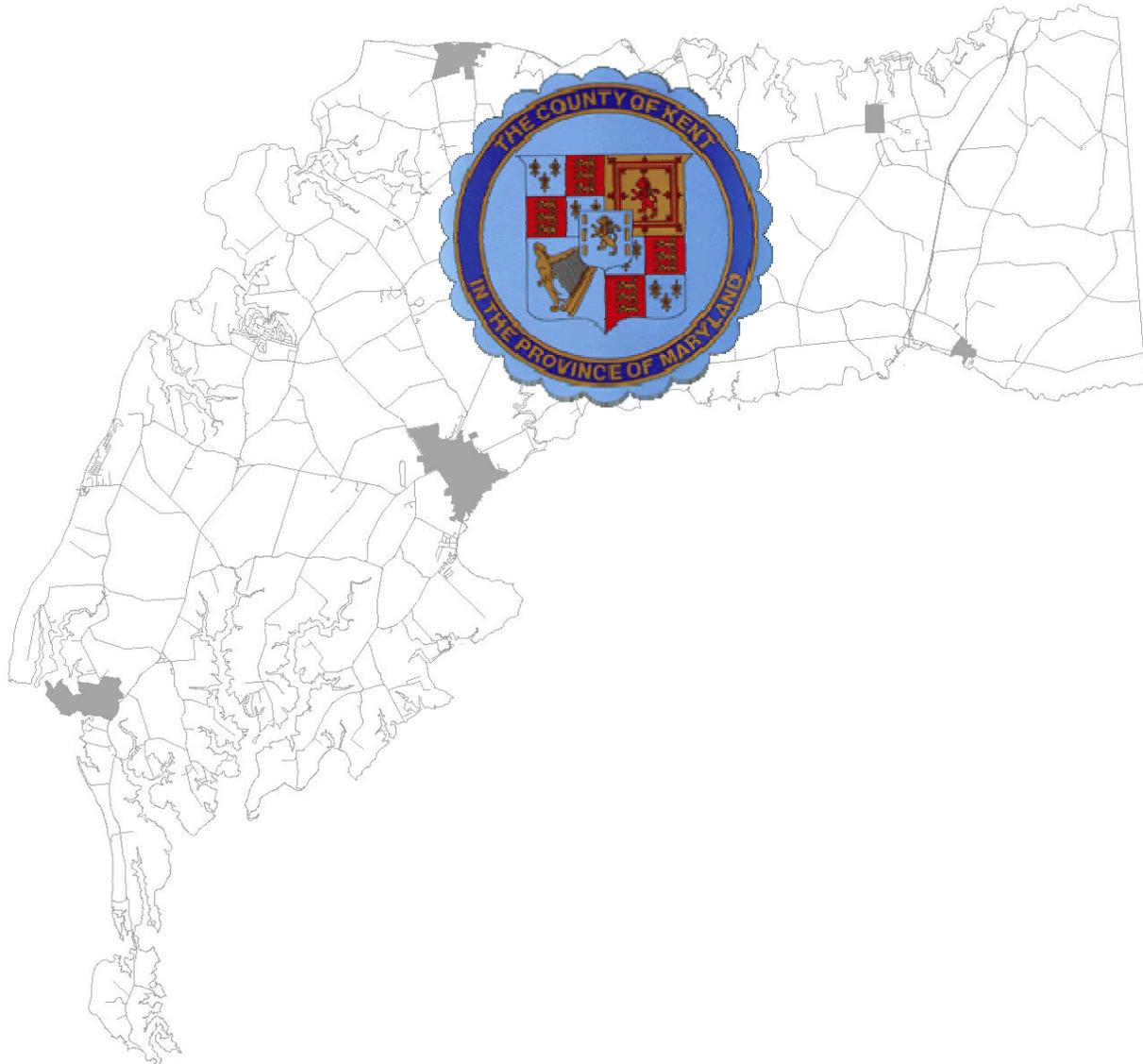


COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



KENT COUNTY, MARYLAND

MAY 2006

**THE KENT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
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I. A VISION FOR KENT COUNTY

Kent County is rich in agricultural, natural, cultural, and human resources. Quality soils, topography, climate, woodlands, the Chesapeake Bay with its tidal tributaries, wetlands, and marshes create an environment rivaled by few other areas. These natural features enrich our economy and the lives of our citizens. Kent County is also steeped in historic tradition. Towns and villages have a strong sense of identity, retaining their original design as a framework for their continuous and steady development. From these singular resources and features emerged our local culture, character, and economy.

The Eastern Shore is now facing unprecedented change. Historic growth rates and patterns are being undermined by suburban development. Improvements to US Route 301 and discussions of an additional Bay crossing, place the County in a perilous position that is detrimental to its vision.

