Nearly 100 community leaders from Prince George’s County gathered on November 10, 2009 at the Show Place Arena in Upper Marlboro, MD, to explore opportunities and challenges for the county and brainstorm ideas to support a vision for its future. The Forum is one of six being held this fall to provide input into the development of a vision and action agenda for the county. This Community Forum Report contains the ideas and priorities generated at the Forum.

Envision Prince George’s is an initiative launched by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and is a landmark countywide public engagement and collaboration effort. Envision Prince George’s is a call to action to develop and implement a vision for Prince George’s County’s future with a vibrant economy and a high quality of life for all.

The Envision Prince George’s Community Forum convened a diverse group of county leaders, including representatives from business, education, non-profit, faith-based, and government sectors.

Who Attended the Envision Prince George’s Community Forum?

Community Forum demographics are compared with the demographics of Prince George’s County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>November 10</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48%</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>November 10</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and better</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>November 10</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local or County Govt.</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>November 10</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American/Black</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one race</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Representation</th>
<th>November 10</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North (north of Route 50)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central (between Rt. 50 &amp; Rt. 4)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South (south of Rt. 4)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Prince George’s County</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What is one thing you really like about Prince George’s County?

Participants were asked to share one thing they really liked about the county that everyone should know about. Responses included:

- The great diversity of our county—ethnicity and geography (rural, urban, and suburban).
- Close proximity to the Patuxent River, natural resources, and recreational opportunities.
- Access to a variety of services for children and seniors.
- Central location makes D.C. region accessible—including historical and cultural resources.
- Long term Prince Georgians are intensely loyal to and proud of their county.
- Safe and attractive place to live and raise families.
- Highly educated county with access to educational opportunities.

For more information on Envision Prince George’s, please visit our website at: www.envisionprincegeorges.org or call 301-952-3594. TTY access 301-952-4366.
Brainstorming Vision Ideas

Participants brainstormed ideas in all six of the Envision areas: Live, Work, Learn, Serve, Enjoy, and Sustain. A range of ideas were proposed, including:

**Envision Ideas for LIVE**
1. Spur economic development:
   a. Focus on Metro stations
   b. Encourage mixed development (walkable communities)
   c. Solve transportation problems
2. Improve health care:
   a. Offer better access (neighborhood clinics)
   b. Enhance variety of services offered
3. Emphasize education:
   a. Improve system
   b. Enhance vibrancy
   c. Include non-traditional facilities (museums, etc.)
   d. Address education as a means to improve public safety issue
   e. Include a focus on the arts as opportunities for seniors and young adults
4. Establish a “Welcome Center” to tout the County at Wilson Bridge.

**Envision Ideas for WORK**
1. Develop Community Partnership and or task force to foster a Green economy.
2. Establish public-private non-profit partnerships such as agribusiness through University of Maryland large business mentorships.
3. Develop community technology centers to make education affordable and accessible.
4. Promote entrepreneurial development through incubator initiatives.
5. Create a progressive county for business development and focus the function of government to support business.

**Envision Ideas for LEARN**
1. Create new programs for students/parents with disabilities.
2. Set standards for achievement—“public investment in programs with measurable outcomes and performance benchmarks”.
3. Encourage local businesses and professionals to participate within the school system to facilitate job readiness.
4. Increase family and community support services to facilitate and enhance the learning process.
5. Learning starts at home, parents need to participate in public school decisions.

**Envision Ideas for SERVE**
1. Grow leaders at all levels/ages.
2. Involve decision-makers with communities.
3. Adopt concept of civic involvement as a civic responsibility using existing infrastructure such as faith-based communities.
4. Promote coordination among non-profits
   a. Non-profits need resources
   b. Use existing successful models for collaboration to foster the non-profit community

**Envision Ideas for ENJOY**
1. Develop more town centers with mixed use: recreation, restaurants, theatre, arts and music.
2. Build a trail system and recreation infrastructure that connects outdoor activities—parks, fishing, biking, and more.
3. Support recreation that caters to young people.
4. Create new unique events like sports competitions and running races.
5. Leverage partnerships to build additional recreational and cultural venues.

**Envision Ideas for SUSTAIN**
1. Promote use of public transportation—trolley and light rail.
2. Capitalize on technology—incorporate more technology education, K through college, make higher education more affordable.
3. Promote Smart Growth—develop around Metro stations, invest in older communities.
4. Protect rural and farm areas.
5. Attract more green businesses.

The Theme Team working to synthesize participant ideas. Photograph courtesy of Mr. Edwin H. Brown, Sr.
**Most Important Opportunities for the County to Leverage over the Long-Term**

*Participants were provided a list of nine opportunities to review and prioritize. The top three opportunities were as follows:*

1. Improve education system and expand workforce training (73%)
2. Leverage mixed-use development–Metro, MARC, Amtrak (59%)
3. Market county’s assets and target core growth industries (39%)

*The remaining votes:*

4. Successfully recruit federal agencies (31%)
5. Preserve rural character and develop green urban areas (27%)
6. Leverage opportunities with non-profits (20%)
7. Leverage the strengths of the higher education system (16%)
8. Leverage County’s proximity to D.C. and Annapolis (13%)
9. Leverage success at National Harbor (4%)

*Additional opportunities brainstormed by participants included:*

- Invest and conduct business with county companies.
- Celebrate diversity, e.g. dining opportunities to embrace cultural heritage.
- Encourage collaboration.
- Pioneer leadership in environmental protection.

