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Smart Growth Means Sustainable Communities

BY SECRETARY SERENA MCILWAIN, MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

LEAGUE LEADERSHIP

Dear Maryland Municipal League Members,

When I met and spoke with so many of you at the MML Summer Conference in Ocean City, I was struck by your shared commitment to working together in order to solve big problems. The issues at the top of my list at the Maryland Department of the Environment are climate change, resilience, and environmental justice.

The good news is that Smart Growth policies you are pursuing also play a major role in addressing these global issues at the local level. Collaboration will be the key in making real progress.

Maryland is a pioneer in implementing Smart Growth strategies. Through a combination of legislative initiatives, state-level planning, and a commitment to sustainable development, we are focusing growth around existing infrastructure, protecting the environment, and promoting sustainable communities. These actions also positively impact our economy and our overall quality of life. Most importantly, we are making sure that when we make important decisions no one is left behind.

Here are some key areas we are working on:

- **Reducing Sprawl**: Curbing urban sprawl is an important part of making sure that infrastructure can handle demand. By directing development to existing urban and suburban areas, we can contain sprawl and preserve open space and natural landscapes.

- **Improving Transportation & Improved Air Quality:** We are enhancing public transit to reduce reliance on individual vehicles, which lowers emissions and decreases traffic congestion. The reduction in sprawl and the emphasis on compact, walkable communities makes for a healthier Maryland as we strive to reach our goal of zero emissions by 2045.

- **Protecting the Chesapeake Bay:** Maryland is rich in water resources, including the Chesapeake Bay and numerous rivers and streams. We are upgrading wastewater treatment plants, strictly enforcing pollution controls and maintaining infrastructure to modern standards. Efforts to control stormwater runoff, reduce impervious surfaces, and encourage responsible land use practices near water bodies also help the Bay.

- **Implementing Sustainable Building Practices**: Maryland has seen increased adoption of sustainable building practices, including LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification and green building standards, leading to energy-efficient and environmentally friendly structures.

- **Promoting Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)**: Maryland has successfully implemented projects, particularly in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area, that co-locate work, residential, entertainment and transit. The development of mixed-use, high-density communities around transit hubs reduces traffic congestion and promotes public transit use.

- **Preserving Rural and Agricultural Land:** Maryland is known for its fertile agricultural land. Through various zoning and land preservation initiatives, we have protected farmland and rural landscapes. Agricultural preservation programs have helped sustain the state's vital agricultural industry and ensured a sustainable food supply.

- **Strengthening Urban Cores**: Revitalized downtown areas in cities like Baltimore, Annapolis, and Frederick are shining for all to see. These revitalization efforts have attracted residents, businesses, and tourists, boosting economic activity.

- **Expanding Affordable Housing**: Smart Growth developments present opportunities for expanding affordable housing stock, promoting socioeconomic diversity in communities and opportunities for all.

Community engagement and participation in planning processes is critical to ensuring that the needs and desires of residents are considered in development decisions. By fostering vibrant communities, we attract new businesses and investment, boost local economies, and generate new jobs in our emerging green economy.

Big challenges remain, but Governor Wes Moore and I are committed to engaging residents and stakeholders throughout the process and keeping equity and community needs at the forefront of everything that we do.

Let's get it done together.

Sincerely,
Serena McIlwain
Secretary, Maryland Department of Environment

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Seen & Scene: MML Town Halls with Frederick Chapter and Allegany/Garrett Chapters and More

July MML Town Hall with Frederick Chapter

MML's Inaugural Symposium: A Cannabis Deep Dive

Allegany-Garrett Chapter Town Hall

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Delegates CT Wilson and Jheanelle Wilkins Highlight MML's Inaugural Symposium – A Deep Dive on Cannabis Legalization

BY JUSTIN FIORE, MML DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ADVOCACY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Maryland Municipal League (MML), which represents 157 cities and towns, two special taxing districts in Maryland, launched its inaugural Symposium Thursday, August 10. The first in a series of deep dives into emerging municipal issues, the Symposium's speakers tackled the recent legalization of cannabis.

Delegate CT Wilson, House Economic Matters Chair and architect of the legislation, was the morning keynote. Before a packed house of 136 municipal officials and staff from over 60 different jurisdictions, Wilson set the stage: "You hippies voted for it, so we legalized cannabis."

It was a friendly reminder for everyone that legalization came via a ballot initiative and that the State is only moving forward. The Chairman also stressed that feedback was still necessary, and that the General Assembly will be taking an omnibus approach to legislative tweaks.

Panels featuring municipal attorneys, administrators, and consultants covered how to navigate challenges surrounding local land use policies and cannabis in the workplace throughout the day.

Industry leaders also had the opportunity to share the economic benefits of welcoming a dispensary, processor, or grower into their community, citing the number

of jobs created, competitive wages, and restoration of otherwise vacant properties in addition to any revenues collected from the sales and use tax.

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins, Chair of the largest Legislative Black Caucus in the nation and Vice-Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee was joined by Laurel Councilmember Martin Mitchell and MML CEO Theresa Kuhns to talk about the social equity components of the bill. Wilkins shared that the equity piece of the puzzle was intentional and needs collaboration between the State and locals governments.

