

## Frederick Building

Special reviews for FCBA prepared by  
**Strategic Marketing Group**



**John Lynn Shanton**

### BOCC and Growth

I am not a native of this beautiful county, but have lived here over twenty years. My three children and many grandchildren live here...we call Frederick home. Few residents are interested in uncontrolled growth, but growth is coming, no matter what.

I have listened to Commissioner Thompson and his diatribes in the two

years he has been in office. As a member of the Chamber Board, I listened when our consultant presented the results of an Impact Fees study on December 6th. He called the 45-page report a "piece of manure" and "a bunch of horseapples." Even though he's a lawyer, he must know that manure supports growth in the Spring.

On March 6th the Chamber had an excellent speaker, **Ed McMahon**, talk about how to balance existing historic sites and scenic landscapes. He suggests a number of ways to balance growth and development and keep the beauty of the land. It could be done in Frederick. There were many planning commissioners and Frederick City officials in the audience. Can't remember seeing any County Commissioners there. Why not?

On March 27th, on request of **Jan Gardner**, I reviewed the growth of the nine counties around Frederick; a presentation from newsletters published by my firm, and given over a decade. **Lenny Thompson** left the room, but the other four commissioners listened, were interested, asked questions, and

were quite pleasant. Mr. Thompson indicated that since I had a regular column in the *Builder Bulletin*, it was not worth his time to listen to the bias I would present. My membership in the FCBA and the Chamber, provides more information for my subscribers.

Over 8 years this column has reported information similar to that in the BOCC presentation. Future columns will show that the "moat mentality" will drive us to uncontrolled growth. We can't build a fence around Frederick and say no more people!

### Challenge to Commissioner Thompson

Therefore, this challenge is offered to Mr. **John L. Thompson**. Use this full page to write a rebuttal to the enemies of your 26,000 voters. Don't use negatives; tell us exactly what you want to do. I will also find space in my newsletters; for a series if you wish.

Do you think builders, developers, and REALTORS® are mean spirited? Why do you think economic development is bad? Do you want a fence or moat around Frederick County? Tell us, I want to hear exactly where you stand. Let's make this debate built on facts, not fiction or fear.

You cannot stop what is happening, but you can make an impact on the real future! My e-mail address is [shanton@erols.com](mailto:shanton@erols.com). I look forward to hearing from you.

### City Still Number Two

According the U.S. Census 2000, the City of Frederick was 52,767 people (+31.4%), growing 12,619 in ten years, and remaining #2 behind the City of Baltimore. Our county is the seventh largest in the state of Maryland (with 195,277 residents), increasing 45,069 people (30% growth) since 1990.

