

Montgomery County Healthy and Sustainable Communities Workshop
June 26, 2008
Universities at Shady Grove, Rockville, MD

Goal and Indicators Break-Out Session: Draft Notes

Draft Goal: Smart Communities: Well-designed, energy-efficient housing of varied types and densities linked to jobs, transit, and services. Affordable and convenient transportation options should be enhanced to reduce our car-dependence, conserve resources, improve air quality, and reduce traffic congestion.

Draft Indicators: % of Housing within ½ mile of Metro and ¼ mile of Bus, Jobs to Housing Ratio, Montgomery County Residents Mean Travel Time to Work in Minutes

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Proposed revised Goal: Smart Communities: Smart communities are affordable, healthy, energy-efficient communities with a sense of place.

Major Theme of Discussion on the Goal:

The goal, as written, is missing elements.

Comments Related to Major Theme #1:

- Some missing elements from the Goal Statement, as written, are:

Smart Communities Session Notes (Draft 7-12-08)

- “range of housing costs” – affordable housing
 - some reference to smart growth communities being Healthy Communities – walkable communities help deal with the obesity issue
 - Creating a “sense of place.”
- Smart Communities lend themselves to economic competitiveness
- Smart Communities are energy sustainable
- Which ones of these specifics do we really want as goals, and which ones are means of getting to those specifics?
 - Varied types of housing
 - Links to jobs, transit, and services
- Do these goals have to do with the built design or are they goals that relate to actual behavior?
 - You can design a community that will conserve resources & improve air quality, etc. Good design may have no impact on behavior.
- Affordable housing is an important goal
- Energy efficiency is not just about residential; need to expand to commercial sphere.
- Minimizing carbon footprint is an urgent priority
- Change “linked” to “proximity”
- Relevant transportation
- Mixed use
- Sense of place / ownership
- Affordability issue is missing
- Smart communities link jobs to housing
- Equal footing for walking, public transportation
 - Bus routes need to be more understandable
- Principles of Place – connect to nature; integrate schools and neighborhoods; availability of art
- Smart? How about using Successful?

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Major Themes of Indicators Discussion:

- Indicators should be as close to a measurement of the goal as you can get & should measure progress
- Indicators chosen should reflect population changes
- These indicators are not that good.
- Indicators should be tied to policy
- Travel Time to Work has stayed constant over the years, so this doesn’t really tell us anything. Travel time can be affected by too many different factors.

Suggested alternate indicators:

- % of new building permits that are LEED certified
- % of daily trips (people avg. 7 trips per day) are able to be done by walking or by transit?
- % of access to transit to where they want to go

Smart Communities Session Notes (Draft 7-12-08)

- % of shopping trips (non-employment trips) by car
- Standard affordability indices
- Multi-worker households
 - Destination / living space are connected via transit
- Availability of quality schools
- Housing/transportation index
- % of trips by different modes of transit and by type of trip (car travel to school, walking to school, bus to school, etc.)
- Does the community have a civic association? How often does it meet? How do they utilize it?
- % of income diversity as measured against the income diversity in the larger county
- Develop an index including accessibility to services, jobs, shopping, transportation, schools, etc.
- % of people within 20 minute walking distance of their normal everyday activities (groceries, libraries, open spaces, schools, cultural events, etc.)
- Per capita/household energy use – home, transport; commercial/business indicators, as well
- Subsidy of different modes of travel – relative cost of more sustainable travel choice
- “Happiness index”

Additional Question: With 70% of all residential land use in cul-de-sac communities, how do you apply Smart Growth?

Story Behind the Ability to Create “Smart Communities”

- **Positive Factors:**
 - Constantly changing county
- **Negative Factors:**
 - Traditional financing methods
 - Access to public wealth is a measure of a community members success
 - 70% of people live in cul-de-sac communities
 - Subsidies for highways
 - Political pressure & economics changed the original intent of the community (satellite cities, not bedroom communities)
 - Mansion-ization of communities
 - Private sector perspective understood
 - Externality costs – don’t just charge average costs
 - Current state of public transit
 - People’s preferences – not all people share this goal
 - Cars are convenient
 - Full price of goods are not used – is subsidized
 - Metro financing – WMATA doesn’t have a dedicated source of finance
 - Subsidized sprawl
 - Transportation policy favors road building
 - Codes (building, zoning, electrical, etc.) need to be revised
 - Divided government
 - Existing building stock / land use patterns

Potential Action Strategies:

- Eliminate 2 of the 7 trips taken per day by car (land use Not by car)
- Prices change behavior (ex: triple the gasoline tax to decrease amount of car trips)
- People should pay the full cost of their choices
- Public education can change behavior
- Shift public policy from what we don't want to make it a level playing field
- Code revision
- Increase collaboration among government entities
- Increase people's choices in communities (cul-de-sac vs. urban/walkable)
- Build to code
- Financing (subsidize smart growth)
 - Public financing (TIFs, etc.)
 - Creative
- More walk-able communities
- Rebuilding "the Commons"
- Make access more competitive
- Re-zone communities to higher densities to put in "missing pieces"
- Re-develop neighborhood shopping centers to include "missing pieces"
- Use \$ earmarked for the ICC to public transportation
- Financing additional modes of travel – bike paths, etc.
- Re-develop big box store areas
- Align codes & policies toward Smart Growth
- Reduce parking requirements
- Improve public transit
- Eliminate the ICC
- Look at the greenhouse gas impact of proposed roads
- Improve accessibility – do an accessibility audit of each community & respond to each communities needs