



## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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July 1, 2024

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** City Council

**Via:** Christopher Jakubiak, Director

**From:** Eric Leshinsky, Chief of Comprehensive Planning

**Re:** **ANNAPOLIS AHEAD 2040 DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
PROPOSED AMENDMENT #3**

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The following changes to the DRAFT Annapolis Ahead 2040 Comprehensive Plan have been requested by Ald. Pindell Charles. These changes are in addition to the documents identified as Amendments #1 and #2 already in the record and dated April 26, 2024.

1. In the Key Terminology section at the beginning of the Draft Plan, add “Community Fabric” as a new term with the following definition:  
  
*“the unique composition of physical and social elements that give a community its distinct character.”*
2. Replace the terms “community character” and “neighborhood character” in the Draft Plan with the term “community fabric”.
3. In the Appendices, add the attached “We the People...” letter as Appendix A and reference the letter on page 1 of the Draft Plan at the end of the section entitled “Equity” with the following new text:  
  
*“See Appendix A for a personal testimony that underscores the importance of equity to this Plan.”*
4. In Chapter 2: Demographic Trends, add additional census data with descriptive text for the African-American population within the section titled "Rising Population Groups".

5. In Chapter 6: Transportation, add the following text to the section entitled “Employment”:

“Even as Annapolis works to expand employment opportunities for all residents, particularly those who have been historically marginalized, the city remains part of a regional economy and its residents will continue to commute to other opportunities beyond the city limits. Until there is more effective regional transit, most regional commuters will continue to rely on the personal automobile.”

6. In Chapter 7: Community Facilities, add the following text to the section entitled “Park and Trail Maintenance”:

“[There may also be opportunities for existing maintenance staff to develop new skills and responsibility through a professional development program] which can increase both morale and the livelihoods of an important segment of the city’s workforce population. African-Americans comprise a large percentage of the City’s maintenance crews in both the Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Department of Public Works but have historically had few opportunities for growth or advancement. By providing new professional development opportunities for this population, the City can improve services as well as reverse longstanding inequities which have limited the potential of the city’s African-American population.”

**“WE THE PEOPLE...”**  
**A (Straight) FORWARD to the City of Annapolis’ Comprehensive Plan 2040**

According to our City’s History, Annapolis has always been a very busy and important place.

From its founding in 1649; to its incorporation in 1708; to the first slaves “arriving” in 1767; to Washington resigning his commission as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army before the Congress of the Confederation, where he met in the Maryland State House in 1783, then “taking his leave of all the employments of public life” (retirement, *and so he thought*); to being the temporary national capital of the United States from 1783-1784—Annapolis has always been a bustling hub of activity, and even excitement (and especially because of our proximity to today’s nation’s Capital). Our U.S. Constitution was finally ratified in 1788. And George Washington became our first U.S. President in 1789. (Yes: A lot happened in these 140 years.)

The Preamble to our U.S. Constitution is very familiar. The Constitution is a document that symbolizes a way of life that was created for the people—a tangible symbol by the people that they were leaving behind a king with all of its trappings. It also symbolizes a guiding force of principles and purposes—of democracy, equality, unity, justice, peace, defense, general welfare, liberty, and posterity. And that the rights and power belong to its citizens.

With this backdrop, what has actually emerged here is the framework for our City of Annapolis’ “Comprehensive Plan 2040” (hereinafter referred to as “the Plan”).

The Preamble reads:

**We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.**

As we dissect The Preamble and “insert” the tenants of the Plan, we “come full circle” and are “on target”:

**We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union,**  
*[We, the people of the City of Annapolis, in order to strive for perfection, but instead, strive for the more attainable, which is Excellence; which also includes continuing to enhance a variety of interjurisdictional and cross-jurisdictional relationships, partners, and collaborators, as well as constantly seeking new ones],*  
**establish Justice**  
*[which includes Equity],*  
**insure domestic Tranquility**  
*[Public Safety; Vehicular, Non-motorized, and Pedestrian Safety; and Addressing and Responding to Emergencies],*  
**provide for the common defence**  
*[Law Enforcement],*