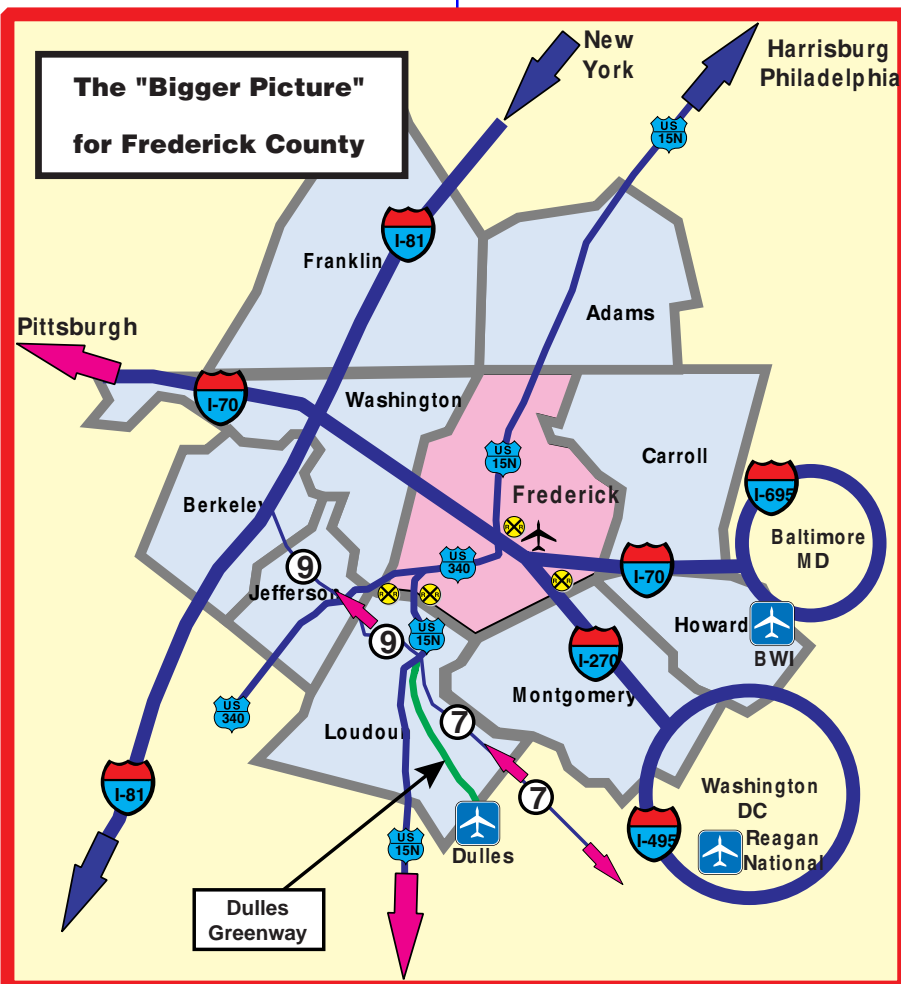
### Transportation Center

Take a look at the map to the left. Within five years we will have the I-270/I-70 interchanges, four MARC stations, and further expansions of our excellent airport. Growth will happen...we must be proactive in planning for it or repeat failures of other cities/counties in this area.

This is a great county that will continue to grow. Let's work together.

*John Lynn Shanton*

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[www.smg-mktres.com](http://www.smg-mktres.com)



## Frederick Growth



**Commissioner John L. Thompson**

### My Views on Growth

*This comes directly from Commissioner Thompson and represents his views on growth. We hope other commissioners consider this an opportunity to present their views. They did!*

### Legg Mason Report

As I recall, the 45-page Legg Mason report indicated that if the county attempted to restrain runaway growth we would lose millions of dollars in income tax revenue from the 5,000 Frederick County construction industry jobs. Unfortunately, the report failed to take into account:

- The substantial number of construction industry jobs held by folks who work in Frederick County but live elsewhere. The number includes bricklayers and carpenters who live in Washington County, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. It also includes developers who live in Bethesda.
- The substantial number of construction industry jobs held by Frederick County residents who work out of county.
- Income tax revenue is allocated to the taxpayer's place of residence, not place of employment. Thus, Frederick County derives no income tax revenue from people who work in the county but live elsewhere. The same applies to the out-of-county land developers. Frederick County's land use policies cannot affect the flow of income tax revenue from out-of-county folks because we don't receive any such revenue in the first place.

Likewise, our land use polices have no effect on income tax revenue derived from construction industry workers who live in the county but work elsewhere.

To the extent that the report left its readers with the impression that millions of dollars in income tax revenue

and thousands of jobs held by people in the construction industry were in jeopardy because of county land use policies, the report was ("was" in italics) *"a piece of manure."*

### Mean Spirited Builders, Developers & REALTORS®?

I don't believe the vast majority of builders, developers and REALTORS® are mean spirited. However, as economic entities, these groups have a natural inclination to externalize (i.e., pass on to the general public) the spillover costs of their activities. It is when local government attempts to internalize (i.e., require the entity engaged in the activity to absorb the costs) these spillover costs that the fireworks usually begin.

In the case of uncontrolled residential growth that causes or exacerbates school overcrowding, this spillover cost is passed on to existing school children (in the form of overcrowded schools) or the general taxpayer (in the form of higher taxes to finance massive school construction programs). School construction impact fees and an adequate public facilities ordinance help internalize these costs.

Another example is traffic congestion. As more development brings more traffic congestion, the spillover costs are passed along to motorists who must wait longer in traffic. An adequate public facilities ordinance helps internalize these spillover costs. The developer must pay, in the form of a longer wait for approval to begin development.

When a few builders, developers and REALTORS® go to extremes to resist efforts by the county to internalize these spillover costs, their efforts sometimes make them appear mean spirited.

### Economic Development

I don't think economic development is bad. I do believe that excessive government involvement in economic development is bad, especially:

- Secret meetings and secret agreements between businesses and elected officials. I favor making all aspects of our economic development efforts open to public scrutiny.
- Government facilitation of low interest, tax-free loans for businesses and developers. These loans are nothing more than transfers of wealth from the federal and state

offers to those politically powerful enough to get them. These folks can afford to pay market rates of interest for their projects. If they can't they're in the wrong business.

