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Overall

<u>Improving the Strength of the General Plan (GP)</u>

Develop consistent cohesive threads in the language. Walk through the document as a whole, taking each of 400+ specific statements (outcomes, issues, goals, policies, and actions) and look to be sure there is a consistent set of threads. Then do the same for the supporting discussion and commentary. Cohesive threads should repeat and refine the Outcomes, Goals, and Design Precepts. Each Goal should be scored on its contribution to each of the three Outcomes. Each Goal should address one or more Issues. A chart with Goals as rows and Issues as columns might work. The chart would need to be in three parts, ten columns per set. In addition to strengthening the fabric of the GP these scoring and cohesion exercises might uncover imbalances.

Review word choices. For example, on Page 13 "Specifically, Montgomery County in 2050 is made up of a web of Complete Communities connected by vibrant corridors." Not sure vibrant is a good word choice, it is pleasing but perhaps out of place and misused. We suggest "efficient, low cost, safe, environmentally sound corridors". The current slide on themes picks up on the idea.

Are we really still separating corridors from communities? Are we not saying corridor cities / communities and the corridors are one and the same? Are complete corridors a thing?

Do we end up with a complete County or a collection of complete places? If the collection of very nice things we envision in the plan result in a hodgepodge quilted mosaic, we may well have missed the mark. The transitions between density gradients, glaring corridor deficiencies, pockets of neglect, improving the school's role in the community, and the elevation of the east are needed for balance and completeness at the county level.

Drop the second word in the outcomes. Go with: Healthy, Equitable, Resilient. A Healthy, Equitable, Resilient county. A place where Healthy, Equitable, Resilient behaviors are habitual and facilitated by the built environment.

Develop Expressive Graphics. Use pictures and graphics to convey Outcomes and Precepts. Provide clear understanding of plan intent without slogging through pages of dense non-plain English text. (The Securities and Exchange Commission provides a guide to the use of plain English.)

Make the concepts clear enough so people of all ages and backgrounds can comprehend the gist of the plan. Using pleasing artistic expressions should be supplemental not primary. The graphics should clearly convey the Outcomes and Precepts and match the threads in the narrative. The General Plan may have greater appeal if it can be expressed visually.

Outcome related graphics we cobbled together from browsing around the internet follow. They are cut and pasted parts and may have use restrictions. They are presented as examples of things we think might work well.
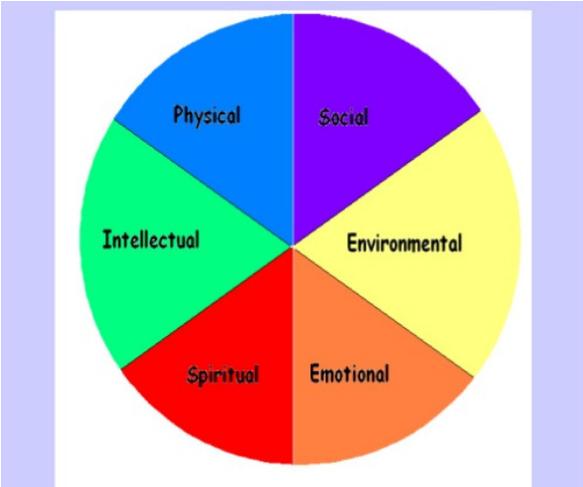
Equitable

Resilient

STRESSORS   PROTECTIVE FACTORS
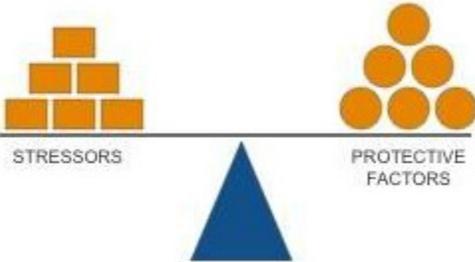
Healthy

The words in Healthy could be replaced with pictures and the word choices in Resilience could be changed.

Risks to the General Plan

Lack of bold public policy ideas reduces the GP's role as a guide for change. Ideas such as no-cost pervasive frequent transit and mobility, a super dense mega city, pre-K through 16 education, using school facilities for community activities as much as they are used for educational uses are some suggestions. Much of the advantage of education is lost without a supportive out of school environment. Schools serve us best when they do not stand alone. The decades long unconscionable achievement gap needs to end and the GP's role in helping communities rise is vital. These kinds of public policy ideas help inform and navigate the inherent tensions of progress.

The GP lacks a detailed analysis and historical perspective on coordination, contrasts, competition, and adversity stemming from the plans of our neighboring counties.

Solving for the past and longing to undo past missteps is not a plan nor does it adequately account for poor implementation. The current state must be addressed or the plan remains an unachievable island of ideas not an implementable vision. The difference between vision and hallucination is execution. A sample discussion of where we may be falling prey to these pitfalls and solution set bias is in the transportation section.