When asked about how municipalities can help, Vice-Chair Wilkins highlighted the Cannabis Business Assistance Fund and encouraged officials to share its opportunities with their community. The fund was created in the law to provide grants and loans for small businesses, including small, minority-owned and small, women-owned businesses entering the adult-use cannabis industry..

League members were also treated to administrative and regulatory updates from Will Tilburg, Acting Director at the Maryland Cannabis Administration as well as revenue updates from Rachel Sessa, Deputy Comptroller.

Theresa Kuhns summarized the event: "Local government is closest to the people, and there is a great responsibility involved with directly representing 2 million Marylanders. This symposium was more than education for local elected leaders and staff, it was about connecting and building intentional progress for future generations of Marylanders."

Water, Water Everywhere: Walkersville Maryland's State of the Art Treatment Plant

BY ANGELICA BAILEY THUPARI, ESQ., MML
DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

During the July MML Town Hall for the Frederick Chapter, MML leadership and staff made a stop in Walkersville that included a tour of the town's state of the art water treatment plant. An important issue for all MML cities and towns, water and sewer innovations, like what we saw in Walkersville, are definitely something that The Local should share with our readers.

Matt Orndorff, Water Superintendent for the Town of Walkersville, was our host for the tour. Because often, creativity, innovation and redesign are born from crisis, Matt admits that the town's water plant remodel was a result of a sewage spill. They were able to use a 90/10 infrastructure grant. Below is a picture of the project cost. They also won an award in 2021 for Water System of the Year from the Rural Water Association.

The old Water Treatment Plant (WTP) was over 45 years old and utilized pressure filtration, Ion Exchange Nitrate removal, and Ion Exchange softening followed by disinfection. Many of these technologies had run their course. The salt bins, brine system for the nitrate removal, and softener units were in poor condition and had been a continuous maintenance problem for the Town and added sodium to the drinking water. The filtration and ion exchange equipment were near their typical useful life cycle of 30-50 years. Some of the vessels had been repaired several times for leaks, and many of the valves and instruments were outdated. Despite Town's continuous maintenance, excessive corrosion and rust were reported on the piping and treatment tanks. The WTP could no longer provide adequate protection against potential contamination of source waters.

Walkersville town management and staff decided to build a new and advanced WTP designed to address future demands and more stringent water quality regulations. The basis of design for the new plant was established to pump out 1.0 million gallons per day (MGD) and 1.5 MGD in the month of maximum use. This flow demand was viewed to be good for the next 30 years

The new facility is an Integrated Membrane System (IMS), one of the first drinking water IMS in the State of Maryland, consisting of pretreatment for protection of membranes, Microfiltration (MF) for turbidity and pathogens removal, Reverse Osmosis (RO) for reduction of Nitrate and hardness, chlorine primary disinfection, UV secondary disinfection, fluoridation and post pH adjustment. The finished water hardness has been very consistent in the 80-100 mg/L since the new

plant came online. Water quality meets and surpasses all state and EPA requirements. In order to cost-effectively meet and surpass the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) water quality requirements, typically, 25 to 30 % of the filtrate from the MF is bypassed around the RO to reduce O&M costs and minimize chemical usage for pH adjustments. The current blend ratio is set at 28%, which will result in 90-100 mg/L of hardness and Nitrate levels of 2-4 mg/L, well below EPA maximum standard of 10 mg/L.

Since its implementation in 2020, the Water Treatment Plant has been successfully operating without any issues, meeting and surpassing all requirements and expectations.
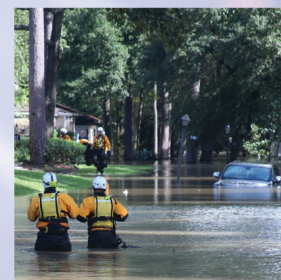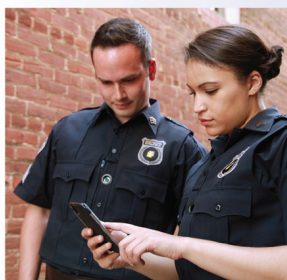
Celebrating a Sustainable Partnership

By Tom Reynolds, MML Senior Director, Leadership Development

In 2014, the Maryland Municipal League entered a partnership with a new program called Sustainable Maryland Certified. Now known simply as Sustainable Maryland, the program is part of the Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland (EFC). Designed to support the state's 157 municipalities as they look for cost-effective and strategic ways to protect their natural assets and revitalize their communities. Sustainable Maryland uses best practices in resource areas like water, energy, planning, health, food, and economy to advance the sustainability visions of Maryland's cities and towns.

This free and voluntary program helps communities choose a direction that suits their sustainability efforts. Participating cities and towns choose from a variety of "actions" where they can apply program tools, trainings, case studies, and other sustainability resources.

Currently, 88 Maryland municipalities participate in the Sustainable Maryland program, and 41 of those have achieved certification by completing actions that best align with the needs and goals of their communities. This symbiosis between local government and the community it serves represents the core of the Sustainable Maryland program.

MML has great pride in this partnership and the sustainability successes it generated. We are also pleased to have been a part of the concerted 2022 legislative effort that brought consistent state funding to a program that previously relied almost exclusively on the vicissitudes of grant funding.

This recurring issue of The Local serves as both a reflection of the meaningful work to which Sustainable Maryland contributes and the MML partnership that helps strengthen the state's municipalities along with the communities they serve. To learn more, spend time with this issue of The Local and visit sustainablemaryland.com.