- Having the taxpayers pick up the tab to send millionaires to the Preakness. For those who favor these kinds of giveaways, I can't help you!
- Having the taxpayers subsidize the operations at the Frederick Municipal Airport in order to keep costs low for the millionaires who use the airport. A better choice is to have those who use the airport pay their own way, or park their airplanes someplace else.
- Allowing developers and businesses to dedicate their property tax dollars for their own benefit (otherwise known as tax increment financing ("TIF")), something we're about to do with the Monocacy Boulevard deal. Only the rich and powerful can pull these deals off. Those who create the need for public improvements should pay for them with their own funds.
- Raising property taxes on everyone in order to keep water rates low for businesses (a position espoused by the Chamber of Commerce). Again, for those who favor subsidies for multinational, multi-billion dollar corporations, I can't help you.
- Fast track permitting based solely on the political whim of the county commissioners. I favor creating a policy whereby builders and developers can get faster service, provided they are willing to pay whatever it takes to induce our permits staff to work extra hours on their projects.

### Fence or Moat

I don't favor, figuratively or literally, putting a fence or moat around Frederick County. Such a move would limit access to Frederick County to those who already live here and would probably run afoul of several federal constitutional provisions, most notably, the federal right to travel, the commerce clause, substantive due process and equal protection. However, reasonable land use policies that don't discriminate on the basis of residence are constitutionally permissible.

I do favor asking those who wish to build a new home in Frederick County to pay their fair share of the costs of the water and sewer projects, roads and schools needed to accommodate them.

— Lennie Thompson

## Frederick Growth



**Commissioner Terry Roy Rhoderick**

### My Views on Growth

*This is the second of five Commissioner responses to the Challenge to Lennie. Read this closely, Commissioner Rhoderick has put a lot of thought in this.*

Let me begin by stating the obvious—you can't change history. The fact is that Frederick County has always been a vibrant and growing community, which has contributed to our having the [second largest city in the state](#). With proximity to highways and thriving urban areas, blessed with fertile farmland and streams, we have benefited from a viable economic engine for the past 250 years.

The demand is here to accommodate growth as more people move into our area. Our charge as commissioners is to respond in an intelligent and methodical way, seeking to [maximize what's already in place to accommodate the inevitable](#), while striving to preserve the unique character that is a hallmark of this community.

I believe it is incumbent upon us all (public officials and the general public) [to listen and to learn about the concerns from reliable sources](#). As commissioners, we should serve as mediators to achieve a middle ground that accommodates those who are anti- and pro-growth. We should strive to avoid the polarization that is occurring in our community, and make considered decisions that allow for moderately paced growth that is not unduly restrictive.

Development in Frederick County increased dramatically during the 1980s, but an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) and impact fees were not implemented until the early 90s. Problems that resulted from "uncontrolled" growth could not be re-

solved in a mere few years any more than one snowplow can effectively handle the aftermath of a blizzard. Since the introduction of the APFO, other measures have been taken to balance the development of land in Frederick County.

For one thing, we have followed a plan of Smart Growth. Similar plans are being discussed and implemented nationally, as the issues related to growth are certainly not unique to this area. Another example is that we are currently discussing the Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) as part of our new Zoning Ordinance. [TDRs provide a process for development that will help to retain farmland in the county](#). We have also raised Impact Fees and tightened the APFO.

People are often amazed when I tell them that our Comprehensive Plan allows for only a 20% buildout of Frederick County. [Because of the APFO school test, two-thirds of the county is presently shut down to residential development](#). (Since the 1998 Public Facilities Ordinance amendments were enacted, only 84 new residential lots have passed this test.) [Housing costs are skyrocketing and builders are telling us they can't find lots](#).

To the skeptics of the equation cited above (a 20% buildout), I suggest that they get in their cars and head up Route 15. Past Hayward Road they'll mostly see nothing but farmland, with the exception of small jurisdictions like Thurmont (that shares a 250+ year history). To the east, beyond Walkersville, they'll basically see a very similar sight; acres and acres of farms. To the west there are farms and federally-protected parks. To the south, farms and Civil War Heritage areas.

The county commissioners have actually built additional layers of protection in the design of our Comprehensive Plan. Granted, additional growth could result from annexation by existing municipalities, or from "infilling" areas in those municipalities. Most development exclusive of municipalities, however, will occur in the southeast quadrant of the county, east of Route 15 and south of Interstate 70. This area is viewed by our board as the logical development corridor, the area where we plan to concentrate growth and commit our resources.

Part of our reasoning is that this corridor qualifies as a priority funding

area, and would comply with the Governor's [Smart Growth](#) initiative. The main criteria is that the infrastructure is already in place, avoiding the need for design and construction prior to development. By identifying this area, we are eligible for assistance with funding from the state for things such as water and sewer or roads extensions.

