

## PLANNING COMMISSION

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145 GORMAN STREET, 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

October 1, 2015

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Annapolis City Council  
**From:** Planning Commission  
**Re:** Findings for *West Annapolis Sector Study*  
**Attmts.:** *West Annapolis Sector Study, August 25, 2015 Staff Report, R-34-14*

### Summary

The City of Annapolis *Comprehensive Plan* of 2009, endorsed by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council, in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland, provides the officially designated Comprehensive Plan currently guiding development and land uses within our City. The plan identifies a part of West Annapolis as one of four Opportunity Areas, which are the locations where the plan recommends that the Planning and Zoning Department complete a sector study to evaluate the specific dynamics of the smaller area.

The *West Annapolis Sector Study* was initiated in May 2013. As a detailed planning effort, the sector study focuses on the topics identified in the *Comprehensive Plan* and by community stakeholders. The sector study is structured around three primary issues:

- **Transportation:** A detailed examination of recurring (i.e., rush hour or “non-event”) and non-recurring (i.e., special event or “event”) traffic impacts on West Annapolis and the impact of overflow traffic from US 50
- **Market Analysis:** A comprehensive analysis of the economic and market data relevant to development and retail opportunities in the local and surrounding area
- **Land Use:** A review of existing zoning and how it corresponds to the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan. This section also discusses urban design; pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit modal options; and potential new recreation and open space facilities, in light of limited available land within West Annapolis.

### Process

The Sector Study was guided by an 11-member Steering Committee that set the work plan for the scope of the study. The Committee held eight meetings over the course of the yearlong process. These meetings provided an opportunity to review and comment on key aspects of the sector study, including transportation, the market analysis, recreation, land use, and urban design. Steering Committee members represented City departments (Planning and Zoning, Public Works, and Transportation); the US Naval Academy; West Annapolis civic and business groups, and the MainStreets Annapolis Partnership. Representatives from the City’s consultant team also attended Steering Committee meetings. The Steering Committee hosted presentations by other officials, including:

- Maritime issues on Weems Creek and the Severn River, presented by J.P. Walters, the City’s Harbormaster;

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- The renovation and expansion of West Annapolis Elementary School, presented by representatives from Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) and the architecture team responsible for the redesign of the school;
- Constraints and opportunities for public recreation and open space, presented by Brian Woodward, the City's Director of Recreation and Parks; and
- Discussions of existing traffic conditions, the relationship between local (to/from West Annapolis) and non-local traffic, and opportunities to better manage traffic, presented by members of the consultant team.

Public outreach included interviews with the owners and/or managers of 11 West Annapolis businesses, as well as two public meetings held in the fire station on Taylor Avenue. The objectives of the first public meeting were to share and gather information about existing conditions in West Annapolis and to answer any questions from the community. The primary purpose of the second public meeting was to present the draft preliminary plan concept to the public, and to obtain feedback on that concept. The City's consultant team presented the concept in detail, along with additional background information necessary to support its recommendations.

The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the plan on November 6, 2014. At that time, due to deficiencies in the plan, the Planning Commission was unable to recommend approval. In March 2015, the revised study was sent to Planning Commission for review. In April 2015, staff met with the Chair of the Planning Commission and the Alderman of Ward Two to discuss the revisions. The Chair requested renderings showing the "Urban Center Low Concept" and other suggestions from the Comprehensive Plan. In July 2015, staff came to the Planning Commission with a graphic artist to discuss renderings and further refinements. In August 2015, staff met with the West Annapolis Civic Association Board to review changes to the study.

Changes in the amended plan include generally:

- Integrated the 2009 Comprehensive Plan more fully into the sector study. The Comprehensive Plan is the starting point and lays the foundation for the purpose of the sector study.
- Refocused the traffic analysis on discussing the difference between "regular" congestion that occurs in the afternoon, and "event" congestion, that occurs on Friday afternoons in the summer or during scheduled events in town or on the Eastern Shore.
- Tightened the market analysis and removed conjecture while keeping the analysis intact. This section now focuses on retail uses and whether additional retail uses could succeed in West Annapolis. The recommendation in the Comprehensive Plan is to make the Opportunity Area mixed-use. This would require allowing more retail uses in the parts of West Annapolis closest to Rowe Blvd.
- Expanded the land use analysis to include a more throughout analysis of the proposed land use in the Comprehensive Plan. The section on urban design, recreation, and bicycling and pedestrian facilities was also expanded.