Five Ways to Reimagine Smart Growth

By Andrew M. Fellows, Faculty Research Specialist, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland

Smart Growth has changed the way we think about our communities. Cities, towns, and counties throughout Maryland have been engaged in the political challenge of implementation, which may encourage the reimagination of Smart Growth in the coming decade to further refine local planning. One might envision neighborhoods that are:

- **Mixed Use Supporting Sustainable Jobs and Micro-Economies**

  Building consensus on local decision-making often requires a bottom-line goal of supporting jobs and building tax bases that can be used to fund and accelerate the following approaches. Globally, millions of creative and innovative jobs will continue and increase to address health, culture, local and new business start-ups, equity, and resilience. Basing locally improves the quality of life, while saving time and energy.

- **Healthy**

  Preventive health care includes nutritious food, exercise, clean air and water, easy access to quality health providers and related businesses. Zoning can promote both urban agriculture and the farming legacy of rural communities. Transportation planning can incentivize walking, biking, and running. Farmers markets, fun-runs, and eating locally build community while strengthening sales for local food producers and

"Smart Growth has changed the way we think about our communities."

Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program

fitness-related business. Reading and relaxing in a transit commute instead of road rage is a good prescription for less stress and mental health.

- **Creative and Innovative**

  Good food in schools is one foundation for communities to support the many benefits of creative and artistic growth of youth. Blueprint for a Better Maryland funding will strengthen educational support of student expression. Complementary cultural richness in public space, galleries, with loft spaces and housing to support creative communities, made viable through increased density and tax bases in artistic hubs.

- Smart intellectual growth for youth feeds a flow of brilliant minds working towards innovation in every discipline. Entrepreneurial job creation will increase better ways of saving energy, reducing, or eliminating waste builds a base of sustainable jobs that further improve the quality of life while encouraging families to build their careers locally.

- **Just, Inclusive, and Engaged**

  Just, diverse, and inclusive communities create an immersive experience of fairness and civic engagement. Trust-building and respectful dialogue – in

schools and everyday life – strengthens democracy. Equal access to housing, employment, education, and health opportunities for every family are envisioned in a democracy. Communities zoned to achieve these goals unleash the power of every individual to make a difference.

- **Climate Crisis Adaptive**

Earth's warming is already altering lives. Leading communities embrace clean energy and energy-efficiency. The integrated management of water resources through rain harvesting (e.g., green roofs, walls, rain gardens) and re-use of water will reduce consumption. Better plumbing supports jobs and reduces water waste. Communities on decentralized closed loop water systems reduce energy and water expenditure by centralized systems.

Co-benefits of trees, green space, and soil health maintenance include carbon sequestration along with reduced erosion and sedimentation. Wetlands protect communities from the increased flooding and intense rain events that will be experienced in the coming decades. Architecture and planning accommodating rising water levels will reduce property and productivity loss caused by devastating storms.

Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program

"Just, diverse, and inclusive communities create an immersive experience of fairness and civic engagement."

Many of the reconsidered qualities of Smart Growth have been enjoyed by Maryland municipalities engaging in the Sustainable Maryland certification program (https://sustainablemaryland.com/), which began in 2011. Any neighborhood can review the menu of options that include and promote many of the practices of modern smart growth communities, and choose action now tailored to any locality that will improve quality of life while helping to save the planet.

For More, Contact Author Andrew M. Fellows*, Faculty Research Specialist,* University of Maryland, College of Information Studies (School) Campus Community Connection

Also Affiliated with the National Center for Smart Growth 4161 Fieldhouse Drive (Patuxent), Room 1109D, College Park, MD 20742 www.ischool.umd.edu | afellows@umd.edu | 301-405-2042 UMD is built on indigenous land of the Piscataway People

Interested in implementing Smart Growth in your community? Check out these resources!

Local Government Guide: Preserving Local Character and Landscapes

National Center for Smart Growth

Smart Growth America

Photo by Ethan Weston/Chesapeake Bay Program

The Town of Bel Air Milton Reckord Armory and Smart Growth

By Kevin Small, Planning Director, Town of Bel Air

Take a drive through Bel Air and you are sure to notice the historic Milton Reckord Armory in the heart of downtown on North Main Street. Constructed in 1915 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Reckord Armory has a long history of being a focal point for community activities in Bel Air, providing a year-round facility to host events. The Town of Bel Air purchased the Armory from the Maryland National Guard in the early 2000s and completed a renovation of the property. Since that time, the Armory has served as a catalyst to bring people downtown to experience the arts, meet neighbors and support local stores and restaurants. In the center of historic downtown Bel Air, the adaptive reuse of the Armory is easily and safely accessible for many of the Town's residents.

With a robust calendar of events, the Armory now serves as an economic driver for downtown and fills a critical need as a centrally located cultural and recreational facility as well as a venue for private events throughout the year. On any given weekend, you might find a wedding celebration, a chess tournament, a concert, a dance performance, or an event showcasing local authors and artists. A signature event in December is Winter Wonderland which features tens of thousands of warm white lights and live music which provides an opportunity for local residents and families to enjoy the spirit of the holidays.