We are challenged, as we look to the future, to protect the quality of our environment and its inherent quality of life while meeting the needs of all our citizens. This special place has been purchased at a high cost, one of limited job opportunities, particularly for our young citizens. Although our economy has expanded from a chiefly farm-based and water-related one to one which includes industry, retail, tourism, and other service-oriented businesses, we must continue to seek innovative ways to diversify our economy and provide job opportunities for all Kent County citizens. Vigilantly safe-guarding those precious and irreplaceable resources unique to Kent County and wisely planning for change, we look forward to the challenge of the future.

The following principles will serve as a guide to decision making in the future:

- ☞ A diverse, stable economy that provides economic opportunities for all of our citizens is essential to a healthy and balanced community.
- ☞ Stewardship of our lands and waters is a universal ethic.
- ☞ The County is committed to supporting agriculture and promoting working landscapes.
- ☞ Preservation of our cultural, historic and archeological resources is essential to maintaining our sense of place.
- ☞ In order to preserve the County's unique quality of life, growth is planned to occur slowly and deliberately at a manageable rate which does not exceed the County's historic growth rate.
- ☞ Growth will occur in limited and specific locations in a way that complements and enhances each community's character. These locations will be a result of mutually agreed upon boundaries established by working with existing communities.
- ☞ Elements necessary to enrich the lives of our citizens and sustain a healthy community include a high-quality system of public and private schools, opportunities for recreation and cultural activities, effective transportation systems, a variety of housing types, and a safe and healthy environment.

This document was prepared by Kent County citizens for Kent County citizens. It remains the responsibility of the citizens of Kent County, both present and future, to promote and protect this Vision of the future

II. PURPOSE OF THE KENT COUNTY PLAN

AUTHORITY

The Comprehensive Plan of Kent County has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Section 3.08 of Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

PURPOSE

The Comprehensive Plan is the principle document outlining County direction, policy, and action regarding land use. It is a policy statement that can be valid in the face of change over many years. Properly used, the Plan is the basis for decision-making at all levels of government and will guide the private sector toward acceptable, beneficial and profitable activities affecting the land and people.

The Comprehensive Plan is the statement of development policy for Kent County by the County Commissioners. The Plan presents a series of goals and strategies to guide the preparation of County regulations and the application of County programs. These goals and policies are organized in eight functional categories dealing with the economy, towns and villages, the countryside, the environment, housing, transportation, community facilities and public services, and historic and cultural preservation. Each section contains a summary of important issues and trends, a statement of goals which should guide the County's administrative programs, and a list of strategies that the County will take to reach these goals.

The Plan requires public cooperation and support for its accomplishments. It also requires far-sighted and steadfast leadership by public agencies to support the Vision and goals, to stick with the long range view when it is attacked in the name of expediency or quick profit, and to promote this view in all matters dealing with the Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to serving as a guide to expenditure of public funds in the acquisition of land and the construction of public facilities, the Plan forms the necessary background for the zoning and subdivision regulations. Zoning and subdivision standards are necessary to achieve orderly growth and an acceptable pattern of land use. Growth and change occur with time, and good planning principles must be established to preserve our vision for the future.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND LAWS

Kent County, as required by State laws, has prepared and continues to prepare a variety of specific plans and ordinances. Among them are the County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, Solid Waste Plan, Economic Development Plan, Land Use Ordinance, "Stories of the Chesapeake" Heritage Area Management Plan, and the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. While providing more detailed information and policy, all plans and laws shall be in compliance with, and conform to, the County Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides policy direction and guides the development of these other plans.

III. BACKGROUND

Kent County, founded in 1642, is the second oldest county in Maryland. Prior to European colonization, the area was inhabited by a mosaic of different native societies, including the Tockwoghs and Wicomisses. Early settlers were greeted with the magnificent expanse of the Chesapeake Bay, the beautiful Chester and Sassafras Rivers, waters teeming with fish; myriads of waterfowl, mighty forests, and rich soil. Although much has changed since then, much remains the same. The hallmarks of Kent County continue to be the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, and our rich farmland. These resources shaped much of our economy, culture and character and they continue to serve as the foundation of this Comprehensive Plan.

Kent County is changing and one of the primary purposes of this document is to plan for change and guide new development. The major driving forces behind change in Kent County are described below. Additional information is contained in the Comprehensive Plan Background document.

POPULATION: Kent County's population will continue to steadily grow.

Kent County continues to have the lowest population of any county in Maryland, but in 2000, the Census reported the county's highest population to date. The County's 2000 population of 19,197 represents approximately an 8% increase since 1990. This growth rate has been significantly lower than nearby counties, the Upper Eastern Shore region, and the State and is projected to continue to slowly increase at least through the year 2010. The Maryland Department of Planning projects Kent County's population will reach 20,500 by the year 2010, and 21,250 by the year 2015.

DEMOGRAPHICS: Kent County's population is aging.

