

# Forum Report



## *Envision Prince George's* Community Forum Prince George's County, Maryland – November 17, 2009

More than 80 residents from Prince George's County gathered on November 17, 2009 at the University of Maryland's Samuel Riggs IV Alumni Center, to explore opportunities and challenges for the county and brainstorm ideas to support a vision for its future. The Forum was the second of six being held this fall to provide input into the development of a vision and action agenda for the county. This Community Forum Report contains the ideas and priorities generated at the Forum.

*Envision Prince George's* is an initiative launched by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and is a landmark countywide public engagement and collaboration effort. *Envision Prince George's* is a call to action to develop and implement a vision for Prince George's County's future with a vibrant economy and a high quality of life for all.

The *Envision Prince George's* Community Forum was free and open to anyone who lives, works, learns, serves or enjoys the county. Language translation services and materials were provided to encourage participation by a diverse cross-section of the community.



Participants deliberating at the Community Forum.

### Who Attended the *Envision Prince George's* Community Forum?

Community Forum demographics are compared with the demographics of Prince George's County.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>November 17</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>November 17</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Female	43%	52%	African-American/Black	52%	64%
Male	57%	48%	Asian/Pacific Islander	4%	4%
			Caucasian	37%	18%
<u>Age</u>			Hispanic/Latino	3%	12%
15-24	12%	19%	Native American	0%	.2%
25-34	16%	17%	Native Hawaiian	0%	0%
35-44	11%	20%	More than one race	3%	2%
45-54	28%	19%	Other	1%	.3%
55-64	21%	13%			
65 and better	12%	11%			
			<u>Geographic Representation</u>		
<u>Household Income Level</u>			Mount Rainier/Brentwood/Hyattsville area		19%
\$0-24,999	11%	13%	College Park/Berwyn Heights/Adelphi/Riverdale area		17%
\$25,000-49,999	11%	21%	Laurel/Calverton/Beltsville area		8%
\$50,000-74,999	22%	22%	Greenbelt/Glenn Dale/Seabrook/Lanham area		20%
\$75,000-99,999	19%	17%	Bladensburg/Port Towns/Cheverly/Landover area		12%
\$100,000 and above	34%	28%	Somewhere else in the county		16%
Not sure/prefer not to say	4%		Outside Prince George's County		8%

## Live Work Learn Serve Enjoy Sustain

The six *Envision* areas are closely interconnected. Sustaining a high quality of life for the county requires that all of these areas be addressed together.

<b>Live</b>	<p><i>Envision</i> the communities in which we live—or want to live—and how we contribute to a high quality of life. Topics in <b>Live</b> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Housing</li> <li>■ Public safety</li> <li>■ Health and human services</li> <li>■ Historic preservation</li> <li>■ Urban planning</li> </ul>
<b>Work</b>	<p><i>Envision</i> what a sustainable, vibrant economy that benefits all should look like in the future. Topics in <b>Work</b> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Economic development</li> <li>■ Jobs</li> <li>■ Small business development and entrepreneurship</li> <li>■ Agriculture</li> <li>■ Business retention and attraction</li> </ul>
<b>Learn</b>	<p><i>Envision</i> what a quality education for everybody—our children, young adults, and lifelong learning—should look like. Topics in <b>Learn</b> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pre-school learning</li> <li>■ Lifelong learning</li> <li>■ K-12 schools</li> <li>■ Higher education</li> <li>■ Workforce development</li> </ul>
<b>Serve</b>	<p><i>Envision</i> how everyone can find a way to serve the county and how residents, leaders, and organizations can work together to serve the county more effectively. Topics in <b>Serve</b> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Governance</li> <li>■ Non-profit community</li> <li>■ Citizen engagement</li> <li>■ Planning</li> <li>■ Faith-based organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Enjoy</b>	<p><i>Envision</i> how we would like to spend our time with family and friends enjoying community amenities and natural green spaces. Topics in <b>Enjoy</b> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Parks and Recreation</li> <li>■ Arts and culture</li> <li>■ Heritage</li> <li>■ Entertainment</li> <li>■ History</li> </ul>
<b>Sustain</b>	<p><i>Envision</i> how to sustain a higher quality of life for ourselves and for future generations, including our children, grandchildren, and new residents. Topics in <b>Sustain</b> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Transportation and other public facilities</li> <li>■ Energy efficiency</li> <li>■ Climate change</li> <li>■ Sustainable development</li> <li>■ Natural environment</li> <li>■ Agriculture</li> <li>■ Water quality</li> </ul>

