

Creating a World-Class Public Participation Process for Land Use and Zoning Decisions

Executive Summary

Prince George's County Planning Department

July 2016

Introduction

The regulation of land use and zoning is one of the most important functions of county government. New development can enhance or detract from residents' quality of life, foster or hinder economic development, and dramatically impact land use options for individual property owners. It is therefore critical that all affected community members have meaningful input into zoning decisions. Our public participation process needs to be more than good – it needs to be great.

No land use decision will please every community member or every property owner. Officials have to choose among the competing positions of neighbors of the project, developers, agencies, and other stakeholders. The critical test of a good community process is credibility. The side which did not prevail will be unhappy. But they must believe that they were treated fairly, and respect the decision even if they disagree with it.

In Prince George's County, as in many jurisdictions, the public hearing before the Planning Board or the District Council is viewed as the most important moment of public participation. But public hearings are only effective when participants arrive at the hearing with accurate, complete information and receive a meaningful opportunity to be heard. And it is important to note that public hearings are not always necessary or appropriate. Most development can – and should – be handled at an administrative level (permit review or staff-level review). Potential public input opportunities for administrative applications are addressed in the companion discussion paper.

This executive summary discusses possible reforms to improve public participation in land use and zoning decisions as explored in further detail in the companion discussion paper. Experience shows that a good public participation process begins long before the hearing is even scheduled. These reforms cover the time period before a development application is considered, the hearing itself, and what happens after the hearing. Each proposed reform creates potential costs for the applicant and the County. It is safe to say that applying every reform to every application would be neither practical nor affordable. However, this executive summary outlines a menu of options from which to choose.

Staff reminds the reader that, at the time of this writing, the Planning Department, Planning Board, and District Council have not taken any positions regarding the proposals presented by the Clarion Associates team. Nothing in this executive summary or the companion discussion paper should be viewed as endorsement or adoption of any recommendation made by Clarion.

It Starts With an Educated Community

1. Codes written in plain language.

The first and arguably most important step to enhancing community input in the land use and zoning processes is making sure the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations

themselves are easier to understand. They should be written in plain language, avoid jargon and legalese when possible, and include graphics such as illustrations, photographs, diagrams, flow charts, and tables. Residents should have a fighting chance to understand the regulations without having to resort to costly land use attorneys to help interpret the rules.

2. Zoning Academy.

All land use decisions are improved when the community understands how land use and zoning work, including what the decision makers can and cannot do under the law. The County could create a seminar series offered on a periodic basis to interested residents and business owners. These seminars would focus on the nuts and bolts of the land use and development review processes, but not pending development proposals.

3. Big picture briefings on future development.

Each geographic area of the County faces different conditions and different real estate trends. On an annual or semi-annual basis, staff could hold meetings in different areas to discuss real estate market conditions, on-going projects, and likely future projects. One such meeting could be held in each Council District, with participation from the Councilmember, the M-NCPPC, and other agency staff. (At least one Councilmember already holds such a meeting annually.)

4. Community and municipal briefings.

The Planning Department engages in community outreach as part of its core mission, but community organizations and municipalities may request that staff attend meetings to discussing ongoing or anticipated development projects that are of interest to the community.

5. Internet outreach.

The Planning Department's website can highlight the County's online development activity monitoring system to provide public access to all applications. Moving forward, this online tool could be enhanced to provide links to active application documents such as maps and plan drawings, statements of justification, and to the Department's PGAtlas.com online mapping tool. Additionally, a detailed online calendar should be maintained in a highly visible location, providing links to meeting details for the Planning Board, Zoning Hearing Examiner, Board of Zoning Appeals, County Council, major community meetings, and other activities.

Giving Meaningful Notice of New Development Applications

Notice of a new development proposal must come early in the application process, and it must effectively convey the information needed to participate. Reforms to consider:

1. Improve mailed notices.

Too often, notices give a bare-bones description of the project, or use technical jargon rather than plain language. Notices could be longer, should be prepared by a staff person who is expert in writing clear communications, should include a description of the specific level of development being proposed (e.g. number of dwelling units, square footage of retail space, etc.), should include diagrams showing property location and the proposed site plan, and should contain a web address and/or QR code where the recipient can access all relevant documents related to the application.

2. Improve sign posting.

Use plain language, specify the type and amount of development being proposed, include a simplified diagram, and include a web address and/or QR code for more information.

