

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **delmarvanow.com**  
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

---

Article published Dec 1, 2005

## City, county cooperation urged for impact fees, growth plans

By James Fisher  
Daily Times Staff Writer

SALISBURY -- Ten years after the release of a pathbreaking report on how Wicomico could keep at bay residential development patterns that swallow up rural farmland, some of that damage has already been done, and a change in how government works is needed to prevent more harm from happening, one of the report's authors said Wednesday.

King Burnett, a local environmental attorney who was one of nearly three dozen contributors to the Quarter Century report released in 1995, said county and municipal governments have not harmonized their planning efforts in ways the report said they could to make sure residential growth was done well.

"It's probably more serious today than it has been for a long time," Burnett said. "We need the city and the county to sit down and talk about growth boundaries. ... We can all see that a great deal has not been accomplished."

Burnett spoke at a town hall-style meeting sponsored by the Wicomico Environmental Trust, and reviewed what growth measures the 1995 committee had supported. One key element was the emphasis of directing growth toward urban areas, Burnett said, and that meant cities should be made more attractive to developers than unincorporated areas.

"We have to watch out for the push-pull of high impact fees in the city and low impact fees in the county," Burnett said, noting that both the county government and Salisbury's City Council are now considering impact fee legislation without formally coordinating their efforts.

Alan Girard, a panelist at the talk who works for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, said many major recommendations of the 1995 report have been passed over, and that many of the dangers it identified remain.

"If this report were released yesterday or last month, we would say, boy, that's right on," Girard said.

Salisbury City Council President Michael Dunn, another panelist, said he agreed with Burnett that the city and county should coordinate their impact fee research.

"I agree, sadly, that they're worse today than they've ever been," he said of city-county relations.

Salisbury and Wicomico County planner Jack Lenox, speaking about the history of zoning regulations in

the county, said that standards had been very lax in the years before the 1995 report was written.

The rule of the road at one time, he said, was "if nobody shows up to oppose (a development), the board will probably grant it." Now, he said, planners think differently about how land should be used.

"There are certain properties that should not be developed intensely," Lenox said, and added, "We have to be concerned about losing the good aspects of growth if we don't have our act together."

Several local elected officials were in the audience for the evening forum at Wor-Wic Community College, along with Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Lewis Riley.

- Reach James Fisher at 410-845-4655 or [jfisher@salisbury.gannett.com](mailto:jfisher@salisbury.gannett.com).
-