

Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 11: Community Involvement Goal

Goals

- To increase citizen awareness of, and participation in planning issues, processes, and development decisions
- To increase public participation in government processes

Citizen participation is an important component in the process of developing comprehensive and facility plans and in the decision-making process of approving plans for development. The citizens of the Mount Airy environs community have various opportunities to participate in and influence the County's decision-making relating to the future development in their community. Public participation includes activities such as voting for elected officials, running for public office, attending public meetings and hearings conducted by elected officials or appointed boards or commissions, attending public workshops or committee meetings, and participating as members of committees or appointed boards or commissions. The Carroll County Board of Commissioners appoint qualified citizens to numerous boards and commissions, including: Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Environmental Affairs Advisory Board, Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, Board Of License Commissioners, Historic Preservation Commission, Economic Development Commission, Industrial Development Authority, Children's Council, Commission on Aging, Recreation and Parks Board, and Board of Social Services.

Current Conditions

Several formal opportunities are available to the citizens of the Mount Airy environs community to voice their concerns and provide input on issues that are important to them.

1 Government Structure

The Board of Carroll County Commissioners is the local legislative body for the Mount Airy environs study area. The members of the Board are elected at large for four-year terms. The County Commissioners serve as both an executive and legislative body, deriving their powers from the state legislature through enabling legislation. Since Carroll County is neither a code nor charter county, many of the laws that govern the County must be adopted by the Maryland Legislature.

In terms of State representation, the Mount Airy Election District is located in the Legislative District 4B, which is represented by one Senator and one Delegate in the Maryland Legislature in Annapolis. At the federal level, the planning area is located in the Sixth Congressional District, which is represented by one member of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. Two Senators in the U.S. Senate also represent the State as a whole.

2 Current Citizen Participation Opportunities

Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan

A ⇨ Carroll County Planning and Zoning Commission

The seven-member (plus alternate) Planning and Zoning Commission is an appointed body responsible for such planning-related activities as developing and approving comprehensive plans, approving subdivision and site development plans, and recommending a Capital Improvement Program to the County Commissioners. The Planning Commission also recommends to the County Commissioners amendments to planning-related regulations and ordinances such as the subdivision regulations and zoning ordinance (ordinance text and zoning map). The Planning Commission holds a public meeting on a monthly basis to consider planning-related projects and issues. Citizens are welcome to attend. The Planning Commission is required to hold public hearings to receive input on comprehensive plan elements, updates, or amendments. The Planning Commission considers the comments received before approving the plan and submitting it to the County Commissioners for adoption.

B ⇨ The Planning Process

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland mandates that the Planning Commission develop and approve a comprehensive plan and recommend it to the local legislative body for adoption. Community meetings and workshops are held to encourage citizen input to help ensure that the vision and goals of the plan reflect the desires of the community.

C ⇨ Carroll County Board of Commissioners

The Board of Carroll County Commissioners is the local legislative body for the unincorporated areas of the County, including the Mount Airy environs study area. These elected officials have the final decision-making authority over many issues that affect the Mount Airy environs community. The Board is required by law to hold public hearings on changes to a diversity of regulations and plans such as zoning maps, the zoning ordinance, the subdivision regulations, and the Water and Sewer Master Plan, prior to any final action. The law mandates that these public hearings be duly advertised in local newspapers. All public meetings and hearings conducted by the Board are open to citizens for their input.

The ultimate opportunity to influence local public policy and decision making is to vote for candidates for County Commissioner or run as a County Commissioner candidate.

D ⇨ Carroll County Board of Zoning Appeals

The Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) is a quasi-judicial body comprised of three members. The Board is empowered to hear and decide on requests for conditional uses and authorize appeals for variances to the zoning ordinance. The BZA may also hear and rule on appeals to orders, requirements, decisions, or determinations that are made by an administrative officer in the enforcement of Article 66B or any ordinance adopted under the article. These cases may involve, for example, appeals to actions of the planning commission. The BZA conducts public hearings to address all cases that are filed for its review and action. Public hearing notices are published in local newspapers, signs are posted on properties under review, and notices of the public hearings are mailed to adjoining property owners. The public hearings and notification of them provide an important opportunity for citizen input to these cases.

Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan

E ⇨ Carroll County Subdivision Advisory Committee

Citizens have an opportunity for input in the early stages of the review and approval process involved with the development of property. The Subdivision Advisory Committee (SAC) is comprised of County and State agencies that review and comment on subdivision and site development plans. SAC meets monthly to publicly review all development plans submitted to the County and to present its recommendations and requirements to the owner/developer of the property and the developer's engineer. When a property owner is contemplating the improvement or subdivision of his or her property, notices of the SAC meeting are mailed to adjoining property owners and signs are posted on the property informing the public of the scheduled SAC meeting. Citizens are invited to attend the SAC meeting to voice their concerns on the proposed development at this early design stage.

3 Citizen Information Sources

A ⇨ Media

Residents in the Mount Airy area have a variety of sources of information to keep informed of local events and activities. The *Carroll County Times* and the Carroll County edition of *The Baltimore Sun* are general-circulation daily for-purchase newspapers that focus on news in Carroll County, in addition to providing regional, state, national, and world news. Landmark Community Newspapers of Maryland, Inc., publisher of the *Carroll County Times*, also circulates two free monthly publications, *Carroll Families* and *Carroll Seniors*. These periodicals contain feature stories and County activities aimed at families and senior citizens, respectively. The Mount Airy Gazette is circulated on a weekly basis and is a general-circulation for-purchase newspaper that focuses on news in Carroll County, in addition to providing regional coverage of other surrounding counties and municipalities.

