CITY OF ABERDEEN ◆ COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

The City of Aberdeen Comprehensive Plan is the official long-range policy statement adopted by formal resolution of the City Council. It is an important City-wide vision that will provide direction for Aberdeen's built, economic, and natural environment into the future. The City is required to update the Comprehensive Plan every ten years to meet State law and planning requirements. This update will be adopted in 2022 by the City Council.

This Project Roadmap recognizes the complexity of engaging the Aberdeen community in a transparent and effective way to develop the Comprehensive Plan. It contains goals to guide engagement and identifies creative methods for engaging key audiences. The work plan and project schedule present a proposed outline of how the project will progress as well as how the City intends to solicit and incorporate feedback from the public and other key audiences.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Public engagement is a means for all people to bring their thoughts and voices to the Comprehensive Plan. It is a forum for groups and individuals to share their ideas, backgrounds, priorities, experiences, and expertise to collectively achieve a shared vision and outcome. The development of the Comprehensive Plan provides an opportunity for residents, workers, and visitors to promote quality of life in the Aberdeen community in a manner that everyone can benefit from. The Project Roadmap is the vehicle for conversations that will help guide the City's long-range policy. The Aberdeen community will assist in the creation of the Plan and the final plan will reflect that participation.

ENGAGEMENT GOALS

Public engagement for the Comprehensive Plan will feature opportunities to participate in activities to gather information, interact in the process, and provide meaningful feedback through both in-person interactions and virtual participation. The City aims to achieve the following outcomes in the Comprehensive Plan engagement process:

MEANINGFUL & RELEVANT DIALOGUE: The community feels that the dialogue is meaningful and relevant to their interests and daily lives.

- Focus all materials, activities, and tools on specific topics.
- Use key participants' time efficiently and effectively.
- Connect topics to the work of the comprehensive planning consultant's process.
- Clearly define the expectations, goals, and outcomes of every activity.
- Follow-up by connecting people to resources.

INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION: The perspectives and participation of a broad range of community members are equitably represented in the Comprehensive Plan.

- Create a variety of options for key audiences to engage in the process.
- Share information through diverse community communication resources.
- Market events, materials, and tools to different age groups.
- Facilitate discussions and develop materials with cultural sensitivity in mind.
- Provide clear and comprehensive summaries of public input and share them through engagement activities, materials, and other tools.
- Create opportunities for different audiences to understand each other's various perspectives.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION & OPPORTUNITIES: The public has the information they need to participate in ways that are appropriate to their experiences and lifestyles.

- Test methods and tools to confirm they are understandable and accessible to people from a range of cultural backgrounds and with a range of abilities.
- Be concise and use plain language at events and in materials and tools.
- Make engagement more accessible through visual examples (e.g., diagrams, charts, photographs) and develop tools that are accessible to people with a variety of learning styles and on a variety of levels.
- Utilize accessible and diverse meeting spaces for public engagement events.

CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE IMPACT: The public feels their input has been thoughtfully considered and sees their contributions reflected in the Comprehensive Plan.

- Have in-person, face-to-face interactions in addition to opportunities to participate online.
- Build relationships with various communities through engagement interactions.
- Engage diverse audiences at facilitated meetings and activities.
- Report back on input.
- Engage key audiences to obtain input from their communities.

RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY USED: Government resources are used wisely and effectively.

- Use objectives, methods, and tools that make the most effective use of available resources.
- Utilize methods that can be used in future planning processes beyond the Comprehensive Plan.

KEY AUDIENCES

The City of Aberdeen intends to be as inclusive as possible in its public engagement process and has preliminarily identified key audiences that best meet the engagement goals and objectives of this plan. These are broad audience groups that will help focus engagement efforts but may not represent all interested people.

RESIDENTS. Residents—both homeowners and renters—will have different perspectives on the community. These perspectives are influenced by a number of factors including age, family status, and length of time in the community. Project notification and outreach to City residents will occur using a number of communication tools.

PROPERTY OWNERS. People who own homes or other properties encompass a wide breadth of interests depending on the type of use—residential, office, retail, industrial, mixed-use—and size of their sites.

THE GENERAL PUBLIC. The general public encompasses any residents, workers, and visitors of the City that do not identify with a particular group or organization. Outreach to this broad group may be accomplished where everyday life happens.

CITY STAFF. City staff play an extremely important role in the development of the updated Comprehensive Plan. In addition to supplying background information, reviewing project materials, and managing aspects of the overall project, staff will serve in a technical advisory capacity to give local input to conditions, vet analyses, provide information on preferred direction and scenarios, and give overall guidance to all aspects of the project work.

NEIGHBORHOOD AND HOMEOWNERS' ORGANIZATIONS. These organizations represent one or more neighborhoods or subdivision within an established boundary. Most are governed by a board and run by volunteers while some are able to fund full- or part-time staff. Staff and volunteers alike work to improve the quality of life in their geographic area through organizing community events, assisting in crime prevention, representing neighborhood interests in City processes, and implementing other localized priorities. The planning team will work with these organizations to get the word out about engagement opportunities.

CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS. Cultural organizations are those that represent people who share one or more unique characteristics. While not all people who share a cultural characteristic may be involved with a representative

organization, official cultural organizations can be an effective stakeholder to assist in engaging their members in the visioning and planning process.

BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS. The City of Aberdeen is home to a number of business associations, including Main Street Aberdeen and the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce.

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS. Small business owners include people running brick-and-mortar businesses or entrepreneurs working from home or a co-working location. Those who own a physical business may be connected to a local business association that represents their interests. Those who work independently, without a physical storefront, likely have different goals and opinions on the City's future and may choose to get involved during off-hours.

YOUTH & FAMILIES. A comprehensive plan for the City with a 10–20-year planning horizon is particularly relevant for youth and young families because they are most likely to be the City residents, employees, and visitors of the future.

SENIORS & AGING POPULATION. Senior citizens may be Aberdeen residents, work full- or part-time in the City, or visit the City for cultural events or to see family and friends. Many senior residents are aging in place in homes where they raised their families, while others live in residential facilities that can take care of their daily needs. The population of seniors will continue growing with the aging of the Baby Boomer generation, so the voices and needs of seniors should be strong drivers in the engagement process. Customized outreach efforts may be required in locations where current or future seniors live or congregate.

TOURISTS & VISITORS. Tourists and visitors live in other parts of Harford County, the State of Maryland, other parts of the country, or internationally. Visitors who live within the region and attend events can be reached through those respective venues or online.

POLICY ADVOCATES. Policy advocates work toward improvements on one topic or set of related topics. These are often organizations and non-profits but can also be interested individuals. Examples of policy topics include, but are not limited to, affordable housing, multimodal transportation, resiliency, and water resources. Policy advocates may want to play an active role in the planning process but likely on their topic of choice rather than the plan as a whole.

PUBLIC AGENCIES. The City of Aberdeen works closely with other local, regional, and state governments such as Harford County, Baltimore Metropolitan Council, the State of Maryland, local watershed organizations, Harford County Public Schools, U.S. Army Aberdeen Proving Ground, and neighboring jurisdictions. They all have a role to play in this engagement process because they support the implementation of City of Aberdeen plans and policies.

CITY BOARDS & COMMISSIONS. The City of Aberdeen has numerous Boards and Commissions that will play varying roles in the engagement process. The City has a few land use and development-related Boards and Commissions that will have a stronger role throughout the planning process. These Boards and Commissions have members who are appointed to assist in creating policy affecting the built environment.

WORK PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan Update process has been designed in four phases: Project Kick-Off & Management, Data Collection & Analysis, Community Engagement, Plan Development.

PHASE 1—PROJECT KICK-OFF & MANAGEMENT

Phase 1 will extend throughout the project's duration and will incorporate the management of the project in addition to the following specific tasks:

PROJECT ROADMAP. A formal project timeline and work plan that identifies key tasks will be developed. The schedule of milestones will help keep the process on track.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS PLAN. Public engagement are the cornerstones of the planning process. The planning team will continue to work with the City to define the public engagement plan to ensure all desired items are addressed.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS TRACKING. A tracking and coordination system for all events, outreach, and communications is under development. The system will be regularly updated and accessible to City staff.

COORDINATION CALLS. Regular coordination calls will take place throughout the project timeline.

MILESTONE STATUS REPORTS. The planning team will provide written reports and presentations at particular milestones that include key project updates, engagement results, and pertinent decision points.

PHASE 2—DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

The planning team has started collecting and reviewing baseline information from the City, other government and stakeholder resources, and mapping. Information collected and analyzed will include historic, current, and projected data on topics that at a minimum include population, housing, employment, economic indicators, and land use. These analyses will also review growth patterns and anticipated developments, population and household projections, development capacity, water and wastewater capacity, and nutrient loading implications.

As part of this phase, introductory meetings will be held with the City Council, Planning Commission, and Economic Development Commission to discuss the project's scope, schedule, and process and to begin obtaining feedback on the existing plan, initiate a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, identify key issues, and finalize plans for community engagement.

PHASE 3—COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As mentioned previously, the engagement process will include traditional (face-to-face) and online/virtual activities to ensure meaningful, inclusive, and diverse input. The project team will develop project branding to use in outreach efforts and plan development, which will be used consistently throughout the planning process. The planning team will also conduct a community survey to assess perceptions about the City, community needs, desires for future redevelopment, historic preservation, and other key topic areas.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS. While not a complete list, the following tools will likely be utilized:

- Project Website
- Digital & Printed Materials
- Branding Materials
- Online & Hardcopy Survey
- Social Media Content
- Flyers
- Press Releases
- Fact Sheets
- Email Updates

ENGAGEMENT EVENTS. The planning team will build on previous engagement efforts. Specific engagement events include the following:

- Visioning Meetings (2)
- Community Event
- Open House
- Comment Boxes
- Key Stakeholder Interviews

These events may utilize a number of techniques including vision cards, sticky dot polling, questionnaires, and participatory mapping, among others. Results from these events and activities will be presented during 'data reveal' workshops with the Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, and City Council.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REPORT. Draft and final reports on public engagement methods and results will outline the methods utilized, participation, findings, and key metrics. The final report will ultimately serve as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan.

PHASE 4—PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Incorporating input and results from previous tasks, the planning team will develop a framework structure for the Comprehensive Plan and all elements will be drafted following this agreed upon framework. In addition to background components, the planning team will also identify goals, objectives, implementation strategies, and possible funding sources, based on Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, City Council, City staff, stakeholder, and public input.

The draft plan will be concise, user friendly, and will clearly communicate community objectives and policies for addressing priorities in narrative, plans, diagrams, charts, tables, and photos. Chapter element drafts will be reviewed by City staff, Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, and City Council; their comments and other input will be incorporated in subsequent revisions. Once a full draft is developed and reviewed, the planning team will facilitate a public open house to present key elements, goals, and strategies. Once the official public comment period ends, the planning team will make recommendations to address comments received, incorporating those as directed, before public hearings and adoption.

PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE

The Comprehensive Plan Update process is organized into four phases that are tied to technical analyses and various methods of civic engagement, including gathering community feedback throughout the project's duration; however, some tasks will span multiple phases. The process started in October 2021 and the draft Plan is intended to be ready for public release in August 2022. Known and anticipated dates are listed; dates yet to be determined will be updated as they are finalized. This timeline is subject to change based on additional input from the City and venue availability. Monthly topic focus areas highlight Wallace Montgomery's intended chapter(s) of focus including relevant department/leadership/stakeholder interviews, data analysis and synthesis, and initial chapter drafting. Initial chapter drafts as well as interview recaps will be shared with City staff and revised to address internal comments prior to Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, and City Council reviews and public document release. Regular coordination calls with Planning & Community Development staff will occur and milestone status reports will be provided for inclusion in appropriate meeting packets.

OCTOBER 2021

19   Staff/Consultant Project Kick-off Meeting

NOVEMBER 2021

8   City Council Project Introduction

DECEMBER 2021

8   Planning Commission Project Introduction
15   Economic Development Commission Project Introduction
15   Community Survey Release

JANUARY 2022

TBD   Visioning Workshop #1
TBD   City Department/Stakeholder Interview(s)

TOPIC FOCUS: CITY PROFILE

FEBRUARY 2022

TBD   Visioning Workshop #2
TBD   City Department/Stakeholder Interview(s)
18   Community Survey Closes

TOPIC FOCUS: SENSITIVE AREAS, WATER RESOURCES

MARCH 2022

9   Planning Commission Data Reveal: Visioning Workshops, Community Survey & City Profile
14   City Council Data Reveal: Visioning Workshops, Community Survey & City Profile
TBD   City Department/Stakeholder Interview(s)

TOPIC FOCUS: TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING

APRIL 2022

20   Economic Development Commission Work Session

TBD City Department/Stakeholder Interview(s)

TOPIC FOCUS: COMMUNITY FACILITIES, MINERAL
               RESOURCES, SOLID WASTE

MAY 2022

11   Planning Commission Work Session

23   City Council Work Session

TOPIC FOCUS: LAND USE, MUNICIPAL GROWTH

JUNE 2022

TBD Community Event

TBD City Department Draft Plan Review

TOPIC FOCUS: INTRODUCTION, IMPLEMENTATION

JULY 2022

13   Planning Commission Draft Plan Review

25   City Council Draft Review

AUGUST 2022

TBD Draft Plan Public Presentation & Open House

OCTOBER 2022

12   Planning Commission Final Review, Public
       Hearing & Potential Recommendation

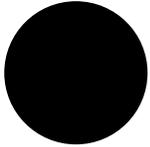24   City Council Final Draft Introduction

NOVEMBER 2022

14   City Council Public Hearing & Potential Adoption

LOGO

planABERDEEN
Our City. Our Plan. Our Future.

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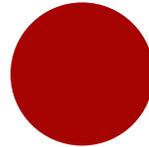HEX: #FFFFFF
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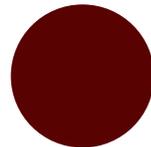
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