3. Use the web to provide better information.

Ideally, an interested resident could find all of the information about a proposed project on the web. This would include the application, all accompanying plans and documents, a clear description of the steps in the approval process, how long these steps take, and how to comment on the proposal. Residents should be able to find the information using the property address, a click-and-point map, or the application number.

4. Mandatory pre-application meeting with the community.

Many developers do this already, but it is not required. A pre-application meeting between applicant and affected neighborhood should be made mandatory for projects above a certain size (those projects that would require a discretionary hearing). The applicant would run the meeting and record community input, and a staff planner could be present to answer questions about the review process. At the meeting, all attendees should be given written information clearly explaining the next steps in the process and how to remain engaged.

How to Have a More Credible Public Hearing

Holding a credible public hearing is harder than it sounds. Typically, the applicant comes with expert consultants and attorneys who know exactly how the review process works. Participating residents are not experts. Indeed, they may be attending their first government hearing on any subject. Since the applicant possesses most of the information needed by the decision maker, the applicant typically gets to speak longer and more often than the residents. Staff already know what the applicant is going to say, but may be hearing for the first time what the residents have to say. Too often, all of this results in a hearing that appears one-sided, even though staff and the hearing body wish to be even-handed. Reforms to consider:

1. Making the hearing more accessible to residents.

Some hearings could be held closer to the location of the project. More hearings might be held in the evening, so working residents can attend. Alternatively, the hearing body's agenda could be organized into dockets, rather than simply listing every item of the day in order. There could be a morning docket, an afternoon docket, and an evening docket. The time when an item actually will be heard is always unpredictable, but at least someone interested in an afternoon docket item would know they do not have to come in the morning.

2. Staff reports could include resident viewpoints.

Typically, staff reports apply the law to the applicant's request and make no mention of community concerns, even when those concerns are known ahead of time. Land use decisions are not made by popular vote, but a staff report can still recite community concerns. This adds legitimacy to the community's concerns, and makes everyone aware of the issues up front.

3. Staff reports could include options for the decision maker.

Typically, staff reports recommend approval or approval with conditions. In the vast majority of cases, the staff recommendation is identical to what the applicant is already prepared to accept, because the applicant has worked with staff beforehand. This is a perfectly normal practice across the country, but to the resident it appears that the decision is preordained. In some jurisdictions, the staff report makes a comprehensive recommendation, but also explains other decisions the body could make in response to community concerns. Placing options in the staff report shows the audience that there is more than one possible outcome.

4. Voting.

Residents appreciate a clear statement from the presiding officer of what is being voted upon, as well as a roll call vote – even for the Planning Board (the District Council typically acts with roll call votes today).

After the Hearing

1. Staff debrief.

The community could request a staff debrief in the days following the decision. Staff would explain exactly what was decided by the hearing body, what the applicant must still do before beginning construction, and how a resident can monitor the applicant’s progress toward grading, building permit, etc.

2. Pre-Construction meeting.

A meeting between the applicant and the community could be added prior to the issuance of a grading or building permit for a major development application that was decided by a hearing body. This meeting would be similar to the pre-application meeting in terms of advertisement, location, and attendees, and could cover aspects related to the construction plans, such as development phasing, timeframes of site work, how to access additional information, and the identity of a point of contact for the project.

3. Online development tracking.

The status of permits, including their issuance or reasons for potential holds, and other relevant documents should be available for public view through the Planning Department’s online development activity monitoring system.

Creating a World-Class Public Participation Process for Land Use and Zoning Decisions

A Discussion Paper

Prince George's County Planning Department

July 2016

Introduction

As Prince George's County continues with the critical and monumental task of rewriting our Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, Planning Department staff has identified several areas that would benefit from additional research. This discussion paper presents staff recommendations regarding the best practices for the role of community input in the development review process. Community engagement and input is a critical part of a robust and transparent review process for all development application types. The responsibility for engagement should be shared between the applicant, planning staff, and the community, and include clear expectations with identified opportunities for education, awareness, and input.

A successful approach toward development review must incorporate concrete, measurable, windows of opportunity for input by the community, while allowing for the overall process to be streamlined and timely for the applicant. The process should create a high level of certainty for the community and the applicant, specifically related to investments, timeframe, and outcomes.

Staff reminds the reader that, at the time of this writing, the Planning Department, Planning Board, and District Council have not taken any positions regarding the proposals presented by the Clarion Associates team. Nothing in this executive summary or the companion discussion paper should be viewed as endorsement or adoption of any recommendation made by Clarion.

