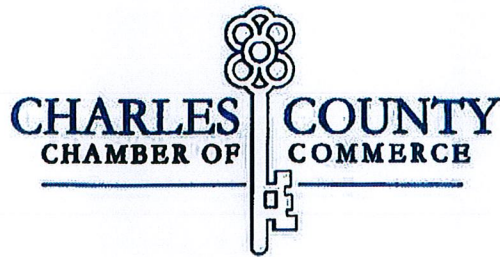


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October 24, 2013

The Hon. Candice Quinn Kelly, President  
Charles County Board of Commissioners  
Honorable Members, Board of Commissioners  
PO Box 2150  
La Plata, MD 20646

Dear Commission President Kelly & Charles County Board of Commissioners:

On behalf of the Charles County Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to offer some brief comments on the proposed update to the Charles County Comprehensive Plan as ratified by the Planning Commission. As stated in my letter of April, 2013 to the Planning Commission, the "importance of the Comprehensive Plan in land use planning and economic development is significant." The Court of Appeals for the State of Maryland, has rightfully noted that comprehensive planning allows the planning of growth "in a manner that allows for the expansion of economic activities and opportunities in the area or region for the benefit of its residents, while at the same time attempting to maintain the quality of life of the region, all without unduly disturbing the reasonable expectations of the citizenry as to the permissible uses they may make of real property." The current update builds upon the work and progress of prior Comprehensive Plans, to include the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. That success has resulted in Charles County being a diverse and vibrant community, preserved hundreds of acres of rural land under the TDR program and various conservation and preservation programs, and helped make Charles County one of the wealthiest counties in the country.

The Chamber urges the Commissioners to remain committed to land use goals that further the economic vitality of our County. The Chamber believes that the goals of economic growth and the goals of balanced growth in an environmentally sustainable manner are not mutually exclusive. In that regard, the Chamber requested that the Planning Commission consider several issues. A list of the comments made by the Chamber to the Planning Commission is set forth below along with a summary of action taken by the Planning Commission in response to those comments:

**Comment 1:**

The Chamber supports the Economic Development goals set forth in the draft Comprehensive Plan document. The Chamber notes as a goal, "Promoting the County's unique assets and opportunities and elevating its profile within the region through participation and collaboration with its partner jurisdictions in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and Greater Washington Board of Trade/Greater Washington Initiative." This goal is consistent with the Chamber's view that Charles County has a unique talent pool that is under-recognized within the region.

**Plan Document:** The Plan Document language is unchanged. The Chamber supports this goal and seeks to partner with the County in the realization of this goal.



**Comment 2:**

The Chamber further supports “ongoing planning efforts for U.S. 301 in relation to mixed use, commercial and industrial land, with an emphasis on the Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor and the Transit Corridor from White Plains to the County line.” The continued development of the Urban Core is central to the County’s business development. *At the same time, the Chamber supports changes to the current Zoning Ordinance governing the Route 925 WUDS corridor which will allow small businesses and current property owners more flexibility and usability with respect to their properties and businesses.* (emphasis added)

*Plan Document:* The Chamber continues to support the Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor the Transit Corridor. However, as noted in our letter to the Planning Commission, the Chamber reiterates its concerns that County rules and regulations be examined to allow small businesses and current property owners more flexibility and usability with respect to their properties and businesses. The Chamber continues to invite the County to partner with the Chamber on working through this issue.

**Comment 3:**

The Planning Commission should pay particular attention to the Maryland Airport. As noted in the draft plan, “The Maryland Airport has received Federal Grants through the Federal Aviation Administration to expand the runway length and load capacity to handle small to medium corporate jets, as a reliever to the Washington, D.C. area airports. The runway expansion will be completed in 2013. In addition, the owner of the private airport is planning the construction of a new terminal facility to increase airport operations.” The development of the Maryland Airport will bring significant opportunities for economic development. The Planning Commission should consider re-designating land in close proximity to the airport, which is currently noted as “the Deferred Development District”, to “the Development District” and also designating this property as intended for commercial or industrial zoning as needed to accommodate the economic development anticipated to be generated by the airport. Similarly, “proximity to the Maryland Airport” should be noted with respect to “Employment and Industrial Districts.”

