

Gwen Wright: Thank you all for joining us this evening. I am Gwen Wright. I am the Planning Director here in Montgomery county. We're very excited to have this year's Winter Speaker series focus on envisioning a new future for Montgomery county. We are going to be embarking on an update to our general plan. This speaker series is to get folks to begin thinking about the future, thinking about how they might want to see Montgomery county grow and develop and be 30, 40 or even 50 years from now. I'm going to do a few slides to just, again, orient folks to our idea of the general plan update. Then, I'm going to introduce our three speakers.

Gwen Wright: Today's session is very interesting because it is ... the folks who have been in the trenches, people from jurisdictions that have been working on updates to their general or comprehensive plans, and I think, like good planners we always want to learn what the baseline is, learn what other jurisdictions have done, and this is our opportunity to do that with some of our colleagues from very nearby communities. We love this image. It is actually from the 1964 General Plan, and that is what folks in 1964 envisioned Montgomery county might look like in 50 years including as you note the Guggenheim Museum has moved from New York to somewhere in Montgomery county. It was refreshing to think that folks were really imagining a very, very different and exciting future.

Gwen Wright: There's a lot of optimism and, I think, hope in some of the images from the plan. The 1964 General Plan is the one that everyone talks about, the on wedges and corridors plan. It was really part of a broader regional effort to look at how the whole region should grow. The image that you see on the right is actually from a regional document and talked about Washington DC as the hub and corridors radiating out from that hub to different jurisdictions all around in Maryland and Virginia.

Gwen Wright: We in Montgomery and Prince George's County took that concept and refined it, and in 1969, we completed the detailed General Plan that was really a land-use document that focused our development along corridors of transportation with green wedges between those corridors. One of the things that I really think makes the 1964 and 1969 plans so important is that they truly were implemented. They were not theoretical. They have, for Montgomery County in particular, actually driven what is on the ground, what we look like as a county, how we have grown over the last 50 years.

Gwen Wright: They also were the genesis of a whole variety of really landmark programs. They identified in these plans, some big goals, some big outcomes that they hope for. The county took each of those goals, each of those outcomes, and created actions that helped to make them real, to realize them. The plan talked about increasing affordable housing. What came out of that, and it's actually misspelled a little bit, is our MPDU law. We talked about protecting farmland and, again, what came out of that also misspelled, I apologize, is our TDR program in our ag reserve.

Gwen Wright: the plan talked about the provision of infrastructure in a timely way. What came out of that was our adequate public facilities ordinance. A lot of the big ideas, the big goals for the county were identified in the plan as outcomes that were hoped for or envisioned, and then there were actions taken to really implement those goals. That's what I hope for in our upcoming General Plan update. I don't see it as a major land-use effort because our land-use structures are pretty well formed. What I see it as is an opportunity to really think about what are the big outcomes, the big goals that we want 30, 40, 50 years from now, and what are some of the actions that we may want to take to make those outcomes happen. We want a general plan that's going to be meaningful to people, to residents in the county, so that it really lays out a clear policy map of how we are going to proceed in the next several decades.

Gwen Wright: Many people ask why update the General Plan at this moment in time. There's a lot of reasons. Obviously, the plan really has not been fully updated since 1969. There was a General Plan refinement in 1993, but that was limited in scope. I think the real reason that it's time now is we have changed as a county dramatically since 1969. We aren't a bedroom community. We are a diverse county of over a million people. We're going to be increasing in population and increasing in diversity. We have a whole series of drivers that are going to promote change. Those drivers include technologies. Everyone has talked about a lot of them, the autonomous vehicles, the cellphones that we all hold that allow us to essentially do our jobs from our living room couches. There are going to be cultural shifts, because we really do expect increasing diversity in the county over the next several decades.

Gwen Wright: We think it's time to step back to look at those drivers of change, to talk about what outcomes we want to envision, and to create a roadmap for the actions we need to take given those drivers, given as outcomes to keep things in the balanced, thriving community that we all hope that Montgomery county will be. We see change as an opportunity in the county to thrive, to not remain where we are, to not go backwards, but to move forward and to thrive for the decades to come.

Gwen Wright: Just to tell you a little bit about what our process is. We are still in the pre-planning. We're almost done. We've been working hard on creating a strategic framework for our planning effort. We're going to be introducing that as a scope of work to the board this spring. We'll then get into the very, very hard work of actually crafting the plan with your help, all of your help, and your participation. We anticipate a very, very robust community outreach strategy in a way for everyone to participate. Then, again, through the next year we will work on identifying those drivers, identifying outcomes, doing visioning and analysis, so that we can create by hopefully June 2020 a working draft of the plan that can then go to our planning board and be discussed through our normal process of public hearings and work sessions. All of our plans, of course, then go to our county council, and we would anticipate July of 2021 transmitting this to the county council for their consideration.

Gwen Wright: That's where we are, but we, tonight, are at the very beginning, and we are in a learning and listening mode of wanting to understand what the experience of some of our neighbors has been in updating their general and comprehensive plans. What I'd like to do is just briefly introduce our three speakers, and then each of them will step up to the mic and share some of their experiences. Then we'll have plenty of time for question-and-answer and discussion.

Gwen Wright: The first person I'd like to introduce is Tanya Stern. Tanya is our Deputy Planning Director here in Montgomery county. She's been with us for a little under six months, but has jumped in with both feet and is very, she feels like she's been here forever. She is coming to us from the District of Columbia office of planning. She worked in the District of Columbia government for 14 years in various capabilities, most recently as the Deputy Director for Planning, Engagement and Design with the office of planning. She directed in that role a neighborhood and waterfront planning and some of the urban design initiatives, and she was the project director to launch the current update of Washington DC's comprehensive plan.

Gwen Wright: One of the major contributions that she made in that effort was really focusing on the integration of resilience into the comprehensive plan, which was a new theme, a new idea for that planning document. Before being deputy, she was the Office of Planning's Chief of Staff for five years and has had, again, a variety of positions in the executive office of the mayor and other district agencies. She has a Masters Degree from the University of Pennsylvania in Planning and is currently the co-chair of the ULI Washington's Placemaking Initiative Council.

Gwen Wright: The next person I'd like to introduce is Valdis Lazdins. Valdis also has a connection to the Montgomery county planning department and worked here for a number of years on a variety of projects including towards the end of his tenure being chief of our research and special projects division. He is currently the Planning Director for Howard county, Maryland. He's a professional planner and landscape architect and his focus has been land-use planning, site design, plan implementation and code writing. He has directed and managed many multidisciplinary teams in both the private sector and the public sector. He has extensive experience with complex planning and urban design projects focusing most recently on lots of ideas for reinventing the suburbs.

Gwen Wright: He has been very active with two private sector consulting firms that had a national and international practice and led design, planning, business development, client relationships and staff and consultant management. He's going to talk to us about comprehensive plan, work in Howard County. Our third panelist who we're delighted to welcome is Ricky W. Barker. Mr. Barker is currently the Director of Community Planning and Development Services for the city of Rockville. Prior to that, and that's very recent June 2018, he was the Planning and Zoning Director for Loudoun county, Virginia, where he led the development and drafting of a new comprehensive plan.