Staff's Initial Thoughts

In order to provide a robust discussion on best practices for community input in the development review process for all application types (major and minor), staff need to understand the processes proposed by Clarion Associates, which are expected as part of Module 3 (process and administration) in the summer of 2016. However, what we can provide now are some general concepts for additional strategic opportunities to enhance input based on staff's experiences with the current processes.

In general, the first point of community input in the development review process is during the creation of master plans within the County. This is the community's chance to attend public meetings and hearings to contribute ideas and knowledge about the current functioning of their neighborhoods and community and brainstorm opportunities for improvements. These ideas get implemented through the master plan text and possible sectional map amendments that are adopted and will influence the review of future development applications.

The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations rewrite itself offers a unique and unparalleled opportunity for residents, business and property owners, developers, municipalities, agency staff, elected officials, and other interested Prince Georgians to create the development regulations and review procedures that will guide the future of development in the County. It is vitally important that

stakeholders continue engaging in the rewrite to ensure our new regulations and procedures will be clear, achievable, and effective.

Outside of the development review process, year-round community education is often the first step in obtaining meaningful input on future development applications. The following recommendations represent concrete opportunities for enhancing community awareness in Prince George's County:

- Use Plain Language: Write the new Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations in plain language to provide an easier to read, and more importantly, easier to understand set of codes that will guide the County's growth and development.
- Establish a "Zoning Academy": Staff could work with other County agencies, municipalities, and decision makers to create a seminar series designed to inform residents, civic groups, property owners, and other stakeholders about the land use and development review processes.
- Regular Planning Department Meetings: Staff could hold public night meetings at a central, accessible location within different geographic areas of the County (perhaps based on Council Districts) to present a summary/status of all active major applications in that portion of the County, discuss real estate and market conditions, and answer basic process questions.
- Community Meetings: On an as-requested basis, Planning Department staff attends organizations' scheduled community meetings to discuss active major and minor applications in the applicable area.
- Municipal Meetings: All municipalities are provided with access to a database of all active major and minor applications within their jurisdiction for discussion at their individual city or town meetings; Planning Department staff attends these meetings upon request.
- Internet Outreach: The Planning Department website could be enhanced to provide and highlight community access to the County's online development tracking system; this database and map would include all applications (major, minor, by-right, subdivision, site plan, permits, special exception, etc.) with updated statuses and links to active application documents (i.e. maps, letters, plans, etc.). Other internet opportunities to enhance community awareness include comment or discussion boards, emphasize the link to the Department's PGAtlas.com online mapping tool, and increase the use of social media.
- Planning Department Calendar: A detailed, expansive online calendar should be maintained in a highly visible location with links to details (i.e. agenda, location, etc.) for all scheduled meetings (Planning Board, Zoning Hearing Examiner, Board of Zoning Appeals, County Council, major community meetings, and other activities).

Once a specific development is envisioned, the current requirements are moderately successful in terms of community notification for all major applications. However, there is a lack of ability for meaningful community input until late in the process, such as at the Planning Board hearing, at which point a considerable amount of time and money has been invested in the project by the applicant and staff, making proposed changes more problematic. In collaboration with Clarion Associates and national best practices, staff has recommended some opportunities to incorporate more meaningful input earlier in the process. All procedures should be contained in a process manual for ease of reference by citizens, applicants, and staff.

The recommendations are first separated by the general stage in the development process, where they occur, and then further by general type of application. The types of application are kept broad to allow for changes once the final recommendations are available from Clarion regarding process.

Relative to staff's discussion, a major application is one that will require a discretionary public hearing, such as the Planning Board, District Council, Zoning Hearing Examiner, etc. We do not yet know what types of development applications may require hearings, but Clarion has suggested these thresholds may be based on the amount, type, or location of the proposed development. A

minor application (such as at the Planning Director-level) should generally be a minor revision to a previously approved application, such as to add new architectural elevations that are equal or superior to the original, or other application that has a limited scope in terms of impacts, such as grading for infrastructure only.

A “by-right” application (permits only) is assumed to be a development that can proceed directly to the permit office and does not require a discretionary public hearing because the proposed development is permitted by the zone and meets all the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The recommendations below should only apply to major permit applications, such as initial building and/or grading permits that propose 5,000 square feet or greater of gross floor area and/or disturbance.

Revisions to permits and minor permits, such as fence permits, use and occupancy permits, and interior renovation permits should not be required to have any official community input or notification processes outside of the status and documents being posted on the suggested online development tracking system. Generally, these minor permits are lawful and should have little effect on a community, so streamlining the process would be appropriate for these small improvements.

