



Chapter Seven:

Community Involvement

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Goal

Involve the community in implementing the Master Plan

The Significance to Carroll County

Carroll County has a long tradition of community involvement in the preparation of community and general plans. Many hours of research, thought, and discussion went into the development of this plan. Its development included numerous opportunities for community involvement - the all-day visioning session (Charrette), as a member of a work team, open public meetings, etc. In addition, the public was kept informed of the progress of the plan through periodic newsletters. However, plan development is only the first step in achieving a community's vision. A comprehensive plan is only as effective as the community commitment to implementation.

The Challenge to Carroll County

Over the last 30 years, the population of Carroll County has more than doubled. While the more rural pre-1960 Carroll County was oriented inwards, toward the County seat in Westminster, the residents moving into the County have often maintained their ties to their previous communities in the Baltimore and Washington areas, commuting out of the County to work, shop, and recreate. This has resulted in residents that are not involved in their county. Often, the first contact with the County and activism is when they feel personally impacted.

Community involvement and support during the development of the comprehensive plan has been accomplished through regular work teams meetings, newsletters, presentations, and newspaper articles. Maintaining community enthusiasm and understanding of the County-wide emphasis in the Plan will be more difficult to achieve during the implementation phase.

The Choice: Goals, Policies, Thresholds, & Recommendations

Goal

Involve the community in implementing the Master Plan

Policies

A. Citizen participation will be incorporated into the work programs for updating all comprehensive plans.

Recommendations

A. Continue to improve citizen participation in the planning process as a whole.

B. Publish and distribute a “Planning” newsletter to the general public on a periodic basis to provide community awareness on planning topics and update on the progress of planning projects.

C. Develop educational material and presentations relating to comprehensive planning and other general planning issues that can be available for community organizations and interested citizens.

- Educate the public on the value of wetlands and responsibilities of wetland protection.
- Work with prospective landowners to better understand and utilize the benefits of the brown fields legislation.
- Establish a public education program in the County on the value of preserving agricultural land for economic, environmental, and quality of life benefits.
- Educate the public on the importance of floodplain protection, water conservation, and water resource protection.

D. Provide speakers to civic and service organizations to talk about Master Plan issues.

E. Involve citizens in and around the Community Planning Areas in developing and updating those comprehensive plans.

F. Work closely with the Public Information Office and the “computer architect” to ensure information is distributed through press releases, internet, and other options.

G. Notify local organizations and corporations by mail of planning notices, hearings, Subdivision Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings, and Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) meetings where possible.

H. Investigate the feasibility of notifying the community earlier in the planning process.

Fiscal Impact to the County

This goal and its implementation recommendations will have limited budgeting impacts on the County. Writing newsletters, preparing presentations, and attending public meetings is a role currently filled by County staff. Additional costs would be incurred for printing and mailings.