Kent County's population reflects an out-migration of young adults and an in-migration of older age groups, especially those of retirement age. Since 1997, there has been a slow but steady decline in the number of school-age children, while the number of citizens over 60 has continued to increase. The Maryland Department of Planning projects this trend to continue. In 2000, the median age for the county was 41.3 years compared to 36 years for the entire State, and almost 25% of the county's population was over 60 years old.

EMPLOYMENT: Well-paying jobs are scarce in Kent County.

Well over half of the new jobs created in the County since 1985 occurred in the two lowest paying segments of the economy, services and retail trade. The economy has transitioned from one based on manufacturing and the natural resource based industries to one based on service providing industries. In 2004, Kent County had the 5th largest increase in jobs in the state.

HOUSING: Single family detached housing remains the dominant housing type in the County.

In 2000, Kent County had 9,410 total housing units (including owner and renter occupied units and vacant units), representing a 15% increase between 1990 and 2000. Approximately 78% of all housing units are single family detached units and over 70% of the 7,666 occupied housing units are owner-occupied. During the 1990's, nearly 65% of the new housing units constructed were single family detached homes, and 31% of the new units were in multi-family developments of 10 or more units.

SUBDIVISION ACTIVITY: The number of existing undeveloped lots in the County could satisfy projected population growth for more than the next 30 years.

In 2005, Kent County had 3,653 undeveloped parcels representing 28.8% of the total number of parcels in the County. Although many of these parcels may not meet Health Department or zoning regulations in order to build, many will be able to meet these requirements. In addition, 250 new parcels have been created since 1997 in the unincorporated areas of the County. An analysis of subdivision activity shows an increasing trend towards smaller lots located within developed areas. The County is working with the Maryland Department of Planning on a building capacity analysis to better determine the potential for development.

LAND USE: New lots and new dwellings are being located within already developed areas and approximately 20% of the land area is protected by private easements or held as parkland.

Between 1973 and 2002, the amount of developed land increased by almost 135% according to the Land Use/Land Cover data maintained by the Maryland Department of Planning. However, much of Kent County remains open. Over 65% is forest, wetlands or used for agriculture compared to 7.5% that is developed.

AGRICULTURE: Kent County is taking proactive measures to slow the rate at which farmland is lost to development.

According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, Kent County continues to lose farmland albeit at a slow rate. The agricultural community is committed to maintaining a strong industry and supported changes to the Land Use Ordinance that limits the ability of landowners to create farmettes. The right to farm law was readopted in 2004 with stronger language to better protect farmers from potential nuisance complaints. In addition, many landowners are interested in permanently protecting their land through easements and the County Commissioners have committed county funds and resources towards these efforts.

FOREST LAND: Kent County is one of the counties with the least amount of forest cover in Maryland.

Less than 20% of Kent County is forested, reflecting the County's intensive agricultural use. According to the Department of Natural Resources, 64% of streams in Kent County have inadequate forested buffers.

IV. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

This Comprehensive Plan establishes goals and strategies to achieve our Vision for Kent County's future. The following goals and strategies address eight areas:

- ☞ Economy
- ☞ Towns and Villages
- ☞ Countryside
- ☞ Environment
- ☞ Housing
- ☞ Transportation
- ☞ Community Facilities and Public Services
- ☞ Historic and Cultural Preservation

The goals for each of these areas describe the County's policy. The strategies describe concrete actions that the County will take to achieve the goals and the County's Vision for the future.

A. ECONOMY

Kent County's economy is deeply rooted in the traditional livelihoods of farming, fishing, forestry, and hunting. Although many county residents still derive income from these industries, resource-based occupations provide full-time employment for a small and decreasing number of county workers. Alternative employment is available. Over fifty percent of Kent County's employment base is in the service industry. While some of these jobs have been created in the lower paying segments of economy-services and retail trade, many of these jobs are in education and health care. This job creation is essential in addressing the needs of an aging population for medical and personal services and convenient access to retail shopping in Kent County.

Many of our young adults choose to leave the county in search of alternative economic, social, and cultural opportunities. It is a county priority to create job opportunities for more young people in Kent County without sacrificing their opportunities to earn an income that will support a family. The median household income of Kent County would be improved by providing good quality employment opportunities for people who live in the County, including those who will move into the county.

This Comprehensive Plan reaffirms the importance of traditional occupations to the Kent County economy and seeks to develop its existing business base and strong entrepreneurial spirit. The County will seek a more diversified economy that will provide economic stability, better-paying jobs, and a tax base sufficient to support improved public services and facilities. We will assist in the expansion of existing employers, attract clean industry, promote the development of small businesses, and enhance tourism.

