

Forum Report



Envision Prince George's Community Forum Prince George's County, Maryland – December 3, 2009

More than 100 residents from Prince George's County gathered on December 3, 2009 at the Prince George's Ballroom in Landover, to explore opportunities and challenges for the county and brainstorm ideas to support a vision for its future. The Forum was the fifth 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 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>December 3</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>December 3</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Female	57%	52%	African-American/Black	72%	64%
Male	43%	48%	Asian/Pacific Islander	1%	4%
			White/Caucasian	17%	18%
<u>Age</u>			Hispanic/Latino	4%	12%
15-24	6%	19%	Native American	0%	.2%
25-34	10%	17%	Native Hawaiian	0%	0%
35-44	21%	20%	More than one race	5%	2%
45-54	30%	19%	Other	1%	.3%
55-64	23%	13%			
65 and better	10%	11%			
<u>Household Income Level</u>			<u>Geographic Representation</u>		
\$0-24,999	3%	13%	Mount Rainier/Brentwood/Hyattsville area		6%
\$25,000-49,999	15%	21%	College Park/Berwyn Heights/Adelphi/Riverdale area		5%
\$50,000-74,999	22%	22%	Greenbelt/Glenn Dale/Seabrook/Lanham area		16%
\$75,000-99,999	13%	17%	Bowie/Mitchellville/Woodmore area		18%
\$100,000 and above	43%	28%	Bladensburg/Port Towns/Cheverly/Landover area		19%
Not sure/prefer not to say	5%		Lake Arbor/Kettering/Largo/Fairmount Heights/ Seat Pleasant area		8%
			Capital Heights, District Heights, Suitland, Hillcrest Heights area		12%
			Upper Marlboro/Marilton/Westphalia/Camp Springs area		8%
			Further south or somewhere else in the county		3%
			Outside the county but I really love Prince George's		6%

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.

Live	<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 Live include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Housing ■ Public safety ■ Health and human services ■ Historic preservation ■ Urban planning
Work	<p><i>Envision</i> what a sustainable, vibrant economy that benefits all should look like in the future. Topics in Work include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic development ■ Jobs ■ Small business development and entrepreneurship ■ Agriculture ■ Business retention and attraction
Learn	<p><i>Envision</i> what a quality education for everybody—our children, young adults, and lifelong learning—should look like. Topics in Learn include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pre-school learning ■ Lifelong learning ■ K-12 schools ■ Higher education ■ Workforce development
Serve	<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 Serve include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Governance ■ Non-profit community ■ Citizen engagement ■ Planning ■ Faith-based organizations
Enjoy	<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 Enjoy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parks and Recreation ■ Arts and culture ■ Heritage ■ Entertainment ■ History
Sustain	<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 Sustain include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Transportation and other public facilities ■ Energy efficiency ■ Climate change ■ Sustainable development ■ Natural environment ■ Agriculture ■ Water quality

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:

- “Prince George’s County has **more Native Americans** than any other county in Maryland.”
- **Potential for growth and greatness** among county residents.
- **Proximity to Washington D.C.**, easy access to surrounding areas.
- **The spirit and passion of the people** of Prince George’s County is a blend of East Coast culture and southern living.
- **The hidden historical treasures** and history in the county.
- “**The energy of community empowerment**” of individuals.”
- “The opportunity it affords to **enhance the cultural vision** of the county through entertainment and education for children and adults.”

For more information on ***Envision Prince George’s***, please visit our website at: 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. Affordable, quality housing for everyone, just build McMansions.
2. High-end development, including shopping centers, theatres, 5 star dining and hotels.
3. Improve on maintenance of our streets, no litter, graffiti or boarded homes.
4. Occupy buildings with more job opportunities, i.e. federal and government jobs.
5. Stress free living with no worries of crime, housing issues or health care.
6. Better access to metro, light rails and walking paths.
7. More green buildings that provide job opportunities.

Envision Ideas for WORK

1. Higher income jobs that are closer to transportation in the county.
2. More green jobs available in the county.
3. Better healthcare within the county.
4. Increase opportunities for better paying jobs within the county. (i.e. government, local, federal).
5. Police centers within every city and shopping centers.
6. A tax friendly environment that would encourage businesses to build and multiply within the county.