Gwen Wright: Prior to Loudoun county, he spent 20 years as the Associate Planning Director for the town of Cary, North Carolina, which is adjacent to Raleigh. He is very experienced in planning, has a Masters in Planning from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and has been a National Planning Association Conference speaker on transportation planning, mixed-use development, building design standards and, most importantly given our topic tonight, the development of comprehensive plans. With that, I'd like to turn it over to the panelists and our first speaker will be Tanya Stern.

Tanya Stern: Great Gwen. Thank you so much for this opportunity to share a bit about my experience working DC's comprehensive plan, and also share a few thoughts and lessons learned that I have taken from that experience that I think I can help you think about some things as Montgomery is embarking on a general plan update. Just really quickly, this photo is from fall of 2016 when the DC office of planning launched an ad campaign to advertise the comprehensive plan amendment cycle and encourage people to go to a series of citywide meetings. I was really excited to see this. This is in one of the metro stations in DC, the Waterfront metro. It was just exciting for me as a planner to see a project that I worked on on an ad in a metro station.

Tanya Stern: First, I'm going to give just a little bit of background about DC's comprehensive plan. Just to take a few steps back, the current plan, which is being updated right now, was actually the groundwork for that plan started really over about 14, 15 years ago when Mayor Anthony Williams was the mayor in DC and DC hadn't had a brand-new updated plan in a couple of decades or so. The district undertook an extensive pre-planning process that ultimately resulted and the 2004 framework, a vision for growing an inclusive city. That really laid out how the city should embark upon creating a new comprehensive plan.

Tanya Stern: The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital District Elements, that is its formal name, is a 20-year vision for DC's growth and development. Just to get in context about what was going on in the city at that time when it was adopted in 2006 by the DC council, the District of Columbia was starting to experience a period of population increase after having experienced population, significant population decrease over a period of decades. The city was faced with ... there was, again, an increase in the number of residents. There was also a big effort to look at different parts of the city where there are opportunities to do major redevelopment. I don't mean just individual parcels or sites but whole sections of the city where there's an opportunity to create something brand-new, in some cases new neighborhoods.

Tanya Stern: This plan was really geared towards helping to lay out a game plan for a growing city. It was first amended in 2011, although that was much more smaller in scale, mostly technical corrections and just a few policy amendments. The project that I worked on is the current amendment cycle which was launched in 2016. The current comprehensive plan is really focused on a vision of planning an inclusive city. There is a statement here that's in a green box that actually

comes from that 2004 vision statement, but ultimately, the current comprehensive plan and even this current amendment cycle is really geared towards how can a city accomplish this vision for ensuring that as the district keeps growing population and development, in jobs that all district residents can benefit from that.

Tanya Stern: The plan is also organized around five core themes. Managing growth and change, creating successful neighborhoods, increasing access to education and employment, connecting the whole city, and building green and healthy communities. One thing to note with the current amendment cycle, this vision statement, those five core themes, these are remaining in place. One big piece to keep in mind is that the city ... this is an amendment cycle but it's a very extensive amendment cycle, really it's more of an update, but it isn't starting all over from scratch. It really is taking the framework, the bones of the existing comprehensive plan and looking at how can we make it even better.

Tanya Stern: The comprehensive plan is comprised of about three major components. The first are a series of citywide elements. Elements are chapters. There is the framework elements which is not a policy chapter but it does a number of things. One of which is to tell a story about what is happening in the district, to talk about the forces driving change similar to the drivers that Gwen mentioned. It talks about the growth forecasts, it does a number of other things. Then, there are also 12 citywide topic focused chapters, not just land-use transportation and housing, which is what you would expect to see but it really covers a wide range of topics and issues that affect the entire city as well as pretty much every district government agency.

Tanya Stern: Other chapters that cover economic development, arts and culture, community services and facilities, infrastructure etc. There are also 10 area elements, 10 chapters that give geographically specific guidance. This map shows the boundaries of the 10 planning areas for the comprehensive plan. Each planning area includes several neighborhoods, so it isn't, if you're familiar with the district's ward boundaries, these boundaries are not the same as ward boundaries, but they're also much bigger than individual neighborhoods.

Tanya Stern: Then there are also two maps which are considered official comprehensive plan guidance. The future land use map as well as the generalized policy map. This is the website for the current project, the current amendment cycle planDC.DC.GOV. I highly encourage you to take a look at this website. There is a ton of information there. For tonight I'm really giving you the highlights, but if you'd like to see a lot more details definitely take a look at the website.

Tanya Stern: Why is DC's comprehensive plan being updated? There are a host of reasons but here are just a few highlights. One is that the comprehensive plan also has a chapter called the implementation element, that says the comprehensive plan should be updated regularly. It calls for a major overhaul every 12 years and an amendment cycle every four years. By the time this project launched, it's

launched about five years after the first amendment cycle was completed. Also, as I mentioned, DC had been experiencing rapid population growth, while the existing comprehensive plan anticipate it, that growth, the actual pace over time was actually even faster. The city has gained over 100,000 residents over a decade, just over a decade. That's a lot of new residents, and with that a lot of demographic changes not just in the racial and ethnic makeup of the population, but the city was experiencing or has been experiencing a baby boom for the last several years, which a lot of people may not know.

Tanya Stern: There is a growing population older residents as well. There's a whole host of needs for the population that really needs to be considered. Additionally, particularly since the last amendment cycle, both the DC office of planning as well as a whole host of district government agencies have completed multiple plans, land use plans, citywide policy plans that really are the current guidance for the district government, but they are not reflected in the current comprehensive plan, and these are just a few examples.

Tanya Stern: Another big issue that this project included and Gwen mentioned this briefly is also to take this opportunity to address emerging issues in a comprehensive plan, one of which is the concept of resilience. I can tell you I could do a whole presentation just about this topic, so I'm really just going to give you the highlights, but really would like you to think about this because this is also a topic that we at the Montgomery County Planning Department is also really interested in thinking about. For this work, for DC's comprehensive plan, it really was ... we took the approach that resilience isn't a topic that goes in just one place in. The chapter, that's where we started initially, but as we actually worked on it we realized that it actually touches a lot of different topics and aspects of the community's life that the comprehensive plan addresses such as land use, housing, infrastructure, transportation, economy.

Tanya Stern: Over time, the approach really became how can we look at all those topics and think about how the city can be more resilient. This is particularly of interest because the District of Columbia is actually vulnerable to a whole host of both human made and natural hazards. Obviously, it's the nation's capital, we know terrorism is a threat, but DC is also very vulnerable to flooding. I'm a native Washingtonian, honestly, before I worked on this project but from other projects I didn't know that for a long time. That has real implications on the city's future.