"Quality of life" is an important site selection criteria for many major employers and therefore, preserving Kent County's rural character and villages is an integral part of the economic development strategy.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

GOAL: SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESS

Strategy: Retain and promote existing businesses

Retention and expansion of local firms is key to the economic success of the County. The County will assist in their expansion where it is consistent with the goals and policies of this plan. The County will maintain an inventory of available commercial and industrial buildings and land to assist local firms in finding space for expansion within Kent County. The County will continue a program to achieve ongoing personal contact between Kent County businesses and representatives of County government.

Strategy: Support the County's Health Care Industry

Kent County is fortunate to serve as the home of the Chester River Hospital Center, as well as several other health care facilities. These health care providers are critical contributors to the overall economy, add positively to the medical employment niche of the community, and provide vital services to County's residents.

Kent County is committed to supporting its health care industry. The County will focus economic development efforts to support existing health care businesses and encourage the development of new health-related businesses, thereby reinforcing a strong economic base while meeting the needs of its community.

Strategy: Assist in the growth of existing small business

The Planning Commission will identify a contact person within the Department of Planning and Zoning to assist existing employers through the subdivision and building permit process. The County's Economic Development Office will assist such businesses through the transition from home-based business into the larger business community.

Strategy: Maintain and enhance a quality of life that is attractive to business

Kent County offers scenic qualities, water-based recreation, and proximity to metropolitan areas that are attractive amenities for business creation and relocation. The County will encourage private-sector initiatives to provide other desirable amenities. The goal is to provide the life style and amenities desired by employers while retaining small town character.

GOAL: EXPAND AND PROVIDE MORE DIVERSITY IN THE SIZE, NUMBER AND TYPE OF BUSINESSES IN THE COUNTY

Strategy: Promote development of small locally owned businesses

The County's Economic Development Office will act as an information clearinghouse to promote small and minority-owned business development by making entrepreneurs aware of state-sponsored small business loan, grant, and incubator programs, as well as assistance available from the federal Small Business Administration. The County will continue to support and encourage small and minority-owned businesses to use the local chapter of SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives), the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Small Business Administration (SBA).

Strategy: Encourage the development of cottage and home-based business

Cottage and home-based businesses provide opportunities for telecommuting, entrepreneurship and reuse of older buildings. The Planning Commission will evaluate current regulations that pertain to cottage and home-based businesses and recommend revisions to these regulations to encourage the creation of these low impact businesses. Likewise, the Planning Office will assist cottage and home-based businesses through the permitting process. The County's Economic Development Office will assist such businesses through the transition from home-based business into the larger business community.

Strategy: Recruit new businesses which are desirable to the community

The County will recruit environmentally sound, well-paying sustainable industries. Sustainable industries are defined as those which do not destroy or undermine the resources they are dependant upon, have some close or inherent link to the community and support other public goals and policies. In particular, the county will target businesses that support traditional life styles and in turn, maintain the character of the countryside. Examples are agricultural industries that use raw materials from area farms or agricultural research companies.

In order to recruit new businesses, the County must identify and promote its competitive market advantage and identify the County's most desirable assets through the collection and analysis of baseline economic data, community demographics, skills, life styles and trends. This analysis will also be used to focus the County's economic development efforts. An example of a possible business is one which meets the needs of the senior citizen population, which is projected to increase over the next twenty years.

The County's Economic Development Office will establish and publicize an Economic Development Hotline to facilitate local residents who have economic development leads or ideas and to assist new and existing businesses through the local, state, and federal permitting processes.

Strategy: Enhance the County's "Information Infrastructure"

Kent County is home to a broadband internet service provider which provides approximately 20 jobs. Not only is the company's focus broadband service to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, but also it is providing much-needed upgrades to Kent County's growing service industry. Under this plan, Kent County will have dependable county-wide high speed internet service. The County will promote the broadband internet service to attract clean high-tech businesses.

Strategy: Conduct research and analysis to better focus Economic Development Efforts

Kent County will explore options for funding on-going market and development research. The purpose of the research is to:

- ☞ Obtain a better understanding of the role of economic development in the County,
- ☞ Identify successful economic development strategies,
- ☞ Identify niche, new or emerging markets appropriate to Kent County,
- ☞ Identify the needs of the increasing number of retirement age residents,
- ☞ Identify the education and skills required by existing business and those new businesses appropriate to Kent County,
- ☞ Identify the skills of existing residents and local graduates,
- ☞ Identify opportunities for specialized business clusters such as medical or green business parks.

Strategy: Promote the development of the County employment centers

The County is developing two new business parks which will have the available infrastructure necessary to attract desirable businesses and assist existing businesses with expansions. The County will actively promote these employment centers as a means to develop a more diversified economy.

By designating suitable areas of varying size, location, and natural characteristics with appropriate zoning, the County can encourage potential employers to locate in areas where employment and industrial uses are desirable and compatible. The County can also provide a stronger commercial/industrial tax base in the county to help balance county tax revenues during a period of expected population growth.

