



# Town of Sykesville Comprehensive Plan

## Advisory Committee | Meeting #2 Summary

Thursday, July 16, 2020 | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM | Zoom Meeting

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### Attendees

1	✓	Al Mcevoy	11	✓	Mark Dyer
2	✓	Anna Carter	12	✓	Norman Fogg
3		Brandon Smith	13	✓	Rachel Becks
4	✓	Debbie Scheller	14	✓	Roger Lerner
5		Ed Cinkole	15	✓	Troy Truax (Michael Baker International)
6	✓	Eric Valenstein	16	✓	Vanessa Shamberg (Michael Baker International)
7	✓	Jana Antrobus	17	✓	Peter Quintanilla (Michael Baker International)
8	✓	Joe Cosentini	18	✓	Kirsten Compitello (Michael Baker International)
9	✓	Julia Betz	19	✓	Cameron Weiser (Michael Baker International)
10		Laura Scheiner			

### Meeting Materials

- Advisory Committee July 16, 2020 Meeting Agenda
- Advisory Committee July 16, 2020 PowerPoint Presentation

### Meeting Discussion and Summary

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

- Troy Truax thanked everyone for joining and opened the meeting with a summary of what was discussed during the last meeting. In addition, he reminded participants that the stakeholder excel file is still open for additions and editing on the Microsoft Teams Page

#### **Summary of June Treasures/Challenges Exercise**

- Vanessa Shamberg gave a recap of the treasures and challenges discussed during the last meeting
  - Treasures
    - Downtown / Main Street
    - Historic District and resources
    - Tourism
    - Sense of place and community

- Parks and recreation (facilities and programs)
- South Branch Patapsco River
- Well-maintained residential neighborhoods
- Housing stock
- Riverfront redevelopment potential
- Warfield development potential
- Challenges
  - Balancing new development with existing development
  - Parking
  - Topography and stormwater runoff
  - Lack of developable land; nearly built-out
  - Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and accessibility
  - Aging infrastructure
  - Existing park assets (lack of a long-term investment plan)
  - Concern for new and outward growth and potential impacts on Downtown/Main Street
  - Warfield development (impact on Downtown/Main Street and developer's ability to preserve and adaptively reuse the historic state hospital buildings)

**Field Tour Observations**

- Troy and Vanessa introduced some of the observations he and Vanessa made while touring Sykesville on July 9:
  - Strong Neighborhoods
    - Few code violations
    - Housing stock is very strong, few houses for sale
    - Riverfront has potential for redevelopment
    - There has been investment in the downtown, including façade improvements as well as new infill development. Participants agreed that the downtown area has experienced a lot of positive change in recent decades, which has contributed to the Town's success.
    - The merchants have been key with the downtown's success. Many were attracted to the area with low rent but have since helped position the downtown for success with advertising and events.
      - It was a struggle to prevent Sykesville from being absorbed into Eldersburg in the early 2000s.
    - 714 Sandusky building could benefit from reinvestment.
    - One consideration for infill development is that the Little Sykes Railroad Park is built on debris fill; any development may require core sampling to ensure that ground is stable.
  - Vibrant Downtown
    - Connectivity is very important for downtown to attract residents and visitors.
    - Merchants would like to expand downtown where possible to enhance business, both northward and along the riverfront.
      - The question of expanding the downtown area has been sidelined by Warfield
      - Many conversations have been had about Warfield distracting from downtown
    - The Warfield development has experienced complications in the past and present, which are now exacerbated by current COVID-19 circumstances.
    - The Town has a long-term lease for the former apple butter factory; the parcel should be used for recreation to some capacity.
  - Parks and Recreation

- Vanessa asked if a parks and recreation master plan would be helpful to identify future park improvements and connections. The Advisory Committee communicated that the Town has wonderful parks and didn't seem to suggest improvements are needed. However, it was noted additional trailheads could be beneficial.
- It was noted that park improvements are made based on grant funding availability. If a parks and recreation master plan was initiated, how would the Town appropriate funds for the recommendations?
- Many participants feel that the unofficial trail near Church street should be maintained and made an official Sykesville trail.
  - Helps connect western suburbs to the downtown area
  - It was noted that homeowners nearby have concerns due to the trail's proximity to their homes.
- The Warfield trail could be incorporated with the rest of the Town

### Neighborhood Characterizations

- Status of 2010 Growth Areas
  - Vanessa and Kirsten showed the Committee the growth areas identified in the 2010 Master Plan and asked if there was still desire to expand the incorporated area north of Warfield and south near the river.
  - Overall, the Committee expressed confusion surrounding the Growth Areas; many members are not familiar with them. The southern Growth Area was considered for annexation in the past; however, the terrain and limitations for future development impacted that discussion.
  - It was recommended that Stephen Enslow (Chair of Planning Commission) and Ed Cinkole would be good resources to ask about the Growth Areas given their involvement with past planning efforts.
- Kirsten Compitello discussed Michael Baker's Urban Transect Analysis as a method of community planning:
  - Urban Transect
    - Kirsten spoke about the ten-minute walking radius from downtown, which extends to the bridge toward Warfield
    - There is an opportunity to think about gateways from downtown to Warfield, as well as from Howard County to downtown
    - The Town should think about what community characteristics the Town wants to emphasize in welcoming visitors
  - Neighborhood Opportunities
    - Downtown – Mixed use buildings (commercial and residential) and Historic District
    - Warfield and Gateway – May include residential, parks, mixed use
    - Riverfront – Create distinct identity
    - Neighborhood – maintain and promote consistent character

### Community Profile

- Vanessa introduced some of the data that Michael Baker has been working with while creating a Community Profile for Sykesville (see PowerPoint slides for summary).
  - Overall, the Committee concurred with Michael Baker that some of the data seems skewed from neighboring areas outside the incorporated area (for example, the hospital and detention center group quarters). While not all the data may be able to be reconciled, Michael Baker will explore other data sources to refine the Community Profile as much as possible.

**Discussion and Next Steps**

- Vanessa shared that identifying stakeholder for the August focus groups is a key action item for July. She asked members to provide stakeholder names, phone number, and emails by Monday, July 20. The names can be emailed to Vanessa or added [here on Microsoft Teams](#)
- Vanessa asked Jana to share Sykesville's event schedule with the Advisory Committee and Michael Baker for future reference.
- Next Meeting: 6 PM Thursday, August 20, 2020