1. Pre-Application:

This step occurs prior to the applicant contacting the Planning Department or any submissions being made. Generally, this is not the appropriate stage for detailed community input as the application has not been vetted by Planning Department staff as to its feasibility (i.e. use is allowed, etc.), correct process, applicable standards, and conceptual design. The important outcome of this stage is for the applicant to engage Planning Department staff during a required pre-application staff conference about the specifics of their project and any questions the applicant may have on the process. This will ensure that any information that is then conveyed to the residents and community in later stages is correct and accurate.

2. Pre-Acceptance:

This step occurs after an application has been filed, but prior to the Planning Department’s official acceptance for review. Generally, this is an appropriate stage for community input as it is early enough that there has not been a huge investment of time or money in the project, but there is also enough detail to review as the application is almost ready for processing. The important outcome of this stage is to clearly explain the proposal to the community during a required pre-application community meeting, and identify major issues that can then be examined further during the full review of the application. The applicant would be required to provide a summary of all community concerns and the applicant’s responses along with their submittal/application package.

Major Application (discretionary)

- Letter of Intent/Informational Mailing: After initial contact with Planning Department staff regarding the application, the applicant should send a letter with a detailed description of the proposed development (size, uses, contact information, etc.), diagrams of the location and site plan, and details of the required pre-application community meeting held for adjacent property owners, persons of record, registered civic associations, and municipalities within one mile of the site. This letter should be distributed via mail and/or electronically, and available for viewing via the Planning Department website, Facebook page, etc. For instance, there could be a link on the Planning Department’s Facebook page to all letters of intent sent out within the previous 30 days.
- Pre-Application Community Meeting: This should be an applicant-organized, public night meeting held in a location relative to the subject property (staff may help in determining location). The subject property should be posted to advertise the meeting, information posted on the Planning Department website and other internet pages, and Planning Department staff should attend. The applicant is tasked with recording and considering the

community issues as they finalize plans prior to official acceptance of the application. Residents can sign up to become persons of record for the case at this meeting.

Minor Application (Planning Director-level)

- Letter of Intent/Informational Mailing: After initial contact with Planning Department staff regarding the application, the applicant should send a letter with a detailed description of the proposed development (size, uses, contact information, etc.), and diagrams of the location and site plan, if any, to adjacent property owners, registered civic associations, and municipalities within one mile of the site. This letter should be distributed via mail and/or electronically and available for viewing via the Planning Department website, Facebook page, etc.

3. Post-Acceptance:

This process step occurs after the Planning Department has officially accepted the application for review, but prior to an official decision by staff or the approving authority. Generally, this is an appropriate stage for more detailed community input. The important outcome of this stage is to appropriately respond to the community's major issues with an application, if any, and finalize the details of the application.

Major Application (discretionary)

- Acceptance Letter: Once the application is ready to be accepted, a notification letter should be distributed via mail and/or electronically to adjacent property owners, persons of record, registered civic associations, and municipalities within one mile.
- Pre-Application Community Meeting Response: In the official application acceptance package, the applicant is responsible for providing a brief discussion of the pre-application community meeting, the issues that were raised, and the applicant's responses.
- Referral Period: Submitted plans and documents could be available online for community input and comment for 30 days post-acceptance (same timeframe as the application is typically referred to other agencies). Notification of the posting and website could be included in the acceptance letter that was sent out. At the close of the 30-day referral period, the assigned Planning Department staff reviewer is responsible for reviewing the online comments and addressing or incorporating them into the final decision, as appropriate.
- Sign Posting: The current practice of posting signs on the subject property 30 days prior to a public hearing is generally seen to be sufficient. However, the content and layout of the signs should be further examined to make sure they provide enough detail about the proposal, such as the specific number of dwelling units or commercial square footage proposed, and include a convenient, technologically advanced way to access additional information, such as QR codes linking to online project documents. The signs should also use plain language and may incorporate diagrams of the site and proposal.
- Staff Report: The required staff report for each discretionary application should be expanded beyond the current practice of applying the law to the applicant's requested development to recite community concerns – if not in the staff report itself, then perhaps in the back-up package that accompanies the staff report. This would enhance community trust toward the process and the staff.

Additionally, some jurisdictions adopt an approach where the staff report makes a comprehensive recommendation that the applicant is already prepared to accept, having worked with staff before the hearing (as is normal practice across the country), but also explains other decisions the approving body could make in response to community concerns. Most cases may have more than one possible outcome.

