

Western Maryland – Implications and Implementation Discussions Summary

Below are summaries representing the full spectrum of recorded responses to the identified questions, which were asked to Reality Check exercise participants (at each exercise table) on June 2, 2006. Note that these are discussion notes and not an endorsement by the Reality Check *Plus* effort, any of its organizing entities, or any of its participants of any particular initiative or implementation concept. These notes are intended to encourage an ongoing discussion regarding how the Western Maryland region can address its growth concerns.

(1) How does this group feel about the amount of growth projected for the region?

- “More growth coming than anticipated, but some areas still won’t have much growth.”
- “Projections are fine and acceptable, if not at the lower end.”
- “Too much – unrealistic because there will not be the demand for jobs that is projected.”
- “The types of jobs may not support housing prices.”
- Projected growth? “slightly conservative.”
- Projections are questionable: there may be too few jobs.
- “There is tension between reality and ideal situation in this exercise.”
- “The forecasting is underestimated for Washington County – projection may not be realistic. Cumberland is growing faster than projection. Growth projection could be self-fulfilling.”
- “We need to create jobs that allow children’s children’s children to stay in the area.”

(2) Regardless of what policies state or local governments adopt, it is inevitable that some additional growth will occur in this region.

- a. What policies do you think state and local governments should adopt in order to accommodate the additional growth yet maintain the region’s quality of life?*
- b. What are the implementation tools required to achieve this envisioned growth pattern and maintain or improve quality of life?*

(3) Based on your knowledge of the region, what infrastructure improvements would be required to achieve this envisioned growth pattern?

[Due to overlapping themes and concepts, the responses to these questions have been combined in the table below and are presented in no particular order.]

Education
Need policies to prevent new schools from being built on large green field campuses.
Encourage a collaborative effort with schools and businesses to plan for more jobs and more residents; promote the linkage between higher education and entrepreneurship.
Strengthen and support area institutions of education, K-through-college, for workforce preparedness, the opportunity to retain residents, and to attract viable businesses.
Need greater citizen participation in regional land use decisions – and marketing and education to get the public involved in land use discussions.
Educate public and voters about impacts of growth and change and the opportunities of economic development.

State education board wants to build schools on green/open space – this is wrong.
Environment- or Resource-Related
Need to develop local sources of funds for land preservation to complement state funding.
Agricultural land, forests and other sensitive areas need to be protected by strict boundaries.
Existing state owned land should remain undeveloped.
Use preservation and quality of life to attract economic development.
Need stronger local government support for parks and open space programs, such as TDR programs (particularly in southwestern corner of Maryland).
Need to create programs that support local agricultural viability (not just conservation).
Zoning and Planning
Provide financial incentives to areas with infrastructure (including density bonuses).
Raise impact fees outside PFAs (based on zoning).
Build in areas with existing infrastructure; focus on infill and renovation.
Capital spending should be focused on developed areas, with stricter zoning in rural areas.
Counties need closer, more periodic or annual benchmark checks to see how well they are following their own comprehensive plans.
Building should be prioritized to areas with existing infrastructure.
Zoning should be created to drive higher densities and mixed uses in certain places.
Appropriate adequate public facility ordinances should be introduced.
Keep growth around existing centers.
Western Maryland local governments have inadequate staff and resources to handle/manage projected growth.
Need zoning incentives (and disincentives) to protect agriculture/open space through cluster development.
Economic Development
Make tourism into 12-month industry.
Reduce personal and business income taxes in specific areas.
Focus on attracting high-tech or green-tech businesses.
Get rid of the bureaucracy associated with tax incentives.
Attract federal jobs to the region, especially biotechnology jobs.
Regional and Inter-governmental Cooperation
Need state level support and coordination, especially for infrastructure.
Need a regional coordinating body and greater cooperation between counties.
Need “county-city, county-county, and regional-state (priority) communication in the planning process.”
Create a regional community develop corporation to deal with variety of issues, including an inventory of redevelopment opportunities within the existing housing stock, and an inventory of existing infrastructure and natural resources.
Need “unified growth control measures” that emphasize county/municipal planning cooperation at every opportunity.
Share wealth of growth with other municipalities in Western Maryland.

Affordable Housing
Need Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit program throughout the Western Maryland region.
Streamline the process for rehabilitating older properties.
Increase workforce housing.
Transportation
Develop a regional transit system, possibly high speed rail.
Begin commuter flights or helicopters to Cumberland and Oakland.
Provide additional mass transit.
Expand interstate highways and secondary roads.
Need viable airport for Allegany and Garrett counties.
Need resources to improve Route 220.
Funding
Need much more funding for roads, schools, water and sewer.
Need funding for structures for the elderly and handicapped.
Water and Sewer
In Washington County, sewer capacity should be reserved for job growth so the county maintains its diversity and does not become simply a bedroom community.
Need upgrades to water and sewer filtrating and treatment plants.
Coordinate planning of water and utilities with stricter policies to prevent growth in open lands.
Water supply technologies and infrastructure has to be improved to meet future demands.
Technology
Encourage more telecommunications jobs in Western Maryland.
Other
Improved solid waste management.
Plan for cultural districts.
Be conscious of energy consumption when building.
Goals and Other Incentives
Use a long-term (next 100 years, or multi-generational) community vision.
Provide new funding (incentives) for growth within Priority Funding Areas for revitalization and job growth.
Have policies that respect the existing community character.