Tanya Stern: There are other chronic stresses like social and economic inequities, aging infrastructure, the impacts of climate change. Some of those will show up as hazards, but they really are chronic stresses because we're seeing that these are long-term threats. This is really an opportunity for the DC Office of Planning as a printing agency to think about how can a land use planning agency think about resilience. How does resilience show up not only in land use policy but also in policy that guides the programs and missions and investments of other agencies

not just district government agencies but regional entities that provide services to the city.

Tanya Stern: I'm just to give a few highlights from the outreach and community engagement. This image covers a number of activities that took place during about the first year of the project. The official launch, the public launch was in the fall of 2016. That was, if you remember the image that I showed at the beginning, there were seven citywide community workshops, but in addition there were, even before that, some workshops with advisory neighborhood commission leaders. There were also a series of topic specific forms in roundtables with experts and other stakeholders on data, historic preservation, transit oriented development.

Tanya Stern: Then, one big piece that was probably unique to the district, but there is a process of an open call for proposed amendments where any member of the community can propose an amendment to the comprehensive plan. That process took place over three months in 2017 and resulted in 3,000 propose amendments being submitted from the public, as well as from other agencies. I, along with other staff at the office of planning, had the pleasure of reviewing most of those even before I left last year.

Tanya Stern: Also, another unique thing was, we call it a meeting in a box. Once we had a whole series of materials related to the project, we were able to actually put them all together with a copy of the existing comprehensive plan and provide it to any community organization advocacy group, anyone who wanted to lead their own discussions as well.

Tanya Stern: I'm going transition to some of the lessons that I learned from working on this general plan update. Before I do that, I do want to acknowledge my colleague, Josh Ghaffari. Josh, stand up, who's one of the project managers at the DC Office of Planning on this project. We have spent many, many, many, many, many, hours, months, three years on this project. Again, this is an active project. The district has completed proposed amendments from one of the chapters and I'll talk about that later, but the rest of the work is still ongoing. If you're really interested in finding out what's going on, staying plugged in, Josh should be a good resource and have [inaudible 00:28:59] contact information later.

Tanya Stern: Lesson learned number one. General plan updates are complex projects. That may seem like a really obvious thing, but they're really complex projects. A general plan accompanies a plan, it's not like a local master plan, a sector plan, small area plans, which is what the District of Columbia produces. They are their own animal by themselves. They're very, very different. I'm mentioning that because a lot of people because the long timeframes that general plans, the comprehensive plans, these are not the plans that you do on a regular basis. This is going to be a new experience for a lot of people, so I'm putting this up just to manage your expectations going into this.

Tanya Stern: The scale of this project, because it covers the entire jurisdiction, because it covers multiple topics, it affects literally every aspect of the update, not only the scope, the engagement, a whole variety of aspects of the project. General plan updates also challenge your imagination. This is not only as a planner. I was trained as a planner to think into the future, to help to imagine things that may not exist, to help to solve for challenges that exist now as well as things we anticipate in the future. But I can tell you, working on the comprehensive plan, it really challenges your imagination. It really stretches you both as a planning professional as well as residents.

Tanya Stern: It really ... because of the timeframe, it covers decades, not five years or 10 years even 15 years with so many other types of plans that most people are used to will cover, it's literally decades. It really challenges you to think far beyond immediate issues, again, to envision what may not exist now, even things that you want or the community wants to take place in the future. Another challenge is an opportunity but it's also a challenge is that, general plans tend to cover or address emerging issues. I mentioned resilience, AVs is another one. We know these things are coming, we know we need to address it, but we still don't really know exactly what's going to happen. We don't really have our arms around it, but we have to write policies about it at the same time.

Tanya Stern: Again, to mention something Gwen mentioned, general plans are more than land use plans. You saw that listed as citywide elements, they cover a whole variety of topics. DC's comprehensive plan also has policies that affect not only district government agencies or even developers doing private development but regional entities like Ramada, the utilities, federal agencies that own property. Its reach is pretty expansive.

Tanya Stern: That leads to the point that general plans range of influence requires different strategies for policy and partnerships, particularly in terms of the other types of agencies and entities are affected, doing education about the general plan, what it is, what does it offer to those agencies, and then creating ongoing collaborations with the fact that local state and federal agencies is really critical. That was something that we knew as part of, when I was at the DC Office of Planning that we had to do outreach to other district agencies and there were a lot of meetings, lots and lots, probably dozens and dozens of meetings. The real point was not just, "Hey, your agency is affected by a policy that's in this plan, do you want to update it?" It's, "This is actually a tool for you, this other agency, you should take advantage of it. It can help to inform your future public investments. It can help you set a roadmap for your own agency." That's really the opportunity that I think really should be kept in mind. It's not just engagement with residents, which is obviously a critical part, but there are other partners who can really use this as well.

Tanya Stern: Another lesson learned is to be mindful of other current issues that may impact the general plan update. One of the things that they could accomplish before I

left OP was there were proposed amendments to the framework element that were submitted to the DC Council in early 2018, and the DC Council held a public hearing in March of 2018. There were over 270 witnesses who signed up to testify at that hearing. That was, from what I understand, probably the most people who had ever signed up for a council hearing to-date. Not all but a good portion of those witnesses were there because they were concerned about another issue that had been going on in DC, which was the fact that the DC Court of Appeals had vacated several approvals by the DC Zoning Commission all planned unit development projects. PUDs are the equivalent of optional methods development here. That had a lot of implications, both on projects that had already been approved, projects that were in the pipeline, projects the developers were thinking about submitting as PUDs.

Tanya Stern: There was a lot of discussion about this issue because the framework element in those amendments included some updates to the guidance for the zoning commission to use as part of their reviews of PUDs. This was an issue that ... what was going on with these appeals was something that was going on, but I don't think, at least from my perspective, we anticipated that this will be such a big topic at that hearing. That hearing started on at 2PM on a Tuesday and ended at 3:45AM, Wednesday morning. I know because I was there. That just shows you, obviously, other people were there to talk about other issues but this is a really big issue. To really be mindful of the fact that there may be some other things that may pop up as the county is going through this process that you will need to contend with.

Tanya Stern: Then the last lesson is that general plans are highly influential policy documents and most people don't know about them. Because they are infrequent they cover the entire jurisdiction, they cover multiple topics, it can take 2+ years to complete them, they cover multiple decades, it's a high-level policy document, it's not a zoning document, it's not land use guidance for specific sites. Why would anybody want to spend two years working on this? However, this is really an opportunity because this is about a jurisdiction's future, and so the lesson learned that I took from that is that it's really, really critical when a planning agency is thinking about engagement, it needs to be much more expansive than what that agency may be used to doing not only of reach but approach, message, partnerships.

Tanya Stern: It's also really critical, I really got to understand this, to really talk about why ... what planning is, what land use planning is and why planning is valuable to communities, because this is the kind of project that it won't just be residents from a particular neighborhood who are interested, it really does cover the entire jurisdiction. You have to think about how do we reach all of these people and really get them involved. At the end of the day, the project really needs to speak to people's values because in the end this is about our community's future. Thank you.