Where we often encounter a problem is with those properties that are zoned agricultural, but have been identified in the Comprehensive Plan as areas to be developed. Another problem results with residents of an area that's been designated to accommodate growth. Steps in that direction bring out in force the development dissidents.

I would like to stress the importance of preserving 80% of the county by accommodating the 20% that's been identified for development. If this is not done in a methodical way, there will ultimately be more pressure placed on our existing agricultural lands.

The demand for growth will not go away. What is beginning to happen is that the cost of housing is becoming a burden to our senior citizens and our children. If we don't provide medium priced dwellings, we risk becoming an exclusionary community where only the affluent will be able to afford to live.

We must find a balance between no growth and poorly planned rampant growth in the process of our Zoning Ordinance update. Performance Zoning is one way to achieve this. Such zoning includes environmentally-sensitive projects that incorporate criteria such as stream buffer areas or visual screening methods.

Transportation is another big issue we face and one that has not been resolved. [We are spending \\$2.5 million each year](#) to assist with "state-funded" projects. This amount is in addition to our locally planned projects. We received authority from the state to implement an Excise Tax that will help fund roads in Frederick County. The law will be effective July 1 and adds a tax based on the size of new residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

We cannot control nor eliminate the congestion that occurs on interstate highways. Many of those driving on those roads are simply passing

through our area. What we can do is partner with the state and work with the federal government to build and improve roads in our county. An example is Route 85, where we have funded \$600,000 for preliminary engineering. Another example is that the state has provided for an upgrade of Routes 15 and 26; we will help to fund that project as well. [Road construction and improvements will span the next 10-15 years.](#)

In addition to roads, we must allocate funds to support enhanced transit systems, and encourage use of those systems as a way to alleviate traffic congestion. The MARC train will help in this area as well.

As commissioners, we have an obligation to maintain the health, safety and welfare of our citizens. Emergency services are critical to this mission. In Frederick County we still have [1,500 fire and rescue volunteers](#), but volunteer companies have come to us requesting paid personnel. With their numbers dwindling, it becomes a hardship to provide 24-hour coverage. We are looking at the possibility of insurance company billing for ambulance service. This seems a viable alternative to raising taxes.

I view one of my biggest accomplishments as a commissioner as being the [accelerated school construction program](#), with a schedule that will provide the schools that are needed based on the projected number of students. [Six years from now we'll be at 88% capacity system-wide. Being able to fund the solution to an identified need is rewarding.](#)

Education has always been a priority with our commissioners and they have shown their strong commitment over the years. [Education receives the largest portion of our budget, at 55.2%.](#) (Property taxes generate 46% of revenue, with 37% derived from income taxes.)

In closing I would caution that although there are different opinions as to how we proceed to best influence the pattern of growth, the willingness to compromise is ultimately the key. [We must forsake our various factions and seek innovative ways to best address the growth that is inevitable.](#)

With a city second to Baltimore in size, [we are second to none in quality of life that must be preserved for the residents of Frederick County.](#)

— *Terre Roy Rhoderick*

## Frederick Growth



**Commissioner Jan Gardner**

*Another excellent commentary from Jan Gardner...she tells it like she feels it is. Read it all, her views are clear.*

I ran for public office, as an average citizen, to help make my community a better place to live. My primary motivation was my belief in strong public schools as fundamental to the future success of our community. After attending public meetings for several years, I realized that [the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance \(APFO\) was so full of loopholes that virtually no residential development request was ever denied even when schools were already surrounded by por-tables.](#) Worse yet, there was no financial plan in place to assure that adequate schools and roads and other infrastructure would ever be provided. The county's capital budget did not reflect solutions to these problems and state funding to Frederick County was minimal. [The county didn't even consider the impacts of residential growth on its operating budget and didn't project its operating needs beyond one year.](#) It was very clear that the county was digging itself into a hole that would take years and years of capital construction and revenue growth to correct. I decided to run for office to become part of the solution.

It is my opinion that residential growth and business growth should be viewed separately. Generally, [residential housing demands more in services than it generates in property and income taxes.](#) The opposite is true for business and agriculture. In general, businesses pay more in taxes than they take out in services. True business growth and economic

development should be encouraged. [Since businesses pay more in taxes than they take out in services, business growth is usually a financial win to the County.](#) The pace of residential growth should be moderated until the county can "catch up" in terms of infrastructure and services. Policy should be implemented to assure that the pace of residential growth does not outstrip the county's financial ability to provide and pay for the needed infrastructure and services that population growth demands. Residential growth should be required to pay its fair share of the public costs it creates.