Envision Ideas for LEARN

1. K-16 institutions collaborate, and neighborhood/corporations co-own schools.
2. "Investing in residents rather than importing expertise."
3. More choices, including vouchers and charter schools.
4. Increased quality at all levels: 100% certified teachers focusing more on teaching, less on testing. All students graduate.
5. "World renowned system: proud students and faculty."
6. "Parents accountable for children's learning."
7. No cost barriers to education: affordable for all.
8. "Focus on technology to make graduates competitive internationally."

Envision Ideas for SERVE

1. Faith-based organizations are fully engaged, partnering with other non-profits to provide services in their communities.
2. Enhanced opportunities for children and youth to volunteer and serve their communities.
3. Government and non-profits collaborate to develop opportunities to learn, earn and serve.
4. All civic and government venues are accessible to all citizens.

Envision Ideas for ENJOY

1. Residents are more physically fit, through biking, walking, etc.-contributing to better overall health.
2. A "vibrant arts community" –more art museums, performance art venues and partnerships between artists and businesses.
3. Better and more diverse restaurant choices.
4. "Green space that is treasured" by county residents.

Envision Ideas for SUSTAIN

1. "Maximize solar power to reduce pollution," including energy efficient homes powered by own generators.
2. Invest in light rail and increase transportation accessibility within the county.
3. Walk-able towns: workplaces near restaurants and shopping, all bus and rail accessible.
4. Greater emphasis on preservation of historic properties, "involving youth as future stewards."
5. "Local farms producing organic food."
6. Cities/towns connected, not isolated: advocate together and share project/service expenses.



Participants sharing their visions during a table discussion.

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. Improve education system and expand workforce training (72%)
2. Leverage mixed-use development—Metro, MARC, Amtrak (46%)
3. Market county's assets and target core growth industries (37%)

The remaining votes:

4. Successfully recruit federal agencies (29%)
5. Leverage the strengths of the higher education system (26%)
6. Preserve rural character and develop green urban areas (21%)
7. Build upon success at National Harbor (16%)
8. Take advantage of opportunities with non-profits (15%)
9. Take advantage of County's proximity to D.C., and Annapolis (12%)

Additional opportunities brainstormed by participants included:

- Leverage the diversity of the county.
- Utilize the county's undeveloped land for agriculture, e.g. vineyards and organic farms.
- Use the county's small-town, community feel to attract new residents.
- Take advantage of federal funds to develop energy efficient businesses and homes.
- Provide recreation to families by opening school buildings after 3:00 p.m.

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 (68%)
2. Public school system reputation (68%)
3. Training needed for jobs in new & existing industries (33%)

The remaining votes:

4. Insufficient coordination across sectors and governments (29%)
5. Access to high quality health care not affordable for many (26%)
6. High tax burden on residents (26%)
7. Few incentives to attract new business (20%)
8. Pressure to develop in the rural and farm areas (6%)
9. Competition for scarce tourist and recreational dollars (6%)

Additional challenges brainstormed by participants included:

- Lack of affordable housing, especially for low and middle income families.
- Negative image and insufficient marketing of businesses and services.
- Need to elevate standards for choosing our local and public officials.
- Low graduation rates and opportunities for training and education for our youth.
- Insufficient police patrol and officers.

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 to develop a low-cost or no-cost health clinic.
2. Development of more upscale residential areas.
3. Offer affordable legal and education services.
4. Encourage better inclusion of immigrant members of the community.
5. Work with ex-offenders and women returning to the workplace.
6. Collaborate with other non-profits to build capacity to deliver better services.
7. Enhance resident awareness of the decisions their elected officials are making.
8. Develop a major performing arts concert venue.

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. Circulate information regarding *Envision* throughout the community via listserv and other local media.
2. Mention the *Envision* process in homeowner's newsletter.
3. Work for more involvement of the youth in the county.
4. Distribute flyers in the Latino community.
5. Bring county leaders to the table and ask them for a commitment to listen to suggestions.
6. Encourage more partnership between business and non-profits for the betterment of the county.
7. Promote the use of public transportation over car use.

Evaluation Results

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

Learn Anything New?

95% of participants learned something new from the forum and 72% learned quite a bit (44%) or a lot (28%).

Level of Satisfaction with Meeting:

82% of participants were highly (52%) or very highly (30%) satisfied with the forum.

Level of Interest in Staying Involved:

79% of participants are highly (46%) or very highly (33%) interested in staying involved in *Envision Prince George's* initiative.

Next Steps

Through one final Community Forum, 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 Youth Community Forum**
December 5 – University of Maryland
- Share your ideas on the website: 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*!

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