

**Council Member Stephen Domotor**

Comment Set #3

Informal Comments on Draft 2023 Mt. Airy Master Plan (Version 121824, Draft)  
Provided at the Third Town Council - Planning Commission Workshop and to the Public  
December 18, 2024

#	PAGE(S)	LINE(S)	COMMENTS
1.	i- iv	None given.	Global comment: The Executive Summary (ES) pages are entirely new text not previously seen or commented on by the Council at the previous workshops. It needs thoughtful, careful review to ensure the messaging contained in it truly maps to and reflects the actual content of the full document. I am concerned that there is some new language that does not reflect the content and priorities of the actual document. I do not support the Executive Summary as is currently drafted without inclusion of needed changes. Some of the ES comes across as an opinion piece of the author, rather than summarizing the factual content presented in the main document.
2.	i	First paragraph	Change text TO (new text underlined): This Comprehensive Master Plan continues our efforts to wisely manage all growth, development, land use, and public services <u>in a manner that protects and enhances our residents' high quality of life and community identity.</u>
3.	i	Second paragraph.	Remove the second paragraph in its entirety. The 2013 MP did not have such a paragraph in its ES. It is suggestive that we are promoting a surge of dwelling units that could include what is considered high density housing – which is not supported by our citizens. It also contains wording that implies or gives town government “cover” for raising taxes in the future.
4.	i	Under “regional setting”	Third line: remove “also” and add “bedroom community.”  Line 7:change “four county” to “immediate”. This matches the 2013 ES wording.  Line 7: change “will always fully” to “will strive to.” This matches the 2013 ES wording.

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5.	i	Second line last paragraph.	Add “open space, and transportation.”
6.	ii	First Par.	Remove the citation to the Town Code. Add as last line: “The Plan recognizes the need to pursue a range of housing options that are responsive to our community’s needs.” That is all we need to say here.
7.	ii	Second Par.	<p>This entire paragraph is problematical. It needs to be re-worded or entirely removed. And it seems to prioritize annexations for the purposes of this increased growth and “missing middle” housing rather than a key goal of annexation which is to provide a buffer and mitigate the effects of growth from areas surrounding our town.</p> <p>It states “Regarding housing, the Plan acknowledges a demand for more rental inventory.” Question: where in the Plan is this cited?</p> <p>A potential re-write: Simply focus on the annexations portion and use as follows: “The Plan’s proposed annexations for consideration are intended to help mitigate and buffer the impacts of regional growth on the town’s character, and provide opportunities for more water, and for open space, parks and recreation to address our sizable open space deficit.”</p>
8.	ii	Transportation Network Section	This seems to focus only on the pedestrian safety aspect and not the overall traffic safety issues and need for roadway improvements to address failing intersections and heavy traffic loads, etc. And the need for widening of Rt. 27. Also, the Plan’s intention to address the concept of “complete streets.”

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			Add the following: “ The Plan also highlights the need to widen Rt. 27 and address marginal or failing Rt. 27 intersections to improve traffic safety, and to develop guidelines for “complete streets” that provide safe and convenient accommodation to all users including pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike.”
9.	iii	Citizen Participation	Change the last sentence and add an additional sentence such that it reads: “Town residents’ participation in the 2020 Community Survey and previous Town Surveys was considered in creating this Plan. The survey results provided very clear direction as to the residents’ desires and how they feel the Town government should proceed. The residents’ participation in Public Hearings when any growth or development is being considered will always be valued and considered.” Note: This added sentence is taken directly from the 2013 Master Plan ES and it should apply equally today in this new Plan.
10.	iii	First bullet under Growing Wisely.	Add to the end of the first bullet: “...and our quality of life and community identity are protected and enhanced.”
11.	65-70	All – redline text added since Workshop #2 which we have not yet commented on.	<p>Much new redline text was added to pages 66-70 within the Land Use, Housing and Zoning Chapter. I do not concur on this section of the Plan as it is currently written. See my attached markup of these pages for specific minimum changes I believe are needed.</p> <p>Relative to page 65 text lines 1904-1910 on affirmatively furthering fair housing, I do not believe upon initial consideration that our town has any of the issues listed within the five bullets presented (e.g., such as “overcome patterns of segregation.”)</p>

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			<p>It is not readily apparent to me that the authors/town staff involved in drafting the Plan did any meaningful analysis upon which to base some of their conclusions. As an example, there is no presentation of the current housing mix in the town (e.g. percentage of single family homes, townhouses, multi-family). The 2013 Master Plan indeed included such information. This “baseline” would seem equally needed here in this 2023 Plan for any meaningful analysis of the housing situation and potential future needs. Also, the Plan could benefit from an analysis (e.g., using census data) of how many of our current residents would fall within the income level that meets the “lack of affordability” criteria.</p> <p>I suggest you incorporate these points in some fashion into the subject section:</p> <p>New housing to address the needs of the community should be added such that the relative town-wide proportions in scale and numbers for different housing unit types remain balanced. This overall proportional “mix” of housing has served us well in Mount Airy and our citizens agree. We do not want to see a surge in attached housing types that reflect high density housing that our citizens have told us through multiple town surveys they do not want.</p> <p>New housing units tied to addressing the need for “affordable housing” should be done in a way that is in harmony with the immediate neighborhood (in form, scale, and relative numbers of units) in which it is to be added, along with the surrounding neighborhoods and then more broadly within the Town of Mount Airy.</p> <p>The town already has a range of zoning categories that collectively offer opportunities for a diversity of housing types that could be responsive to the housing needs of the community, and at least one of them specifically cites as an objective, “expand the opportunity to support diversified housing options within an integrated site design of varying land uses.”</p>

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			Addressing entry-level housing challenges should also include strategies to stabilize the path to home ownership. Examples could include conducting outreach to local lenders to discuss disparities in rates and lending access; and expanding entry-level home buyer assistance and educational programs, to include availability of favorable mortgage products and terms available to them, some of which require no down payment and not as dependent on credit scores.