### **Business Support**

My voting record reflects my support for true business and economic development. I have voted to increase the budget of the Office of Economic Development, have [supported virtually all Fast Track requests for new businesses](#), increased staffing for the Small Business Development Corporation, supported new programs to enhance the agricultural industry and have voted to initiate and fund the strategic economic development planning process that is ongoing today. Contrary to the rhetoric, the majority of this Board of County Commissioners has been supportive of business.

### **Responsible Growth Policies**

current board has [supported responsible residential growth policies.](#) [The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance has been tightened](#) to protect our schools and roads from additional overcrowding and new water and sewer regulations have been implemented. Agricultural preservation programs have been expanded three times over to assure that some of the county's rural areas and scenic view sheds are permanently protected. No new residential growth has been approved in the last three years. [The county "pipeline" of already approved but not yet built housing units is approximately 15,000 units with over 11,000 having APFO approval.](#) This pipeline will continue to be built out for several years. The county should not approve any more residential development until we can provide infrastructure and services to support what has

already been approved. We should make sure we are able to finish what we've started before starting anything new. This is simply common sense.

## Services & Infrastructure

The county commissioners have a responsibility to provide services and infrastructure and are actively working to "catch up". Infrastructure does matter. Infrastructure is the essential foundation of a thriving community and is critical to maintaining "quality of life". The county commissioners have put in place a huge capital construction program. The county is currently building five new schools, is expanding and renovating the C. Burr Artz library, building a new law enforcement complex, and constructing a new public safety communication system. Plans are also moving forward to renovate the community center in Em-mitsburg, build a new fire station and a senior center. These improvements will go a long way to address the existing infrastructure shortfall. I have personally worked hard for state funding for schools and roads. The county has received record levels of school construction funding from the state. This year we received \$26 million, more than the last board received during their entire four years in office.

## Building Excise Tax

I also initiated the discussion of the building excise tax that was supported by the Chamber of Commerce, the business community and the general public this past legislative session. Once enacted locally, this revenue will be specifically dedicated to transportation and will allow the county to leverage state dollars to jump start critically needed transportation improvements on state secondary highways. Route 85 is finally in the state Consolidated Transportation Program after sitting at the top of the county priority list for more than a decade.

## Six Year Operating Plan

Public policy should be implemented to link the pace of residential growth with the county's financial ability to provide and pay for needed infrastructure and services. I proposed a multi-year operating budget and the county has now adopted a six-year operating plan to

go along with its six-year capital plan. I have supported replacing the APFO or merging it with a concurrency ordinance to better time the pace of growth to occur concurrent with infrastructure and services.

Residential growth must pay its fair share of the public costs it creates. I have supported increases in impact fees to cover the financial capital costs of new housing on schools and public libraries. Residential growth has moved closer to paying its fair share.

## Cost Impacts

This board inherited a multitude of problems and challenges from years of population growth without adequate revenue growth. In addition to the obvious problems of overcrowded schools and congested roads, the increased demands on fire and emergency services, water and sewer infrastructure, and the landfill had largely been ignored. The cost impacts to county government are enormous.

## Huge Credit Card Bill

Past practice to promote residential growth without consideration to the financial impacts resulted in a huge "credit card bill" for the county that hit its spending limit and had to be paid by the current board. Citizens need to recognize that the pace and subsidizing of residential growth ultimately results in either reduced services and lacking infrastructure or a need for higher taxes to pay for the cost of services demanded that are not covered by the tax revenue generated by new housing. These comments are not meant to be negative to a particular industry but rather to acknowledge a fiscal reality.

Someone has to pay for infrastructure and services or we have to do without them. The citizens of this county have choices. We have the choice to manage our growth with fiscal responsibility and avoid future tax increase or proceed irresponsibly and "pay" the consequences.

— Jan Gardner

## Frederick Growth



Commissioner Rick Weldon

Another well-thought out response to the issues of growth.

I welcome the opportunity to "weigh in" on a topic of great interest and considerable speculation. In my seven years of local government experience, I have heard all sides of the argument, and all of the supporting rationale. In order to create a framework for my thoughts, I think its important to read the Mission Statement from the October 1998 Comprehensive Plan.

*"The mission of long-range planning in Frederick County is to enhance the quality of life and sense of neighborhood and community enjoyed by the people who live and work in Frederick County by providing guidelines and standards that ensure: (1) sound fiscal and economic investment; (2) orderly and balanced growth; (3) preservation of a healthy, functioning environment; and (4) adequate funding of infrastructure needs."*

Whew! Probably a violation of the cardinal grammatical rule to write a sentence that can be spoken in one breath. While maybe not the best-written sentence, the thoughts expressed and the ideas contained therein are essential to any debate over growth in this County. One of the vogue buzz phrases is "sustainable" development, and the definition of what is sustainable is dependent upon who you ask. Most would agree that a sustainable community is one where residents have access to schools, shopping, professional services, jobs or commuting options, worship, and recreational and cultural facilities. Where the problem arises is in the difference between the academic definitions and market-driven descriptions.

## Homebuyer Market

Reading recent professional writing on this subject (which this writer humbly confesses as a hobby),

I have found that neo-traditional and new urban design concepts are touted as the future of land use planning. I expect this seems intuitive to the writer sitting behind a word processor, but market experience bears out a very different conclusion. Simply put, today's homebuyers prefer larger houses built on large, suburban lots. Ask the residential builders which of their product the buying public prefers, and they will invariably tell you it is the large lot subdivision. The same is true for the existing housing stock. This isn't meant to diminish the importance of the neo-traditional product like the Wormald's outstanding Worman's Mill development.

Obviously, there is a market out there for such a high quality development. Likewise, well-maintained town homes in the Fredericktown Historic District are in demand, and fetch a great price. The fact remains that the predominant housing market is for the more suburban, large lot product. County planning, editorial letters, and general fussing about this fact will not alter the desires and dreams of the home buying public. The problem is most clearly demonstrated in neighborhoods like Spring Ridge, Urbana, Whittier, Cloverhill, North Crossing, and many of the subdivisions that line Ballenger Creek Pike.

## **New Resident's Issues**

All of these neighborhoods offer beautiful settings, excellent housing choices, and a high quality of life. An analysis of the percentage of the number of the residents of these neighborhoods who have moved into Frederick County from neighboring counties shows that people have made a conscious choice to abandon a denser, more populous area to settle in the more bucolic settings of Frederick County. This is where the incongruity starts. When folks from Montgomery County or Fairfax County move here, they do so for several reasons. One is the exorbitant property tax rate, another is the green space or agricultural surroundings, another is safer, less crowded schools, and traffic congestion is also frequently cited. It doesn't require the sharpest knife in the drawer to see where this leads.

That ingress of new residents,

many of who seek a 4-5 bedroom 2,000 plus sf home on a one acre lot, leads to the conversion of land from a use category like agricultural to a residential land use category. These families are either growing or have grown to the point that they have young children who will need seats in local public schools. They often have more than one automobile, and frequently hold more than one job per household, generating more daily trips on local roads. The higher property tax rates they were accustomed to paying supported a higher level of recreational opportunities and cultural activities.

Unfortunately, the people who decide to move away from the ever-expanding Metro area are not alone in this decision. The fact is that many of their neighbors will reach the same conclusion. They too will be drawn to Frederick County, for the same reasons.

## **Value of Place**

So where does that leave us? Are we destined to choose sides in the battle between the development community and those who would rather the County not grow? The answer lies in leadership and rational, well thought-out, long-term land use and financial planning. The debate needs to focus on facts, not emotion. We find ourselves at a critical junction in Frederick County. The County Zoning Ordinance is undergoing a revision right now. The City of Frederick is also updating their Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision regulations. Those revisions offer us the opportunity to influence land use decisions by developing mechanisms to encourage residential and nonresidential development in a way that protects what we think is most important.

Many of us have been exposed to the concept of the "value of place" eloquently described by **Edward McMahon** of the American Farmland Trust. Mr. McMahon argues that we are drawn to, and remain, in a place because of factors like aesthetics and quality of life. Many of these concepts can be prioritized, and in some cases, codified to guide the development process. If the development community, the slow growth advocates, and local government (both City and County) can work

together to address some of these issues, we can move beyond finger-pointing and blame assignment.

## **Commitment to Infrastructure.**

The County's commitment to a multi-year operating and capital budget is an important step. The recognition that there is a baseline of infrastructure maintenance that must be maintained regardless of the impacts of new growth is reflected in the BOCC's increased commitment to school capacity, roads, public safety, parks, libraries, and water/sewer treatment.

The development community must continue to accept the burden of responsibility for financing the impacts of new growth. Assuming government has done its job and the existing infrastructure has been adequately maintained, and consistent and predictable methods for calculating the cost of those impacts driven by growth are in place, then the builders and developers can be fairly and equitably assessed their share of those costs.

## **Proposed Solution**

My call is to the Chamber, the County and City Planning Commissions, the Builders Association, FCAR, the Frederick County Maryland Municipal League Chapter, the Civic Federation, the PTA Council, and the BOCC to work toward the incorporation of design standards and land use concepts that take advantage of what we all value and hold important into our core land use planning documents.

I suspect these groups, while representing diverse interests, could agree on a set of core principles that could change the nature of the debate forever. Those who follow us will measure our success not by who made the best pro- or anti- growth argument, but by the steps we have taken collectively to construct land use and zoning policy designed to build a community in which we all feel comfortable, that elusive "sense of place."

— Rick Weldon

## Frederick Growth



**Commissioner David Gray**

The president of the Board of County Commissioners presents his impressions and how he feels the BOCC has responded to the pressures of growth.

For most people the decision of where to purchase a home is one of the most important decisions they make. Not only is it a large financial decision, but their home's location will determine the nature and quality of life their family will experience for many years. Once the decision is made our citizens rely on government to maintain an environment that doesn't devalue their property or their quality of life.

What then, can I, as Commissioner of Frederick County, do to protect this purchase? First I must analyze our present situation, recognize what is good and not repeat the mistakes of the past. Future growth must only be allowed to occur with adequate infrastructure and services in place — promises don't count. Payment for these items needs to be as they occur, not after. This will ensure that our future residents (including our children) are not left with a bill because politicians gave in to the cry of those who want to build now and pay later!

Let's look at the component areas of growth and see how we are doing. I will assign a grade to the present county management in each of these growth areas.

### **Traffic Viability for Business and Pleasure**

Our "In Your Face" Number 1 everyday problem experienced by commuters, businesses, shoppers/retailers, etc.! Everybody hates the situation and wonders how we got this way. The answer is simple — during the last decade development was allowed to proceed regardless of congestion and virtually no money was re-

quired from that new development to improve the roads to accommodate the impact.

**Maryland 85** — Buckeystown Pike is a primary example. It desperately needs to be improved. The state was unwilling to start improvements unless the county puts up 50% the initial study money — \$600,000 of taxpayer money that should have been required from the prior developers. It came from last year's budget.

**I-70/270 interchange.** This has been moved ahead significantly due to commissioners/ delegate lobbying and help from our Senators and Representative. Four cents of the tax increase the commissioners passed was pledged for county transportation improvements and this years budget includes \$2 million for new local traffic projects.

**Other Highways.** Situations are worsening on MD 26 and U.S. 40A. Also, U.S. 15 is blocked many days costing our citizens and businesses significant time and financial loss.

Last year the commissioners, with support from the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses, asked the delegation to give it authority to impose a Transportation Excise Tax on new building so that future development pays its traffic bill. They did.

The commissioners have not yet exercised this authority. I wish to put the traffic excise tax on the books soon so that the future development does not make the situation worse. We continue to have much "catch-up" to do. We need to continue to get our share of state dollars to help with this catch-up. We also need to hold the line in any situations that make present traffic problems worse. This means not allowing more growth on roads that are presently overcrowded...period!

**Grade — C (Results); A— (Plans).**

### **Water**

Our best success. For the first time the county, city and Lake Linganore have a signed agreement on water usage and sharing. The county has taken a very strong stand on not allowing development to exceed the safe yield under worst case drought conditions. The limits have been scientifically and honestly defined and are being enforced. As a

result two developments have been halted due to water deficiencies.

This has been a long time coming. I will not waver from my commitment to never take risks with water. Our citizens' health depends on it. This is the area where we recently have received to most severe pressure from those who wish to go forward with water/ sewer reclassifications or rezoning that do not meet all the rules.

**Grade — A.**

### **Schools**

Five new school projects were initiated in last years budget — the highest number ever! Ground breaking for the new Tuscarora High School takes place this September.

The board matched the governor's teacher salary challenge both in 2000 and 2001 resulting in additional 10% teacher salary increase. We achieved top 1/3rd status in the state for teacher compensation.

A School Impact Fee was passed ensuring school funding for new residential growth. This was a culmination of many years of effort by many people. This Impact Fee money however cannot be used for catch-up school construction to eliminate overcrowding. Those dollars have to come out of present budgets.

**Grade — A.**

### **Parks**

For parks the board committed a fixed portion of the tax increase for parks. Two new district (100 acre) parks were added. We continued the very successful Park/School concept. However, demand remains high for parks and ball fields. More needs to be done.

**Grade — B+.**

### **Libraries**

This next spring we open the new downtown C. Burr Arts Central Library on Carroll Creek. This is a milestone and represents the culmination of citizen efforts, lobbying and generous contributions from many organizations including the C. Burr Arts Trust.

A Library Impact Fee passed last year to provide new funding for libraries in Thurmont, Urbana, and expansions on present small libraries. Hours have been expanded to provide more weekend and evening service. Even though the county has

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been way behind in years past, the new facility downtown will be state of the art and as advanced as any in the state. Remember here too, catch-up expenses do not get covered out of Impact Fees. They must come from the General Fund.

**Grade — B+.**

## Environmental Protection

This is an area where the board has been responsible but lacks any coordinated effort. Long term planning is not well defined as to what problems are out there. The impact of factory hog farming was faced squarely and responsibly with the passage of the CAFO ordinance. Landfill issues will become more serious. Air pollution problems, especially fluoride in the Adamstown area need to be constantly monitored locally, not by the state. Our tough water and sewer policies should minimize problems in that area. Recycling financing needs to be protected and guaranteed. I believe we should seriously look at a separate Department of the Environment.

**Grade — C+.** We need to do better.

## Fire & Rescue

I believe one of the most extensive tasks has been the revamping of taxing districts to ensure adequate funding and enhance cooperation in volunteer and county Fire and Rescue Services. This was a long and extensive process involving many parties. I believe we need to make the utmost effort to encourage and enhance the volunteer spirit and energy

of our present companies and integrate the paid employees for adequate 24 hour protection. The events of New York and Washington have shown us how valuable and dedicated these people are and how everyone needs to cooperate to get the job done.

**Grade — B+.**

## Agricultural Preservation

When I first ran for public office in 1986 my Campaign theme was "Preserve the Best of Frederick County." It referred to the dual issues of agricultural preservation and historic preservation. Back then not many people in public office felt that loss of farmland and historic property were much to be concerned about. I felt rather lonely in my concern. Fortunately, we now have a board that has made a major, major commitment to agricultural preservation. This is the most extensive commitment in the last two decades.

We have completed a broad study of Agricultural Viability in Frederick County. This involved many personal interviews in the agricultural community. Among the many suggestions received was the creation of an **Agricultural Web Site** for use by county farmers and other marketers of agricultural products. This was done and launched this Spring. The site will also be used for information dissemination and any other purpose to enhance economic opportunities for agriculture. We have been recognized statewide for this innovation. The Office of Eco-

nomics Development has Agriculture Viability as their prime business development goal.

Agricultural Preservation, Rural Legacy and Critical Farm easement funds have been maximized at 2 to 3 times past levels with 29 farms applying for the last round of Agricultural Preservation designations. A special **Agricultural Advisory Committee** has been established to continue these and other enhancements. I think the farmers are really beginning to believe that this commitment is for real. It is!

**Grade — A.**

## In Conclusion

We must never allow the county to get so far behind again! We must demand that new growth be paid for as it occurs and that it enhances rather than diminishes the quality of life in Frederick County. More citizen involvement in the planning process is a reliable way to have this happen, because most citizens desperately want to enhance their quality of life and that which their kids will inherit. Nobody wants to be responsible for "leaving a mess" that will have to be cleaned up creating higher taxes for everyone.

The county's Comprehensive Planning Process for each updated region starts with an open house inviting public input and communication with staff. It continues with extensive public hearings. Come out — we need to hear from you!

— David Gray

## Editor's Note on the Commissioner's Growth Series

When this challenge was first issued, I thought it would be point and counterpoint series between Lennie and me. Fortunately, the other commissioners thought it would be a logical forum for presenting their thoughts and possible solutions on growth. It seemed to work.

I am quite pleased this **Government 101** forum has begun, far before the election next year. This gives all of us an opportunity to make our own decisions based on the responses to the challenge and way before the County election starts next year...before the litany gets too hot!

I hope groups other than the **FREDERICK COUNTY BUILDERS ASSOCIATION** and **FREDERICK COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®** publish these excellent essays for their members to make their own judgements in support of candidates. The **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF FREDERICK COUNTY** is planning to respond to the challenge. This series should appear in newspapers throughout this area.

Finally, it appears the "litany of Lennie" has decreased to a degree. We need to talk, not call names (*Chamber of Communists*, etc.), and appreciate others opinions in this issue. I subscribe to the **Committee for Frederick policy**, which the **Frederick City Aldermen** and **Frederick County Board of County Commissioners** adopted months ago...let's hope this is applied in all future meetings. Elected public officials need to get off their bully pulpit and listen to all the people, not just a few vocal and organized minorities!

We have commissioners who responded to the challenge with much thought and detail on their perception of growth for our County...this is a beginning. Let's use these thoughts to build a better county!

Accept the challenge of our commissioners, get involved now! The election is in 2002!

— John Lynn Skanton