Virtual Land Use and Local Planning

November 18, 2020

Description of group: describes projects concerned with a local government’s ability to plan for the community’s future and to meet the current needs of residents. This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): updating zoning ordinances or land use; updating municipal/local policies, taxes, fees, etc.; increasing local government staff capacity; and updating planning documents like sector plans or comprehensive plans.

I attended the Land Use and Local Planning Focus Group where they talked about zoning and land use. Some of the things they are looking at is housing and land use (zoning/ordinances). They recognize the need for sustainable community designation in order for this to be successful.

Some feedback from survey: can County regulate the # of liquor stores (don’t want derelict liquor stores); code enforcement to inspect disengaged landlord properties, UMBC’s Mural in Arbutus; revitalize downtown

Survey results strengths: proximity, quaint neighborhood, walkable areas; weaknesses: business types, vacant stores, lack of green space, crime/homelessness, flooding and other issues.

Other areas reported from survey: no more development; need more green spaces; tax benefits for small businesses; spot zoning, update zoning ordinance/land use/ update local policies, taxes, fees; encourage UMBC partnership; lower property tax; grant opportunities; community input meetings notifications; more government support

For focus group, looking to ask/answer: what government support are you seeking? Any zoning questions? Small business assistance?

Some issues/questions raised during open session:

--need for more streamlined permit information for opening a new business/restaurant (see Small Business Resource center on Balto County website; also reach out to area planner or Arbutus Citizens Association)

--how this groups work and input relates to other groups – each group has different areas of responsibility; information is gathered together and submitted on the application in April 2021 to the State (for state programs, projects, initiatives, incentives, etc.)

--need for sidewalks around elementary and middle schools to the library for better accessibility

--need for more police activity in/around Halethorpe; more investment in the police bike patrol

--a County Executive initiative is for an outreach coordinator to attend meetings to help where possible and to listen; great job on the Balto County website

--zoning for B&B (apparently the Council has recently changed to allow)

--like to see a shift and encouragement from local businesses and larger corporations. UMBC largely supports the community but there is a disconnect from the large corporations around the area.

There was discussion about the 5 year and 10 year master plan. The purpose of the plans are for land use, existing land use, zoning transportation, environmental issues and green space. These documents are policy centric with a (hopeful) holistic approach.

When thinking about revitalization, they try to integration these into the master plan.

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