**promote the general Welfare**

*[Social and Community Needs and Services, including Access to Healthy Foods, and the development of Community Gardens; and the Wide Dissemination and Exchange of Information and Ideas using a variety of Resources, i.e., “public participation” and “community fabric”],*

**and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity**

*[Quality of Life: Sustainability; Infrastructure; Stewardship; Health and Wellness; Clean Water; Resilience; Education; Employment/Workforce; Housing; Economic Development and Tourism; Transportation/Transit/Traffic/Parking; Financial Literacy; Environmental Sustainability, Enhancements, and Stewardship, including increased Tree Canopy and Impervious Coverage reduction; Beautification and Aesthetic Upgrades; and the Accessibility, and the Pursuit and Enjoyment of Social, Community, Entertainment, The Arts, Historical, and Recreational and Environmental Amenities],*

**do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America**

*[City of Annapolis Comprehensive Plan 2040].*

And The Preamble (to our U.S. Constitution) was really actualized in 2016 in the form of the “Upper West Street Sector Study”.

The Upper West Street Sector Study was initiated in 2016. While this Study was never formalized as a City document (for a variety of reasons), nevertheless, what we all walked away with was this very simple but profound, poignant, and visual statement/graphic written on a post note by a resident: **“Don’t Forget The People’: Today’s Residents—The Heartbeat”**; and this simple phrase was surrounded by a Heart. This simple post note represents the true essence of The Preamble.

Not only was Annapolis’ Historic District already “set in stone” from the very beginning of time and which remains relatively unchanged over the centuries—in many ways, before annexation, Eastport, Parole, West Annapolis, and the other areas along Forest Drive and Bay Ridge Road were already “set in stone” as well. For example, the African-American community of Parole was originally established as a post-Civil War, segregated enclave with an accompanying mindset, e.g., hard labor and work; extremely close family, friendship, and spiritual ties due to the need to be close as a result of racial discrimination; etc. (And up until Parole’s annexation in 1951, “Parole, MD”, which was a part of the County, recognized that it needed to provide its residents with the services and necessities of life that were within walking distance; hence, the “mishmash” of businesses, residences, services, etc., concentrated in a small area.) In other words, each one of these annexed communities, neighborhoods, enclaves, even down to the individual streets themselves, etc., had already taken on their own identities before annexation—Jewish, German, Greek, Italian, etc.—and even beyond religion and national origin, e.g., maritime, businesses, etc. And many of these identities remain today to some degree. Nineteen fifty-one (1951) is really only 3-4 generations removed from the annexation of Eastport and Parole into the City. And so many of these City’s communities, neighborhoods, enclaves, etc., “have grown in a more piecemeal...fashion”. Couple that with our City being a peninsula—we are almost totally surrounded by various bodies and types of water and natural resources, e.g., creeks; coves; harbor; streams; marsh; forests; woods; wildlife; tributaries; puddles (sometimes due to impervious surfaces); etc., and many, not all, of our communities, neighborhoods,

enclaves, even down to the individual streets themselves, etc., are naturally divided by these natural resources.

Additionally, this even lends itself to communities, neighborhoods, enclaves, even down to the individual streets themselves, etc., “naturally” taking on their own identities—in this case, due to their own experiences and challenges. In other words, for example, residents who live Downtown versus Kingsport versus First Street in Eastport versus Admiral Heights versus Harbour House versus Hunt Meadow versus Parole versus Parkside Preserve will not have many of the same experiences and challenges.

Nevertheless, “the water, which made Annapolis a fitting location for settlement, and the City we know today, continues to be vital to its existence and to the people who choose to live here, work here, and recreate here.”

Therefore, it can be a challenge to devise a City-wide Comprehensive Plan. But what we are able to do is to review the amenities of every community, neighborhood, enclave, even down to the individual street itself, ward, etc., and develop what works to the benefit of these areas as well as our entire City.

The 3 Foundational Themes of the Plan are: Equity – Health – Resilience.

