

Statement of Trudy McFall on the Annapolis Comprehensive Plan

Presented to the Annapolis Planning Commission

February 5, 2009

I am appearing before you tonight and presenting this statement as a candidate for Mayor. I feel this is important to say specifically because, if I am elected, I would be called upon to implement the City's new Comprehensive Plan. As you can imagine, I have considered my comments very carefully and I have spent considerable time following the process of developing this Plan. I have also served as the Chairman of the Development Committee of my own neighborhood, West Annapolis. Our Civic Association President is submitting that testimony separately, and obvious I strongly support the report and recommendations he will present.

Let me state my position clearly and concisely. I believe this Plan calls for an amount and scale of new development that is not in the best interest of Annapolis and, in my judgment, is not what our citizens want. The Plan states that between now and 2030 we have a "development potential" for up to 2,570 additional housing units and almost 1.5 million square feet more of commercial space. The Plan justifies this by saying that it is projecting growth at a rate that is consistent with past trends. There are a couple of reasons why this is not an appropriate approach.

Annapolis is now virtually fully developed with only 2% of developable land remaining, and there is little vacant land left to annex. This means that these additional homes, offices and stores will be built largely on sites which involve redevelopment and infill. In other words, the future development will be mostly in existing developed neighborhoods, always sure to arouse more concern from residents. Infill development must also be built utilizing infrastructure created for lower levels of density.

Furthermore, the plan projects all of this new development to be concentrated in four "opportunity areas." These neighborhoods are Outer West Street, West Annapolis Village, and two areas along the Forest Drive/Bay Ridge Road corridor. The resulting density impact on these four areas is very significant. For example, my own West Annapolis neighborhood is projected to receive up to 230 more housing units and 135,000 square feet of offices and stores. This level of growth would roughly double the number of homes now in the neighborhood. Outer West Street would receive up to an amazing 1,910 new housing units and 1.1 million square feet of additional commercial space. The already traffic-impacted Forest Drive/Bay Ridge Road corridor would pick up to 430 new housing units and 257,000 square feet more of

commercial space. That would be a huge impact on these areas if the plan was every fully fulfilled.

In addition to increasing density, the plan also calls for increasing the size and scale of buildings. At a time when residents are expressing concern about the size of the newer buildings in town, such as Park Place and 1901 West, the plan allows for taller buildings than we currently have in all of the opportunity areas. In a town where development has generally been 1 to 3 stories, the plan allows for buildings to be up to 4 stories or up to 8 stories, depending on the area. This scale and density would certainly change our City from its historic and small town feel to a much more urban area.

The problems with the Plan in my mind are twofold. First, as already discussed, the plan calls for an unacceptable amount and scale of new development.

Second, the plan acknowledges that major streets and highways in and around Annapolis already have “increasing traffic volumes and deteriorating levels of service.” By 2030, the plan projects that virtually all of the major routes in, out and across town will “experience severe congestion” and will “operate at failing levels of service during peak travel periods.”

The plan lays out general transportation principals and calls for some future studies, but lacks a clear plan of action for improving our roads and public transit. Until we know more specifically how we will solve our traffic issues, we should not compound our present problems by accepting projected increases in density to the levels described in this plan.

I am not suggesting a no-growth approach. Growth can be desirable and it is inevitable. We do have many sites suitable for infill or redevelopment. In the 28 years I have lived in Annapolis the City has benefited by much of its new growth and redevelopment when it has been done at an appropriate and compatible scale. We need to plan for growth which is more modest, more carefully controlled to coordinate with transportation and at a scale and design that keeps Annapolis the unique and special place it is.

To do this, I believe the Planning and Zoning Commission needs to significantly revise the Plan to reduce the growth projected and reduce the related “development potential” set for the opportunity areas. By significant reductions, I mean by as much as half or more. You also need to reduce the scale of development to be permitted. We should not call for virtually all of our new development in the future to be able to be up to 4 or up to 8 story buildings. That is a suitable development scale for Annapolis only in some very limited locations, certainly not everywhere.

TRUDY MCFALL

205 Scott Drive

Annapolis, Maryland.