



## CHAPTER 13: INTERJURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION

### GOALS

As previously detailed in Chapter 2, Union Bridge has set forth the following goals:

- To partner with other government bodies on local community projects
- To improve communication and coordination with Carroll County and neighboring counties as well as the State

Under the Planning Act, local comprehensive plans must include recommendations for improving planning and development processes to encourage economic expansion and to direct future growth to appropriate areas. Such development and economic growth often have interjurisdictional impacts on transportation infrastructure, the environment, and other areas of concern. For this reason, it is necessary for planning, growth strategies, and policies to promote and encourage cooperation among adjacent jurisdictions.

No one will dispute that interjurisdictional coordination is important and valuable. However, when real-world issues are confronted by jurisdictions with conflicting agendas, ideals often fade, and agreement can be difficult to achieve. It will be impossible to achieve the intent of the Planning Act without immediate and effective interjurisdictional coordination. It is necessary to identify potential conflicts, address them as an integral part of comprehensive plan preparation, and include provisions in the plan for continuing coordination and cooperation. As jurisdictions collaborate on issues of mutual interest in their respective comprehensive plans, they generally become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. This contributes to their ability to better anticipate potential problems.

The most important benefit of timely interjurisdictional coordination is that it enables the affected jurisdictions to identify and resolve issues at the earliest possible stage when they are usually easiest to address and manage.

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

Carroll County Government has been practicing interjurisdictional coordination and communication with the Town of Union Bridge, as well as the other municipalities in Carroll County, for many years. These activities have produced numerous benefits and provided mutual assistance between jurisdictions.

#### *1 Town/County Agreement*

The primary instrument for interjurisdictional coordination and communication between the Town of Union Bridge and Carroll County is the formal document generally known as the Town/County Agreement. Annually signed by both jurisdictions, the agreement enumerates services provided by the County to the



Town and provides for the coordination of planning and other governmental functions. Both jurisdictions participate in coordinated planning efforts and joint review of master (or comprehensive) plans or revisions, draft amendments to development-related ordinances and regulations, rezoning proposals, and annexation petitions. Development plans and other proposals are exchanged between the Town and County for informational purposes and to provide staff and elected officials the opportunity to comment. County projects or proposals relating to land located within one mile of the town are submitted to the Town for review and comment. Town and County staffs also attend the other's Planning and Zoning Commission meetings to keep apprised of planning activities in each jurisdiction.

The Town/County Agreement with the Town of Union Bridge creates a cooperative relationship between the two jurisdictions that fosters open communication and the exchange of information regarding planning and development matters. As a result, a "joint planning approach" is cultivated that promotes consistency within the overall Union Bridge environs. In addition, many planning-related issues can be resolved at the staff level early in the process.

## *2 Joint Comprehensive Plan*

Traditionally, the County and its municipalities prepare, approve, and adopt comprehensive plans jointly. For each plan, a Growth Area (GA) is delineated that includes the entire municipality and an area surrounding the municipality that forms the unincorporated portion of the overall community. In preparing the comprehensive plan jointly, the various elements of the plan (e.g., goals, land use, transportation, public water and sewer service, etc.) are developed so that they are compatible throughout the community planning area. The joint comprehensive planning process involves extensive participation by the County and Town planning staffs. The Union Bridge Planning Commission approves the portion of the Community Planning Area located within the Town's corporate limits, and the Town Mayor and Town Council adopt the same portion of the plan. Correspondingly, the Carroll County Planning Commission approves and the County Commissioners adopt the unincorporated portion of the comprehensive plan. Most recently, the Union Bridge Comprehensive Plan, was jointly adopted in 1990. Subsequently, the Town reviewed and updated their plan for the incorporated areas in 2000.

## *3 County Provides Staff Assistance*

As mentioned above, a provision of the Town/County agreement involves County staff assistance to the towns on planning-related issues. A County planning staff member acts as a liaison to the Town's planning office and planning commission. This arrangement aids in the prevention of planning and development conflicts and the development of compatible plans, goals, and regulations.