Health and Resilience are pretty much self-explanatory and understandable.

However, Equity is much more complicated and intense.

First, pictorially, a City Comprehensive Plan should highlight photos and renditions of the places and people to which the Plan is directed and affects. In other words, in the photos and renditions, we should see and recognize people and places that are familiar and/or that look like a variety of people that we see everyday. Historically, this has not been the case in a variety of venues and situations; and this is where Equity has, in the past, “missed the mark”.

Weaved into Equity must be a stark recognition of the impact that History has played in the evolution and in the life of Annapolis. And the History answers many of the perplexing questions, as well as the initial “reluctance”, for adopting this Plan, that our residents expressed.

For example, in 1951, Parole seated its first Alderman who was African-American. We believe that there were no more than 2 African-American Alderpersons on the Council, at one time, until the 1980’s—representing the Old Fourth Ward, and Parole. For example, it is starkly obvious that one African-American Alderperson had very little, if any, leverage on the Council when it came to garnering votes in support of the residents and businesses that he represented. In other words, one was a “lone wolf” on the Council. This was the reasoning behind the formation of the City-wide Task Force/Committee to establish 3 primarily African-American wards in the 1980’s. So between 1951 and the 1980’s, for approximately 30 years or so, for example, Parole was “subject to the whims”, and had to accept, whatever the rest of the City Council voted on and did not want; and the Council, in turn, voted on what they wanted. (Thank goodness, the times have changed dramatically.)

Embedded in the History are the complexities of daily living and survival, but also success, starting with the root and foundation of a successful life, which is Education, i.e., an educational system that continued to purposely fail, on a variety of levels, too many of our students, for almost a century, at an extremely pivotal time—starting in 1916: Lack of assistance and outright discouraging students from attending college by telling students: “You’re not college material!” (and if one’s parents are not college graduates, then one naturally, and common sense says, to believe one’s college-educated guidance counselor); students not allowed to participate fully and meaningfully in extracurricular activities; knowing the right answer, raising one’s hand, but never getting called on in class; teachers “losing” term papers; teachers “incorrectly” grading assignments; “incorrect” grades placed on report cards; a teacher stating outright to all of his students that he was not going to teach African-American students because: “I hate Black people!”; and this very unfortunate list goes on and on and on. As a result, by this time, obviously, one’s grades are not good enough to get into college.

Secondly, historically, the Employment and job opportunities, in which the African-American population’s households (probably at least 75-80% of these households) thrived and heavily depended upon, were service-oriented, e.g., hospitality, food service, maintenance, operations, barbering, laundry, pressing, etc., that nevertheless, afforded great benefits and retirements: Particularly at the United States Naval Academy and NSA/Ft. Meade (they are now both heavily privatized and contractual in these workforce/job areas); Crownsville State Hospital and the old Plastic Plant in Odenton (both now closed); Anne Arundel County Public Schools (now a larger number of custodians and not nearly as many teachers and administrators); and the Old Fourth Ward’s thriving business district—the “Black Tulsa, Oklahoma” of Annapolis—numbering well over 60 businesses (long destroyed). These 6 sets of viable workforce opportunities of the past provided a very supportive economic engine for our entire City, including the African-American community.

Thirdly, “urban ‘removal’” (instead of what was pitched and sold as “urban ‘renewal’”) when it came to Housing. Specifically, starting in earnest in the early 1970’s, there was an aggressive and purposeful displacement of self-sufficient African-American families—as we now see that they are primarily all living along the Forest Drive corridor, and in certain sections of Eastport. (Only an “all hands on deck” and “all resources on deck” approach can rectify this decades-long disenfranchisement, embarrassment, and disrespect.) As a result, our City has had 15 public or subsidized housing communities where poverty, mental health, and trauma continue to abound, and that are overwhelmingly African-American.

And fourth, juxtapose the elected representation on behalf of Annapolis area residents—either by the County (prior to City annexation) as well as by the City: It has been overwhelmingly non-African-American.