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**Most Important Challenges for the County to Address over the Long-Term**

*Participants were also provided a list of nine challenges to review and prioritize. The top three challenges were as follows:*

1. Public school system reputation (80%)
2. Public safety and crime perceptions (57%)
3. Insufficient coordination across sectors and governments (36%)

*The remaining votes:*

4. Few economic development incentives (27%)
5. Workforce training needed (26%)
6. High tax burden on residents (20%)
7. Pressure to develop in the rural and farm areas (20%)
8. Access to high quality health care not affordable for many (19%)
9. Competition for scarce tourist and recreational dollars (0%)

*Additional challenges brainstormed by participants included:*

- Crime is not “perceived” it is real and needs to be addressed.
- Restoration of our water quality.
- Large number of home foreclosures in the county limits tax base.
- Lack of funding to address social issues in the county.
Implementation Ideas

Participants were asked to (1) share how what they are currently doing is in service of creating a high quality of life in the county and to (2) recommend how to sustain strategic engagement and long term action of a Vision for Prince George’s County, once the Vision is finalized.

Examples of what participants are currently doing to create a higher quality of life:

1. Provide services to youth in Prince George’s schools and in the community; personally shop, buy, and live here.
2. Participate actively as member of community HOA; chairman of community neighborhood watch group; active member of business-to-school mentoring network.
3. Employ 142 persons, of whom 90% are from Prince George’s.
4. Preserve farm and adopt a ‘stewardship’ attitude/role in maintaining rural character and protecting sensitive environmental features.
5. Chair the County Livable Community Initiative. Chair a multi-agency work group that meets weekly.
6. Conduct a training class in Green technology.

Examples of what participants said about how to sustain strategic engagement and long term action:

1. Provide tangible things that can connect and be meaningful for community leaders to communicate to others.
2. Encourage local political and business leaders to collaborate.
3. Put our tax dollars where our vision is.
4. Keep engaging the whole community, keep the momentum going, and provide opportunities for residents/businesses to get excited.
5. Actively involve the nonprofit sector via Human Services Coalition.
6. Keep local leadership (County Council, County Executive, new elected leadership) and other policymakers informed so they can buy into the ideas.
7. Create some tangible goals and milestones to make the vision more real.
8. You are doing it, pulling all the sectors together.

Implementation – Polling:
Participants were asked three questions to better assess future levels of involvement, individually and organizationally, and to test a few ideas for how implementation might be approached. The results were as follows:

- **Question 1**: How involved do you expect your organization to be during the implementation period of the vision?
  - Not involved at all 2%
  - Minimally involved 17%
  - Moderately involved 45%
  - Highly involved 36%

Summary: 81% expect their organization to be moderately or highly involved.

- **Question 2**: How involved do YOU expect to be during the implementation period of the vision?
  - Not involved at all 2%
  - Minimally involved 9%
  - Moderately involved 48%
  - Highly involved 41%

Summary: 89% expect to be moderately or highly involved.

- **Question 3**: Which strategy would you recommend we pursue during the implementation period?
  - Foster a process that enables the ongoing creation of Community Action Teams to tackle all of the key projects identified in the long-term action plan – 35%
  - Create a permanent steering body, with rotating leadership, to help guide and oversee the effort over the long-term – 29%
  - Create a coalition of organizations across sectors to be responsible for implementation – 22%
  - Start a new and/or support an existing non-profit to organize all of the key stakeholders to coordinate and monitor implementation – 11%
  - Other 4%
Call to Action
Participants discussed what personal actions they could take to make a difference in Prince George’s County and within their local communities. Here is a list of actions participants committed to taking in 2009 and 2010.

1. Be personally involved with Envision Prince George’s every step of the way to help move the process forward.
2. Regularly visit website; stay updated on individuals/organizations involved.
3. Share the website with others.
4. Continue to attend the community events and share involvement with others in conversation.
5. Maintain role as ambassador in 2010 and beyond.
6. Lobby (elected) representative.
7. Attend planning and action meetings; suggest and involve other community members and entities.

Participants discussed what actions they would recommend their organization take to stay involved in Envision Prince George’s. Here is a list of seven examples of recommendations participants planned to make to their organizations.

1. Align our strategic planning with Envision Prince George’s.
2. Recruit members, especially from Prince George’s based firms, to get involved in action.
3. Build a non-profit consortium to improve education.
4. Take a pivotal role in the integration and development of opportunities to build and enhance small businesses in the county.
5. Encourage the membership of faith-based organization to do more to reach out to those “beyond the sanctuary.”
6. Collaborate with County leadership (education, business, elected officials) to address workforce training challenges.
7. Repeat this exercise with members of my own organization.

Next Steps
Through five additional Community Forums, innovative educational activities, online discussions and a countywide town meeting, Envision Prince George’s will continue to engage those who live, work, play, serve, and more in Prince George’s County to explore what kind of county they want to create in the future.

- **Next Community Forums**
  - November 17 – University of Maryland
  - November 19 – Show Place Arena
  - December 1 – Clarion Hotel, Oxon Hill
  - December 3 – Prince George’s Ballroom

- **Youth Community Forum** – December 5, University of Maryland

- **Share your ideas on the website:** [www.envisionprincegeorges.org](http://www.envisionprincegeorges.org)

- **Text ENVISION to 41411**

- **1,000 person Town Meeting to Finalize Vision, Goals, Priorities, and Strategies**
  - March 20, 2010 at Prince George’s Sports & Learning Center in Landover

Tell a friend about Envision Prince George’s!

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