Some Town goals that have been met following the renovation include encouraging pedestrian traffic, establishing Bel Air as a visitor destination and fostering recreational and social opportunities downtown in the evenings and on weekends. Moreover, the renovation of the Armory has drawn investment to the northern end of Main Street providing a spark for façade improvement projects, new business development, and other types of capital reinvestment in the area. The Armory has served as a cornerstone of Bel Air's downtown and helps strengthen a sense of community while providing an opportunity for residents to expand their cultural horizons.

In 2010, to complete the Armory complex, the Town added the Frederick Ward Armory Park. In 2016, Bel Air introduced the Armory Marketplace, the Town's award-winning business incubator facility. The once vacant garages behind the Armory now offer an innovative service provided by the Town of Bel Air to encourage retail development, nurture entrepreneurs, increase pedestrian traffic, and create new jobs in the community.

Armory Marketplace is a highly selective program that offers new business owners an opportunity for a flexible, below market-rate lease for up to three years which gives them time to establish their business, understand the local demand for their product or service, and strengthen their financial standing. The program provides business coaching, marketing and technical assistance, and an opportunity to build strong community partnerships. The startup period for any business is a critical time and having additional support from the Town of Bel Air creates a strong foundation that allows the business to graduate from Armory Marketplace and be successful in a permanent Bel Air location. One of the goals of the program is to make sure that Bel Air is consistently infused with new life through various new businesses that contribute to the Town's unique appeal.

The Reckord Armory complex is a community asset that enhances the vibrancy of downtown Bel Air. The smart-growth rehabilitation and repurposing has maintained the historical integrity of the property while offering a community center and an innovative resource for entrepreneurs.

Residential Clustering and the Town of Thurmont

Haymarket Development Clustering in Thurmont

By Jim Humerick, Town Administrator, Town of Thurmont

In 2017, the Town of Thurmont approved an amendment to the town's Subdivision Regulations allowing a zoning practice known as "Residential Clustering". Residential Clustering (RC) is a residential development program in which single-family houses are permitted to be grouped closer together on lots smaller than the minimum lot size allowed by the Zoning Ordinance. Clustering provides flexibility without increasing density, creating critical land preservation and further reducing the overall extent of public infrastructure. Less infrastructure, less roadway, and less impervious surface is a huge benefit to the environment.

The clustering provision does not allow the applicant to exceed the maximum density allowed in the district where the development is located. So, if the original zoning requirements allow for 20 homes, the residential clustering provision still only allows 20 homes. The remaining acreage cannot be developed and can only be utilized to meet environmental requirements and guidelines.

Here's an example of how it works -- in Thurmont, a residential lot in the medium density zoning district must be at least 8,000 square feet in size. If a developer is approved to utilize the Residential Clustering provision, the minimum lot size is reduced to 5,600 square feet. The difference between the original 8,000 square foot requirement and the 5,600 square foot RC requirement is 2,400 square feet. This remaining 2,400 square feet cannot be used for anything other than certain environmental uses such as creation of a forest, storm water management, open space or park land. To put the environmental

significance in perspective, if a subdivision with 30 proposed homes uses the RC provision and uses only the minimum lot sizes, there is a potential to realize an additional 72,000 square feet of land that can be used for nothing other than the environmental uses stated previously. All residential zoning districts in Thurmont have a requirement to create open space but the RC provision significantly increases those numbers.

To date, three proposed subdivisions have been approved to use the Residential Clustering option. One of these subdivisions is currently under construction and the remaining two will be under construction in early 2024. By using the residential clustering option, these three subdivisions combined will create an additional 832,400 square feet, or 19.1 acres of open space.

The Residential Clustering component of the Thurmont Subdivision Regulations provides the Town of Thurmont the ability to ensure that larger contiguous portions of subdivisions are preserved for the conservation and protection of our natural resources. Smaller lot sizes, along with the required additional open space areas allows Thurmont to grow, while ensuring that it's done in a well thought out way. Towns and communities must grow, or they become stagnant and lose their economic vitality. The RC component allows growth which is beneficial and attractive to potential developers by allowing them to provide a marketable product that exceeds environmental requirements, complies with the Master Plan, and meets the vision of our forefathers ensuring that Thurmont remains the "Gateway to the Mountains".

Salisbury's Path to Sustainability and Inclusion

By Dylan Laconich, Sustainability Specialist and Sophie Detorie, Communications Intern, City of Salisbury

Salisbury has a clear sustainable roadmap for the future which was established by the hard work of residents, elected officials and staff. The City is adopting innovative planning approaches to ensure equitable and sustainable development which also preserves the local culture.

There are several equity-based urban renewal strategies that are frequently implemented. Some examples of these strategies include:

- **Transit-Oriented-Development** - a type of urban development that maximizes the amount of residential, business and leisure space within walking distance of public transport. It promotes a symbiotic relationship between dense, compact urban form and public transport use.

- **Form-Based Code** - a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks.

- **Mixed-Use Zoning** - Mixed-use zoning allows for the horizontal and vertical combination of land uses in a given area. Commercial, residential, and even in some instances, light industrial are fit together to help create built environments where residents can live, work, and play.