This long-standing pattern of inequities has resulted in many unfortunate situations in our City, including crime and social disfunction. For instance, regarding “Employment”, “the largest industries in the City are those that generally require a higher education degree.” And regarding “Education”, “the presence of the State government, County government, the Naval Academy, St. John’s College, and many other institutions has led to Annapolis being a highly educated City

compared to others of its size.” As such, there is a very obvious and direct correlation between the educational levels of City residents and the low percentage of residents who are viably employed in the City. And as a result, residents who work many miles outside of the City, and who must rely daily on public transportation or on a personal vehicle to get back and forth to work, have practically very little energy and/or time, if any, to volunteer in areas that are needed in our City.

Additionally, this cannot be overlooked as well: “The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted many of the inequities already present among Annapolis communities.”

Taking all of this into consideration, the centerpiece of this Plan is “Small Area Planning”, accompanied by “Form-Based Zoning”. While “Form-Based Zoning includes legally-binding regulations, not optional guides, and it offers municipalities an alternative to conventional zoning for shaping development”, nevertheless, it should still strongly include “Small Area Planning” as an integral part of the overall plan/development. On another note, for example, “community benefit agreements” could be a point of discussion when it comes to “Small Area Plans”. And in that light, one of the Community Facilities Goals is “to improve public safety throughout the City by targeting public and private investment in areas of persistent poverty, crime, and Historic Disinvestment”.

When it comes to “Small Area Planning”, reviewing each “Ward Profile” should require an “overlay” of “The Preamble”. In other words, has each Ward been adequately represented and “taken care of” as it relates to what is needed in that Ward? Therefore, “The Preamble” should be embedded in every “Ward Profile”.

And incorporating the Appendices, A-K (or any other Appendices or Attachments) into the Plan, should only occur when they comport and/or align with the Plan, or are for informational purposes only.

Much of this Annapolis History has resulted in communities being labeled as “Social Vulnerability” neighborhoods as outlined in the Plan. “Social Vulnerability” considers these components: “Race and Ethnicity”; “Income and Poverty”; “Housing Affordability”; “Employment”; and “Education”. “The tale that ‘social vulnerability’ tells is that within the distance of only a few short blocks, wealth and opportunity can change drastically.” Additionally, because these 6 sets of viable workforce opportunities of the past no longer exist (as outlined above), many of these communities were not, “back in the day”, “socially vulnerable”.

What has been outlined here represents the best arguments for the use of “Small Area Plans” when it comes to determining land use and the location of affordable housing as well as other amenities. Again, what we are able to do is to review the amenities of every community, neighborhood, enclave, even down to the individual street itself, ward, etc., and develop what works to the benefit of these areas as well as our entire City.

Some of what is in the Plan deserves highlighting.

Regarding “Tree Canopy and Impervious Coverage”: “The preservation and expansion of the City’s tree canopy coupled with a reduction in impervious cover is one of our best tools for mitigating the impacts of rising temperature in Annapolis. The benefits are substantial and far-reaching when we place significant emphasis on protecting and expanding the City’s tree canopy since it addresses all 3 of this Plan’s foundational themes: Equity; Health; Resilience. The benefits: cleaner air; energy conservation; runoff reduction; protects biodiversity; cooler temperatures; improved mental health; higher property values.”

Regarding “Environmental Sustainability”: “Work with BGE and other partners to establish more public car-charging stations in Annapolis, particularly downtown, as well as incentives to establish charging stations at existing multifamily and commercial developments.”

Regarding “Projections of Household Growth”: “The adopted forecast for the City would result in adding roughly 1,500 households through 2040.” For example, this translates roughly into a total of 187 households per ward from 2023-2040—over an 18-year period (and how does this calculate into actual persons). So incremental and strategic growth can be the key.

