



Friends of Rural Roads



September 16, 2024

Frederick County Executive Fitzwater
Frederick County Council Members
Frederick County Planning Commission

Dear County Executive Fitzwater, Council Members, and Planning Commissioners:

We, the undersigned, believe that the Investing in Workers and Workplaces (IW2) effort is bad planning and is a bad precedent for future planning. It repeats past practices that were developer-driven, shunned citizen participation, ignored principles of good government, and sacrificed community values.

Wise land use decisions are based, not on priorities of special interest groups like developers and data centers, but on open, comprehensive, and unbiased analysis. Land use should provide the highest net benefits to the county at the least cost to residents. The Livable Frederick planning process was designed to secure this objective.

County residents pay dearly for misguided development. We face, for example, higher electricity bills, reduced property values, and damaged environments from the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), an effort intended to bring power to data centers, principally in Northern Virginia but also in Frederick County.

The power line proposal has been a “hurry-up” project, in an obvious attempt to avoid careful scrutiny. The IW2 plan has been rushed in the same way, seemingly so that county residents and taxpayers do not get the full picture of its impacts. IW2 also contradicts the primacy of the Green Infrastructure plan and other important elements of the Livable Frederick Master Plan. IW2 seems to be an attempted end run around the county’s proper land use planning process.

The IW2 Advisory Group’s discussions centered on increased development, profit, and revenue; they gave little concern to workers’ issues. This focus is unsurprising, given that 10 of the 14 members of the Advisory Group are developers, commercial real estate agents, or people who work for them. They dismissed agricultural and resource conservation areas, as being “underperforming” rather than being essential for food production, water and air quality, carbon storage and sustainability. The County’s agricultural Priority Preservation Areas and Rural Legacy Areas were said to be “in the way” of intense development.

The County should prioritize redevelopment of existing underutilized commercial and industrial sites rather than looking to rezone and develop greenfield areas currently designated for agriculture (AG) and resource conservation (RC). The County's fields and forests are treasures that help to make Frederick County a desirable place to live and work.

We, the undersigned, call on Frederick County government to:

- 1) Halt the IW2 planning process, pending a thorough reconsideration of its objectives, the composition of the Advisory Group, and the inappropriate focus on 'greenfield development.'
- 2) Immediately commence work on the long overdue, LFMP mandated, Green Infrastructure Plan.
- 3) Immediately codify the recommendations of the County Executive's Data Center Workgroup, before any county-wide, massive land use changes are undertaken to facilitate data center development.

We look forward to your earliest reply,

Signed, in the public interest,

Sugarloaf Alliance
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Friends of Rural Roads
Citizens for Responsible Growth
Fellowship of Scientists and Engineers
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Climate Change Working Group of Frederick County
Sugarloaf Citizens Association
Cleanwater Linganore Inc
Climate Communications Coalition
Envision Frederick County
Hall's Choice Farm Ltd
Audubon Society of Central Maryland