Strategy: Assist employers through the permit process

The Planning Commission will identify a contact person within the Department of Planning and Zoning to assist a prospective employer through the subdivision and building permit process.

Likewise, the Economic Development Office will launch a public awareness effort to familiarize the people of Kent County with the need to support intelligent, planned economic development in the County. Economic development is a process of creating and utilizing physical, human, financial, and social assets to generate improved and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for a community or region.

Strategy: Support the efforts of the Upper Shore Regional Council

The Upper Shore Regional Council was created in October 2003 (Chapter 100, Acts of 2003). The Council is a regional planning and development agency for Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's counties. It exists to foster the physical, economic and social development of the region. The Council initiates and coordinates plans and projects for the development of the area's human and economic resources.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with the incorporated towns and private sector economic development efforts

The County Commissioners and the Economic Development Office will work closely with the incorporated towns, the Chamber of Commerce and other private sector groups in developing an integrated and coordinated economic development strategy. Joint efforts could include assembling information for prospective employers and developing recruitment packages for businesses that are consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.

Strategy: Encourage more young people to live and work in Kent County

Create opportunities for more young people to stay in or move back to Kent County without sacrificing their opportunities to earn an income that will support a family. Improve the median household income of Kent County by providing good quality employment opportunities.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

GOAL: DEVELOP AN EDUCATED WORK FORCE WITH THE SKILLS AND TRAINING REQUIRED TO SERVE CURRENT AND FUTURE KENT COUNTY EMPLOYERS

Strategy: Commit to excellence in the school system

Kent County should strive to have the best school system in the state and cater to the needs of all students. This will require innovative practices and outreach to business and community leaders.

Strategy: Develop secondary and post-secondary school training and apprenticeship programs that will train local residents and provide skilled workers

The presence of a skilled labor force is a critical ingredient in attracting new employers as well as satisfying the growth demands of existing businesses. Training and apprenticeship programs developed in cooperation with local businesses and non-profit organizations including resource-based business will help meet their needs, while also providing opportunities for Kent County workers to advance and obtain better-paying jobs.

Kent County Government will encourage a continued dialog between the business community and the various educational institutions, including but not limited to the Kent County school systems, Washington College, and Chesapeake College, to identify those skills needed by graduates to successfully compete in the job market.

Strategy: Re-emphasize trade education at Kent County High School and in the community

Job training in our public school system must meet the needs of our present and future demand. The County recognizes the need to strive for excellence at both the academic and the vocational level in our public school system. In cooperation with the local community, Kent County will identify jobs and special skills needed in Kent County, such as historic restoration and paramedical. The County will also seek to develop partnerships with local trade organizations to provide training for a variety of job opportunities.

Strategy: Increase involvement of local businesses in local education system

The Economic Development Office will foster a cooperative relationship among the Board of Education, private employers, community colleges and training facilities to establish and nurture vocational training programs. These programs that satisfy the training needs of local businesses will develop skills in younger workers and re-train existing workers. These programs will emphasize skills that will be needed in the future and training that enables workers to learn and adapt to new technologies.

Strategy: Work with Washington College and Chesapeake College to strengthen research-based job opportunities for graduates

The County will continue to work to provide a connection between Washington College's growing strength in the research field and the County's economic development. Likewise, the County will encourage County employers to recruit Chesapeake College graduates.

Strategy: Support development of marine trade programs

Marine trades offer well-paying, skilled jobs. Marinas require staff with specialized training to service, construct, repair, commission, and maintain boats. Currently, there is a need for these skilled employees and marine trade programs that can certify students in these specialized areas are important to the County's economy.

Strategy: Promote historic restoration education

Kent County's historic preservation not only promotes our sense of community, but also provides an economic niche market for heritage tourism and historic renovation. The County will support a variety of educational tools such as historic restoration training in the high school trade education program and apprenticeship programs.

RETAIL

GOAL: DEVELOP DIVERSE RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES THAT PROVIDE WIDE AVAILABILITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES WITH COMPETITIVE SELECTIONS AND PRICES

Strategy: Promote development of local shopping and family dining opportunities

Many Kent County residents want a better selection of consumer goods and prices within the county. Currently, many residents take advantage of neighboring Delaware, which does not levy sales tax, or travel to other locations in order to find greater variety in price and style.

The Economic Development Office will assess the existing merchant mix and retail offerings and identify retail gaps. Locations for retail activities also may be identified in the Village Master Plan for the larger communities. The Planning Commission will consider traffic and other secondary impacts. Any retail development in the villages or their designated growth areas must be compatible in size, scale, and architecture with existing development and proposed design guidelines.

Strategy: Promote locally owned business

The County will act as an information clearinghouse to promote small and minority-owned business development by making entrepreneurs aware of state-sponsored small business loan, grant, and incubator programs, as well as assistance available from the federal Small Business Administration. The County will continue to support and encourage small and minority-owned businesses to use the local chapter of SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives), the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Small Business Administration (SBA). In cooperation with the local business community, the County will look for ways to highlight the local shopping opportunities that exist in the County.