Gwen Wright: I'm just going to pop up to mention because I forgot this. Tonight's presentation is available for AICP and LACM credits. If you need those credits, there are sign-up sheets at the table in the lobby, so please sign up. With that, Val, do you want to join us next?

Valdis Lazdins: Thanks, Gwen. Good evening, everybody. Glad to be back in this part of Montgomery County. One of the slides that Gwen showed troubled me a little bit because it was the Wedges and Corridors plan and it showed Howard County being in the wilderness. I just saw no data on it, it was just all white and yellow. But there is a lot that goes on in Howard County. I'm going to be doing something a little bit different. It's going to be a little more of a travelogue because one, we have not initiated the general plan update. The kinds of general plan updates that we've recently been doing have been little tweaks around the edges due to expansion, minor expansions of public service boundaries, and those obviously trigger a general plan amendment.

Valdis Lazdins: The major projects that the Department of Planning and Zoning has been undertaking for the last about year and a half or so was a complete rewrite of our zoning code. When I left Montgomery County and went up to Howard County, one of the first things that I've observed was a really broken set of development regulations. I don't know if you all heard but we had an election recently. We have a new county executive. We have five new council members. We're just waiting to see what changes the new administration is going to take as far as the DPZ's work efforts for the next few years. Obviously, Howard County, you can't come here to talk about Howard County without mentioning Columbia.

Valdis Lazdins: I will touch on that. Here we go. Howard County is divided into planning districts. I have a former colleague here, Dot [inaudible 00:39:26], she could probably do a better presentation on planning history in Howard County than I can because I haven't been through a general plan update in Howard County. Our planning areas are basically Elkridge, Columbia, Southeast, Ellicott City. The basic concept for Howard County is, and this goes back to the 1990 general plan is preserve the rural west, develop the urban east. That's basically the way Howard County has developed.

Valdis Lazdins: We're a county of about 300,000, a little over 300,000. We're Maryland's smallest jurisdiction, about 160,000 acres. Our targeted growth areas are the growth and revitalization areas that you see here in salmon and then the beige areas are established communities. We're a little bit different than other jurisdictions in Maryland. We have adequate public facilities regulations. We test for traffic, as well as schools, but we're unusual because we have allocations for housing units. We're the only jurisdiction in Maryland that has another aspect of APF, which is we limit the number of permits that are released.

Valdis Lazdins: However, if you will, I think one of my slides will show our general population trends. This is dicey, there you go. Obviously, Howard County went through tremendous growth during the 80s and 90s. Our population has stabilized, and so with that the allocations, we have about 2,500 allocations annually, and they can be stored up. There is no longer any issue with allocations, it's just about adequate public facilities ordinance and the big test right now is the school's test.

Valdis Lazdins: Right now, if things continue to track, Howard County will be experiencing a de facto moratorium on development. About 60% to 70% of the county will be shut down for development beginning in July. Our APF standards for schools were recently changed so the maximum capacity for schools was recently upgraded. We now do a high schools test, 115% capacity, a middle schools test that are 110%, and elementary schools at 105%. What that does it really shuts development down for Howard County.

Valdis Lazdins: We're currently taking a look at what are the fiscal implications of that policy action. We expect in February to have a draft of that analysis released. Anyway, Howard County has grown tremendously. We've peaked and you can see we're in the red based on projections. We're looking at the mid-300,000 in terms of population. There we go. Obviously, Howard County is home of Columbia, Rouse's vision for a new suburban experiment. These are the goals that he espoused. You can read them but the bottom one is realize a profit. He didn't do so well in terms of the profit. The development corporation was on the verge of bankruptcy a number of times and saved by investors through pension funds and the insurance market.

Valdis Lazdins: Columbia is the true heart of Howard County. You can see the transformation of downtown Columbia from the 60s basically farm fields, the late 90s. Downtown Columbia is anchored by a million square foot shopping mall that's been expanded over time. Now, it's beginning to experience development around the fringes. Really, the goal for downtown Columbia is to transform what is a very suburban environment into a very, very urban and walkable, mixed-use downtown of approximately 6300 residential units, 1,200,000 square feet of retail space, 4,300,000 square feet of office, and a hotel and conference center. In fact, the lower, I don't know if this has a point around it, but maybe it does.

Valdis Lazdins: Anyway, down in the lower part of the drawing here on the right-hand side, that portion of Columbia adjacent to downtown Columbia adjacent to the Merriweather Post Pavilion is undergoing development. There's tremendous activity going on in downtown. Now, the movement is to the lakefront area. We're anticipating yet another development, the middle there. A lot is happening in downtown Columbia to transform it into that desired place. Long-term vision is really going from a suburban auto oriented type of a center, spread out growth to a mixed urban pattern, more pedestrian friendly, mixed-use, vertical. We're beginning to see some height to come up finally in downtown Columbia.

Valdis Lazdins: The planning process for this took a long time. Dot said, I think, was in the midst of that. A number of efforts were begun for downtown Columbia. General Growth was the developer after the Rouse company was purchased by them. It went through a series of charrettes. What's interesting is that this was a real cooperative effort between the developer and the county leading to what was really a developer-led plan for downtown Columbia. It's somewhat of an unusual approach where you have the developer involved with the planning efforts for such a major part of a county.

Valdis Lazdins: This is so the Merriweather district. Currently, this is under construction. It's home to a new high tech computer firm, Downtown Tenable. It's also headquarters to MedSTAR. There is a ... we've just been talking to the developer, which is Howard Hughes Corporation, about a hotel in the downtown. It's really going through a major transformation. The other areas of Howard County that we're looking at is the Route 1 corridor. The area between 95 and Route 1 is home to about 30% of our job base. That's one of the planning areas that we're currently working on, is the route one corridor.

Valdis Lazdins: The other is similar to the effort to Montgomery County just went through with the planning around Democracy Plaza, Democracy Boulevard area. That is the Gateway District. It's 900 acres. It's excellently located between Baltimore and Washington DC. It's home to a lot of the high-tech firms that are related to NSA cybersecurity. The benefit is, I guess you could look at it as a benefit, there's a lot of room available for development. 60% of Gateway is either an open space or 20% in parking, so there's a lot of opportunity for redevelopment and rethinking it.

Valdis Lazdins: Another interesting approach here, though, is that the major property owners have taken it upon themselves to do their own plan. I think that what would happen as a result of this, while we were involved this was really a developer-driven process. I think it created for Howard County administration just as awareness how important Gateway is for our future. 8,000,000 square feet of commercial space, 11,000 employees and 300 businesses.

Valdis Lazdins: I have to also talk about some of the major tragedies that are going to be driving planning in Howard County. The two floods in Ellicott City, the 2016 and the 2018 flood. Absolute tragedy. This is the first time in my career when you begin a project as a result of, you talk about resilience and the changes that we're experiencing here. You start a project, you're on the verge of getting the planned draft out to the public for comment, and then the second flood happened in May of last year. Now with a new administration in place, we're going to be restarting the plan for Ellicott City. Here we go.