- Public Hearing: All Planning Board, Zoning Hearing Examiner, Board of Zoning Appeals, and District Council hearings are open for citizens to attend and provide input/comments. Consideration should be given to moving these hearings to an evening or weekend time, and for major cases, closer to the proposed site, to allow for easier attendance by more citizens. An approach incorporating dockets may also help by clearly separating cases into morning, afternoon, or evening sessions so residents

interested in an afternoon case, for example, do not have to come to the hearing during the morning. Finally, a clear statement of what exactly is being voted upon, and a roll call vote on each application are positive community transparency steps that merit consideration.

Minor Application (Planning Director-level)

- **Sign Posting:** Under today's practices, Planning Department supervisors determine if the minor application requires a sign posting on the subject property or not, depending on the scope of the project. If posting is appropriate, the subject property is to be posted for a minimum number of days, such as 20, with signs that provide details on the proposed project, links to the application documents, contact information, and the ability to request a community meeting by any citizen.

If site posting is not required, no specific opportunities for citizen input are provided, as the nature of the application is so minor. As with all applications, these will be added to the online development tracking system that provides detailed information and links to relevant information.

- **Optional Community Meeting:** Due to the minor nature of these applications, such as adjusting grading, landscaping, or adding new architectural house types in a residential subdivision, it would not be a good use of time, money, and resources to require a community meeting for all minor applications. However, sometimes there is a sufficient interest or concern to be addressed even with minor applications. Citizens or community organizations may become aware of a minor application either through a general or municipality meeting, a sign posting, or the online development monitoring system and may officially request a formal community meeting be held to discuss the application.

If a community meeting request is filed by a citizen or community organization, the applicant should organize and hold a public night meeting similar to a pre-application community meeting on a major application. The applicant is tasked with recording and considering the community issues, and Planning Department staff would attend. Further meetings with staff would determine the applicability and legality of the comments or issues that were raised, including a determination if there are major issues that warrant a public hearing of the application.

- **Staff Report:** Similar to a discretionary application, a staff report may be prepared for a minor application. This report could identify any community comments that were received on the application.

By-Right Application (permits only)

- Permit status, comments, and relevant documents should be available for viewing through the online development tracking system.

4. Post Approval:

This step occurs after the final official approval of the application by staff or the approving body (Planning Board, Zoning Hearing Examiner, Board of Zoning Appeals, or District Council). Generally, this is not the appropriate stage for detailed community input as a large amount of time and money has been invested into the application and changes would create an unsustainable amount of risk. The important outcome of this stage is to provide awareness to the community about the status of the approved development.

Regardless of the type of application, one potential community input opportunity that could be incorporated is a staff debrief in the days following the decision. The community could ask staff to explain exactly what the hearing body decided, what the applicant must do before construction, and how residents can monitor progress moving forward.

Major Application (discretionary)

- Certification: Once plans are certified (signed as approved), they are posted online to the development tracking system and available for resident viewing. This status update could be communicated in the regularly-held Planning Department meetings discussed above.
- Pre-Construction Meeting: Prior to the issuance of a grading or building permit for a major development application, the applicant should submit proof of holding an advertised community meeting to discuss construction plans, including the phasing, times of construction, access to information, and contact person. This meeting is similar to the pre-application community meeting in terms of advertisement, location, and attendees.
- Permit status/issuance and relevant documents should be available for viewing through the online development tracking system.

Minor Application (Planning Director-level)

- Approved plans for minor applications should be available for viewing through the online development tracking system. This status update could be communicated in the regularly-held Planning Department meetings discussed above.
- Permit status/issuance and relevant documents should be available for viewing through the online development tracking system.

By-Right Application (permits only)

- Permit status/issuance and relevant documents for major by-right applications should be available for viewing through the online development tracking system.

Background: Current Practice

Staff believes that the current development review processes are moderately successful at community input and engagement. Generally, prior to acceptance of major applications (reviewed at the Planning Board level), the applicant must complete both an informational and an acceptance mailing to all adjacent property owners, any municipalities within one mile of the subject property, community associations that have registered with the Planning Department, and all parties of record. The filed application documents are then available, during regular business hours, for viewing and copying by any member of the public. Community members are also able to call either the applicant or the case reviewer to obtain more information or request a meeting.