### **Findings**

The *West Annapolis Sector Study* reinforces the importance of this careful residential/commercial balance to maintain a vibrant economy, which is one of the overarching goals of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

#### *Transportation*

Key findings include:

- Public and business-owner concerns include internal neighborhood traffic circulation and safety, parking, and non-local traffic diversions
- The existing level of service during the PM peak hour on non-event days (i.e., no special activities occurring in downtown Annapolis or at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium) is a D or better at all

signalized intersections, although several minor street stop-controlled approaches operate at a level of service E or F

- Travel time measurements during non-event conditions document that the fastest travel times crossing the Severn River or leaving downtown Annapolis are provided by the highest capacity roadways (US 50 and Rowe Blvd.)
- An origin-destination analysis revealed that approximately a quarter of the traffic MD 450 carries is neither originating from nor destined to West Annapolis
- Stakeholder agencies such as the Maryland Transportation Authority, State Highway Administration, US Naval Academy and Anne-Arundel County Department of Public Works are aware of the event traffic conditions, have deployed numerous Intelligent Transportation System devices, and have employed many traffic management strategies, to varying degrees of success. However, to date, only limited coordination has occurred with the City.

#### *Market Analysis*

Key findings include:

- The market could support approximately 20,000 square feet of new retail/commercial uses by 2018, and as much as 67,000 square feet by 2030. This primarily includes redevelopment and/or enhanced performance of existing retail. The best retail “fit” for the study area includes:
  - Furniture and/or hardware stores, especially antiques: this business type builds on existing offerings with a stronger antiques cluster, and to cater to the upscale tastes of residents (demand is included in the “miscellaneous retail” category)
  - Limited-service restaurants, such as coffee shops, delis: The analysis above finds support for 3,500 to 6,300 square feet of additional restaurant space in West Annapolis.
  - Smaller full-service restaurants: together with limited-service restaurants, these establishments would provide an array of dining options
  - Health and beauty, and related: West Annapolis provides neighborhood serving retail and services, among them health and beauty stores. In addition, and in support of the retail offerings, there are a number of health-related establishments in the area that would support this additional retail. Based on the preliminary results of this sector study, personal fitness studios (e.g., pilates and yoga studios) are now a permitted use.
- The market would support up to 34 new housing units through 2018. The location and appearance of these new units would need to be compatible with community character
- Some new residential development could occur as single-property developments (i.e., infill, accessory units, etc.). Should an appropriate development site be located, larger scale residential development could be supported after approximately 2018 as the residential market continues to regain strength.

#### *Land Use Analysis*

Key findings include:

- Annapolis Street between Taylor and Melvin Avenues (the central spine of the B1 zoning district) is generally acknowledged to represent the desired aesthetic character of the West Annapolis business district, and that street’s appearance gives the entire community much of its public identity
- Full-service restaurants are desired by residents. Based on the preliminary results of this study, parking requirements for restaurants in the B1 District were reduced.
- Business owners noted a lack of clear wayfinding and coordinated, distinct signage within the business district (including directions to parking and overall information)
- Many recommendations of the 2009 Annapolis Street Streetscape Study remain valid

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- Numerous deficiencies in the non-motorized transportation network have been documented in the study area, creating gaps and barriers for pedestrian, bicycle and transit travel. These include missing sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and bicycle lanes, as well as limited transit service
- West Annapolis is served by a limited number of public recreation sites and open spaces, and access to recreational facilities outside of the community is difficult due to both distance and the presence of barriers, in the form of major roads such as Rowe Blvd., Taylor Avenue, and MD 450
- The ball fields and playgrounds at West Annapolis Elementary School were the community's only large public space for recreation. The modernization of West Annapolis Elementary School has consumed a substantial portion of this recreation space.