Valdis Lazdins: We're really taking a conference look at this, it's not just the downtown. We're taking a look at the entire watershed. As part of that, we're going to be looking at potential changes to the requirements for stormwater management. We have a report that's due back out to the county council in May that talks about

what kinds of changes are appropriate to look at for the entire watershed here. Ellicott City is unique and so whatever our findings are, I'm not sure that we can necessarily apply them across the entire county because Ellicott City sits at the bottom of a granite funnel. Whatever drop of water hits that watershed, it's going to make its way down through Ellicott City down to the Patapsco River with one point of entry to the river itself.

Valdis Lazdins: The focus so far has been daylighting the Tiber and Hudson streams. What this shows, basically, is all of that waterway, a good deal of it was placed under ground years ago. Looking at opening up, widening the channel itself and improving the flow of water through Ellicott City. No matter what we do in the upper reaches though, it's the lower portion of the downtown that suffers. You can see that the overall concept for redeveloping within the middle reaches of the downtown area and Tiber Hudson, but the real critical one is downtown itself. This concept shows a removal of 10 buildings within the historic district to address long-term flooding problems. With the new administration coming in, all of the decisions that were associated with the demolition of the structures in the historic district are being reviewed.

Valdis Lazdins: Obviously, this has raised a lot of concern in the, throughout the state in terms of the historic preservation community and all. We're on the verge, I think, of developing a new general plan. We'll see where the new administration takes us. Over time from the 60s, it's planning to prevent problems. Through 2012, our most recent plan, it's looking at managing sustainable growth, and we'll talk about this a little bit later, but I have a feeling that Howard County is going through a transformational period.

Valdis Lazdins: We were a green fields county with a lot of development and growth potential. Our populations has plateaued, we relatively plateaued. I think the critical issues that we're going to be facing is how does the county change, how does growth and redevelopment happen within the context of existing neighborhoods, because I can tell you that that's a tough thing when you're proposing to tear structures down to build something new. I'm sure you're all aware of that one. With that, Gwen?

Gwen Wright: Thank you. Our next speaker will be Ricky Barker.

Ricky Barker: Good evening. First of all, I'm impressed. I'm impressed you took a Wednesday evening to talk about comprehensive planning. That's really pressing for me, being in the career over 32 years to see you all come out and have an interest in this, and I hope you will. You're not waning right now at the end.

Ricky Barker: I'm going to talk about a comprehensive plan that I was involved with in Loudoun County. I'm not going to talk about the details of the plan, I'm going to talk about how you do a successful comprehensive plan. I'm going to lay out the process and the step by step that we used in Loudoun County, I used in Loudoun County when I was there. Loudoun County has similarities to most definitely to

Montgomery County and want to go over some of those issues that we're experiencing. Of course, we're the home of Washington Redskins practice facility. We have both urbans, three Metro stations coming opening in 2020 including Dulles station. We have suburban, we have urban, and it's just really a unique place to be.

Ricky Barker: I'm just going to give you some little bit of background. The need for our plan charter to launch our comprehensive plan, what is a plan charter and what are the components of a plan charter, what is the process we used to actually get that plan charter approved, and what are the outcomes and the lessons learned. If you don't know much about Loudoun County, I encourage you to visit there. We've got a lot to ... the county has a lot to offer, I still live there and commute across the river every day. I've discovered thousands of new friends on the roadways. It's a really great opportunity for me.

Ricky Barker: Second fastest growing county in the nation, most business investment. 70% of the world's internet comes through Loudoun County. We have over 15,000 horses. We also, in Loudoun County have the most wineries and breweries in Virginia. It's more than 44 now and 21 breweries, but don't drink and ride. We have, like I said, in 2020 we're going to have three rail stations with silver line expanding out. We'll be the end or the beginning of the silver line, whichever way you want to slice it. We have direct access to, of course, Washington DC, millions of regional employees. We also have a wonderful airport that we can tap on.

Ricky Barker: Why do you plan a charter? This is a major undertaking for our jurisdiction and it's been discussed as very complex. There's going to be a lot of investment in time and resources, and you really want to get it right. Taking the time up front to, I think Gwen talked about the scope of services that's similar to a planned charter. Get that right first so that you can come out with a successful end state. A planned charter is a plan on how to do plans, so that's ironic but you need to do that. The most important thing is receiving agreed-upon direction from the governing body because that sets out the parameters for staff, the consultants, and we have a stakeholders committee and the general public.

Ricky Barker: Tanya, you talked about managing expectations, and so that is so critical in a process like this. You don't want to let down your residents. You also, as a planning staff, it's really important that we know what we can do and what we really don't want. We want to stay in the lane and so this helps us to understand with confidence that we're doing the right thing and meeting expectations.

Ricky Barker: Developed by staff, a plan charter, it's endorsed by, approved by and it usually takes 3 to 6 months to develop and receive endorsements. Like I said, that's an important and valuable 3 to 6 months. What are the components? First of all, what is being done? With a comprehensive plan, sometimes it's good to be strategic in making sure that the outcomes that need to be addressed are going to be addressed through the process. Why is it being done, how will it be

accomplished, what are the cost and the process and the level of public involvement, who will be involved, what are the roles and responsibility of those people involved in the organizational structure, when will it start and when will it end. That's a really critical thing, to lay out that and be realistic about it.

Ricky Barker: Okay. Oops. Sorry about that. No, you went too fast. There we go, sorry. There we go. Begin with end in mind. These are the characteristics we wanted to come out with. We wanted our citizens to be engaged. We wanted this plan to unite the differences in the county. I know we also want it to be balanced. We didn't want one group to dominate, another group to dominate, we want a balance of that preservation side and that development side and that rural side and the urban side. We wanted predictability for people there who are going to invest in their resources and money. Whether you're buying a home or whether you're putting millions of dollars into an office building.

Ricky Barker: We also want it exciting. That's a big challenge with a comprehensive plan, but we did want to do that. Okay go ahead. Just to tell you quickly what the topics were. Of course, every topic the comprehensive plan has to address. Economic development, not only rural economic. but of course how you address the office market that's going away in the suburban area and building up in the more areas around the Metro stations. Transition area. We have this unique area that's between or suburban growth area and our rural area, and it's being wedged in there. That's where most of the opportunities for new development is, and that gets a lot of pressure, and so what are we going to do with that and how we're going to plan it.

Ricky Barker: Of course, have some choices in diversity. I know that that's what Gwen talked about and Tanya talked about is that having the opportunity for everyone to participate in the success of the county and not just be an exclusive place but inclusive place for people to live, work and play and learn. Of course, we have a lot of old, aging areas and redevelopment revitalization. We didn't really have good policies on how to address that and so that's real important that we do that.

Ricky Barker: Of course, we've got our areas, they're changing from suburban to urban with the Metro stations, and we need to make sure we don't, we take our time and plan this metro station areas right. Of course, community facilities and infrastructure, schools, roads, parks and things of that sort are really critical for our success. Quality of development, we want to make sure we don't lose touch of why people are moving to Loudoun county. We don't want to, we want to keep and maintain those high quality design standards. Then, of course, fiscal responsibility. As a county you've got to make sure everything balances out when you're doing a plan. Then growth management, making sure you know where you're going to grow, how much you're going to grow, what type of growth is going to occur.

Ricky Barker: Just real quickly. Organizationally, of course, we have our non-member board. We have a planning commission that reports directly to the board county staff. We set up a stakeholders committee to do this project, and I'll get into that in a minute. We have also on the side, we have staff technical advisory committee made up of almost every department in the county. Then we have the community at large and our consultants.

Ricky Barker: The Stakeholders committee, we decided in order to have it embraced by the community, we needed to have representatives of the major stakeholders in our community. Even though they shared diverse use, we knew it was going be tough. We had 26 representatives and then we had the planning commission chair and the vice chair sit on the committee as the chair and vice chair of that committee. Then, the one unique thing, we had each board member so they can have some ability to stay out of the process to just so they can let the process work. Each of them had the ability to appoint one citizen to be on that committee. This is just a list of people with diverse views from chamber representatives to people on environmental council to the airport, to various preservation coalitions. It was most definitely a blend of different opinions.

Ricky Barker: We also really needed a good logo to really get people excited about our development. We spent some time coming up with Envision Loudoun, our county, our future. It was real important that it's our county and not just different diverse views of a county. We want to unite that as well as look toward the future. We, like Gwen, laying out the path of success. We laid out a foundation of getting a good understanding of what Loudoun County is right now and some facts about Loudoun County. Then we did a round, a series of workshops, listening and learn. We didn't provide too much information. We had a number of just roundtables with each, facilitators at each table just listening and taking notes about the future for Loudoun county. Then we took that and developed and started to develop some concepts of the vision and where we're going next. Then I had another workshop session of envisioning the future and still sitting roundtables and having a conversation with people, not this back-and-forth at a speaker.

Ricky Barker: Then we brought out, developed the plan with the stakeholders and went out for a review and have those workshops. It's highly engaging and really important opportunity that we want it to be open, inclusive, both meeting in person and on demand inputs as well as building on previous success that we've had and making sure we had informational meetings to anybody that wanted a presentation on the plan, we went out and did that. Great engagement, those people with the yellow shirts are Envision Loudoun volunteers just taking notes and listening. We had over 8,000 comments in our process. Those led to categorizing them into new policies and new visions for the community. We really wanted to follow through with what we heard.

Ricky Barker: We had consultants that we use because we needed somebody with transportation expertise. We also wanted to make sure we had somebody that

was good at engagement and doing the PR and all that stuff so the staff didn't have to do it. We also did economic analysis and fiscal impact, we hired a consultant to do that. We also got that board commitment to the process in engagement. We had expended \$1.6 million to do this work.

Ricky Barker: Outcomes, we stay ... it's important to stay on schedule, stay on topic. Even though the board was out of it, we kept them informed. We give them quarterly updates about what was going on and if they felt like maybe it was going out of balance, they didn't have a problem expressing themselves. That's fine, that's fine, making it a little bit more challenging. Staff confidence. Like I said, we had a lot of confidence because that charter, we knew what we're doing. Lessons learned, really if you're going to have a stakeholders committee, make sure you set boundaries on communicating with the media, because you had all the media trying to get interviews from all these different people, and also, unfortunately, maybe stirring up stuff, which wasn't cool. It would have been better to make sure we have one representative that could talk to the media from the committee. Engage the board in locations where you'll have these public meetings and engagement, so they can come and actually welcome people to it.

Ricky Barker: We wanted to make sure, you make sure you have a good work program and put some flesh on those bones of that work program, because don't just like spend some time thinking about what does this step include, what's it going to take, because that's going to help with your planning of time. Decide about the coordination meetings, Those are critical when you're coordinating so much staff. That's all I have and I hope that was useful to you. Thanks.

Gwen Wright: Great. I think we're going to move right into questions. I do want to note two things. First, we are interested in your thoughts whether you ask a question at this moment or not. We have some boards, actually there are sheets of paper posted on the window in the lobby. We would like to encourage you to provide comments on the post-its and add those to the sheets out in the lobby. We want to know what you think are the big trends, issues, opportunities and challenges that we should be looking at in our Montgomery County general plan update. I also want to recognize Carrie McCarthy, who's chief of our research and special projects division and Khalid Afzal, who is the project manager for the general plan update. They've done a lot of work on putting the speaker series together and a lot of work on the plan in general. They are going to have the microphone so if anyone has a question, try to get their eye and they can bring a mic to you. One person in the back.

Audience: The '64 general plan was the product with the background that began in the 50s, and it covers several jurisdictions. I'd like to know a little bit more about the history and the reason for that and what the impacts were to our part of the plan. Secondly, when we're considering these plans that are countywide, we're considering it within a region and we have a metropolitan planning organization. It seems to me that in guiding this work, we should be considering

our Montgomery County's location within the metropolitan region and the factors and trends that are occurring in the surrounding jurisdictions. Whether we keep that in mind as we work or possibly even a better way is to have a general plan that is comprehensive, that is regionwide. Some of your thoughts and the panelist's thoughts on that. Thank you.

Gwen Wright: Sure. I think that, again, you're exactly right. The 1964 plan came out of a larger planning effort, and I think it was actually conducted by the council of governments at that time. It did look at the whole region that was that star-shaped diagram that really had fingers going out into Montgomery, Prince George's, and into all the areas in Virginia. Each jurisdiction then interpreted that that very big regional concept in their own way. Montgomery County was one of the most true to the concept of corridor development with wedges of green between those corridors, not all of the jurisdictions follow that as faithfully. But I think you make a really great point, which is that we have huge regional issues that are going on and a regional context. I guess I'm interested from the panelists perspective based on the speaker's question, how much influence do regional context have in your planning efforts.

Ricky Barker: In Loudoun County, we have 10 independent jurisdictions. We took time to meet with them to understand how we as a county as we plan were influencing and how they were influencing us at that level. With regard to our neighbors, that was really critical for our transportation systems. Of course, not getting that bridge into the Montgomery County was an issue. Just a joke.

Gwen Wright: We're going to have to escort you out of here if you keep bringing that up.

Ricky Barker: I wanted to make you laugh. I did that. Okay, good. That was real ... The other thing was we had some bottlenecks coming into Fairfax County. We ended up, had those limits. It wasn't as much as ... it's more understanding the limitations and the concerns of those jurisdictions and how we can relate, because transportation and infrastructure and utilities and other things like that have to be done at a more regional level. We did set up those opportunities for conversations and understand those contexts.

