

The Big Picture



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Stuart Bass Marks 5 Years as Our Comprehensive Planner!

In May, Stuart Bass marked his fifth anniversary as the City's Comprehensive Planner. A "travelin' man" with an international background, Stuart brings a wealth of experience to his position.



Stuart worked as an archeologist until the mid-1980s when he changed gears and went into planning, working as a planner with the Brunswick County, North Carolina and York County, Virginia Planning Departments. After leaving York County, he spent several years in the private sector as an environmental planner before joining the Peace Corps where he served as a Cities Management Advisor in the Czech Republic for a few years after the fall of the iron curtain. More recently, Stuart served as a department director for Edgecombe County, North Carolina and as the town planner for the Town of Troy, NC. As our Comprehensive

Planner, Stuart is responsible for the longer-range activities of the Department, such as the Comprehensive Plan update, ordinance amendments, annexations, and processing requests for water and sewer service outside of the current city boundaries.

Stuart and his wife Ann reside here in Hagerstown. Stuart enjoys volunteering at Antietam National Battlefield in his spare time.

We thank Stuart for his service and dedication to the City of Hagerstown and congratulate him on five years of accomplishment.

Land Management Code Adopted

At a recent meeting, the Mayor and Council adopted the proposed Land Management Code. It will take effect on September 26, replacing the Zoning, Subdivision, Forest Conservation and Floodplain Ordinances.

These four Ordinances were adopted at different times and were difficult to coordinate in applying development plan review. Now they are all coordinated into a single, better cross-referenced document with a common and consistent section of definitions. Copies will be available soon.

First Phase of Comprehensive Rezoning Is Now Under Way

In consultation with the Planning Commission, the Planning Department has decided to approach the 2008-09 Comprehensive Rezoning process in

phases. Phase I will include the creation of new mixed-use zoning districts (see article in adjacent column) to add to the Land Management Code, and a review and alteration of the zoning map for the downtown area, and the area south of downtown roughly bounded by Wilson Boulevard to the south, Frederick Street to the east, and the Norfolk-Southern Rail Line to the west.

Comprehensive Planner Stuart Bass has been working with the Planning Commission for approximately 4 months on the proposed new districts, and the Planning Commission has recently begun reviewing a package of zoning map amendments for the Phase I region. This package includes about 16 identified sites (some single-parcel and some multi-parcel) that the Planning Department identified as in need of review. The purpose of Comprehensive Rezoning is to 1) implement the policies of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan and 2) correct any existing zoning classifications that either no longer make sense due to neighborhood transitions or are identified as mistakes overlooked since the last comprehensive rezoning.

Look for the Planning Commission public hearing for the Phase I Comprehensive Rezoning in the coming weeks.

New Mixed Use Districts

The Planning Commission will soon conclude its work with the Planning staff on draft language for three new mixed-use zoning districts recommended by the 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

These three districts are:

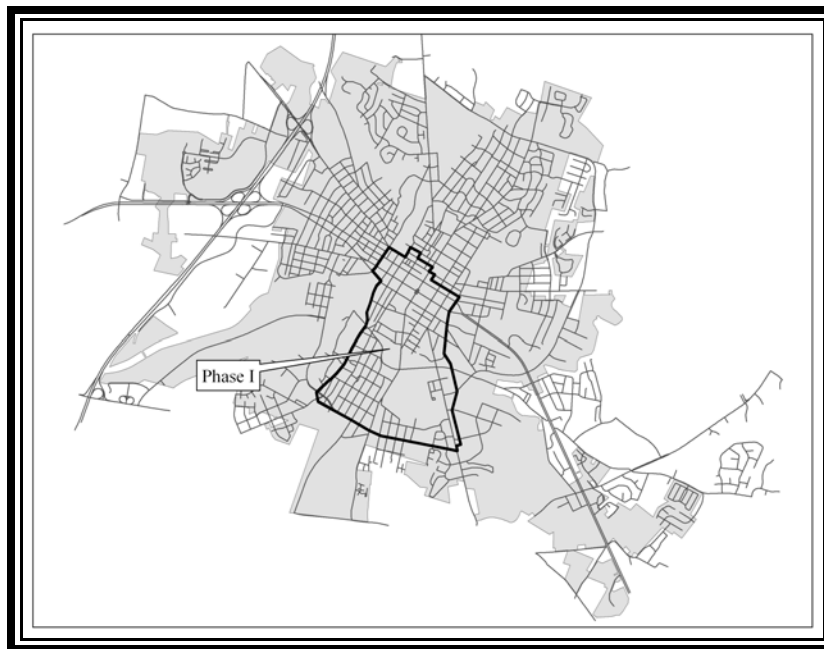
D-MU (Downtown - Mixed Use) - the D-MU District will replace the existing downtown C-3 District and allow a greater variety of uses in the downtown, as well as set higher design standards for new construction.

I-MU (Industrial - Mixed Use) - The I-MU district will allow the mixing of industrial uses with commercial uses that support the industries that are located in that area. This new district is predominantly intended for Hopewell Valley areas west of I-81 as those lands are annexed into the City, but could be used in other locations as well.