*Plan Document:* The Chamber is pleased to note and commends the Planning Commission for revisions to Chapters Three and Seven. The revisions recognize the significance of the Maryland Airport and the need for a land use plan that will both protect the Airport and will allow it to develop as an economic engine. The Chamber further commends the Commissioners for funding the completion of public sewer to the Airport Property line and for authorizing County staff to proceed with the steps necessary to undertake a land use plan specific to the Maryland Airport and the surrounding properties.

**Comment 4:**

Closely connected with the Maryland Airport and the opportunities for economic development and support of our military economic base, the Comprehensive Plan should retain the Bryan’s Road Sub-Area Plan and should support the Indian Head Science and Technology Park. This is consistent with the statement with the draft Comprehensive Plan which states, “Support of the base re-development activities at the Naval Support Facility at Indian Head, which will be complemented by encouraging commercialization and support opportunities outside the gate. This support will include assisting the Town of Indian Head in its economic development and redevelopment plans as well as the provision of nearby planned employment parks such as the Indian Head Science and Technology Park.”

*Plan Document:* The Chamber is pleased to see that the Plan Document ratified by the Planning Commission supports the Bryan’s Road Sub-Area Plan, the Indian Head Science and Technology Park and the Naval Support Facility at Indian Head. Further, the Commissioners inclusion of these items in the Commissioner Goals and Objectives compliments and enhances the Plan Document.

**Comment 5:**

Equal care and attention should also be given to the Waldorf Technology Park.



**Plan Document:** No changes were made to the Plan Document. The Chamber continues to stress the importance of the need for the County to partner and work with the Waldorf Technology Park to ensure its success and thus, the realization of a revitalized and urban Waldorf.

**Comment 6:**

The Chamber supports the concept of mass transit as both a tool for economic growth and environmental stewardship. However, the Chamber recognizes the reality that mass transit is a long term solution that will not occur without corresponding commercial and residential growth. Consequently, until such time as another viable alternative is presented, the Chamber supports the retention of the Cross County Connector within the plan. The Chamber believes that construction of this important project is vital to the County's economic growth and can be accomplished in an environmentally sensitive manner and that there are land use tools available which can be implemented to ensure the roadway does not encourage sprawl or leapfrog development. The draft Comprehensive Plan reinforces this position when it states as a goal, "Supporting business development through assigning priority to the provision of adequate infrastructure, especially transportation, and water and sewer facilities, to locations set aside for business use. Infrastructure must be in place if the County is to remain competitive in attracting new business and industrial investment."

**Plan Document:** Again the Chamber supports mass transit and improvements to the County's road infrastructure as part of a balanced transportation program. The Plan Document approved by the Planning Commission supports both mass transit and the simultaneous improvement of the County's road infrastructure, to include the retention of the Cross County Connector. The Chamber believes that the realization of an east-west connector, south of Route 228 is vital and can be accomplished in an environmentally sensitive manner.

**Comment 7:**

The Chamber believes that recent legislative changes dictate removal of some property currently located in the Deferred Development District and restoration to Development Districts for the property. This should be done with parcels that are adjacent to the current boundaries of the Development District. This is particularly important to the County because of the curtailment in rural development brought about by Senate Bill 236. Moreover, the Chamber encourages the Planning Commission to explore avenues to strengthen the County's Transferable Development Rights Program, to include increases in the Development District to create a more vibrant TDR receiving area and a larger market for such a program. In addition, the County's mass transit goals, including light rail, will require more population growth within the Development District.

**Plan Document:** As stated earlier, we commend the Planning Commission and the County Commissioners for taking steps to support Maryland Airport. We encourage the Commissioners to examine surrounding land, including in Deferred Development District, to add land for employment centers and economic development. This will help lessen the likelihood that rural and agriculturally zoned areas will bear the impact of development pressures. Gradual and planned expansion along the boundaries of the Deferred Development District, where infrastructure exists, prevents leapfrog development, promotes the goal of mass transit and signals the County's interest in continued economic development.

On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment. As previously stated, the Comprehensive Plan Document is a significant guidepost for businesses operating and wishing to operate in the County.

Charles County Chamber of Commerce

By: \_\_\_\_\_



Craig Renner, President