

Please accept my written comments on R-45-18, the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector Study, for this evening's Public Hearing at City Council.

I object to the premise in the Study's Report that more infill development is warranted (and encouraged) for the Annapolis Neck and Eastport peninsulas. The current version of the Report demonstrates that the City's Planning and Zoning Office, and the Planning Commission, have ignored the concerns repeatedly expressed by hundreds of residents and community associations living on these peninsulas, both during the conduct of the Study, and in opposition to applications for the many developments now occurring on those peninsulas. It now falls to you, our elected representatives, to listen to their constituents and rectify the Report, which will influence the City's Comprehensive Planning for years to come.

For areas in the northern part of Annapolis, roads are larger and radiate from most points a full 360 degrees. As one moves down the peninsulas, such as the Annapolis Neck and Eastport peninsulas, the roads narrow and do not radiate more than one or two ways in and out from a location. The adjacent waterways prevent access by car. All of a peninsula's population is condensed onto those single narrow roads when going to and from their homes.

The roads and intersections on the Annapolis Neck and Eastport peninsulas are already rated as "failing," and those of us who drive the roads in Eastport and Forest Drive routinely experience the current congestion and delays. Those roads are gridlocked when Compromise Street or the Eastport Bridge is closed, or there is an accident anywhere on the two peninsulas, as well as when there are special events in Annapolis. The free unlimited parking in Eastport results in Eastport streets being the free parking lot for downtown Annapolis and the Naval Academy, bringing more traffic to our streets.

Until and unless the City builds more traffic and parking infrastructure to alleviate the already failing roads and intersections serving the Annapolis Neck and Eastport peninsulas (and additional roads on those peninsulas cannot be done), the City cannot continue to approve development on those peninsulas, particularly high density residential communities, mixed use developments, and those mislabeled "smart growth" (things that bring more people and cars). Improvements to existing commercial developments and traffic flow around them are beneficial, so long as they do not attract additional cars and congestion to those locations.

The "bucket" is already full and overflowing on the Forest Drive/Eastport corridor, so pouring more people and cars into the bucket with abandon is irresponsible, because the size of the bucket cannot be made any bigger. The City seems to recognize that climate change will affect the world, the country, the State, and our City, but that certain areas in our City are being and will be affected more acutely by sea level rise, and attention is being devoted to some of those affected areas. That same realization must occur regarding population and related traffic limitations on the peninsulas with already failing roads and intersections.

The arguments that more development will increase the tax base and bring jobs is a false diversionary tactic. As for the tax base, the additional cost of providing the services needed by the new developments exceeds the new property revenue from those developments, resulting in a net loss to the City. As for jobs, development in other areas of Annapolis with more roads and access can provide those temporary construction and few service jobs. Improvements to existing commercial locations in Eastport and Forest Drive (without adding new residences) could provide more jobs.

I support strategic and comprehensive planning to improve Annapolis. The City's focus should be placed on making City Dock and Main Street a more vibrant "people place" with public transportation, bikeways, and pedestrian paths to allow people to get around without cars. Improvement of existing infrastructure in Eastport and Forest Drive must also receive attention ... before shoehorning in more development into those locations.

The broad-brush statements in the Report that "... there is a significant amount of development capacity in this portion of the City" shows the irresponsible approach the City's Planning and Zoning staff, and now the Planning Commission, has taken with parts of Annapolis that cannot sustain existing traffic and parking, let alone that associated with more development ... and emphasizes their dismissal of the grave concerns already expressed by residents and community associations in this areas. Our voices must be heard!

Thank you.

Jackie Wells
201 Severn Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21403