The City of Salisbury recognized a historic disconnect between the economic success and livability of its neighborhoods. To address the discrepancies, recent plans such as the Salisbury Boulevard Master Plan addresses the specific needs of underserved residents and neighborhoods. The Boulevard Plan aims to infill mixed use development thus attracting consumers from adjacent neighborhoods that currently lack access to amenities. By creating additional neighborhood-oriented retail and family-oriented businesses, Salisbury Boulevard seeks to provide economic success for the historically disadvantaged to work, live, and thrive.

The City has also addressed the reality that not all residents have access to infrastructure, amenities and jobs. This is a major factor in the adoption of the Vision Zero program, which will safely connect everyone to what Salisbury has to offer. Envision Salisbury brought in this community-oriented approach to evaluate day-to-day needs through resident participation, which the City believes is essential to ensuring that all its residents prosper.

Addressing climate change impacts is also crucial for adapting smart growth goals. The City's Environmental Policy Task Force Report emphasizes incorporating sustainable principles and promoting resilience and adaptation while also mitigating greenhouse gases.

A key strategy identified by local stakeholders involved open space and education equally available to all. The City is exploring Smart Zoning Practices, which utilize form-based codes and provide guidance on achieving this balance. These codes regulate the physical intensity, massing and form of development within different zones, promoting greenspace preservation while accommodating necessary development. The concept of a "transect" suggests a gradual transition between different areas of a community. Through such zoning, the City can connect people in the region along miles of nature trails. Likewise, the upcoming North Prong Park planning efforts link principles of resilience and adaptation with education, while also boosting recreation and accessibility in an underserved neighborhood.

By continued commitment to these planning activities and approaches, Salisbury strives to achieve equitable and sustainable development that addresses equity gaps, preserves greenspace and addresses mitigating climate change impacts for future generations.

Climate Resilience Model for Comprehensive Plans

By Owen Bailey, Director of Land Use and Policy, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Flooded roadside in Dorchester County Courtesy of the Chesapeake Bay Program; photographer Matt Rath

While the state of Maryland requires counties and municipalities to draft and update a comprehensive plan that includes key elements like Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Municipal Growth, and Water Resources, it does not require a climate resilience element.

In 2016, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) and the Eastern Shore Department of Planning Office developed a document called the Model Coastal Resilience Element. This document combined policy recommendations and factors for local governments to consider for their comprehensive plans specific to their city or town's responding to sea-level rise. The goal was to first help communities understand how sea-level rise would impact them so they would include a targeted local coastal resilience element in their plans. Beyond providing help with that planning, it was hoped that a subsequent result would be that communities would then be able to acquire funds through grants for resilience projects.

With help from partners through the Delmarva Restoration Conservation Network (DRCN), ESLC, and others this year work began to update the Model Coastal Resilience Element to expand its scope beyond sea-level rise and include impacts of climate change. The Climate Resilience Element (CRE) supports local planning commissions' comprehensive plan updates. As communities face impacts from climate change, this tool can assist by integrating critical considerations into planning and provides strategies and action steps to enhance climate resiliency and links to additional assessments and planning tools and models. The Climate Resilience Element, when used by planning commissions to navigate the complexities of climate resilience can ensure long-term sustainability and preparedness in your community by laying the groundwork for:

- Resilient communities, adaptable to the impacts of climate change, that recognize and protect physical, economic and social value

- Proactive anticipation of future coastal threats that may affect the security and prosperity of future generations

- Increased public understanding and reassurance through a comprehensive response to climate change impacts

- Interagency and regional collaboration and partnership for coordinated transparent and focused delivery of implementable and innovative solutions

- Building capacity to enabling leadership and staff in implementation of good effective solutions

- Development of key elements in comprehensive plans to help local governments apply for funding and technical assistance

- Encouragement for public-private partnerships in climate resilience projects and best management practices

- Currently, many municipalities on the Eastern Shore have not updated their comprehensive plans in over a decade, waiting for the release of key census data delayed due to the pandemic. With the release of the census data, many cities and towns will update their plans in the next few years. The Climate Resilience Element is being drafted to be available this Fall/Winter as a resource to better position local governments in proactively preparing their communities to weather future climate change impacts.

Greater Baybrook Green Network Plan: A Community Vision Plan for Increasing Connectivity and Enhancing Green Assets

By Kimberly Fisher, Program Director, Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability, School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, University of Maryland

The objective of the GREEN NETWORK PLAN is to strengthen the community of the Greater Baybrook by connecting the area's green infrastructure into a unified network of safe and vibrant neighborhoods

We have been hearing about the importance of transportation networks, communication networks and others. This study will detail the development of a Green Network for the Greater Baybrook area. A green network has been defined as a "network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, while also enhancing biodiversity."

The Greater Baybrook area is a suburb of Baltimore, located across the Patapsco River on the peninsula south of downtown Baltimore. Within approximately 3,440 acres there are many features to incorporate into the green network, including the existing trails, parks and waterways. There are also obstacles to a green network, including barriers created by industrial land and highways, and parks that are fragmented and badly maintained.

