

Appendix 2: Strengths and Weaknesses

VISION 2030: SHAPING OUR REGION'S FUTURE TOGETHER
FINAL REPORT

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JANUARY 2003

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths and Weaknesses for the Baltimore Region were compiled from five sources:

- July meeting with Oversight Committee
- First round of stakeholder interviews *
- Comments from Oversight Committee members (sources two and three are combined)
- Input from City and County Planning and Economic Development Directors
- Second round of stakeholder interviews *

*See list of stakeholders interviewed at the end of this document

The Environment

Strengths

Public policy

- Success of the Chesapeake Bay preservation efforts.
- State has done a great job in land preservation.
- Regional water supply depends on Baltimore City's reservoirs.
- Smart Growth.
- Chesapeake Bay clean-up program has been successful.
- Rural Legacy and Agricultural Preservation programs are effective tools the State is using to save land.
- Area wide cooperation on BRTB and Ozone Action days.
- Region has large acreage of natural and protected environment, and coastline.
- Watersheds around three major reservoirs are protected and the water quality is excellent.
- There is a strong anti-growth sentiment in Harford County.
- Baltimore Regional Partnership has found ways to engage people who are not natural constituencies for environmental issues by taking local issues and building on them to show the connection with larger issues.

Natural environment

- Maryland's and the region's natural environment.
- Region's landscape is beautiful.
- Environmental diversity.
- Many recreational options.
- Tremendous natural resources.

Weaknesses

Pollution

- Region is in EPA's severe non-attainment air quality standards category.
- Non-attainment levels will continue to impose limitation to "normal" growth.
- Air pollution and air quality non-attainment.
- High cancer clusters in region.
- Lack of an interstate effort to attack the pollution from the Ohio River Valley that contributes to our bad air.
- Increased truck traffic.
- Environmental conditions poorer in poorer parts of the region.
- Groundwater quality at issue in some small areas, from failing septic, stormwater management problems, agriculture, or road salt runoff.
- We have succeeded only stabilizing the Bay, but we haven't saved it yet. We're only seeing slight improvements with many indicators (bay grasses in trouble still, still high levels of turbidity).
- VMTs will go up by 40% over the next 30 years but we aren't going to be able to increase capacity of roads by 40%.
- Need for additional stream restoration efforts.

Public policy

- Congestion is increasing dramatically due to disconnect of land use and transportation planning.
- Smart Growth has limited effect and is not well understood.
- Transportation planning is not coordinated with land use planning.
- Local jurisdictions do not do enough to implement more tools to save sensitive resources (no TDR, weak environmental regulations).
- Still have developments that are built that shouldn't be built and transportation projects that are questionable.
- We need to adopt better approaches and principles from other places that are going a better job of managing sprawl. I don't know of a place that is doing it without comprehensive plans to which local bodies have to abide.
- When look at MTA's proposal to double ridership over the next 20 years, transit's share of trips does not change.

Public awareness

- Lack of understanding of regional implications of environmental issues (i.e. air and water quality).
- People prefer cars to mass transit.
- Lack of recognition that the region's ability to develop outward is coming to an end.

- Population is relatively complacent in its attitude towards environmental matters.
- A lot of people aren't proud of the kinds of places that we have created. We are losing a lot of places that we care about.

Open space

- Lack of a coherent regional open space network.
- Need to preserve more open space.

Economic development

Strengths

Location

- Location is ideal for business and more people are recognizing that.
- Proximity to Washington, D.C.
- Strategic location along I-95.
- Proximity of Inner Harbor attractions - from Camden Yards to Fells' Pt.
- Access to the Port of Baltimore.
- Position in the Northeast corridor between Boston and Washington, D.C.
- Baltimore region is located in the fourth largest and fastest growing consumer market.
- Baltimore region is one of the wealthiest in the U.S.
- Great place to locate a business.
- Easy access to major highways and BWI Airport.
- Quality of life.
- Reasonable cost of living.
- 35 miles from the capital of the world.
- The extent to which Baltimore connects with D.C. is a plus.
- As employers leave Baltimore City they are not moving too far, but staying in the region.
- Baltimore City is the financial center of the region.
- Cosmopolitan population.
- Traditional hub.
- Route 40 is the economic future of Harford County.

Transportation

- BWI as gateway to region.
- BWI's relatively easy accessibility.
- BWI services the Greater Baltimore region.
- Good access to airlines.
- Port of Baltimore – “niche market”.
- Amtrak service - now, Acela on-line.

