep Calvert Country was very pleased with the results of the January 10, 2018 work session regarding the 1st Draft of the Comprehensive Plan. We applaud the decision to:

1. Request a Multi-modal Transportation Plan
2. Restrict the expansion of the Huntingtown Village to only include the high school
3. Add language to more clearly state the County's growth management policies.

Since P&Z Director Mark Willis stated that comments will continue to be accepted until the Plan's adoption, we would like to take this opportunity to share our thoughts on the discussions surrounding the above decisions and certain statements made.

1. Everyone agrees that it is crucial to replace the 1997 Transportation Plan. After all, the consultant included the Transportation Plan in her list of Plans over which the Comprehensive Plan serves as an "umbrella". We have heard it said that the current Comprehensive Plan was not based on any traffic study. We wish to clarify why that is not true: The 2004 Plan was based on the traffic analysis of the 1997 Transportation Plan and the 2010 update had the benefit of the 2008 Southern Maryland Transportation Needs Assessment. In addition, the 2004 Plan and the 2010 update proposed growth management tools that would **decrease** the projected "buildout", (thereby reducing the traffic growth as well). Some argue that updating the Transportation Plan will slow down the Comprehensive Plan process.

We would like to remind the Planning Commission that the current update is actually premature. State law requires Plans to be updated every 10 years, which gives the County until 2020 to adopt a new Plan.

2. There seemed to be mixed opinions as to whether Huntingtown High School should be included in the Village, with some members stating that it is not necessary since it is already constructed. Although staff explained that a waiver would be necessary if the high school needed to be expanded and was not in the Village, our concern again is any minor Town Centers crossing Route 4. As you know, all Comprehensive Plans have recommended against such crossings since the creation of the Town Centers in the 1983 Plan. We fear that additional rezonings may be made to properties adjoining the high school with the justification that "we've already crossed Route 4, so what's the harm in expanding further". Finally, if you review the Priority Funding Area Map (Figure 2-1 in the draft Plan), you'll see that there are numerous schools that are not located within a PFA, most notably Northern High School, which is currently undergoing a complete replacement.

3. We were concerned to hear the consultant recommend that the Planning Commission consider replacing the “buildout” projections with some sort of method to control the rate of growth, especially since no fact-based percentage was suggested and no explanation as to how such methods would be implemented was given. Even more disheartening was the consultant’s complete disregard for the Maryland Dept. of Planning’s comments:

“Avoid the assertion that the County could somehow manipulate the growth rate. That seems unlikely.”

Staff indicated, when questioned after the meeting, that St. Mary’s County controls growth via a yearly percentage, which equates to a “building permit cap”, with the growth rate percentage being periodically adjusted. We caution the Planning Commission that such methods may not address the long-term concern that Calvert County’s infrastructure and environment can not sustain unlimited growth. We hope the consultant will provide more facts and information to inform the Planning Commission on the pros and cons of attempting to control the rate of growth.

Finally, it is important to clarify the use of the terms **“housing units”** (used by the consultant) vs. **“households”** (used by the current Plan). The 2016 Census Bureau statistics show the number of **“housing units”** (# of houses, whether occupied or not) in Calvert County is 35,056 while the number of **“households”** (occupied residential units) is only 31,479. As you can see, the use of the proper term is significant when discussing how close the County is to its buildout goal of 37,000 **“households”**. Note: for a detailed explanation, visit <https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/definitions.pdf>.

We were very pleased to hear the consultant state that the missing “heritage” and “government” sections will be added to the next draft, but concerned that there was no mention of adding a “purpose statement”. Director Willis’ remarks about the Plan being used as a “vision” falls short of the real importance of the Comprehensive Plan. We encourage the Planning Commission to review the Purpose Statement from the current Plan (attached) and request that a similar statement be included in the 2nd draft so that its intended use is clear.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the above topics. We hope the Planning Commission will find this information useful.

Sincerely,
Keep Calvert Country