## *4 Mutual Referral of Development Proposals and Other Planning Activities*

As provided for in the Town/County Agreement, the County makes its development review staff available to the Town to review and comment on development plans located within the Town. Following submittal of a development plan by the Town, County staff reviews and provides comments on grading and sediment control, forest conservation, and other technical issues. Planning staff reviews for conformance with the comprehensive plan, major street plan, water and sewerage master plan, historic resources, and general design. The County provides inspections for sediment control and forest conservation for the Town. The



County also collects the bonds for forest conservation.

In addition to the reciprocal review of development plans, both jurisdictions also notify each other of planning-related activities within their respective jurisdictions (within one mile of Union Bridge for County activities). These activities include proposals for rezonings, annexations, plan amendments, and amendments to development-related ordinances and regulations.

In addition to the mutual review of development plans between Union Bridge and the County, proposals for development projects located within the county are also submitted to various State agencies for review and comment, and in some cases, approval. The State Highway Administration and Health Department are the agencies most frequently involved.

## *5 Council of Governments*

The County Commissioners meet on a quarterly basis with the Mayors from all of the towns in an effort to foster interjurisdictional coordination and cooperation. In addition to these meetings, a Council of Governments (COG) group has been formed. Included are representatives from all eight municipalities, the Finksburg Planning and Citizen's Council, the Freedom Area Citizen's Council, the Maryland Municipal League, State and County representatives, the Board of Education, and the Health Department. By state law, voting members are limited to member governments, towns and the County, but everyone is invited to participate. The group exercises no legislative power, however. The purpose of the COG is to bring these diverse groups together to discuss issues of mutual interest, which are decided upon by the members, thereby facilitating information sharing and promoting a new level of cooperation/coordination.

## *6 Policy Regarding Annexation*

The Town/County Agreement between the Town of Union Bridge and Carroll County contains a policy statement and procedure concerning annexation areas. The agreement states that future growth and development in the Union Bridge area that is planned to be served by public facilities should take place within the town's corporate limits. This is because both jurisdictions recognize that the public health, safety, and welfare will be best served through mutual cooperation and the coordination of responsibility for those areas that logically should become part of the Town of Union Bridge. This joint cooperation will serve to ensure the continuity of municipal services and maintain the effectiveness of planning functions.

To achieve this objective, the Town and County have mutually agreed upon and designated a future corporate limit line (Growth Area Boundary). This line serves to guide and anticipate where municipal services (public water and sewer, fire hydrants, police, street lighting, garbage and recyclables collection, etc.) may logically be needed.

## *7 Membership and Participation in Maryland Municipal League*

The Maryland Municipal League is a voluntary, non-profit, nonpartisan association comprised of town and city governments from across the state. The league provides information, research, technical assistance, training, information sharing and functions as a networking clearing house to support the needs of its members. The group was founded in 1936 and represents nearly 160 of Maryland's jurisdictions.



Membership permits the town to utilize many types of needed support or information to assist in both daily operations and governing decisions.

## *8 Membership and Participation in Maryland Association of Counties*

The Maryland Association of Counties, Inc.'s (MACo) members are the elected governing officials of Maryland's twenty-three counties and Baltimore City. MACo's members work in committees to determine policy and positions on executive and legislative proposals. Members also attend annual conferences to obtain timely information concerning the issues that face county government. The Association is an important communication link. It serves as a clearinghouse for information pertaining to county government in Maryland.

The Legislative Committee meets weekly during the Maryland General Assembly Session, reviewing proposed legislation impacting county government. The Legislative Committee and MACo staff sponsor various legislative initiatives affecting local government and disseminate information to the Association's membership on all bills relating to county government. In addition to its efforts during the legislative session, MACo works throughout the year advocating county interests on issues and specific bills.