At least 30 days prior to the required Planning Board public hearing, the applicant is responsible for posting and maintaining public hearing signs along public road frontages of the property being developed. Comments about the application are accepted via e-mail or letter and placed in the record for the application until the date of the Planning Board hearing. The Planning Department's policy is that technical staff reports on any given case are posted to the Planning Board's website at least 14 days prior to the public hearing, or 7 days for subdivision applications.

The Planning Board hearing, which usually begins at 10 a.m. each Thursday (except during August and late December) in the County Administration Building, in Upper Marlboro, is open to all community members to attend and speak. Final decisions of the Planning Board are appeal-able to the County Council, sitting as the District Council, for urban design cases (such as detailed site plans or comprehensive design plans), and to the Circuit Court for subdivision cases, by any party of record, the applicant, or affected municipality.

The District Council also possesses the ability to elect to review major urban design cases, but may not elect to review subdivision cases. Major zoning cases follow a similar process with some minor adjustments as the main public hearing is held by the Zoning Hearing Examiner, with the District Council designated as the appellate body. The District Council may also elect to review major zoning cases.

Generally, for minor applications (at the Planning Director level), no mailings are required. At the time of application, the Planning Department's section supervisor can determine if sign posting is required on the property being developed. These signs notify the community of the application, provide a contact number for more information, and the ability to request a public hearing of the application. As with all applications, the filed documents are available, during regular business hours, for viewing and copying by any member of the public. If no contact is made by a community member, or if signs were never required to be posted, the application moves forward with no more community input. Currently for permit, or "by right" applications, there is no formalized community review, input or notification; however, as with all applications the filed documents are public records and available for review.

Background: Clarion Associates Recommendations

In the Evaluations and Recommendations Report, dated December 2014, Clarion Associates provided comprehensive recommendations for the Zoning Ordinance revisions, including some concepts about new review processes and community input. They suggested simplifying review processes through defining some standard procedures that are the same for many types of development applications. The standard procedures would, among other outcomes:

- Be written in plain language
- Require pre-application neighborhood meetings for certain types of development proposals
- Establish a completeness review requirement
- Consolidate all public notification requirements into one section

The notification requirements should take full advantage of technology. Where published or mailed notice is not required by state law, the County should use online technology such as e-mail, ListServes, social media, or similar tools that avoid the time, cost, and waste of printing to notify the public.

Clarion recommends the County consider a pre-application neighborhood meeting requirement for certain types of applications that are more discretionary in nature and involve public hearings, and establish procedures for how the neighborhood meeting is conducted. This includes procedures requiring:

- Written notification of surrounding land owners and affected neighborhood organizations sent a reasonable period of time before the meeting.
- The meeting(s) being held in close proximity to the affected neighborhood or land, within the affected municipality, or at a convenient location to the residents.
- The applicant to explain the development proposal, provide neighbors an opportunity to ask questions, provide comments, and voice concerns.
- Recording and responding to community input to, ideally, resolve any outstanding issues.
- Provision for a staff planner to be present to answer questions about the review process.
- Provision of written information clearly explaining the next steps and informing the community how to remain engaged.

In a memorandum dated January 26, 2016, "Emerging Best Practices in Citizen Engagement," Clarion Associates provided their initial thoughts on emerging trends for citizen engagement. They speak to the challenges, which have been evident to planning departments all over the country for many years. These challenges include timing (the earlier the better), level of detail (if citizen involvement is too early there may not be enough detail), uncertainty (the cost of redesign in response to resident concerns and comments), changes in the project (unexpected changes due to resident comment or changes in the market), and cost (for all parties, including government costs).

In the emerging trends section of the memorandum, Clarion lists eight recommendations, including four national best practices for community input (including earlier community notifications of

filed applications, broader community notification, registered neighborhood organizations, and mandatory neighborhood meetings). Of those four national best practices, Prince George's County currently practices three in some form:

- Emerging Trend 1- Earlier Citizen Notification of Applications Filed discusses public notice (through newspapers or mailings) of many or all of the applications filed for review.
- Emerging Trend 2- Broader Citizen Notification discusses the use of electronic notices of development applications, instead of printed forms.
- Emerging Trend 3- Registered Neighborhood Organizations discusses establishing a system for interested citizen groups to register to receive notices, which is currently in use in the County.

The fourth emerging trend listed is a Mandatory Neighborhood Meeting as part of the pre-application process. Clarion discusses the challenges this tool raises including which organizations need to be included, how staff should participate, how much information is the applicant required to present and how to document any issues or agreements.