NATURAL RESOURCE BASED INDUSTRY

GOAL: MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED INDUSTRIES

Strategy: Adopt a "Kent County Economic Resource Bill of Rights" that includes the right to farm, the right to fish, and the right to hunt

Farming, fishing, and hunting not only serve as the foundation of the County's economy but also of its culture. However, as the County continues to grow and diversify, the noise, odor and dust associated with these activities may be viewed as a nuisance. To avoid potential nuisance complaints and emphasize the importance of farming, fishing, and hunting, Kent County will review and strengthen, if necessary, the existing right-to-farm law and adopt right-to-fish and right-to-hunt regulations. In addition to limiting nuisance complaints, these ordinances will address zoning flexibility, equipment storage and other accessory needs of these natural resource-based industries. These will be compiled as a Kent County Economic Resources Bill of Rights and will be available to those purchasing property in Kent County.

Strategy: Promote Kent County as a boating center

Kent County has many of the basic ingredients for becoming an important boating center: an abundance of waterfront, proximity to major population centers, and existing marine infrastructure. The County's Tourism Department will promote all types of boating activity – large and small boats, boating business and industry, and tourism opportunities through boating.

Boating related businesses and industries not only include marinas, but sailmakers, yacht design and building, boat repair, yacht sales and charters. Kent County will promote use of its many assets to assure that a full range of boating related industries and businesses continue to be developed.

Boating plays an important role in the tourism efforts of the County. The County will work with the Chamber of Commerce, existing businesses, and boating professionals to identify ways to expand boating related tourism in the County. The upper reaches of the rivers, areas around Eastern Neck Island, and the county's many creeks

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provide unique opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, crabbing, rowing, and other water-related activities. The county will examine ways to promote boat rentals and other small businesses which capitalize on this asset.

Strategy: Support commercial fishing industry

The fishing industry is deeply rooted in Kent County's economy, history, and culture. The protection of the County's working waterfront and access to tidal waters are vital to the fishing industry. Kent County watermen must continue to have access to public docking facilities and vital waterways. To that end, the County is committed to providing loading and unloading access for finfish and shellfish and docking and mooring for commercial fishing boats and vessels. Kent County also supports finfish and shellfish processing.

Strategy: Reconcile the needs of both commercial and recreational interests for water access

Kent County watermen must continue to have access to waterways and places where boats and equipment can be loaded and unloaded. Currently, watermen share this access with an ever-increasing number of recreational boaters. In recognition of the importance of commercial watermen, the County will continue to provide conveniently located docking facilities through zoning and the public landings program and will establish a policy that grants priority use of public waterfront access to watermen.

Strategy: Promote agriculture as a viable industry and secure its future in the County

Economic development strategies should support agriculture as a viable and significant industry in the County. Effort should be made to attract agricultural related industries that not only provide job opportunities for county residents but also support the diversification of the agricultural industry and use raw materials from area farms.

The County will review plans, policies and regulations to ensure support for the continuance of agriculture in the County.

Strategy: Encourage the development of Farm-based business

Farm-based and value-added businesses are intended to expand the economic opportunities on farms while maintaining the agricultural character of the area. Agricultural related businesses include but are not limited to small packing/canning plants, dairies, roadside stands, crop genetic companies, and equipment repair.

Strategy: Participate in regional efforts to expand resource based economic opportunities

The county will support efforts to assist interested farmers with product diversification (including specialty and niche market development). The County will nurture entrepreneurial enterprises established by local farmers and community supported agriculture.

Strategy: Support the Chesapeake Fields Institute and other value-added initiatives

The mission of Chesapeake Fields Institute is to strengthen the profitability of traditional agricultural markets for family farms, while conserving the region's natural and cultural resources. "Preservation through Profitability" will be realized through collaboration among area family farmers, community, government, business leaders, and institutions of higher education throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. This collaboration will result in the development of a community-based food systems enterprise that is locally-owned and operated using environmentally sound practices. This will be promoted through health and education entities.

TOURISM

GOAL: ENHANCE AND EXPAND LOCALLY BASED TOURISM THAT IS ROOTED IN THE UNIQUE NATURAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES AND QUALITIES OF KENT COUNTY

Strategy: Develop a coordinated tourism marketing program

The abundance of natural, recreational, cultural, and historical resources in Kent County supports tourism as an important component of the local economy. Kent County should attract new visitors, extend the stay of visitors, and welcome repeat visitors with new attractions, events, and programs. Success will require a focused marketing effort that includes cooperation with towns, business associations, and local tourism-related businesses. This effort should encourage year-round tourist activities that promote the natural and cultural qualities of the County. History or natural resource-based tours and programs including cooperation with neighboring counties to market the Eastern Shore as a destination will help sustain year-round employment and economic opportunities.