- Transportation system that we can build upon.
- Relatively good street and highway access for Port related and other freight traffic.
- New York and New Jersey traffic congestion not here (yet).
- Variety of transportation resources (light rail, MARC, MTA bus system).
- Efficient interstate and highway network.
- State has a great set up already for funding transportation.
- We think we have serious congestion but we do not. Commute times to downtown are very brief compared to D.C. and parts of the Northeast.
- Baltimore has a good highway program.
- Have a great airport, have an excellent port due to geographic location.
- Port is strong.

Public/institutional investment

- Leadership programs sponsored by county and state chambers of commerce.
- Effective marketing by Greater Baltimore Alliance.
- University investment in City.
- Strong medical institutions.
- Heavily influential local, state and federal government, almost recession proof.
- Training assistance.
- Good base of government related and finance jobs, less reliance on smokestack industries.
- Each county has active economic development departments.
- Good coordination among City/County economic development departments.
- Economic development opportunities, especially in technology sector (i.e. Digital Harbor plan, BWI)
- State and federal laboratories.
- The region has economic development programs in place at the state and local level to promote business development/training, etc.
- Partnerships with business leaders and government leaders to support economic development efforts.
- Presence of many institutions of higher learning.
- High government brainpower.
- Johns Hopkins is a significant asset.
- Ravens and Orioles.

Healthcare and technology industries

- Mixture of businesses (service/tech).

- Healthcare community growing.
- Presence of successful medical and bio-technological institutions.
- Tech-based opportunities.
- Technology is strong sector especially in Anne Arundel and Howard Counties.
- Healthcare and biotech are strong industries.
- R & D, medical research, technology are all potential growth sectors.
- Diverse economic base.

Workforce

- High level of intelligent graduates and Community Colleges.
- High-level production of skilled workers.
- Well-trained work forces.
- High education attainment levels.

Weaknesses

Mobility/job access

- Congestion is increasing dramatically due to disconnect of land use and transportation planning.
- Increased truck traffic.
- Inadequate resources to fund transportation needs.
- Parking is a big problem downtown. It is expensive, there are few options. We need to look at reasonable solutions so people do not have to use their cars.
- Insufficient transportation entrepreneurship leads to too much reliance on MTA.
- Area not sufficiently covered by high-speed mass transit.
- Rapid transit systems are separate and not integrated.
- Poor infrastructure within the city.
- Lack of an effective or efficient regional mass transit network, too much focus on roads.
- Insufficient infrastructure funding for Baltimore City.
- Lack of good highway connection to Montgomery County and other Washington suburbs (Inter-Count Connector) that would spur additional job growth around BWI and in Baltimore region.
- Mobility is a serious impediment for low skill workers.
- Downtown hasn't been able to take advantage of transit, example of Chicago, which lives by transit.
- The business community has to bargain for parking, and parking becomes poker chip for downtown development.
- Little rational discussion around Maglev train (i.e. access to stations, taking riders from Amtrak, tunnels already a bottleneck).
- Intermodal (rail to port) terminals are needed, not many exist now.

- Have had very little vision as far as public transit. Don't know where were going or how we're going to get there.
- The region has not supported the state as far as public transit.
- There have been no additions made to the transit system in the last decade except two stops added in the CBD to Johns Hopkins (completed five years ago).
- Howard County needs low skill workers.
- Inadequate access to jobs (mainly for disadvantaged).
- Job growth is primarily in suburbs; whereas, labor pool for entry level/lower skill positions is primarily in the urban core.
- There is a disconnect between job growth and residents. For example, 35% of new jobs in the region are not accessible by public transit (1997-98).

Job creation/workforce development

- Inadequate workforce development and attraction of new workers.
- High employment.
- High unemployment in "pockets".
- Lack of coordinated effort at area wide job training.
- The region does not have an economic plan for job creation.
- Not attracting immigrant population (workforce, entrepreneurial implications).
- Little immigration.
- Lack of adequately prepared and skilled workforce to meet the current and future demands of Maryland's businesses and employers.
- Have not attracted substantial skilled blue-collar jobs to replace steel, aircraft, other manufacturing jobs eastern Baltimore County and Baltimore City.
- We are missing the immigrant influence on community development, where new immigrants come in and start businesses and live in older inner city communities.