MACo is an important voice for county government in Maryland. The Association represents the viewpoint of the state's twenty-four subdivisions before the Governor, the General Assembly, administrative officials of the executive branch, and federal decision-makers. MACo strives to ensure that issues important to the counties are heard whenever programs or problems affecting local government are discussed at the state or federal level.

## *9 Membership and Participation in Baltimore Metropolitan Council*

Carroll County is a member jurisdiction of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB). The BRTB, which is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Baltimore region, is an organization of the region's elected officials that serves as a forum for identifying regional interests and developing collaborative strategies, plans, and programs that will improve the quality of life and economic vitality throughout the region. The Council's Board of Directors consists of the Mayor of Baltimore, the elected executives of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard Counties, and the City of Annapolis. The Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) provides staff support to the BRTB.

The BRTB's mission is to provide a forum for cooperative regional planning; provide an opportunity to discuss differences among its members in attaining regional goals, collect, analyze, and disseminate regional data; cooperate and communicate with neighboring regions; ensure cost-effective delivery of services through cooperation with all levels of government; and participate with citizens and others interested in solving regional problems.

To achieve these objectives, the Board provides the following activities or programs: long-range regional transportation planning; development of demographic, economic, and geographic data; cooperative purchasing to provide cost-saving opportunities to member jurisdictions; assistance in environmental programs such as air and water quality; computerized mapping services; and acting as a regional information center.



Through its involvement on the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, the County is able to participate in regional planning efforts and ensure that the other member jurisdictions take into consideration issues that are important to Carroll County, including the towns. The County can also gain important information and services provided by the Council and share more fully in the benefits that accrue to the Baltimore region as a whole.

## ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY NEEDS

Carroll County has a long history of close interjurisdictional coordination between the County and its municipalities. Joint planning has been conducted for decades, voluntarily setting a precedent that only now is being mandated in other jurisdictions across the state. In Union Bridge, the annual renewal of the Town/County agreement, cooperation on development issues, and monthly attendance at meetings by a liaison planner from the county staff all point to ongoing coordination and a close relationship between the Town and County.

The most notable improvement that could be made with respect to interjurisdictional coordination lies with the annexation process. The recent annexation legislation passed in 2006 may address some of these inconsistencies by more clearly defining the annexation process.

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 1 *Continue the close level of coordination between the Town and County regarding development issues*

Through the use of the Town/County agreement and joint planning efforts, the Town and County have been able to work together to address ways to implement the vision and goals of the comprehensive plan. Whether it is working to approve a subdivision plan within established regulations, planning for long-range infrastructure improvements, or draft and adopting a zoning map, the working relationship between the Town and County has benefited both jurisdictions and helped both achieve the vision and goals expressed in each jurisdiction's comprehensive plans. The annually-updated agreement addresses joint review responsibilities for subdivision, master plans and annexations. It also spells out clear process to coordinate the provision of shared services and funding formulas for permit fees, county grant funds, road funds and National Pollution Discharge Elimination System fees.

## FISCAL IMPLICATIONS & ANTICIPATED CIP PROJECTS

*The recommendations contained in this plan may be policy-oriented or action-oriented, and their implementation may be the responsibility of the Town, the County, other public agencies, private landowners and developers, or a combination of these. This section is designed to identify the potential fiscal impacts to the Town and/or County of each of the recommendations. There could be "No Fiscal Impact," meaning the Town or County would not incur direct or predictable expenses as a result of implementing the recommendation, an "Undetermined Impact," meaning there likely would be a cost associated with implementing the recommendation but that cost can not be determined at this time for various reasons, or a "Fiscal Impact," which likely would be incurred by the Town or County if the recommendation were implemented. For recommendations that have*



*an identified fiscal impact, the cost of implementing that recommendation is estimated to the best degree possible.*

- 1 Continue the close level of coordination between the Town and County regarding development issues*

No Fiscal Impact