Several radio stations broadcast regional news and information that may include Carroll County. These include WFRE (99.9 FM), WGTY (107.7 FM), WGRX (100.7 FM), WYCR (98.5 FM), WHVR (1280 AM), WGET (1320 AM), WBAL (1090 AM), WFMD (930 AM), and WTTR (1470 AM).

Several television stations affiliated with major national networks broadcast from Baltimore and southern Pennsylvania and occasionally include Carroll County news. These stations include WMAR –channel 2 – Baltimore (ABC), WBAL –channel 11 – Baltimore (NBC), WJZ –channel 13 – Baltimore (CBS), and FOX –channel 45 – Baltimore (Fox).

Cable television service is provided to certain portions of the Mount Airy environs planning area by Adelphia. As the area's cable operator, Adelphia provides four television channels for locally broadcast programming. Adelphia Cablevision Channel 3 is a commercial local origination channel that covers local news and events. The television studio is located on Clifton Boulevard in the City of Westminster. Carroll Community Television Channel 19, Carroll Community College Television Channel 18, and Carroll Educational Television Channel 21 (sponsored by Carroll County Public Schools) are noncommercial local access channels that include information on local news and events as part of their scheduled programming.

Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan

B ⇨ Internet

The Internet is growing resource of information for citizens. One website that contains information oriented to Carroll County is located at <http://ccgov.carr.org>. This site contains extensive information on the County, County government, municipalities located in the County, the public library system, schools, services and organizations, and businesses.

C ⇨ Comprehensive Plan Newsletter

As part of the comprehensive plan update process, a series of newsletters are sent out to each property owner within the plan area to inform them of upcoming meetings and the progress of the area plan.

Analysis of Community Needs

Numerous opportunities already exist for the community to be involved in government-related issues. Opportunities for improvement, however, do exist. Many of the residents indicated in the community surveys that they receive information regarding public decisions, meetings and community participation opportunities from newspapers and mailed flyers. However, few people indicated they actually attended any public meetings held by County or Town officials. Public meeting agendas are posted and often printed in local newspapers, but these meetings are not broadcast on cable television for public viewing on a regular basis.

One of the biggest deterrents to citizen involvement is that town of Mount Airy is split between Carroll and Frederick counties. This split makes it difficult for residents to know which jurisdiction to become involved with. Many times they do not feel a sense of belonging to any of the jurisdictions, and as a result do not get involved at all. The other major deterrent is that many people commute out of the area for work, leaving them with less time to spend attending community meetings.

Although these conditions may lead to a lack of citizen involvement, the reality is that most people will not participate in meetings or other public participation opportunities unless they feel directly and significantly impacted. This apathy often leaves the community unaware of the plans for the community or the issues within the community which need to be addressed.

Recommended Actions

Based on Town Plan recommendations with additional County recommendations in bold.

- Propose public or semi-public functions within new developments to impart a sense of community activity and involvement.
- **Create a link from the County website that will allow citizens to check on issues relevant to their community, such as items to be discussed at County and Town Planning Commission meetings, Board of Zoning Appeals hearings, etc.**

Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan

While the County has a link on its main page entitled “City’s and Towns”, which takes visitors to each individual Town’s web page, it may also be useful to post upcoming events that may be specific to the Towns on the County site.

- **Involve existing community organizations in addressing key issues faced by the community.**

It is often difficult to identify people who are interested, willing, and able to serve on committees. Existing community organizations present an opportunity to involve groups of people who are already organized and have a stake in the issues faced by the community.

- **Ensure local media is aware of upcoming meetings and events.**

Given the County’s web site and access to several local cable channels, it is now possible to reach a greater number of people with county news and events. However, many citizens will still get their news from broadcast television and newspapers. County staff should continue to find new ways of reaching the community so that the public will have the maximum opportunity to keep track of current events.

Fiscal Implications

The recommendations contained in this plan may be policy-oriented or action-oriented, and their implications may be the responsibility of the County, other public agencies, private landowners and developers, or a combination of these. This section is designed to identify the potential fiscal impacts to the County of each of the recommendations. There could be “No Fiscal Impact” meaning the County would not incur direct or predictable expenses as a result of implementing the recommendation, an “Undetermined Impact”. Meaning there likely would be a cost associated with implementing the recommendations, but that cost can not be determined at this time for various reasons, or a “Fiscal Impact,” which likely would be incurred by the County if the recommendation were implemented. For recommendations that have an identified fiscal impact, the cost of implementing that recommendation is estimated to the best degree possible.

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No Fiscal Impact

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No Fiscal Impact

- **Involve existing community organizations in addressing key issues faced by the community.**

No Fiscal Impact

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No Fiscal Impact

Anticipated CIP Projects

Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan

**Anticipated CIP Projects Related to Community Involvement
Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan
2005**

Project	Description	Cost Estimate	Anticipated Funding Source
County Master Plan	Update of countywide plan (last updated in 2000)	\$1,048,700	Carroll County Government