Strategy: Integrate Kent County sites, facilities and activities with a coordinated regional tourism program

The County will actively participate in regional tourism efforts that link and promote the Eastern Shore's unique attractions and activities. This participation includes joint advertising and marketing, Civil War Trails, State Heritage Area and National Scenic Byway, theme events, and other programs that invite exploration of the Eastern Shore's historic and recreation sites. This would attract new and repeat visitors to our tourism-related businesses and encourage the visitor to stay longer by expanding the destination experience.

Strategy: Promote and expand facilities, services and activities that support natural resource-based economic development

The County will advocate the development of tourist facilities and activities that supports agricultural or maritime operations, arts and entertainment venues, eco-tourism sites and activities, and historic sites and museums, while retaining the unique character of the area and the quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors. These facilities and activities include:

- ☞ public restrooms
- ☞ adequate lodging and restaurant facilities
- ☞ arts and entertainment facilities and programs
- ☞ recreational opportunities, such as paddling, golfing, bicycling
- ☞ commercial campgrounds or primitive camp sites
- ☞ “night life” entertainment
- ☞ trail and park development
- ☞ appropriate retail and service operations
- ☞ coordinated directional signage
- ☞ interpretive historical, agricultural, cultural, and landscape markers

Strategy: Link cultural heritage and tourism

Projects and publications which link cultural heritage and tourism have the potential to become important components in the County's tourism program. For example, the County and local historic preservation organizations could develop self-guided tours, such as a farm and country tour, a waterways paddling tour, a church tour. These tours may be along designated scenic roads, roads with designated bicycle lanes, or separate hiker/biker trails. In many communities, simply providing these trails has attracted tourists.

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Strategy: Promote the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area

The County supports the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area's environmental, recreational, and cultural value, as well as its role in identifying significant historic sites and districts on the National Register of Historic Places. The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan enhances these resources, improves linkages, advances economic development strategies, and provides for stewardship and preservation.

Strategy: Promote the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway

The Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway is one of the 70 Scenic Byways in the United States. It celebrates life on the Eastern Shore. Kent County is rich in agricultural, natural, cultural, and human resources. Quality soils, topography, climate, woodlands, the Chesapeake Bay with its tidal tributaries, wetlands, and marshes create an environment rivaled by few other areas. These natural features enrich our economy and the lives of our citizens. Kent County is also steeped in historic tradition. Towns and villages have a strong sense of identity, retaining their original design as a framework for their continuous and steady development. From these singular resources and features emerged our local culture, character, and economy.

Strategy: Identify and develop year-round attractions and events that increase the County's tourism-related economic development potential including historic, cultural and arts-related activities and venues

Strategy: Develop tourism management policies

The Tourism Advisory Board, in cooperation with regional partners, will investigate programs and policies that minimize the impact of tourism. These policies may include:

- ☞ Standards and guidelines for bus tour operators
- ☞ Outreach and education to bikers and boaters

Strategy: Identify and promote theatrical and cultural arts and entertainment districts

Artists and craftsmen are a vital part of the County's economy. Arts and entertainment activities stimulate business development and improve the quality of life for the entire community. There are a number of programs to help attract new artists or assist existing artists and some require the establishment of arts and entertainment districts. The County recognizes the contributions of its artists and craftsmen and will support efforts to encourage expansion or new growth in arts-related fields.

B. TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Of all Kent County's attributes, perhaps none are as special or as identifiable as its towns and villages. Some of our communities are architectural jewels, while others retain their agricultural and utilitarian charm. One of the guiding principles of this Comprehensive Plan is to encourage growth to occur in and around these existing towns, villages, and neighborhoods thereby preserving our rural character, agricultural lands, and environment. Accomplishing this goal presents the following four challenges:

- ☞ Insuring that towns and villages maintain and enhance existing character and remain desirable places to live, thereby attracting residents who would otherwise choose to live in the countryside;
- ☞ Insuring that new growth complements and enhances the character of the existing communities;
- ☞ Insuring that the County consults with the residents of incorporated towns and existing villages regarding planned growth around their communities;
- ☞ Insuring that an affordable and a wide range of housing opportunities are available to the citizens of the county.

In Kent County, there are incorporated towns, subdivisions, and three other types of communities: hamlets, villages, and villages with public water or sewer.

A hamlet is the smallest type of community and usually consists of a few homes at a crossroads with limited commercial activity. A village is a settlement that is principally residential but supports commercial activity and other community-related activities such as a church or post office.

Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington, and Rock Hall are incorporated towns. Edesville, Fairlee, Georgetown, Kennedyville, Worton, and Butlertown are villages with public water or sewer. For the purposes of this Comprehensive

Plan, Colemans, Georgetown, Golts, Lynch, Massey, and Still Pond are considered villages. The other communities of Big Woods, Crosby, Chesterville Forest, Locust Grove, Melitota, Morgnec, Pomona, Sassafra and Sharptown are considered hamlets.

