

Building Industry and Chambers of Commerce Green Infrastructure Focus Group Meeting

July 12, 2006 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Auditorium, M-NCPPC, Montgomery Regional Office

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Presentation on Green Infrastructure (20 minutes)
3. Discussion Questions (~ 40 minutes)
 - a) Relationship between natural areas and the built environment**
 1. How have you used or incorporated natural areas within or near development as part of the overall amenity package?
 2. Have you found that natural areas provide amenities and added value to development? If so, in what ways?
 - b) Opportunities/Benefits—Constraints/Drawbacks**
 3. What are the potential opportunities/benefits and constraints/drawbacks in developing a Green Infrastructure Plan with respect to continued growth and development?
4. Breakout Groups (30 minutes)
 - a) Additional Questions
 - i) Incentives/Tools (1 – 2)
 - ii) Plan effectiveness (3 – 4)
5. Wrap-up (15 minutes)

Desired Outcome of the Meeting:

- Participants understand the plan goals, process, and general concepts.
- Park and Planning staff understand green infrastructure-related issues and concerns of the Building Industry, as well as opportunities and constraints.
- A follow-up process that allows continuing input and coordination as needed/desired.

ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Do you have any suggestions for incentives for preserving green infrastructure?
2. Do you have any suggestions for green infrastructure implementation tools (including changes to codes or regulations)?
3. Do you have any suggestions for what types of areas should be included in the green infrastructure network?
4. Do you have any suggestions for ways to enhance the overall effectiveness of green infrastructure or natural area preservation plans?

Any feedback you can provide on the above issues would be appreciated. If you would like to take more time to consider these questions, please feel free to do so and send your responses to:

Mark A. Symborski
Environmental Planner Coordinator
Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

301-495-4636
301-495-1303 (Fax)
mark.symborski@mncppc-mc.org

Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Annette Rosenblum, Maryland-National Capital Building Industry Association (MNCBIA); Raquel Montenegro, (MNCBIA); Moshe Briel, Wheaton and Kensington Chamber of Commerce; Ines Vega, IDI Group Companies; Jane Redicker, Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce; Steve Nardella, Winchester Homes; Dusty Rood, Rodgers Consulting, Inc.; Ginanne M. Italiano, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce; Vince Berg, Forest and Conservation, Inc.

Key Industry Concerns:

- Don't want amount of developable land to be reduced
- Don't want decreased economic benefits because of the Plan
- Don't want the Plan to end up being a tool to restrict or stop development; want a Plan that will increase flexibility and certainty through functional objectives
- Developers want settled expectations—things need to be clear and predictable

General Comments:

- How will the ICC affect the continuity of the Green Infrastructure? (It will have a negative impact, but not yet clear just how much.)
- Maps should show growth areas, roads, and priority funding areas
- Plan should address long-term and interim goals
- Clear goals will help identify solutions
- M-NCPPC should provide outreach to owners of private land without easements
- A holistic approach to green infrastructure is desirable—need to look at big picture
- The Green Infrastructure Plan should allow priorities to be determined in a way that allows flexibility in applying environmental guidelines.
- Must balance priorities
- Water quality and higher densities (where more people want to live) are related
- The Plan could provide a context for evaluating current guidelines, regulations, etc.—and making recommendations for changes where appropriate—rather than just adding another layer of regulation
- Opportunity to identify “shades of green”: some areas might be more appropriate for smaller buffer or more dense development; some areas might be more appropriate for more green preservation
- The private sector can be involved in banking more forest area—forest banking can be a key tool to help implement the Plan. There is a need for Park and Planning to allow the timely establishment of private forest banks, as allowed by law.
- How would you resolve differences between Forest Conservation Law and Green Infrastructure Plan? (The Plan could provide a context for making appropriate revisions to the Forest Conservation Law.)

Specific Comments:

- Map out objectives—development and green infrastructure objectives need not be mutually exclusive
- Need to develop green performance criteria for habitat maintenance
- Identify implementation measures
- Allow design flexibility
- Don't rely exclusively on across-the-county uniform numerical standards for green infrastructure—need to take into account variability on a more detailed scale—different amounts of green infrastructure, different corridor widths, etc.
- Use different objectives in different areas – “shades of green”, e.g. rural areas vs. urban areas
- Allow compensation—e.g. more density in some areas if more green infrastructure is preserved in others
- Green space needs to be a part of urban areas as well
- Other jurisdictions have some useful tree programs—e.g. Baltimore County provides subsidies for individual homeowners to purchase and plant trees on their lots—this could make a significant difference in total green area down the road
- Can work with communities to improve urban areas
- Many people want natural settings for homes—people want nice green views and nature nearby, however, there are concerns about planting trees to close, communities often want a more manicured green space immediately next to homes
- Management companies for HOA's may want to be able to “evolve” amenities that people don't use as communities mature and change over time—may need to make it possible for these areas to be changed, to provide more flexibility to respond to community needs
- Need for more outreach – people will let us know what they want
- Builders will save as much green as they can, they know it has value – however, it is based on what individual site plans call for
- Need to consider what you might be losing in other ways if you protect green areas—need to recognize and balance needs and consider the cost of both preserving and not preserving green infrastructure
- Look at costs and benefits

Other Comments:

- Put Focus Group slide show on website and email file with final meeting agenda
- MNCBIA has a monthly meeting—could be used for and additional presentation and building industry updates
- Put focus group list on website