This project began with six major goals to develop the Green Network Plan:

- Design multimodal infrastructure that connects the community
- Enhance existing parks
- Expand park acreage in areas of need
- Increase tree canopy coverage
- Improve stormwater management through green infrastructure

- Improve access to community waterways

For each of these goals, researchers identified ongoing investment strategies in the neighborhood and evaluated opportunities, constraints and other current site conditions. As an example, using the Multimodal Infrastructure Goal, researchers collected information on all existing roads, bus routes, adjacent light rail lines, and trails and inventoried all landmarks and attractions which would be critical to connect. Future transportation and land use plans added background information. With this complete understanding of the existing and planned transportation network, the authors identified several transportation improvements –

- Redesigning neighborhood streets to follow complete street models
- Larger roadways should be redesigned to include shared use, with a focus on pedestrians and bicyclists
- Connecting off road trails and shared use paths
- Increasing safety on Governor Ritchie Highway and selected intersections
- Ensuring that the green network connects important landmarks and attractions

This Green Network Plan is intended to enhance and strengthen the community of the Greater Baybrook by connecting its green infrastructure into a unified network of safe and vibrant neighborhoods. It will then guide the neighborhood in enhancing existing natural resources and grow its infrastructure to improve the health and well-being of residents.

The University of Maryland (UMD) Landscape Architecture Department was given the opportunity to create this Green Network Plan through Partnership
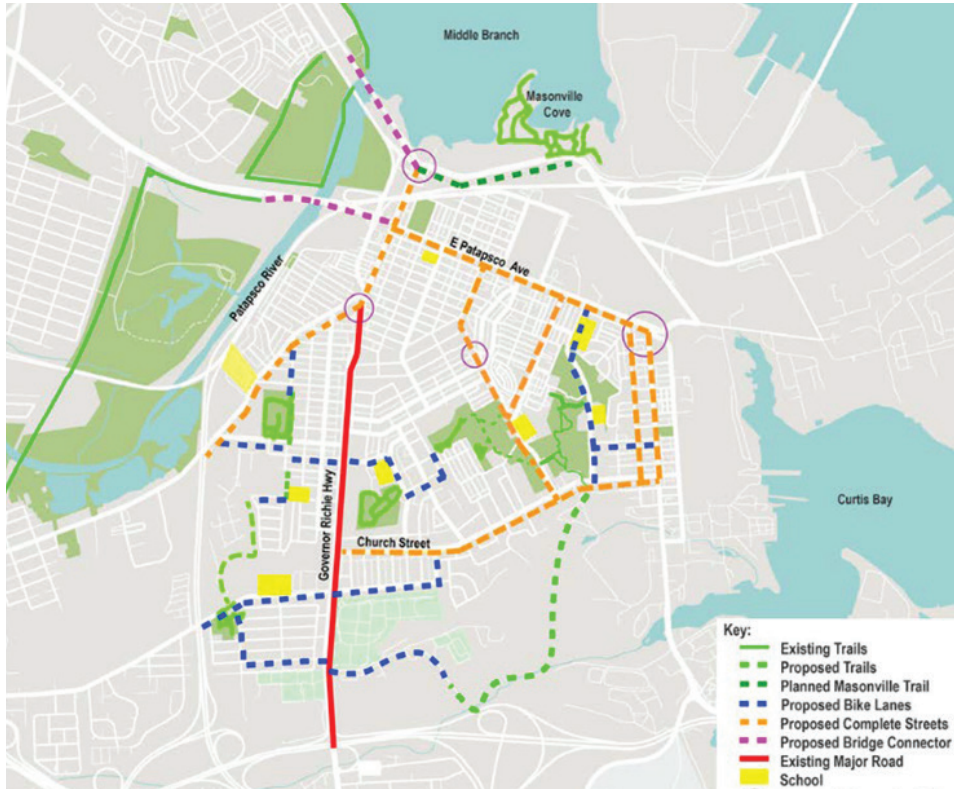
Map of the Recommended Transportation Alignment

for Action Learning in Sustainability (PALS), which is a program that leverages UMD student expertise to solve sustainability-related issues facing Maryland's diverse communities. Partners for the Green Network Plan include the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition, the Greater Baybrook Alliance, EnviroCollab LLC, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Copies of the final report can be found at http://hdl.handle. net/1903/29277.

An Historic Main Street Sees New Life: Excerpts from An Interview with Main Street Middletown Manager Becky Axilbund

By Kristen E. Humphrey, MLA, Local Assistance and Training Planner, Maryland Department of Planning

Founded in 1767, Middletown lies about 60 miles west of Baltimore, eight miles west of the City of Frederick, and 20 miles southeast of Hagerstown, in Frederick County, Maryland. The town sits along the original National Road, the first federally funded road, created by an act of Congress in 1806. During the Civil War, both armies traveled through the town to Antietam and South Mountain's historic battles. At the conclusion of these battles, Middletown's churches and homes tended to the wounded which included then Col. Rutherford B. Hayes, who went on to become President of the United States.

Middletown was recognized by the Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) for the transformation of its main street and its contribution to Maryland's economic development. I first visited the town in early October, coincidentally during their delightful scarecrow decorating contest and strolled their main street with Main Street Middletown Manager, Becky Axilbund.

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) was eager to learn about the town's success drawing new commercial activity into this community of fewer than 5,000 people in the middle of a global pandemic and a time when many rural cities and towns were shrinking.

Q: When did Middletown become a Main Street community and when did you join the effort?

Middletown received its designation in 2009 as both a National and Maryland Main Street community, meaning that the town committed to support the goals of the national Main Street program, which uses a four-point approach to help communities promote their unique assets. For details, check out An Interview with Mary Means, Main Street Movement Pioneer.

