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## Frederick commissioners adopt long-term growth plan

If elected to the board in the fall, Young vows to work with unhappy landowners

by Sherry Greenfield | Staff Writer



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The Frederick County Board of Commissioners

adopted a new Comprehensive Plan — a long-term blueprint of development and land preservation — in a 4-1 vote Thursday, with Commissioner Blaine R. Young the lone "no" vote.

Young was a dark cloud hovering over the celebration of a plan that plots the county's growth for the next 20 years.

As his board colleagues praised and touted the plan Young (R) announced if elected to the board this fall he will work with landowners who are unhappy that between 600 and 700 properties have been rezoned from development to agriculture.

"If I'm around this time next year, and there is a majority of commissioners who agree with me, I'll put together every property owner whose property rights have been taken away by this plan and give them an opportunity to petition us to restore them to what they had," he said.

Changing zoning from development to agriculture means property owners cannot build homes or businesses, and could stand to lose significant economic opportunities.

Other commissioners did not want Young's opposition to overshadow what they see as a major accomplishment of their term.

"I want to keep it positive," said Commissioners' President Jan H. Gardner (D). "A lot of work went into this."

Most importantly, the plan promotes a good quality of life for residents, she said.

Commissioner David P. Gray (R) agreed. "I've been on a number of boards and this is the finest plan I've ever seen," he said. "I'm very thrilled to be here to adopt this."

The lengthy plan, which county officials have worked on for two years, provides guidelines for future business development, new homes, "green" infrastructure and the protection of farmland, open space, historic places and natural resources.

The Comprehensive Plan was first adopted in 1959 and last updated in 1998.

The plan outlines new housing to accommodate a county population projected to reach 323,700 by 2030, almost 90,000 more than today.

To accommodate the influx, the county has 17,550 homes in the "pipeline," or homes that have some level of approval by county planners.

The document also plans for commercial, industrial and business development on more than 3,000 acres of vacant land spread throughout Frederick County. To ensure farming continues to remain a vibrant industry, 100,000 acres will be set aside for agricultural preservation throughout the county.

Though Young said he agreed with parts of the plan, he is not happy commissioners rezoned 600-plus parcels of land to agriculture that could have allowed for commercial development or homes.

"I see no compelling reason for the downzoning and reclassification of 1,000 acres of property in Frederick County," he said. "When properties are zoned certain ways for development, people make life decisions...When those classifications are taken away real people lose real money...There is no compelling reason to downzone properties."

Young's objection was not a surprise.

He served as the former president of Defenders of Citizens Rights, a Frederick County landowner's rights' group that opposed the election of Gardner and Commissioner John "Lennie" Thompson Jr. (R) in 2002 because of their efforts to control growth.

Young said even though he was sworn in as a new commissioner on March 3, after being appointed to fill the seat of

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former Commissioner Charles A. Jenkins (R), he has been keeping tabs on the plan for two years. Jenkins left the board when he was appointed to represent District 3B in the Maryland House of Delegates.

"I know I was appointed late in the process, but anyone who knows me knows what public statements I have made concerning property rights," he said. "I have been watching since the beginning and since the beginning I have had fundamental differences of opinion on how this approach or so called update has gone forward."

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