

Memo

To: Derick Berlage, Chair, Concentrating Growth Work Group, MSGC
From: Joe Tassone
CC: Rich Josephson, Chuck Boyd, Gerrit Knaap
Date: March 24, 2014
Re: Update on Indicators

You are probably aware that the Department has been working with the National Center for Smart Growth to develop a suite of sustainable growth and conservation objectives and indicators. Attached is a summary of the objectives and indicators on which we are currently working. We are evaluating possibilities, compiling data, developing display techniques that may serve the purposes of the Commission, the Department, and the National Center, and trying to put together a statewide “status check” organized by region. Discussed further below, we hope to complete the initial status check before the end of April.

We began with the Commission’s Indicators Work Group final report, and the ongoing efforts of MDP and the NCSG to develop and apply indicators in various contexts. Particularly useful in this regard are indicators MDP is using with the Smart Growth Subcabinet agencies to review PlanMaryland Planning Area local nominations and that the NCSG is using in its opportunity mapping efforts.

The fundamental strategy we’re following is to design a suite of smart growth, community and conservation objectives and associated indicators and display tools that can

- Be used to assess and measure progress statewide and, in some cases, for individual jurisdictions or other smaller geographic areas, and
- Help serve the purposes and needs of the Commission, the Department, and the National Center.

Four primary considerations were used to produce the initial set of objectives and indicators itemized in the attachment. First, we wanted to include objectives most germane to PlanMaryland and the responsibilities of the Sustainable Growth Commission. Second, we had to have the ability to compile data and produce indicators that legitimately measure progress toward those objectives. Third, we had to be fairly confident that said data will continue to be available in the future. And fourth, we wanted to avoid expanding the suite of objectives and indicators beyond the purview and responsibilities of the Department and the Commission, which would make the effort more

complicated and difficult than useful. Objectives and associated indicators had to meet these four criteria to merit inclusion.

In the attachment, the preliminary set of objectives and indicators is organized in five categories:

- Growth, Development and Redevelopment
- Rural, Agricultural and Environmental Resources
- Socio-Economic Equity
- Transportation – Land Use
- Economic Development

To ensure that the aforementioned statewide “status check” by region will be useful as a starting point for measuring progress moving forward, we are also doing the following:

- Determining ways to display and/ or standardize indicators so they can be used for geographic areas smaller than regions, such as individual jurisdictions, PFAs, etc.
- Developing concrete graphic or illustrative examples of conditions represented by the range of each indicator, to help show what places with high or low values of a particular indicator might look like in real world terms. You could think of this as illustrating what a 1 to 10 scale of values for an indicator means in relation to an objective.
- Determining how incremental progress (e.g., on a one or two year time frame) toward objectives might be measured, given that some indicators might take years to change appreciably, particularly those based on cumulative values. Ways to do this might include the use of “programmatic” indicators, i.e., steps that are being taken by state or local agencies or programs to help achieve an objective and which, given enough time, might be expected to change indicator values; and use of indicator values for individual years, to isolate and distinguish what is occurring now and going forward from what has occurred cumulatively over time until now.

It is our hope that these efforts will support the sort of annual or biennial status checks that we understand the Commission would like to have available.