## What is one thing you really like about Prince George's County?

*Participants were asked to share one thing they really liked about the county that everyone should know about. Responses included:*

- The **great diversity of our county**—ethnicity and geography (rural, urban, and suburban).
- **Close proximity** to D.C. but not in the city.
- **Great neighborhoods** that people care about and take pride in.
- **Access to transportation options.**
- Abundance of **green space and parks**, including a significant trail network.
- **Rich community history** dating back to Colonial times.
- A **friendly, caring, community-focused** county.
- An **affordable county** that doesn't force the working class out.

For more information on ***Envision Prince George's***, please visit our website at: [www.envisionprincegeorges.org](http://www.envisionprincegeorges.org) or call 301-952-3594. TTY access 31-952-4366.

## Brainstorming Vision Ideas

**Participants brainstormed ideas in all six of the *Envision* areas: *Live, Work, Learn, Serve, Enjoy, and Sustain*. A range of ideas were proposed, including:**

### **Envision Ideas for LIVE**

1. Turn Prince George's into an elite Maryland county that contains blue ribbon schools, Fortune 500 companies, and safe family-friendly communities fostering an empowered society.
2. Provide affordable health care to all citizens including opening more free clinics that are well funded and offer a range of services.
3. Create a county that is self-sustaining with affordable housing, robust shopping, employment opportunities and programs for youth.

### **Envision Ideas for WORK**

1. Encourage entrepreneurship and development of small businesses.
2. Improve opportunities for workforce development through trade schools, technology centers, on the job training, etc.—everyone who wants a job should have one.
3. Increase the number of county residents who work in Prince George's County.
4. Create job opportunities that allow residents to reach their potential while earning a healthy living.
5. Recruit federal agencies to the county.

### **Envision Ideas for LEARN**

1. Provide equal access to computers and other technology for education throughout the county.
2. Invest in paying good teachers well.
3. Provide affordable and high quality education at all levels, including life long learning.
4. Create great schools where youth want to go and parents want to send their children.
5. Integrate University of Maryland into the county—currently it is an island.

**A statement was also submitted that cut across a number of the six *Envision* areas. It read:**

“Establish communities characterized by vibrant live-work neighborhoods with quality housing, great employment opportunities, recreation and trails, core retail, and entertainment centers, access to public transportation and no crime.”

### **Envision Ideas for SERVE**

1. Foster synergy amongst citizens, government and businesses to implement a common vision of economic and social progress.
2. Create an environment where all residents, particularly youth, are involved in community and volunteer services and projects.
3. Encourage citizens to become stewards of their county.
4. Develop a coordinated non-profit sector that can offer residents some of the services they need.

### **Envision Ideas for ENJOY**

1. Encourage exercise and build sports and learning centers across county.
2. Increase advertisements about parks and county sports teams, such as the Bowie Baysox.
3. Develop cultural arts festivals to celebrate the county's diversity.
4. Nurture and expand arts, entertainment and cultural options, especially family-focused and affordable options.
5. Increase convenient, accessible, and well-maintained bike and pedestrian connections.

### **Envision Ideas for SUSTAIN**

1. Expand local agriculture to create jobs, keep food affordable, and encourage healthier lifestyles.
2. Invest in Green-based technology.
3. Develop a convenient, countywide, accessible and integrated transit system.
4. Create more walk-able and bike-able communities.



Participants review a summary of the vision ideas they brainstormed.

## Most Important Opportunities for the County to Leverage over the Long-Term

Participants were provided a list of nine opportunities to review and prioritize. **The top three opportunities** were as follows:

1. Leverage mixed-use development—Metro, MARC, Amtrak (52%)
2. Improve education system and expand workforce training (48%)
3. Market county's assets and target core growth industries (31%)

### The remaining votes:

4. Leverage county's proximity to D.C. and Annapolis (26%)
5. Successfully recruit federal agencies (22%)
6. Leverage opportunities with non-profits (22%)
7. Leverage the strengths of the higher education system (22%)
8. Preserve rural character and develop green urban areas (22%)
9. Leverage success at National Harbor (12%)

### Additional opportunities brainstormed by participants included:

- Use Prince George's diversity to show that we can all live together and that everyone is a valued community member.
- Engage citizens as volunteers and encourage civic duty among younger generation.
- Invest in county-based small businesses.
- Use "low-rent flex space as incubators" for innovative high tech industries.