In 2011, as the new Main Street manager in a new Main Street town, it felt almost like starting from scratch. Things have really picked up steam in the past few years, but the changes in just the past year have been unprecedented. It's so exciting to see the fruits of our labors really start to unfold!

Q: What area constitutes Middletown's Main Street and what part of the community does it serve?

The Main Street district straddles East and West Main Street approximately two
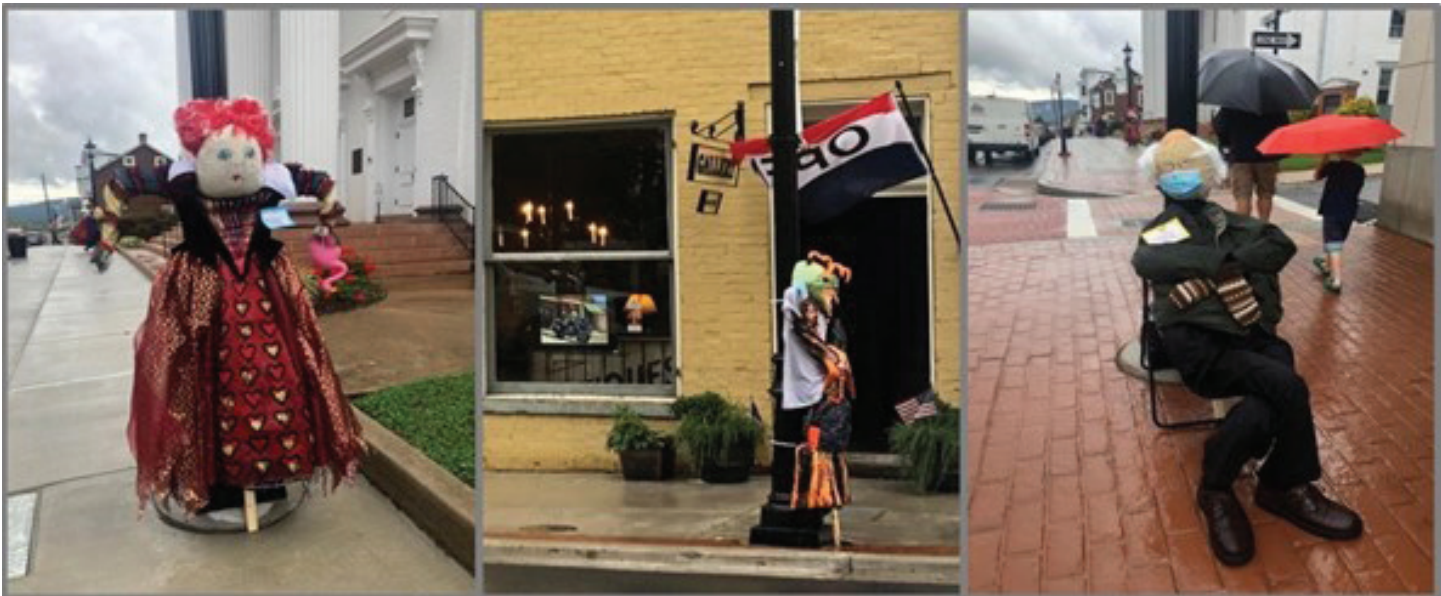

Fig. 1 – Photos of scarecrows along Middletown's Main Street. Photo: Kristen E. Humphrey, 2021.

blocks to the east and six-seven blocks west of MD Route 17, which runs north-south. The district also covers roughly four blocks to the south and two-three blocks to the north. (See Fig. 1, below.) More than 95 percent of the Main Street district structures are historic -- a subset of the Middletown Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Q: What were the issues/challenges and the perceived needs of the community that Middletown was seeking to address in becoming a Main Street?

The Town of Middletown sought the designation as a commitment to economic development, to honor and preserve our historic properties and promote the town in a positive manner as a great place to live, work, and play.

Like many small towns, funds weren't available for advertising and promotion and at the time, our Main Street district didn't feature "typical" Main Street businesses. We had more service industries than retail. We needed to get more people downtown strolling the sidewalks instead of speeding through town by catching their attention with a reason to stop. Some tactics included making parking easier, adding signage and draw new businesses.

Q: What were/are the goals and projected outcomes of the effort?

Main Street Middletown's goals continue to be preserving and revitalizing historic properties in the center of town; maintaining 100% occupancy rates in commercial and retail spaces; increasing our mixed-use ratio; adding employment opportunities; and creating venues for dining, shopping,

and social gatherings.

Much of our focus was on Middletown's history. We pursued a $20,000 grant from the Maryland Heritage Area Authority in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Monocacy and the ransoming of Middletown by the Confederate Army. The first two interpretive signs were installed which tell Middletown's history. We built upon an State Highway Administration (SHA) streetscape project and invested in waterline replacements.

Q: Who are the key partners involved in revitalizing the town? Has the state assisted/played a role?

Partners include the 9-member Middletown Town Council as well as Burgess John D. Miller, a long-time Middletown resident, political activist and retired teacher. A significant development in this on-going effort was the recent creation of the Downtown Revitalization Zone Incentive Program, approved by the Burgess and Commissioners in October 2020.

The Revitalization Zone program created specific financial incentives to attract investment in Middletown's timeless, older buildings. The zone itself aligns precisely with the Main Street district to reinforce the town's commitment to historic downtown as the core of our community.

