

PARTNERSHIPS IN GROWTH

Dru Schmidt-Perkins

Dru Schmidt-Perkins is Executive Director of 1,000 Friends of Maryland, an organization of people that “talks to itself.” Its common concern is how Maryland is growing. Most systems are set up for adversarial relationships. Citizens see companies or individuals being given permission to pollute, and feel the permits involved are doing harm to their lives.

Development brings jobs. However, there is no structure for developers and citizens to work together. Our laws are partial and incomplete.

1000 Friends tries to build alliances. Good policy comes out of these alliances. They are trying to “reduce hassle.”

Maryland has some sacred cows. Program Open Space, which preserves farmland, is one of them. Now the politicians have agreed to leave this program’s funding alone.

A few years ago, as growth issues came to the forefront, development increased, traffic increased and we saw the degradation of the Chesapeake Bay.

How do we look at these issues cumulatively? We have added lane miles, but this is not working. We need to bring our houses and our jobs closer together. This would certainly save us money.

Reality Check Plus was a unique series of growth visioning exercises held around the state in May and June 2006. It was a cooperative effort of 1000 Friends of Maryland, the Urban Land Institute – Baltimore District Council, the National Center for Smart Growth and Education, the Homebuilders Association of Maryland and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. It took a look at how this region should grow, and it included a cross-section of 850 Marylanders. The participants were told to come up with a set of principles to guide growth in Maryland. There were huge similarities in the findings among the various discussion groups, including recommendations to protect environmentally sensitive areas, concentrate development, move jobs closer to housing and provide more transit.

As a result of Reality Check Plus, Partnerships for Land Use Success was created, and several groups are part of it. They feel that Maryland has 10 or 15 years to “do this right” before we experience gridlock and kill the Chesapeake Bay.

The growth expected as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

process will give us an opportunity to demonstrate that Maryland is environmentally, socially and economically vibrant.

Dr. John E. Kortekamp

Dr. Kortekamp and the Home Builders Association of Maryland are part of an “unholy alliance” that believes that progress is based on relationships. We have to be collaborative. A group was launched in an effort to transition Smart Growth from Governor Parris N. Glendening to Governor Robert L. Ehrlich. They got together to reach a consensus on how to move forward on Smart Growth. A total of 36 organizations participated in day-long exercises, and came up with a series of recommendations that were given to the incoming Ehrlich Administration. Much of what that administration did on Smart Growth was based on the work of this group.

The issue of workforce housing is important, as the price of land in areas to which Smart Growth directed growth went up. As a result, another coalition made recommendations about workforce housing in July 2006. Unfortunately those recommendations were put on the shelf.

The Homebuilders Association gave \$100,000 to Reality Check Plus. Some of the focus of this exercise was to determine where and how to house the people moving to Maryland as a result of BRAC. The goal of Reality Check Plus was to come up with policy outcomes.

We all have common challenges. Maryland’s counties have an obligation to submit a comprehensive plan every six years. However, these plans come with a number of problems:

Comprehensive plans do not have to include jobs and housing.

Adequate public facilities ordinances (APFO) do not move forward unless facilities and the necessary infrastructure are available. Ninety percent of the priority funding areas in Anne Arundel County are closed to new housing, except for age-restricted housing. The goal is not to go forward in areas without facilities, but no one is providing the facilities. In Frederick and Carroll counties, water is a problem.

Traffic is a problem everywhere.

People don’t want development in their back yard. If blue collar people oppose growth, they are called racists. If upper class people oppose growth, they are called environmentalists.

The nexus of jobs vs. housing. Every 1.5 jobs created causes a need for one unit of housing. The 60,000 jobs coming to Maryland will create a need for 40,000 new housing units. How do we create this housing? The people in these jobs go home at night. If we don’t create housing near these jobs, our quality of life will diminish.

Questions and Answers

In response to a question about the solution to Maryland's transportation problems, Ms. Schmidt-Perkins said we should not build the Intercounty Connector (ICC). We should put half the money saved into connecting the Maryland Rail Commuter train system (MARC) to the Wilmington train system. We need to build a world class spine, and change the way we think about transportation. People need to live, work and play in their communities. Dr. Kortecamp said he supports transit-oriented development. We need parallel transportation options. It is hard to go from west to east in Maryland.

In response to a question about set asides and wetlands areas, Ms. Schmidt-Perkins said this is an exciting policy discussion. We need to look at the cumulative effect of permits. We need to put our resources where we want to have development. Dr. Kortecamp said developers do not work together. They make individual risk assessments and consider each project individually. They have to operate under existing law. If a company says okay and environmental regulations say okay, then they can go ahead. We need to change the law. Ms. Schmidt-Perkins said we need to identify communities that are clear on where they want development. Public hearings are poor ways to make decisions.