



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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County Executive

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING
Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

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June 21, 2024

John Breeding
Director of Planning, Zoning Administrator
The Town of Mount Airy
110 S. Main Street
P.O. Box 50
Mount Airy, MD 21771

Re: Draft Mount Airy Master Plan Draft

Dear Mr. Breeding,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Town of Mount Airy Comprehensive Master Plan. We enjoyed reading the plan, and we appreciate the careful thought and thorough effort expressed in creating Mount Airy's vision for the next decade. This letter will address the Goals and Objectives of the Draft Mount Airy Master Plan as they relate to the Livable Frederick Master Plan. Text and topic-specific comments resulting from our review of the draft document have also been included at the end of this letter in the hope they prove useful to the Town's work.

The overarching goals of the Mount Airy Master Plan set forth in Chapter 9 are consistent with the Livable Frederick Master Plan, particularly, Goal A: Achieve More-Than-Adequate Public Facilities and Goal B: Responsible Growth. These two goals incorporate all four aspects of the Livable Frederick Master Plan (LFMP) Action Framework: Our Community, Our Health, Our Economy, and Our Health. A comparison of the Town's goals with the LFMP Action Framework is as follows:

- Growth through infill development and redevelopment within existing suburban neighborhoods, as set forth in Goal B: Responsible Growth, can also create more amenities located closer to where people live and work and provide more opportunities for walkable neighborhoods. ***Our Community (LFMP), is also particularly supportive of mixed-use development and diversified mobility.***
- The initiatives detailed under Goal B: Responsible Growth, regarding the Town's groundwater supply, efforts to continuously improve water testing technology, an initiative to document violations and enforce stormwater runoff controls, and initiatives that support improved water quality, water supply, and treatment represent positive steps to preserving water quality. ***Our Environment (LFMP), also supports goals and initiatives related to water quality.***

- “Quality of Life” as described under Goal A: More than Adequate Public Facilities is also an identified goal of the Our Economy Action Framework of the Livable Frederick Master Plan, and it is a critical pillar of sustainable communities. ***Our Economy (LFMP) seeks to ensure that the community assets that are important to residents, businesses, and visitors are adequate to support them on a day-to-day basis while also being maintained with an eye toward the future.***
- Efforts to reduce the open space deficit as described under Goal A: More than Adequate Public Facilities should provide a myriad of benefits to the Town. ***Our Health (LFMP) goals and initiatives include creating active places, environmental greening, and increasing environmental comfort as crucial to improved community health.***
- Goals C – F of the Mount Airy Master Plan and supporting initiatives that address the need for an array of housing options, continued economic development of the downtown, optimization of industrial parks, and optimization of the Town’s MXD Zoning District. ***Our Community and Our Economy (LFMP) both recognize the need for well-planned residential and high-functioning business environments that support each other and offer synergies to communities.***

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Mount Airy Master Plan. The Town of Mount Airy is a special place deserving of the thoughtful consideration and planning represented in the draft.

Sincerely,

Justin Burkner, CNU-A



Attachment: Chapter-specific comments

cc: Deborah Carpenter, AICP, Director, Frederick County Division of Planning and Permitting.
Kimberly Gaines, Livable Frederick Director, Frederick County Division of Planning and Permitting.

The following text and topic-specific comments are offered based on our reading of the draft Master Plan. They have been organized by chapter, as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. On page 7, under Housing, the plan references the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) Housing Element Models & Guidance. There is limited discussion throughout the plan regarding the specific requirements of the Housing Element. Information about the Housing Models and Guidelines (M&G) can be found online at:

<https://planning.maryland.gov/Pages/OurWork/housing-element-mg/housing-element-home.aspx>.

The Town is encouraged to connect with MDP on strengthening discussion of this topic throughout the plan.

2. Frederick County has an updated County Seal for Page 15. An electronic copy can be provided upon request.
3. On Page 16, Line 387, there is more updated information available for the residential pipeline. As of Quarter 1, 2024, there are 32,323 approved units and 15,762 available units. For future updates of the Frederick County Residential Pipeline, please visit:

<https://www.frederickcountymd.gov/7988/Data-and-Mapping>

Chapter 2: History

1. On Page 32, the 2020 Census total for Frederick County was 271,717 and in 2010 was 233,385.
2. On Page 33, numbers in the “Town Population” chart are missing the thousands separator.
3. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Round 10.0 Cooperative Forecast projects a total Frederick County population of 341,300 people by 2035 and 428,800 by 2050. This 2050 population total represents an increase of approximately 157,000 additional people from the 2020 Census. Employment projections are 132,500 jobs by 2035 and 162,500 by 2050. The Town may wish to consider and address these projections in the plan and their potential influence on future growth and development.

Chapter 3: Natural Resources

1. On Page 37 under “General Climate,” much of Mount Airy’s downtown is now Zone 7b (5-10° F) on the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone map. Some of the surrounding area is still Zone 7a. For more information visit:

<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>

2. Under Streams and Stream Buffers, Carroll County’s Water Resources Manual, as updated in 2022, requires a “minimum” of 50 feet with a variable maximum width rather than a 50-foot-wide buffer. It may eliminate confusion on behalf of readers to update this section of the text to reference the current edition of the Carroll County Water Resources Manual.
3. On pages 53 and 54, the narrative indicates that the Town has adopted the 2010 Carroll County Water Resources Element. There is an additional statement about the development of a new WRE for the Town, and it appears as though the Town will no longer rely upon the Carroll County WRE. Would it be possible to clarify this planned course of action in the text?
4. The chart at the top of Page 55 indicates a current average drinking water demand of 0.765 mgd. The Carroll County Water & Sewer Master Plan (2023) indicates a demand of 0.704 mgd, and this quantity has also been utilized in the pending updates to the Frederick County Water Resources Element and the Frederick County Water and Sewerage Plan. We believe the demand estimate should be revised to agree with the Carroll County Water & Sewer Master Plan.