N-MU (Neighborhood - Mixed Use) - The N-MU district will be a medium to high density residential district that includes buildings that allow those residential uses to be co-housed with select commercial uses.

Several areas ripe for redevelopment around the City would be candidates for this designation, possibly including the Lee Street area which was the subject of a special planning study.

In the Fall, look for public hearings on these districts which will be part of the Phase I Comprehensive



Rezoning.

Hagerstown Beautification Advisory Committee Nominates Properties for Annual Recognition Awards

In August, the Hagerstown Beautification

Advisory Committee (HBAC) received nominations for the 2008 Highlight Hagerstown Awards. The Highlight Hagerstown Awards program recognizes those residents and business owners for boosting the curb appeal of the City through landscaping and facade improvements.

This year, the HBAC chose winners for 2 categories - residential and non-residential/development. The 2008 Highlight Hagerstown Awards winners are as follows:

Residential:

1st Place - 175 South Prospect Street;

2nd Place - 533 Reynolds;

3rd Place - 125 North Locust Street.

First and second place awards in the Non-Residential/Development category were awarded to 1500 Pennsylvania Avenue and 37 South Prospect Street, respectively.

In addition to the 5 winners, 14 honorable mentions were awarded in the Residential Category. The HBAC once again thanks the winners and honorable mentions for helping to beautify the City of Hagerstown. The awards were presented at the Mayor and Council's meeting on August 26.

City Bids Farewell to Planning Inspector CheyAnne Brown

After one year of excellent service to our City, we regretfully announce that our inspector, CheyAnne Brown has resigned in order to return to California to be closer to her family. CheyAnne learned the ropes of her job quickly, and swiftly became a high-performing and much liked member of our shop. We wish her luck on her move and she will be missed. The Department will advertise the vacancy in late September with the plan to have a new inspector in place by the end of October.

Staff to Attend Annual MD-DE American Planning Assn. Conference

Our four City planners will be traveling to

Annapolis for a three-day annual conference held by the Maryland-Delaware Chapter of the APA. Numerous lectures, seminars and working groups are scheduled for this event which will be held November 19th to 21st. This annual event offers a great opportunity for our staff to get additional education and training, and to network with colleagues from around the state to share our successes and experiences and to learn from theirs.

Planning Commission Welcomes New Member Judy Wheeler

The City welcomes its newest Planning



Commission member to the table. The Mayor appointed Judy Wheeler to a vacancy on the Commission and she began serving in August.

Judy is a graduate of University of California at Irvine and holds a masters degree from George Washington University. She and her husband Winslow recently retired to Hagerstown, buying and restoring a historic home on South Prospect Street. Earlier this year, Ms. Wheeler graduated from the City's Neighborhood College program. Her appointment fills a geographic hole in the

Commission, as we have not had a resident from the “South End” on the Commission in a while.

Welcome Judy!

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan for House Bill 1141

In 2006, the State of Maryland adopted House Bill 1141; The Land Use - Local Government Planning Act, which requires all municipalities in Maryland to adopt a Growth Element and a Water Resources Element in their Comprehensive Plans by October 1, 2009. (Counties are also required to adopt the Water Resources Element.) If we do not comply with this requirement, the law states that the City’s rezoning authority will be suspended until compliance is achieved. This new planning legislation predated our contract with the consultant utilized in our comprehensive planning process, so not every aspect of the law was incorporated into our recently adopted 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

Staff has reviewed H.B. 1141 and the comments received from the Maryland Department of Planning during the review of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. We have drafted a number of amendments to address the areas where we seem to be deficient of the House Bill requirements and are currently beginning the revision process.

Our Plan is most notably deficient in the area of stormwater management. The Mayor and City Council have agreed in principle to piggy-back with Washington County on their consultant contract to undertake the necessary Water Resources Element work. We anticipate the City’s primary needs from this study will be storm water management data.

and the Task Force on the Future for Growth and Development in Maryland are hosting a series of public forums across the State for residents to share their thoughts and ideas on future growth in the state.

Six Smart Growth Listening Sessions, planned for September, will take place in Maryland’s regions (Baltimore Metropolitan, Washington Suburban, Southern Maryland, Lower Eastern Shore, Upper Eastern Shore and Western Maryland) and are open to all citizens.

The Listening Sessions are intended to generate diverse public input on a variety of growth-related topics including, smart sustainable growth; growth and a healthy environment; regional development; historic preservation; transportation and growth; and growth and schools. Moderated by community leaders, these sessions are designed like town hall meetings with open discussion on these important matters.

The Western Maryland Regional Session will be held on Thursday, September 25 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bridge of Life Center, located at 14 South Potomac Street.

The Latest On GIS

On July 25, Planner Alex Rohrbaugh attended the quarterly meeting of the Western Maryland GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Users Group in Oakland, where this quarter’s meeting focus was on GIS applications to land use planning and environmental remediation. The meeting started with a “round robin” discussion on what each municipality or organization is doing in terms of GIS applications. Presentations were given by representatives from Garrett Community College and Allegany County Planning Department. The next user’s group meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 29 and will be held in Cumberland.

Maryland Office of Planning Listening Session Comes to Hagerstown

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP)