

Good evening, Chair and Task Force Members. I am Jamie Williams Director of Kent County Economic and Tourism Development.

We have heard it's worked all this time, why change.

Consider decreasing population, revenues that do not sustain public services and facilities, and the perception that Kent County is anti-growth. Add lack of affordable housing for our workforce and a 21.3% rate of children in poverty, more than double that of QA Co. to our south, almost double Cecil to our north and the State average and even higher than the US average.

If this is 'What's Worked'. Then don't change anything.

Words matter and details matter. We've heard this quote many times from the Comp Plan "In Kent County agriculture is viewed as a permanent and preferred land use..." here's the rest of that sentence "for the majority of the County." Agriculture, Preservation, Conservation, and Economic Development can co-exist.

Becoming Middletown is not a possibility with Maryland water, forestation, and wetlands regulations. Density within the County and Towns would prevent that from happening. That statement is used as a scare tactic. Sensationalism is what some folks have used to impede true progress, community, and economic prosperity for our citizens, especially for future generations.

The Comp Plan's Vision and Purpose states we must seek innovative ways to continue economic diversification. The Economy chapter states the County will seek a more diversified economy that will provide economic stability, better-paying jobs, and a **balanced tax base sufficient to support improved public services and facilities**. The County has delayed and postponed many capital projects that would improve public services and facilities due to limited revenue streams.

Why would Kent County not want to consider any project based on location and merit?

The 2017 ED and 2022 ETD SPs **Support development on the US Route 301 Corridor and the Worton Industrial Area**. These are the only two areas in the County designated for growth.

We've talked about not allowing truck stops, truck parking lots, gas sales, convenience stores and restaurants with or without drive-through in the Industrial zoning district on the 301 corridor.

These facilities should be allowed in these areas when proper zoning and other State regulations are met. There are only 8 miles of 301 located in Kent County, and not all of that is properly zoned for development, why would we limit project proposals. We have a planning department with planning professionals and a planning commission with the expertise to review these projects and ensure all the criteria is met.

Shouldn't we be open to having those projects submitted and approved or not approved based on the merit of the project?

Just because someone applies, it does not negate any zoning regulations or other approvals that are required.

Water & Sewer regulations
Buffers
Views
Setbacks
Wildlife regulations
Wetlands regulations
Stormwater Management
Ingress/Egress
And many more I am unaware.

The Comp Plan clearly addresses the need for Economic Development and explicitly by expanding the regulatory flexibility, especially focused on the Worton area and the 301 corridor.

In previous meetings the sign ordinance has been discussed and respectfully request it be revisited. It is difficult for business owners to understand. There have been several issues in the 11 years I've been with Kent County. I've learned that sign ordinances can be very controversial and litigious, so I defer any recommendations to the planning staff and commission.

Enacting stricter Forest Conservation Act standards demonstrates the desire to deter growth and not welcome growth. While there is no evidence to support this claim there is no evidence otherwise either. Queen Anne's County recently voted in favor or not enacting stricter standards. One of reasons Kent is tied for first place among all Maryland counties, as deforested, is because we have cleared land for agricultural purposes, a heritage that Kent County is proud. We have the richest soils on the east coast. Let's not send a signal that we want to make it more difficult for development to occur in Kent County.

As I've stated before and it's worth reiterating, "We do get excited when there is interest in Kent County, that says our marketing efforts to get Kent County noticed are paying off and the County is getting a return on their investment. There's a whole approval process and that is where the project should be vetted as a go or no go. It's our job, ETD, to get residents, visitors, and developers to consider Kent County.

There are facts and there are opinions. The facts are schools have shuttered, the hospital is reducing services, population has decreased, and the town and county budgets are strained to the point that much-needed capital projects have been delayed for decades.

Thank you for your consideration.