Chapter 4: Land Use and Zoning

1. On Page 56, the “Mount Airy Population Density” is difficult to interpret. Would it be possible to revise the chart so that it utilizes multiple axes? The pie charts on Pages 57 and 58 may also be better conveyed as bar charts.
2. In the “Land Use and Zoning Objectives and Implementing Strategies” section, consider adding an objective to encourage missing middle housing types and revisiting the Town’s zoning code to support these housing types. They have historically existed in small towns in Maryland and in Frederick County, meeting a need not served by the single-family home or the mid-rise apartment building. They provide entry-level, generational, and special needs housing, as well as sufficient density while maintaining the existing character of the community.
3. In Objective B.4.2, “Reduce our Open Space deficit,” consider adding an implementation item to assess how smaller open space types could play a role in reducing the deficit and

where and when those types could be appropriate in the Town.

4. Livable Frederick commends the Town's Objective F.4.1 which among other things seeks to increase public engagement and outreach. Some potential sources of information and resources for the Town include, but are not limited to: Community at Work, the National Charette Institute, and the International Association for Public Participation.

Chapter 5: Municipal Growth Element

1. The maps provided in this chapter indicate that some conservation areas (encumbered with environmental resources) are included in the "Future" and "Long Range Future" water and sewer service categories. If these properties are not slated for development, would a designation that involves no future service (i.e. excluding Future, or Long Range Future) be more appropriate and assist in preserving drinking water and wastewater capacity?
2. Water and Sewer Service Area maps have an orange hatched line. This symbol is not listed on either map legend. Should it be labeled as "Ultimate Town Boundary?"
3. The Future Annexation map refers to "Proposed Roads" in Frederick County that may currently exist.
4. The Town is advised of the following regarding future annexations, growth boundaries, and planned water and sewer service areas:
 - a. Annexation Area K (Rigler on Prospect) and L (South Main Street) are designated Planned Service (PS) on the Frederick County Water and Sewer maps.
 - b. Annexation Area J (Kraft) is currently No Planned Service (NPS). The property will remain NPS unless the County land use designation is changed or the property is annexed into the Town.
 - c. Rebco Land LLC (Tax Map 81E, Parcel 15, #18-385023) is an unincorporated parcel that is not in the County or Town growth area. However, the property is zoned Agricultural and has a land use designation of Low-Density Residential and Planned Service (PS) for water and sewer. The Town and County should collaborate on this parcel during the reconciliation process after plan adoption.
 - d. The County growth area boundary extends south of I-70 but the Town's boundary does not. The parcels have a Planned Service (PS) designation for water and sewer. The Town and County should collaborate on these parcels during the reconciliation process after plan adoption.

Chapter 6: Transportation

1. The County encourages the Town to expand its discussion of multimodal transportation such as pedestrians and bicyclists in Chapter 6. In addition, while public transportation and paratransit services are not provided by the Town, this chapter would be an appropriate place to discuss the needs of people in Mount Airy who do not have a car but need to access services in Frederick and Carroll Counties. This can assist Frederick County in identifying transit needs.
2. The Town should consider adding an implementation item to Objective A.6.1 to review zoning and subdivision regulations and design manuals to ensure these regulations promote – rather than hinder – safe multimodal transportation. Some examples include increasing the number of street connections, ensuring an appropriate block length, reducing travel lane width to reduce speeds and increase pedestrian safety, and adopting “complete streets” concepts.
3. The Town should consider roadway reconfigurations (also referred to as “road diets”) as a long-term traffic calming strategy and incorporate this as an objective or implementation item. Narrow lanes slow drivers down and reduce the impact of significant injury or death. According to the National Transportation Safety Board, a pedestrian hit at 40 MPH has a fatality rate of 85%. Road diets have proven to have little to no impact on street capacity. The remaining space can be reallocated for on-street parking, wider sidewalks, or space for street trees.

Chapter 7: Community Facilities and Public Services

1. The Town may wish to consider the role and benefits that smaller-sized parks, green spaces, plazas, and shared or multi-purpose facilities can have in meeting the plan’s open space goals and incorporate this as an objective or implementation item.
2. The Town is encouraged to increase its discussion of walkability and bikeability to community facilities and public services and not only as a recreational amenity. The Town should also consider adding an objective or implementation item to consider walkability/bikeability in the siting of new public facilities.

Chapter 8: Design Guidelines

1. The Town’s Planning Commission has expressed a strong desire to maintain the Town’s character. During implementation of Objective B.8.1, Review/Revise 2010 Design Guidelines, there should be a strong focus on identifying what architectural and design features are present in Mount Airy and contribute to its community identity. The revised guidelines could provide quantifiable, actionable, and easy-to-follow guidance for property owners and developers to realize the community’s design goals and vision.

2. In reviewing its Design Guidelines, the Town is encouraged to incorporate design principles that promote a sense of place as well as walkability including allowing for on-street parking, rear access allies, placing parking behind buildings, and limiting roadway curb cuts in the front of buildings.
3. The Town is encouraged to expand a discussion about street trees as an important aspect of the public realm. Trees help provide a sense of place, lower ambient temperatures, clean the air, increase pedestrian safety by decreasing vehicle speeds, help with stormwater management, and increases real estate values.