



City of Annapolis

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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October 15, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission
From: Pete Gutwald, Director of Planning and Zoning *PG*
Re: Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study
Atch.: R-45-18

SUMMARY

As is stated in the 2009 *Comprehensive Plan*, the City of Annapolis has a goal to shift away from the land consumptive suburban development pattern to a more sustainable one. A small percentage of the City's developable land is vacant, and so instead of relying on annexation, future development has and will continue to consist of redevelopment and infill development. The *Comprehensive Plan's* own smart growth approach established four Opportunity Areas where opportunities for sustainable development were plentiful given conditions more conducive to this form of change. The Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study originated out of the effort to implement the smart-growth-oriented policy recommendations of the 2009 *Comprehensive Plan* for the two Opportunity Areas of Bay Ridge and Forest Drive. In order to effectively carry out the land use and mobility components of the study, Eastport, which relies on the Forest Drive corridor as a main route in and out of the City, was also included. The vision for the study area, which includes roughly two-thirds of the City's land area and residents, is one of better management of future transportation and growth.

The Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study ushers in a new era for urban planning and the integration of land use, economic development, technology, and mobility. It provides a specific vision for this part of the City and begins to lay the groundwork for the next *Comprehensive Plan* for the City of Annapolis. Under current regulations, there is a significant amount of development capacity in this portion of the City. This plan attempts to change the character of that possible development, not necessarily to encourage more development.

Resolution R-45-18 proposes that this plan be adopted as an amendment to the *Comprehensive Plan*. It was introduced at City Council on September 24, 2018 and is attached to this memorandum.

BACKGROUND

Public Input

Throughout each step in the planning process, residents, business-owners, civic leaders, and other stakeholders were given opportunity to contribute opinions, comments, and questions. There were a total of 24 meetings to engage the public on the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study—four of which were either open house-style or traditional public meetings. Early on in the process, in summer of 2017, stakeholders belonging to one of several groups—business owners, developers, government officials, environmental groups, mobility groups, non-profits and neighborhood associations were invited to offer their perspectives on needs and issues in the sector area. A series of work sessions with the Planning Commission were held throughout the process to discuss and distill the progress made to date.

Other audiences were engaged through social media, City notification listservs, flyers, a website with regular updates on the plan, and several online community surveys. In all, 1,362 participants

answered questions in one of three surveys seeking input on where their priorities stood, what they valued in the study area, what issues were most pressing, what improvements they would like to see, and what community character and amenities was most preferred. The third survey sought input on the first draft of the plan.

Building the Traffic Model

In order to establish a basis for planning decisions, and for coordination with the County, a new traffic model was devised that builds on the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) Regional Model. The BMC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Baltimore region. The new City traffic planning tool was developed in collaboration with the BMC and can model current and future travel demand. This is a refined, more detailed, version of the BMC's current regional model. It uses a database that was prepared by City staff that reflects demographic data as well as pipeline development projects. This data provides the Baseline Scenario conditions for the future in this study.

Traffic counts were performed at nineteen intersections in the study area in 2017, during typical AM and PM peak periods. This data was used to calibrate the model. A Baseline Scenario was then run on the refined BMC model using the City's demographic database projections through 2030. This scenario assessed the sector's future composition, based on existing City and County policies and City zoning. The model estimates the new travel demand generated within the road network segments by utilizing demographic growth projections to estimate the change in traffic volumes and the future utilization of capacity during typical AM and PM peak periods. Additional factors that were included in the analysis were:

- A list of possible road improvements
- Land use changes - Mid and High Scenarios. Two demographic scenarios were prepared to quantify the possible amounts, types, and locations of land use changes in the sector based on this study's recommendations. The Mid scenario envisions a moderate rate of change consistent with the City's recent growth rates. The High scenario tests a faster rate of change. The High Scenario also tests a comparatively larger amount of change in Eastport.
- Changes in travel modes. A review of current mode choices was performed to identify possible changes to travel mode choices that might occur in this planning timeframe and could impact vehicular travel demand.
- Changes in technology. A review of technology trends was performed to identify possible changes that might occur in this planning timeframe and could impact vehicular travel demand.
- Commuter origins and destinations. A review of available data on commuter origins and destinations was done to identify opportunities for improved local and regional transit service that could impact vehicular travel demand.
- Preliminary Ultimate Complete Street Sections. A series of preliminary Ultimate Complete Street Sections were developed, for further discussion with the County. These identify ways to increase vehicular traffic capacity as well other modes within the current rights of way (ROW).

Development of Goals and Solutions

In the first phase of the planning process, the planning team inquired about the spectrum of issues at hand pertaining to the entire sector area as well as to specific sub-areas within. The more than 300

issues communicated via various input-gathering means were categorized into six individual themes: Land Use and Design/Community Character; Zoning and Approval Process; Mobility—Vehicular and Transit; Mobility—Bike and Pedestrian; Greening of Annapolis/Environment; and Vibrant Economy. The issues under each theme informed and organized the principal and supporting solutions that were selected based on overall goals, as well as for their viability and impact.

PLAN EVALUATION CRITERIA

For plan approval, the Planning Commission shall make written findings. Based on criteria from the state code for comprehensive plans, the plan shall promote:

- good civic design and arrangement;
- a healthy and convenient distribution of population;
- the health, safety, and general welfare of the local jurisdiction; and
- efficiency and economy in the development process.