Valdis Lazdins: I guess I would say for Howard County, while we're members of the Baltimore Regional Council and all, I don't believe that there was a great deal of outreach and in discussions with the surrounding jurisdictions for the reason that counties look at themselves as this is Howard County or this is Montgomery County. While we're happy to talk to her partners, it becomes really difficult to coordinate land-use activities at the edges. Each jurisdiction may have its own vision of what the future may be, and you just look at for example, northern Montgomery County and Frederick County and the same with the ... we have issues at the edges of Howard County with Anne Arundel County. That is our major employment industrial corridor, in Anne Arundel County, that's one of the residential districts. While it's a laudable goal, it's a challenge to make that happen.

Ricky Barker: Also, let you know that Carrie and myself and Tanya, we're going to the COG regional planning directors meetings in with the Amazon coming to Alexandria. That's affecting the whole region, and so we as regional planning directors and representatives are working together to think about housing, think about infrastructure, think about all this just because it located there it's going to impact the whole region, and so we, as a region are trying to plan for that.

Tanya Stern: I also wanted to mention one specific example when I was at the office of planning of looking at the issues in a regional level. I mentioned that resilience integration, to help inform that work, the Office of Planning, myself, the consultant team and others, we created a comprehensive plan and advisory. It reads Comprehensive Resilience Advisory working group and invited representative not only from district agencies that will be particularly affected by these new policies but also some federal and regional partners, including a staff person from COG, who had already been working very, quite a bit on climate adaptation and other environmental planning issues.

Tanya Stern: We did that because we realize a lot of other agencies that would be affected by these new policies have actually been doing some studies in their own work to look at how resilience or different hazards, climate adaptation, etc. would affect them. We really saw them as brain trust to help us figure out how the Office of Planning should approach this work, did inventories of their work, did interviews, etc. but that was one way that we definitely worked with COG because they have actually been looking at resilience and climate issues quite a bit.

Gwen Wright: Okay, more questions, I think we have one here.

Audience: Is this on? All right. In the '64 and '69 plans, that was largely approaching Montgomery County as green fields. The county is largely built out at this point so that's a different of problems and I was wondering from your experience how does that ... since we got a new redevelopment and stuff, how does it affect how you approach it, what issues you look at, things like that. Any words of wisdom in that sense?

Valdis Lazdins: One of the, I think, innovative things that we've been doing in Howard county is we established a Howard County citizens planning institute. We hold classes twice a year, we have a fall semester. We're in the ... because of the flood, our fall semester got pushed to the winter semester. In fact, we just had our first session yesterday evening. We have a sign-up that is open enrollment, it's free. Our class sizes are 35, 40 people, something like that. The reason that we established it was because we knew that ultimately, one, we were either going to be doing a new set of zoning regulations, or we're going to be doing a general plan amendment. I guess my philosophy is always the best way to do that is to educate the public.

Valdis Lazdins: We have a series of classes over a five-week period, three-hour classes. We hit a bunch of topics. Yesterday was where does Howard County sit within the region in terms of development, population? Next week is planning law. We have an outside attorney that talks about takings and what you can do under the Constitution and what you can't, because the general public seems to think that you can just tell a developer to go some place else. Well, there are legal parameters, and so that's always a very lively class. We've really found this to be a great tool. I hope that when we begin the general plan update, we've got a good cadre at least of ambassadors who are planning the county.

Ricky Barker: In Loudoun County, we were running the same issue that two thirds of our county is dedicated to the rural economy and agriculture, and so we've run out of land and so revitalization, redevelopment, and infill were critical issues. That's one of the most difficult thing to do as a developer. Most jurisdictions don't have the policies in place and truly don't have the zoning ordinances in place to make it easier to invest in those areas where mostly, most of the infrastructures are already there and that's why you want to work smarter and provide more incentive for them to go in, [inaudible] service is already there.

Ricky Barker: In Rockville, we just had six office buildings, over 400 and some thousand square feet, be proposed for a new mixed-use project and tearing all office down creating a residential community along with parkland and mixed-use and so, but that's hard to do and they've been struggling for over 2 1/2 years on it. That's the issue, I think, that probably Montgomery County will, if they haven't already, truly make a commitment to change ordinances and rules to make it easier for that to occur, because like I said, it's an incredible effort and I really appreciate people that have the guts and fortitude to do something like that.

Gwen Wright: I don't know, Tanya, if you want to talk about DC. DC has been considered by some people built out for decades, but it's not built out. It's being filled in in very exciting and innovative ways.

Tanya Stern: As I mentioned earlier, the current comprehensive plan, the 2006 plan actually identifies different parts of the city that are called future land use change areas. These are places like the Southwest waterfront where the wharf is now being constructed, Buzzer point where the soccer stadium has been constructed. McMillan is another area our first retirement home which is federally owned. There's actually, Walter Reed, where the hospital was, that's another area. There are parts of the district that were identified back in the early, the mid 2000s as places that could accommodate a very different built environment from what was there before. Again, if you have gone to the wharf or if you know about it, that is an area that was specifically identified in the comprehensive plan as a place that should become a higher density mixed-use area.

Tanya Stern: The zoning was changed, the same thing has happened for Buzzard Point, which is just starting that journey. What you're seeing now, the roots of those are in the comprehensive plan. DC is actually dealing with that issue even though it is,

in an urban environment, it has been dealing with how do you create something that's very, very different from what was there before.

Ricky Barker: Also, just to add to that talking about resilience. When you go in and redevelop a piece of property, the beauty of it is bringing up to standards and you significantly improve water quality, you significantly improve the number of trees on the site, and so it's a win-win situation in a sense for the community to take those tired areas and really bring it up to standards for the community and do that.

Gwen Wright: We have someone in the back. It's on.

Audience: This Howard County citizen planning institute sounds really interesting. I was wondering if there an equivalent from Montgomery County where other opportunities for citizens to be involved in the process other than just coming to public engagement sessions.

Gwen Wright: We are actually considering that. We are in the midst of developing our communication and outreach strategy for our general plan update. This idea of citizen institutes is something we've heard from a number of different jurisdictions. I know I had worked in the City of Alexandria, and they had a citizen institute. We very well may initiate that here. Other questions?

Audience: I just heard a comment today about Montgomery County not needing tax increment financing. In terms of the general plans, are you looking at financial options to fund things? The one I know in Howard County, you're doing a tax increment financing, TOD at Savage at the MARC station. Is that something you'd continue to look at in terms of developing your general plan?

Valdis Lazdins: That's still up in the air on whether or not that particular mark station, the lower park station would be funded through TIF. TIF turned out to be pretty controversial for the funding of infrastructure in downtown Columbia. Initially, TIF funding was proposed for a parking structure that would also serve not only the office commercial development and residential, but also the Merriweather Post Pavilion. Because the perception was that the Howard Hughes Corporation was the beneficiary of that TIF investment, there was a lawsuit from competing developers.