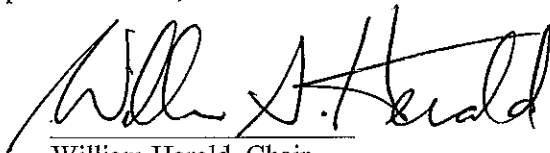
**Public Hearing and Deliberation**

In accordance with the Annapolis City Code, a public hearing was held and the public was invited to comment on the amended sector study. At a regularly scheduled meeting on September 3, 2015, the Planning and Zoning staff presented their analysis and recommendations for approval of the sector study. This information was forwarded to the Planning Commission for review in a report dated August 25, 2015.

**Recommendation**

By a vote of 6-0, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the West Annapolis Sector Study, R-34-14.

Adopted October 1, 2015



William Herald, Chair



Chartered 1708

*City of Annapolis*


**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING**

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Annapolis 410-263-7961 • FAX 410-263-1129 • TDD 410-263-7943

August 25, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Pete Gutwald, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning   
**Re:** West Annapolis Sector Study Update  
**Attachments:** Updated West Annapolis Sector Study and Appendices

**INTRODUCTION**

The Amended West Annapolis Sector Study Draft (August 20, 2015) addresses the comments of the Planning Commission from November 2014, the date of the initial public hearing. The West Annapolis Sector Study has been modified from the original version by the following:

- Integration the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is the starting point and lays the foundation for the purpose of the sector study.
- Refocusing of the traffic analysis on discussing the difference between “regular” congestion that occurs in the afternoon, and “event” congestion, that occurs on Friday afternoons in the summer or during scheduled events in town or on the Eastern Shore. It is now clear that Rt. 50 overflow traffic affects West Annapolis.
- Tightening the market analysis and removing conjecture while keeping the analysis intact. This section now focuses on retail uses and whether additional retail uses could succeed in West Annapolis. The recommendation in the Comprehensive Plan is to make the Opportunity Area mixed-use. This would require allowing more retail uses in the parts of West Annapolis closest to Rowe Blvd.
- Expanding the land use analysis to include a more thorough analysis of the proposed land use in the Comprehensive Plan. It also looks at existing zoning and how that would need to change to encourage more mixed use. The sections on urban design, recreation, and bicycling and pedestrian facilities have also been expanded.

In March 2015, the revised study was sent to Planning Commission for review. In April 2015, staff met with the Chair of the Planning Commission and the Alderman of Ward Two to discuss the revisions. The Chair requested renderings showing the “Urban Center Low Concept” and other suggestions from the Comprehensive Plan. In July 2015, staff came to the Planning Commission with a graphic artist to discuss renderings and further refinements. In August 2015, staff met with the West Annapolis Civic Association Board to review changes to the study.

## AMENDED STUDY

The August 20, 2015 version incorporates additional updates to the Land Use Section, including two renderings that capture the design aesthetic for the Opportunity Area as described in the Comprehensive Plan. This chapter has also been expanded to include additional images that help further explain and promote the ideas and recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan and the Sector Study.

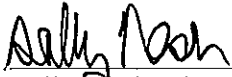
The changes in the study include:

1. P. ii Executive Summary: Defined recurring (i.e., rush hour or “nonevent”) and non-recurring (i.e., special event or “event”) from the beginning to avoid confusion
2. P. iii: Clarified that “new” retail primarily includes redevelopment and/or enhanced performance of existing retail
3. P. iii: Added language that new dwelling units would need to be compatible with community character. Generally toned down “market” discussion
4. P. iii: Study the feasibility of adding a cycle-track along Melvin, to improve separation between bicyclists and vehicular traffic
5. P. iv: Added language about pursuing “floating docks at street ends to improve water access”
6. P. 1 and 3: Added outline of the opportunity area (the part designated as Urban Center Low) and a new graphic close-up of the opportunity area. Included the reasons for designating the opportunity area and the recommendations for the opportunity area
7. Each section now begins with the recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan
8. P. 9: The traffic section now includes additional comments from public input regarding traffic concerns. This section focuses on:
  - period traffic congestion, handling US 50 overflow traffic
  - enhancing access to and circulation within West Annapolis (including internal neighborhood circulation and safety)
9. P. 9: Re-worded introductory paragraph for clarity, “The data presented in this report illustrates that there is not an adequate balance at this time, and that local circulation suffers as a result. This study also outlines several local strategies that could improve mobility. However, the State Highway Association must partner with the City for a successful outcome.”
10. The study was scrubbed of broad policy notions and fixes that involve physical changes outside the immediate area and emphasized local solutions to local issues. In the traffic section, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and operational improvements are now strongly emphasized
11. P. 17: Added more explanation of the “travel time runs.” These were four runs that were performed in each direction along each route. The selection of routes for alternative corridors to evaluate for travel time advantages/disadvantages in comparison to US 50, were made by looking for very different route alignments, not just short-link diversions of a few blocks. Therefore, the Rowe Blvd. to Melvin Ave. to MD 450 Route was not additionally tested with the Rowe Blvd. to MD 450 through West Annapolis Route. However, there were turning movement counts collected at each intersection within the neighborhood street grid that captures the additional traffic flow during event peaks
12. Generally refocused traffic section to emphasize ITS and other ways to manage traffic
13. Moved pedestrian/bike/transit discussion to the Land Use section so it would not get lost in the transportation chapter
14. P. 14: Highlighted explanation for Level-of Service
15. Checked all labels of intersections to ensure proper labeling

16. P. 39: Added that are any major road improvements should also include the addition of a bike lane in 450 that ties in with the existing bike lane on the Naval Academy Bridge. The bike lane should continue to King George Street and to Annapolis Street. This would connect downtown, West Annapolis, and the B&A Trail
17. P. 41: Began section with Comprehensive Plan recommendations and refocused discussion to focus on retail uses. Reorganized some demographic information
18. Focused on emphasizing that the opportunity area should include the following as most likely successful:
  - Furniture, especially antiques
  - Limited service restaurants
  - Smaller full service restaurants
  - Health and Beauty, and Related
  - Personal Fitness Studios
19. P. 61-62: Emphasized the importance of “the context of the village feel and the architecture and location of new density would need to be developed with close cooperation and input from the community.”
20. P. 63: Started Land Use Section with discussion of Comprehensive Plan
21. P. 63: New graphic emphasizing Rowe Blvd. as gateway into the City
22. P. 65: Included a new section on existing land use and zoning and what is proposed in the Comprehensive Plan. Discusses what kind of zoning changes would be needed to allow more mixed use
23. P. 68: New table of zoning districts and what is permitted
24. P. 69: New discussion of urban design and aesthetics
25. P. 70: New graphic and text showing a rendering of “urban center low” along Rowe Blvd.
26. P. 71: New graphic showing Taylor/Rowe Blvd intersection with pedestrian bridge and enhanced pedestrian crossing
27. P. 72: Separated the discussion of the retail areas outside of the Opportunity area, i.e. Annapolis Street
28. P. 72: Discussed previous streetscape plan in more detail
29. P.75: New graphic showing a 5 and a 10 minute walk from the Rowe Blvd./Taylor intersection
30. P. 75: Added a more in-depth discussion of alternate modes of transportation—bike, pedestrian, and transit
31. P. 75: Elaborated on: As part of the redevelopment of the opportunity area, therefore, there would be many opportunities to have sidewalks and recreational areas be more than an afterthought. It may be necessary to work with the Naval Academy to widen the sidewalk and improve the formidable (for pedestrians) intersection of Taylor and MD 450
32. P. 75: Floating dinghy docks in Weems Creek, in the vicinity of the Tucker Street boat ramp or at other street ends. Added public access language
33. P. 78: Added: Utility poles obstruct sidewalks throughout West Annapolis
34. P. 79-80: Added a recommendation for a cycle track on Melvin and added an image of a cycle track
35. P. 80: Elaborated on: Badger Road/Shiley Street: Connect the MD 450/Naval Academy Bridge bikeway to West Annapolis by installing a signed bike route along Badger Road to Shiley Street to Melvin Avenue
36. P. 80: Added new image of a parklet

37. P. 87: Clarified: Install floating docks adjacent and connected to street ends, including the Tucker Street boat ramp. These docks would provide access for paddlers, and could also be used as crabbing/fishing sites.

Report Prepared by



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