Other incentives include deferred water and sewer tap EDU fees, parking requirement waivers, expedited navigation through the town's planning commission and board of appeals processes, waiver of all planning commission board of appeals fees (a savings of more than $3,000) and project "kick-off" meetings with me, town staff and at least one elected official.

Main Street community businesses have access to state lending and incentive programs such as Façade Improvement Program which offers up to 50% of a qualifying business's project costs for a

Fig. 2 – Downtown Revitalization Zone. Courtesy: Town of Middletown, Frederick County, MD.

Fig. 8 – Selection of photos showing the landscape and bees at work from Orchid Cellars, courtesy of their website: https://www.orchidcellar.com/home.

maximum of $50,000. We also participate in the Frederick Chamber of Business Expo and the Frederick County Business Appreciation Week to collectively promote the business community.

Q: What lessons learned would you share with other communities and stakeholders seeking to embark on a similar effort?

First, don't be afraid to start small. It is better to be successful with a small project than to bite off more than you can chew. The Main Street program is not meant to result in overnight change. The second piece of advice I would give is don't worry what other communities are doing. The point is to promote whatever is unique about your community.

July 2023 Update: Middletown Synergy in Full Swing

The wonderful synergy described in our originally published article, just a mere 18 months ago, continues to demonstrate the vitality brought to Middletown and surrounding areas when its main street is revitalized.

Just in time to celebrate the 25th year of Maryland's Main Street program, Middletown Main Street Manager Becky Axilbund shares key happenings with us.

Agro Tourism:

Agro Tourism has become big throughout Frederick County. When I first started as Main Street Manager, there were two big farms in the area - South Mountain Creamery and Jumbo's Pumpkin Patch. Middletown's our first winery, Orchid Cellars, started during my first year, as a woman-owned, family operated winery which focuses on a family recipe for mead or honey wine. Now, Mazzeroth Winery, just north of town, also thrives and produces some award-winning wines.

East of town off Hollow Road is Summers Farm. Summers Farm was located originally on the "Golden Mile" in Frederick but moved to Middletown in 2022 due to continued development on the Golden Mile. While in its original location, it was viewed as "The Farm" with a loyal fan base and attracting many public-school field trips each year. In its new location on the outskirts of Middletown, we see some "real

Figure 9 - Photo of exterior of William F. Moran, Jr. Museum, courtesy of www.visitfrederick.org.

traffic" generated on festival and other events. This activity also generates visitors for downtown Middletown and our revitalized main street attractions.

Valley-HomeMade & Homegrown is another newer farm venture, located on Picnic Woods Road also just outside town limits). Valley-Ho is a pick your own flower farm with dairy and crop farming roots that go back generations.

William F. Moran, Jr. Museum

A native of Frederick, William Moran, Jr. (1925-2006), was an internationally known and internationally collected blade-smith. The Moran Knife Shop is a small shop that has been kept intact. In 2022, an adjacent museum opened at the corner of US 40 Alt and Hollow Road. This unusual museum is likely to be a mecca for forged knife collectors with its prime location to capture drive-by audiences.

Town Hall Heritage Gallery:

Middletown Town Hall recently acquired an eclectic collection of Middletown historic items and ephemera, known as the Bussard Collection, named for local collector, Larry Bussard. To build upon and grow the town as a tourist destination, the town plans to create several exhibits to be displayed on a rotating basis in a gallery space on the third floor of the Town Hall. The Town Hall and the future Heritage Gallery will be Middletown visitors' second stop after visiting Main Street's Welcome Center.

Some themes represented in this collection include commerce (cancelled checks, invoices, receipts, various company letterheads, and marketing items); schools (e.g., graduations, yearbooks, theatrical productions/playbills); social history (e.g., local sport teams and clubs); religious and secular institutions like local churches, the volunteer fire company, and the Valley Register Newspaper, which published from 1840 until the 1990s.

The artifacts illustrate the local history of the people, places, and events, as well as shed light on how the community reacted to larger, national or world, events such as wars, natural disasters, the death of U.S. presidents and more.

For more information about Middletown Main Street, please visit https://mainstreet-middletown.org/ or contact

Becky Axilbund, Middletown Main Street Manager, at baxilbund@ci.middletown.md.us *or* (301) 371-6171.

Excerpts were originally published in the December 8, 2021 edition of Planning Practice Monthly, by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP). This story includes an update on new developments for historic Middletown's main street.

[1] The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) is an independent unit within the Executive branch of State government, and is administered by the Maryland Historical Trust, an agency of the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP).

WELCOME
NEWLY ELECTED OFFICIALS

Jennifer Brockwell, Councilmember, Cecilton

Hunter Dann, Councilmember, Chesapeake City

Alan Hew, Councilmember, College Park

Maureen E. Curry, Councilmember, Easton

William David Montgomery, Councilmember, Easton

Crystal Chissell, Mayor, Highland Beach

Linda Holmes Newton, Commissioner, Highland Beach

William Hunter, Commissioner, Highland Beach

Gene Russo, Committee Member, Oakmont

Katrina Greer, Commissioner, Oxford

Susan Delean-Botkin, Commissioner, Oxford

Kelly Watson Huffer, Commissioner, Rosemont

List accurate as of July 31st

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