The plan shall additionally provide for:

- transportation needs;
- the promotion of public safety;
- light and air;
- the conservation of natural resources;
- the prevention of environmental pollution;
- the wise and efficient expenditure of public funds;
- adequate public utilities; and
- an adequate supply of other public requirements.

Because the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study will be adopted as an amendment to the existing Comprehensive Plan, it should also be reviewed for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The 2009 Comprehensive Plan took an approach to planning focused on “community character.” The concept of community character provided a “means to understand a community’s physical, functional, and design attributes as a whole and further understand how they work together to create or strengthen a sense of place (Annapolis Comprehensive Plan, 2009, p. 3). The Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study likewise seeks to reconcile the different parts of Forest Drive and Eastport and look at how different neighborhoods and commercial nodes can be strengthened to strongly evoke a sense of place.

Three of the Community Character designations used in this study were pulled from the Comprehensive Plan—specifically Urban Center, Urban Center Low and Urban Commercial. Using the concept of these designations, as well as the proposed land use map from the Comprehensive Plan, additional Community Character designations were developed for nodes beyond the opportunity areas.

Many of the policies from the Comprehensive Plan are furthered in the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study. Policy 1 in the Land Use and Economic Development Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan calls for growth to be directed primarily into the four Opportunity Areas and that detailed land use and urban design plans ought to be formulated for each of these areas.

The land use planning component of the study primarily comprises the community character designations for several nodes in the sector area. They are essential for eventually realizing the multi-modal vision of the sector study. Many of the new, complex solutions in the plan will be integrated into the next comprehensive plan. The designations were formulated with the aim of achieving several visions expressed throughout the process. These collective visions can be summarized as: compact, walkable, bikeable, village-like, low-scale, attractive, green, transit-served, and distinctive.

The sector study, with its Community Character and Street Typology recommendations, illustrates context-specific visions for the future. The depictions are more fine-grained and more specific to each place within the study area than the proposed land use of the Comprehensive Plan. One purpose of the community and street character recommendations is not to substantially alter the identity of but to ensure the overall appearance of neighborhoods is both enhanced and better conforms to the surrounding area. Future development in the study area would have to meet adequate public facilities requirements, but would also have increased flexibility to focus more on form and function over use.

Of particular note is that the designations were not designed with increased development in mind. They are instead intended to help ensure that development planned for and in the future conforms to the ideals of the sector study and Comprehensive Plan. To accomplish this, the City's Mixed Use (MX) zoning text could be amended and applied, at least to those areas of the Development Framework proposed to receive an Urban Center, Urban Commercial, Urban Center Low, or Urban Village Center character. Areas with an Urban Neighborhood, Neighborhood Enhancement Area, Greenway Corridor Opportunity or Adaptive Reuse designation can undergo desired change with existing zoning.

In addition to Policy 1, mentioned above, several other policies recommended in the Comprehensive Plan are in alignment with the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study. One policy applies specifically to this study area. Policy 5 in the Transportation Chapter recommends, in acknowledgment of growing congestion in the Forest Drive corridor, to "preserve and enhance the array of solutions currently at the City's disposal." The sector study has proposed certain conceptual roadway improvement strategies with the cooperation of the County. The Comprehensive Plan also recommends as Policy 2 in that chapter for the Opportunity Areas to "contribute system-wide transit demand such that this demand can be leveraged to efficiently operate and expand the entire transit system." The Community Character designations and complete-street street typologies recommended in the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study supports this transit-focused principle.

The sector study's multi-modal specific approach to smart growth seeks to define policy instruments and capital improvements as implementable actions to achieve the goals instituted under the 2009 *Comprehensive Plan* that are ideally appropriate for the study area. Though the sector study is recommended to be completed as an amendment to the 2009 *Comprehensive Plan*, it goes a step further and creates the foundation for future coordinated transportation and land use planning that will serve and feed into the next upcoming comprehensive plan. It incorporates a modern collaborative data-driven process to reinforce decision-making.

Another point from the Comprehensive Plan that is specifically furthered by the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study is a principle that states "[t]ransportation investment and operating priorities in Annapolis must shift to transit, pedestrians and bicycles first, automobile second.

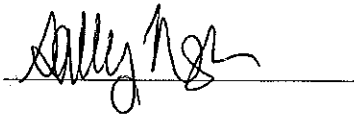
(Annapolis Comprehensive Plan, 2009, p. 49). This is one of the key tenants of the study with the emphasis on creating more pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Additionally, Policy 10 states that “[t]he City will focus on travel demand management as a tool for improving circulation, accessibility, and mobility through Annapolis” (Annapolis Comprehensive Plan, 2009, p. 61). This study does this by analyzing changes in travel modes that are occurring now, and prioritizing the implementation of new technology that will enable travel demand management techniques, such as smart signals.

The sector study calls for a phased implementation plan that will require the coordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders. The first phase calls primarily for legislative and zoning changes. The second phase calls for project planning for specific projects that are focused on bicycle and pedestrian improvements, as well as roadway projects. The third phase calls for construction and implementation of those specific projects in the Capital Improvement Program. This plan, from its approach to its recommendations, is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Furthermore, it lays the groundworks for the next Comprehensive Plan for the City of Annapolis, as well as for future comprehensive rezoning.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff proposes that the Planning Commission recommends the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study be adopted by the City Council as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

Report Prepared by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sally Nash", is written over a horizontal line.

Sally Nash, Ph.D., AICP
Chief of Comprehensive Planning