Leadership

- Overall lack of strong business leadership.
- The number and caliber of business leadership has slipped.
- The business community has no vision to capture resources to expand the system.
- The business community has evolved to make Baltimore a "branch town".
- Economic resources delivered by relocating businesses excessively in hands of established network.
- Still making the transition from the smoke stack industry/economy to the service/technology based company.

- Loss of corporate headquarters, home grown businesses.
- Small number of large employers.
- Too closely linked to Washington, D.C.

Baltimore City

- Baltimore City is terminally ill.
- Digital Harbor seems like “the emperors new clothes” (what exactly is a digital harbor?).
- Appearance of neighborhoods adding to the negative perception of the city.
- Not all jurisdictions (City) share prosperity.
- There is no downtown shopping now. To go to a department store you have to go to the County. There used to be more places like smaller hardware stores (i.e. Howard Street). Have to go to malls now to shop.
- A lot of vacant retail storefronts even just three blocks from Harborfront.
- Baltimore City lacks P.R.

Public policy

- State’s tax structure.
- Permitting process.
- No coherent regional development strategy.
- Region does not have an effective economic plan or identity.
- The state has invested in DC and nothing in Baltimore.
- We need to attract businesses to generate taxes, we build a lot of homes but the average home does not pay enough taxes to support the services that they use (Harford County).

Social Equity

Strengths

Activism

- Volunteer effort – connecting to regionalism.
- Leadership programs as a forum for discussing regionalism.
- Potential alliance of city poor, older suburbs and the remaining rural citizen to put teeth in Smart Growth.
- NIMBYism.
- There is a lot of organizing happening to help the public understand about connections between how we spend transportation funds and the outcomes that we get in our communities.
- Baltimore Regional Partnership has found ways to engage people who are not natural constituencies for environmental issues.

- New organization called BRIDGE (Baltimore Regional Initiative Developing Genuine Equality) is doing leadership development to ensure that people that have been disenfranchised have a voice in regional decision-making.

Community development

- Growth restrictions in the region, combined with middle-income housing programs such as Hope VI have made housing in City more desirable.
- Diversity provides an opportunity to live/work in a heterogeneous society.
- Neighborhoods that are strong are very close-knit; small-town feeling in a pretty big city.
- Great neighborhoods and housing affordability.
- We are a “real place”.
- Cultural diversity in City.
- Strong and vocal communities.
- Healthy Neighborhoods Program is trying to stabilize people in neighborhoods by pointing out assets and preserving and marketing them (i.e. curb appeal projects).
- Positive community for civic participation.

Institutions and non-profits

- Philanthropic community.
- Contributions of CPHA.
- Good public library systems.
- Faith Institutions e.g. Catholic, Jewish and Black Charities.
- Grass -roots oriented cultural resources like Arena Stage, Eubie Blake museum and Great Blacks in Wax balanced with major regional institutions like the Lyric, Myerhoff, etc.
- University investment in Baltimore City.
- Presence of many successful cultural institutions.
- Strong non-profit entities.
- Cultural and recreational amenities.
- Strong professional leaders in the non-profit community.

Public safety

- Baltimore City’s crime rate decreasing (except homicide).
- Drug addiction treatment increasing.
- Crime is decreasing.
- Improvements in public safety.
- Mayor O’Malley’s crime reduction plan.

Education

- Higher education institutions (more potential for them to contribute).
- Improvement of Baltimore City schools.
- Strong public school systems in suburban counties.
- Improvements to Baltimore City public schools.
- Some opportunities for adult education.

Economic development

- Economy and social conditions are improving.
- Relatively low housing costs.
- High employment.

Weaknesses**Education**

- K-12 education in City schools is still inadequate (i.e. technology training).
- Lack of accountability of the school system.
- Not getting the best teachers in schools.
- Very negative perception of quality of public education.
- Lack of recognition of connection between concentration of poverty and school quality problems.
- Need to improve recruitment efforts for local high school students to attend local colleges/universities.
- Weak civic education supporting regional consciousness and action at the elementary, secondary and higher education levels.
- Newest and best schools are built (often) where we do not want growth to occur.
- Resources still lacking for our most needy schools.
- Inadequate and inconsistent/unequal funding for K-12 education throughout the region.
- Despite improvements, Baltimore City public schools still have a long way to go.
- Lack of equity in state education funding priorities area wide.
- Local school boards have no accountability.
- High school graduates are not prepared to successfully enter the workforce, particularly tech jobs.
- Hiring and retention of quality public school teachers.
- Overall perception of the public school system.
- Lack of public education around important issues.
- Colleges and universities not actively involved in regional issues.