And “in the coming years, as preservation efforts expand beyond the downtown Historic District, this Plan proposes two preservations focus areas—the Old Fourth Ward and Parole—that include numerous important buildings and places that tell the history of Annapolis’ African-American community. Many of these sites are already on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Sites including the [Parole] Rosenwald School, Parole Health Center, and Hoppy Adams House in Parole; and numerous row houses in the Old Fourth Ward. The Stanton Center (formerly the Stanton School) and the Masonic Lodge are also on the National Register of Historic Places.” “To address this, the Plan recommends a new State-level designation for an African-American Heritage District that currently does not exist.”

History is vitally important, especially for our young people—in fact, for all young people—and for all people as well. History is foundational. History grounds you. History provides one with a sense of Pride, Place, and Purpose. Pride accompanies and drives self-confidence. Place provides one with a sense of belonging and “the need to be”. And Purpose instills a sense of direction and guidance, i.e., how can I make this world better—and where do I go from here. The phenomenal poet and author Maya Angelou aptly summed it up, with the following quote attributable to her: “You can’t really know where you’re going until you know where you have been.”

It is important to note here the economic benefits as it relates to the Bay Bridge Expansion: “The City has much to gain from being an active participant in the planning process for the bridge expansion. It is an important gateway to the Annapolis area and despite the challenges from summer traffic, the bridge generates significant economic benefits as well.” Therefore, because the Bay Bridge “generates significant economic benefits” to the Annapolis area (and it is approximately 8 miles from the center of the City), likewise, the Annapolis Mall, Anne Arundel Medical Center, etc., and other entities and amenities which are located in the County, just outside of the City’s boundaries, and for which our City provides public transportation, likewise generate significant economic benefits as well to our City. And the City

is directly affected by the decisions of the County. In other words, whatever happens on the west side of Walgreens on West Street matters in the City! So City life doesn't end at Walgreens!

Our "City's Preamble" lays out what our residents and businesses have indicated is important to them (as laid out in The Preamble), but also what frightens them.

Some of what legitimately frightens and/or concerns our residents and/or businesses—much of which is based upon this 375 years of History: Lack of Trust; Lack of Transparency; History repeating itself; Gentrification (oftentimes brought on by an improvement in the quality of life in the community which includes additional amenities, but the "trade-off" is higher property taxes, and so the current residents are "priced out"); Land Use Intensification that can ultimately compromise human wellbeing; Public Safety; timely responding to emergencies; discarding and/or ignoring the importance of "community fabric"; lack of emphasis on "small area plans" and "small area planning"; the "missing middle" and where will these households be located; maintaining a high level/optimal quality of life, including how much is too much Density; proximity to the County and the inability to affect those decisions; waterfront/water privilege/water view; "water access"/water "nearby"; equity and justice; social vulnerability; environmental justice; environmental injustice; environmental advantages and amenities; seniors and their needs; enough aesthetic and beautification upgrades.

Some of what's important: For example, increasing the depth and breadth of local partnerships with Anne Arundel County Public Schools, the Anne Arundel County Department of Health, and the Anne Arundel County Public Library.

"Community Fabric"—resulting in a beautiful Quilt—means that Everyone Matters: Ethnicity; Race; Color; Creed; National Origin; Religion; Income; Education; Gender; Age; Ancestry; Citizenship; Familial Status; Marital Status; Differently-Able; Sexual Orientation; Urban; Rural; Suburban; Employment/Occupation; Experiences; Upbringing; Etc. And as Annapolis is a nautical City, we can agree: "A rising tide [truly] lifts all boats" is a very apropos phrase. (This phrase originally comes from a speech made by President John F. Kennedy who indicated that the phrase was the New England Council's slogan.)

Three hundred seventy-five (375) years have passed since 1649. Telling this History here, in the context of this Plan, would normally require hundreds of pages; hopefully, this Forward is sufficient.

Finally, nautically speaking, as members of the Annapolis City Council, and as the elected leaders of this City, we can certainly take a page from a book from the successful author, John C. Maxwell: "The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails." Our decisions impact residents, property owners, business owners, visitors, public institutions, government agencies at the local, state, and federal levels, and elected officials at all levels. And our decisions, as well as our Budget, should mirror and reflect our values as a City. Query: So do our decisions "adjust" to value "We the People...?"

Thank you.