Valdis Lazdins: TIF can be a challenge. However, the TIF then ultimately ended up funding infrastructure in downtown Columbia because it was broader-based and I think the argument could be better stated that it's for roads that not only does the developer benefit from, but others, infrastructures.

Audience: Is that [inaudible] ongoing?

Valdis Lazdins: I understand that the state is looking to do a station, but the financing of that hasn't at all been discussed at this point?

Gwen Wright: I think we had a question over here.

Audience: I think it's a great presentation, first of all. I work in DC, I live in Montgomery County, I'm familiar with the zones, of planning use in DC. I think the transformation has been awesome in the last dozen years. I'm curious probably more towards Tanya, how do you envision overlaying that to Montgomery County that exercise here since we're a county of great extremes? We have urban, we have extreme suburban.

Tanya Stern: That's a great question. I've been thinking about that. I think that, I've worked in this department for just a few months, so I'm still learning. Like I said, I am a DC native, I've lived in different parts of this region, and I'm really still getting to know Montgomery County in a much different way now that I'm working here in this capacity. I guess one thing I would say is Montgomery County does have urban, suburban and agricultural areas. As a planner, there are different sets of strategies that are appropriate for those different types of contexts. The whole issue of our approach to suburban planning really has been changing a lot over the last number of years. I think between the kinds of projects that the Montgomery county planning department, the planning board have worked on just the examples that were presented for Howard County and Loudoun County.

Tanya Stern: This is Gwen talks a lot about the new suburbanism and so that's ... it's a real thing. Montgomery County, these counties, other parts in northern Virginia, this whole region, we have multiple examples of that and I think everybody is ... there are things that have been tried in terms of how to do great projects that can change what suburbs look like, but I think there's still a lot of learning that everybody is doing. I don't have a real simple question for that, I guess to say that if you have very different built environments, you need probably a wider range of strategies because there is no one set of strategies that will be appropriate for each place.

Gwen Wright: Other questions, I think there's a person back here.

Audience: About a year ago, the county council passed a resolution, a climate emergency mobilization resolution and committed to reducing greenhouse gases 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2040. Can you talk a little bit, talk about community resilience, and I'm super excited to hear more about that in a later meeting. Can you also talk about how that resolution ties into this planning for this plan process?

Gwen Wright: We definitely see a variety of important goals or outcomes we need to strive for. Environmental health, and that involves resiliency, it involves actions to address climate change, it involves increasing tree canopy, it involves reducing imperviousness. We see that as a whole collection of topics. It also involves reducing vehicle miles traveled, because that's a huge producer of greenhouse gases. We believe that that is going to be an incredibly important theme in our general plan, not that we have all of the, again, the answers at this point

because we're at the beginning. We're identifying the big picture goals and the drivers that are going to be things we need to take into account to achieve some of those goals.

Gwen Wright: The county has been very, I think, the county council and the planning board have been very progressive in trying to look at ways of addressing greenhouse gas emission reduction, and ways of reducing vehicle miles traveled, and ways of preserving forest and increasing tree canopy, but we clearly need to do more. Those are, the goals that were set out are very ambitious. We're going to need to do a lot more.

Gwen Wright: For the general plan, our real focus is going to be on looking at that big goal, that big outcome, the drivers that are going to have an impact on it, and what actions we can take other than what's already been done to address those drivers. There's another gentleman here.

Valdis Lazdins: Gwen, if I could just add to that. One of the big challenges that we're facing in Howard County is we are also at the point of being what I'll say pretty much built out. A lot of the investment is going back in existing neighborhood areas. To me that's one of the best ways to address the whole concern for resiliency and reduction of greenhouse gases. With that comes the social issue of I don't want that in my neighborhood, the notion of redevelopment is really hard for people, and because Columbia was the Jim Rouse's vision, there are people who channel him from the grave who still believe that Columbia should be this green, green community without density all suburban development pattern. In Howard County, that's one of the big challenges is getting over the philosophy, while important, that philosophy has changed over time.

Gwen Wright: I do see some folks leaving and we'll take one or two more questions. Before we do, I just wanted to mention we have two more speaker series coming up, two more sessions in our Winter Speaker series. The next one is February 13 and Harriet Tregoning, who had been planning director in DC and then worked for the Department of Housing and Urban Development for a number of years is going to be speaking about resiliency. I think that should be a really, really fascinating talk. If that's an issue you're concerned about, I think Harriet will have some great observations.

Gwen Wright: Then on March 20, we're going to have Joe McAndrew who is the Director of Transportation policy for the greater Washington partnership, which is an organization that is looking at the whole region from Baltimore to Richmond and looking at some very interesting new ideas on transportation policy. I encourage you to come to those future sessions. They are things that we think will be informative as we move forward with the general plan. This gentleman with the hat.

Audience: I don't think I need the mic.

Gwen Wright: We are recording so it helps.

Audience: My concern, I think, are the concern of a lot of people is about development sprawl. I don't think the county is built out yet especially if you go out into the ag reserve. It seems like there are a lot of pressures to build out, build into the ag reserve as witnessed by the approval to build not just wineries, but distilleries out there. In it's my mind and the mind of a lot of people, those are industrial uses, it doesn't have much to do with agriculture, which I thought that was the point of the ag reserve, so I just wanted to raise that issue that a lot of people in the community are concerned about overdevelopment, sprawl, and the ripple effect of the degradation of our streams, our parks, etc etc.

Gwen Wright: Absolutely, we understand that is a huge concern.

Ricky Barker: I would say with the experience in Loudoun County with all the wineries and breweries. One of the things it does it does reduce ... those properties only take up a lot of land and thus they're not used for housing. That's one of the important things in saying we need to generate a rural economy that's thriving so that we don't have that sprawling large lot subdivisions out there, but we have these vast wineries that provide an opportunity. Yes, there are additional people on the road, so it's a balance of different goods that you have to deal with.

Valdis Lazdins: The Howard County experience, Howard County has preserved about 40%, 45% of its land base. You go out to the rural west, you talk about the farmers and how tough farming is. They're looking for different ways that they can stay on the land and make a productive living. It's a challenge, and it requires just a better understanding of their perspectives as well.

Gwen Wright: Okay, one more question if anyone has a final question? Gentleman in the back.

Audience: Hi! Thank you very much for the presentation. I found out your comments just very engaging and very informed so I really, really do appreciate it, thank you. After we all leave here tonight, what's the best way for us to stay informed and involved as the county moves forward through this broad planning process?

Gwen Wright: We have a sign-up sheet on the table in the lobby. If you sign up, we will put you on the email mailing list for updates regarding the general plan. Again, we are still planning for the plan. We're on the verge of our official kickoff, but we want to gather names and email addresses of people who want to follow the process. Please, please share that with us and we'll make sure you're informed also. Also again, there's an opportunity, if there are things you want us to know, ideas you have about what this general plan update should focus on and what trends we need to be aware of, please write it on a Post-it and stick it on one of the paper sheets that's taped to the window in the lobby. With that, thank you very much, we'll see well on February 13 I hope.