Given the projected less than one percent compound annual population growth rate it is hard to see where any momentum, funding, or other necessary preconditions for changes will exist. The same underfunding that turned wedges and corridors (with webs) into a series of alternating inverted wedges and a single failed corridor seem destined to continue.

By concentrating the meager growth in higher density areas there may be opportunity to realize some improvements in very small slices of the county. The rest of the county is destined to be overrun by the mass momentum of errors of the past. The more fortunate areas may be largely protected. Concentrating growth in the corridors does raise the risk of continuing the current pattern of a deficient bloated corridor development and increased corridor overflow.

Precepts

Design precepts are buried throughout the documents and especially in Chapter 8 of the Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions document. Precepts should be highlighted on a page or two. We think the precepts rank right up there with Outcomes as they are the principles in action that get you to the outcomes. Precepts are what lives between vision, outcomes, goals and actions. Enumerate the precepts along with Outcomes, Issues, Goals, Policies, and Actions. Precepts are applicable statements of vision.

Precepts found:
- Infill
- Completeness
- Focused Compaction
- Separation of People Spaces and Transportation Infrastructure
- Green Corridors
- Active Lifestyles
- Fifteen Minute Living

We think there are many more and they should be surfaced.

Precepts missing or needing more emphasis:
- Caring
- Collaboration
- Communicating
- Measuring / Instrumentation / Monitoring / Reporting
- Repair deficient implementation of previous plans

- Regionalism
- Crime Prevention

A discussion of the opposing yet complimentary nature of selected precepts would help inform decisions about proper balance. It is about coexistence and balance not tradeoffs.

Some examples of complimentary opposing precepts:
Equity versus Diversity
Cultural Communities versus Diversity
Fifteen Minute Living versus Slow Living
Locally Complete Communities versus Economies of Scale
Security versus Convenience

TRANSPORTAION

Places like Pike and Rose are nice but still maintain a heavy mixing of people and cars where large amounts of cars are traversing on the same plane as people with fast wheeled transportation and people all competing for the same ground. We should promote multiplanar places where the buildings are on "stilts" with main entrances and walk spaces on a mezzanine level and transportation access is at ground level or put the transportation layer underground.

Current draft GP language around cars may look misguided thirty years from now. Cars have been and continue to be polluters and killers, yet it seems likely in thirty years cars will be far less damaging. Not planning for cars in high density zones is fine, but broad generalized myopic statements are a disservice to the robustness of a plan. Especially true in our county where the density gradient is as granular and wide as it is anywhere else. Given we are not greenfield, have limited funds, and have many car centric places and car centric people **we should not stop planning for cars.**

Transportation technology and the essence of work are rapidly developing in transformative ways. Spending billions on multi decade mobility solutions is by

definition skating to where the puck has been. A concerted management approach to the pipeline of Science, Technology, and Public Policy around transportation would result in greater public benefit at lower cost.

Communities should not have to face the state alone. MCDOT should facilitate the interaction between communities and the state. Just because the state is "in charge" of certain roads does not mean MCDOT cannot provide direct meaningful oversight and overall management. MCDOT should consider using its request systems to accept and track work items related to state roads and provide liaison to citizens. The same principles apply to community's advocating for a convergence of standards of design, construction, and maintenance of state and county roads.

The Darnestown Civic Association has given detailed testimony on the Growth Policy and CSDG related to our roads. To recap, one of the biggest challenges we have in Darnestown today is corridor overflow. The lack of adequate corridor capacity has dramatically increased traffic in our community. We are overrun with people cutting through our community on their long journey to and from places nowhere near us in the county, some originating as far away as Frederick County and beyond. Overflow traffic worsens pre-existing safety issues for vehicle occupants, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Bike lanes in Travilah and on MD-28 in the 2002 Potomac Subregion Master Plan were never built although there are some bikeable shoulders on MD-28. Seneca Road and the county portion of River Road are in desperate need of bikeable shoulders with slower speed limits and would make an excellent demonstration project.

Darnestown - Our Place

Every place is unique for its natural features, built environment, heritage, and its social, economic, and political activities.

We are actively developing a comprehensive description of Darnestown. We hope it expands to include a complete vision of our future and a map to get there. We look forward to collaborating with Montgomery Planning as we develop our vision and hope to soon share an early draft.

Darnestown's sixteen square miles and its immediate surrounds are densely-packed with a high degree of natural variety, heritage and social proximity.

We don't envision a miniature city as our village. Too many village plans look like urban cores. We think bigger set-backs, lower densities, wider vistas, parks, micro green corridors, nature scaping with native plants, open spaces, less impervious surfaces.

Our idea is to live immersively and sustainably in a natural environment not escape to one nearby. Clustering and compaction defeats the relationship with nature. The land supports the people living on it and the people care for the land and are stewards of the natural environment.

Perhaps these words begin to define what we mean by rural residential.