Poverty/ racial and economic segregation

- Disparity of incomes too great.

- Poverty related issues spreading to outer areas (i.e. crime, drug use).
- Concentration of poverty.
- The issue of racism as a root factor in planning/policy development cannot be overstated.
- Disparity of incomes.
- There are huge income differentials, huge conflict over where to place affordable housing, huge tax base differentials.
- Economic segregation.

Mobility

- Inadequate access to jobs (mainly for disadvantaged).
- Lack of transportation options, especially for the disadvantaged (economic, age and race).
- There is a disconnect between job growth and residents. For example, 35% of new jobs in the region are not accessible by public transit (1997-98).
- People do not want mass transit facilities located in their neighborhoods. (i.e. increase crime in the suburbs).
- Lack of transportation options for the disadvantaged traveling from urban areas to employment.

Regionalism

- Lack of regional civic network.
- Residents of Baltimore County, particularly the inner ring, has seen themselves in an antagonistic relationship with the city, even though older suburban communities are just as much on the losing side as the city is.
- NIMBYism.
- Lack of assistance to City from surrounding counties, rather competition.
- Poor use of information technology to support regional civic initiatives.
- Lack of cooperation on social issues.
- Some concern that regional policies will break up the black power base in the inner city, which worries some people.
- Negative perceptions regarding social conditions.
- Lack of public participation.
- Many of the region's residents lack connection to Baltimore City.

Baltimore City

- High-level drug addiction (Baltimore City).
- Crime, drugs and murder in City.
- City is losing population and crime is up.

- There needs to be a downtown neighborhood redevelopment strategy – there is none now. Need a plan and a strategy with neighborhood, private sector and government working together.
- “Poor sister” image to bigger east coast cities.
- City needs its own growth strategy. Are there areas we’re going to just give up on? There is just no strategy for growth in the city.

Redevelopment

- Poor infrastructure and appearance in neighborhoods.
- Not enough investment in revitalizing older neighborhoods; investment occurs in pockets, not as a continued planned process.
- Not enough incentive for infill and urban redevelopment.
- Need for redevelopment of older industrial areas in some jurisdictions.

Corporate involvement

- Inadequate corporate involvement in civic life.
- Low level of individual giving (below national average although Maryland is the wealthiest state) reduces resources for innovation or worthy projects.
- Absence of strong industry leadership.
- Media coverage that does not provide for constructive dialogue (education and crime issues).

Government and Public Policy

Strengths

Smart Growth

- Smart Growth program provides sophisticated planning tools and notion of alternative patterns of development is beginning to catch on.
- State planning organization.
- Smart Growth policy.
- Today there is much better communication between land use officials and transportation officials than there has been in the past. Smart Growth has helped put us on the right track.
- “Stop growth” sentiment is a unifying force.

Leadership

- Some leadership pieces are in place.
- Strong effective Congressional delegation.
- Fairly influential members of legislature (Rawlings/Hoffman/McIntosh).
- Baltimore City’s new mayor injects energy and “can do” attitude.

- County executives and the mayor are dedicated and effective leaders, they coordinate through the BRTB, GBA, etc.
- Strong individual-elected officials.
- Our transportation funding system (Trust Fund) is one of the best in the country.

Regionalism

- Institutions that keep regional issues alive.
- Good transportation planning and coordination through the BMC/BRTB.
- Cooperative efforts by surrounding counties to support Baltimore City.
- Time of interest converging for cities and counties.
- County/City executives are more regionally oriented than in the past.

Overlapping jurisdictions

- Jurisdictions overlap in legislative districts.
- Few and large jurisdictions.
- Overlapping districts, the more of those we have the healthier it will be – I think people appreciate this.
- Relatively few jurisdictions.

Weaknesses

Smart Growth

- Smart growth breaks down at local level.
- Smart Growth has no teeth; all the planning is at the State level, all decision making at the local level, on an unconditional and normless basis.
- Smart Growth perceived as political not practical – a "liberal democrat" solution.
- Planning is important at jurisdictional levels only.
- City Planning department's capacity.
- Counties use zoning codes and development regulations that are 50 years old, these codes promote (almost mandate) sprawl.
- Resistance to updating codes and implementing Smart Growth.
- Smart Growth Program established but not fully understood.
- For Smart Growth to happen effectively need a state comprehensive plan developed in cooperation with local bodies but that local bodies can be forced to comply with.
- Smart Growth structures are incentive based. The State doesn't prescribe hard and fast laws but rather has the power to withhold investment dollars from local areas that are clearly going off track.

