

THE FALL 2016 CEPA FORUM – NEXT STEPS

By Mike Lofton



Last October CEPA hosted a public forum at Anne Arundel Community College to examine "The Unsustainable Spiral of Growth". Among the findings:

- (1) The Chesapeake region has experienced explosive growth since World War II.
- (2) Increases in population and employment foster an expanded local economy. But taxes and fees do not recover the cost of building infrastructure and services or their maintenance and eventual replacement. When those costs are realized local governments often look to additional new growth for revenues.
- (3) Growth results in consumption of natural resources including productive farmland, clean water, animal habitat, forest, and open space.
- (4) When revenues are not adequate to meet the total costs of growth, the burden is distributed to all residents in the form of additional payments, inadequate services, congested roads, and deteriorating quality of life.
- (5) This self-driven spiral of growth is detrimental to all residents and is unsustainable.

See <http://www.cepaonline.org/forums.htm> for more about the Forum.

At the conclusion of the Forum there was enthusiastic support for the formation of an organization to seek a new approach to growth and land use planning in Anne Arundel County. The new Alliance for Livable Communities (ALC) has accepted the challenge.

The Alliance is modeled on a similar successful initiative in Charles County. A steering committee including CEPA, 1000 Friends of Maryland, The League of Conservation Voters, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, South River Federation, Bicycle Advocates of AA County, Bike AAA, and leadership from Growth Action Network will act to:

- Foster citizen awareness and engagement on growth issues.
- Advise decision makers on fiscally and environmentally sustainable growth, and hold them accountable.
- Increase transparency and public participation in the county's planning and development processes.
- Speak out for clean air and drinkable, swimmable, and fishable water.
- Promote communities that are livable, workable, walkable, and bikeable

Are you willing to help? Contact Ann Fligsten, Executive Director, Growth Action Network, annfligsten@gmail.com.