## Most Important Challenges for the County to Address over the Long-Term

Participants were also provided a list of nine challenges to review and prioritize. **The top three challenges** were as follows:

1. Public safety and crime perceptions (63%)
2. Public school system reputation (60%)
3. Insufficient coordination across sectors and governments (36%)

### The remaining votes:

4. Few incentives to attract new business (30%)
5. Access to high quality health care not affordable for many (27%)
6. High tax burden on residents (24%)
7. Training needed for jobs in new & existing industries (15%)
8. Pressure to develop in the rural and farm areas (9%)
9. Competition for scarce tourist and recreational dollars (6%)

### Additional challenges brainstormed by participants included:

- Existing cultural and racial divides and the lack of opportunities to bridge them.
- Collective lack of vision and innovative thinking.
- Tensions due to gaps in economic status.
- Lack of environmental awareness.
- Insufficient parental engagement in the public schools.

## Call to Action

### Personal Actions

Participants discussed what personal actions they could take to make a difference in Prince George's County and within their local communities. Here is a list of actions participants committed to taking in 2009 and 2010.

1. Work for sustainable development practices and to promote local agriculture and business.
2. Assist smaller communities to pool their resources to navigate the political system to better serve residents.
3. Open the Gateway Art Center in Brentwood to foster art development.
4. Get the Hispanic community together more often.
5. Volunteer in middle and elementary schools and hospitals.
6. Help make housing more affordable.
7. Take a lead in organizing arts programs throughout the county.
8. Help increase locally grown organic food consumption in the county.
9. Organize forums with the community on how to capitalize in the benefits of living in a diverse community.
10. Provide personal development classes for youth and adults to improve relationships, health and financial literacy.
11. Be personally involved with *Envision Prince George's* every step of the way to help move the process forward.

### Help Envision Prince George's

Participants discussed other ideas or suggestions about how they might help Envision Prince George's fulfill its mission. Here is a list of seven examples of recommendations participants made.

1. Help *Envision* solicit more from the county's strong faith-based communities.
2. Lend my name to a countywide petition supporting the efforts.
3. Advertise with local media outlets.
4. Help to find ways to involve the working class and poor.
5. Start classes focusing on the county's assets so that people know what they want to stay connected with.
6. Develop a green businesses plan to share with others.
7. Continue to promote open discussion among peers.
8. Have a meditation session added to activities to help clear residents' minds and have them focus on envisioning the future.
9. Help to get the State of Maryland involved.

## Evaluation Results

*Participants were asked five questions to better evaluate the Community Forum. The results were as follows:*

### Level of Satisfaction with Idea Generation:

**89% of participants** were highly (29%) or very highly (60%) satisfied with the **ideas generated from their table discussions**.  
**82% of participants** were highly (48%) or very highly (34%) satisfied with the **ideas generated from the forum overall**.

### Learn Anything New?

**100% of participants** learned something new from the forum and 59% learned quite a bit (31%) or a lot (28%).

### Level of Satisfaction with Meeting:

**79% of participants** were highly (62%) or very highly (17%) satisfied with the forum.

### Level of Interest in Staying Involved:

**69% of participants** are highly (31%) or very highly (31%) interested in staying involved in *Envision Prince George's* initiative.

## Next Steps

Through four additional Community Forums, innovative educational activities, online discussions and a countywide town meeting, *Envision Prince George's* will continue to engage those who live, work, play, serve, and more in Prince George's County to explore what kind of county they want to create in the future.

- **Next Community Forums**
  - **November 19 – Show Place Arena**
  - **December 1 – Clarion Hotel, Oxon Hill**
  - **December 3 – Prince George's Ballroom**
- **Youth Community Forum – December 5, University of Maryland**
- **Share your ideas on the website: [www.envisionprincegeorges.org](http://www.envisionprincegeorges.org)**
- **Text **ENVISION** to **41411****
- **1,000 person Town Meeting to Finalize Vision, Goals, Priorities, and Strategies**
  - **March 20, 2010 at Prince George's Sports & Learning Center in Landover**
- **Tell a friend about *Envision Prince George's*!**

For more information on  
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