- We need to adopt better approaches and principles from other places that are going a better job of managing sprawl. I don't know of a place that is doing it without comprehensive plans to which local bodies have to abide.
- Most of the counties have created huge Priority Funding Areas.
- Need adequate public facilities ordinances. Should have to meet public facility type ordinance in order to be able to build.
- City needs its own growth strategy. Are there areas we're going to just give up on? There is just no strategy for growth in the city.
- People don't know about Smart Growth, especially with regard to neighborhood revitalization. Think it's just to keep highways out of Carroll County.
- Lack of cohesive area wide storm water management planning process.
- Disagreement on the watershed protection plan.

Transportation

- Mass transit does not connect the region well enough.
- Too much focus on automobile mobility.
- Inadequate resources to fund transportation needs.
- Lack of rail based, extensive (gets you where you need to go) mass transit system, poor transportation planning leadership, overflows on parking.
- Bus fare box policies slowly being changed; hinder innovative efforts to improve routes
- No transit advocacy.
- Lack of innovative transportation planning; too much old school "build our way out" mentality.
- Lack of consideration to elevate public transit as something other than that method of last resort.
- There is no transit system; various modes: rail, auto, light rail, bus are not coordinated.
- All the money is spent on the car: public as well as private.
- A dysfunctional bus system.
- Inadequate funding for infrastructure.
- Lack of coordination between land use and transportation planning.
- Need regional approach to transportation issues.
- Very small percentage of the State DOT transportation budget is used for bicycle and pedestrian projects (like .1%).
- There is no vision for rail transit and how the rail system and bus system will work together in the future
- VMTs will go up by 40% over the next 30 years but we aren't going to be able to increase capacity of roads by 40%.

- When look at MTA's proposal to double ridership over the next 20 years, transit's share of trips does not change.

Regionalism

- Lack of regional vision, cohesion and planning.
- There is little evidence of local government support of regional agendas.
- Little support for tax sharing in region.
- There are no institutions for regional governance.
- Lack of cooperation among counties.
- Very little jurisdictional support for regional cooperation/agenda.
- Lack of regional transportation plan.
- City and County Councils do not interact with each other.
- No legislative coordination for the region.
- Many County Councils do not seem to interact well with County Executives.
- Competition, not coordination among counties, and everyone ignores Baltimore City.

Funding

- Disproportionate resources go to Maryland's DC suburbs (i.e. Prince Georges County).
- Lack of equity in state education funding priorities area wide.
- Increasing state education mandates without funding.
- We need to make funding available for neighborhood projects and connect state and local agency resources to provide money for small low cost projects that address people's needs on the everyday level.

Leadership

- Elected leaders still don't have a lot of visible leadership. No shared vision for region.
- Future leadership is weak; will be DC based.
- No leaders have emerged as advocates for the region.
- Absence of leadership by state government for regional policy and strategy.

ACP conducted one-on-one interviews with the following 21 stakeholders:

- Dr. Kevin Manning, Villa Julie College
- Rose Fleming, Fleming Transportation
- Dru-Schmidt Perkins, 1000 Friends of Maryland
- Fran Flanigan, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Bob Embry, Abell Foundation

- Diana Morris, Open Society Institute of Baltimore
- Bill Struever, Struever Brother, Eccles & Rouse
- Lenneal Henderson, University of Baltimore
- Neil Shpritz, BWI Business Partnership
- Michael Replogle, Transportation Director at Environmental Defense in Washington, DC
- Mark Wasserman, University of Maryland Medical Systems
- Gerry Neilly, Transportation planner and activist
- Bob Shaffner, President, Route 40 Business Association (Harford County)
- Terri Turner, Executive Director, Citizens Planning and Housing Association
- Ann Sherrill, Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative
- Harriet Tregoning, Secretary for Smart Growth
- Christopher Costello, Marylanders For Efficient and Safe Highways
- Tim Armbruster, Goldseker Foundation
- Ned Sayre, President, County Farm Bureau, Harford County
- Howard "Pete" Rawlings, Member of the Maryland State Senate
- Bill Hellman, RK & K Engineers