The following goals and strategies encourage development to occur within the designated growth areas (Village Centers and Town Growth Areas) while preserving the existing character of the communities and their historic and cultural features.

GROWTH IN TOWNS

The five incorporated towns of Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington, and Rock Hall are the County's principal residential, commercial, and business centers. These towns are the best locations for future growth and development. Each town has its own independent planning and zoning boards, plans, and ordinances. Given the goal of focusing growth into the towns, the County needs to coordinate and support their efforts to manage growth.

GOAL: INSURE THAT TOWNS AND VILLAGES ARE ATTRACTIVE PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK

Strategy: Promote towns and villages

The County will help make the towns active and vibrant by promoting cultural, recreational, and social events in the downtown areas. The County will also investigate tax incentives and focus federal and state funds on restoring houses and promoting small businesses within the towns. The County will encourage the location of facilities such as post offices and schools, which function as community gathering points, in the towns.

Strategy: Provide public amenities to encourage development within the designated communities

The County will develop new and enhance existing public amenities, such as parks, open spaces, pedestrian paths, landscaping, bikeways, water access, public parking areas, pedestrian trails, community centers, and other recreational facilities in the designated town growth areas and the villages.

Strategy: Require Developers to work with a citizen's participation program

Kent County residents are increasingly interested in decisions made about land use and developments in their communities because these decisions affect their quality of life. Therefore, Kent County will require developers to work with a citizen's participation plan in which the developer consults with the residents and other interested parties in an open dialogue outside the government review process. The Citizen Participation Plan is intended to facilitate communication and early and ongoing dialogue in the review process to ensure that both developers and citizens have adequate opportunities to understand and try to resolve concerns and issues related to a proposed project. The County will provide models and guidelines that describe citizen participation techniques.

Strategy: Investigate techniques to encourage the maintenance and reuse of existing structures and to eliminate physical blight.

The beauty and function of the County's villages are the product of a general awareness and active concern for the structures and landscaping of the communities. Kent County will identify tools, such as tax incentives, to encourage the maintenance and reuse of existing structures.

GOAL: COORDINATE PLANNING FOR GROWTH WITH THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Strategy: Develop Designated Growth Areas in cooperation with the towns

The County will work with interested incorporated towns to identify and map Designated Growth Areas for the towns. The Designated Growth Areas should encompass existing development and identify areas for new compact, mixed use neighborhoods. Where appropriate, the Designated Growth Area may include a growth boundary that represents the physical limits of future town growth. When approved by both the County and Town, the Designated Growth Areas will be included into both the Town and County Comprehensive Plans. This strategy will create a system of town growth boundaries that are the dividing line between areas planned for community development and green belt areas planned for resource-based uses such as agriculture, forestry and limited development designed to maintain the rural edge of each town.

Strategy: Coordinate development of the Master Plans for the Town Growth Areas with the respective incorporated town

The County will work with each of the incorporated towns in the development of Town Master Plans for their Town Growth Areas to insure consistency and integration with the existing towns Comprehensive Plan. These Town Master Plans may address growth areas, annexation, public facilities and amenities, and design and environmental guidelines. For the interim period between the adoption of the County Comprehensive Plan and the establishment of the Town Growth Area Master Plans, the County will solicit comments from the town and will require citizen participation programs, such as a charrette or similar public design workshop, for major developments.

Strategy: Coordinate project review with the incorporated towns

The County will forward any subdivisions or site plans within 1 mile of a town boundary to the town for their review and comment. The Towns' recommendations must be submitted in a time-frame consistent with and not prolong the current site plan review process.

Strategy: Developed Town Gateway Standards

The town gateways, where the transition occurs between the County's agricultural areas and its traditional town centers, strongly influence local and visitor perceptions of the County. The County will work with the Towns to develop design guidelines that will insure safe and aesthetically pleasing entrances to our Towns. These guidelines should address the accommodation of pedestrians, landscaping and screening, contextual building and site design, access improvements, and intra-parcel connections.

GROWTH IN VILLAGES

GOAL: INSURE THAT FUTURE GROWTH COMPLEMENTS AND ENHANCES THE CHARACTER OF THE EXISTING TOWNS, VILLAGES, AND HAMLETS

Strategy: Establish a Village Advisory Council

The County Commissioners will appoint a Village Advisory Council (based on applications from interested village residents) consisting of two representatives from each of the designated villages with water and sewer and one representative from each of the designated villages with private well and septic systems. This Council will advise the County Commissioners regarding issues affecting the designated village areas.

Strategy: Develop Master Plans for each designated growth area

The towns and villages of Kent County each have their own distinctive character. By targeting new growth to these areas, there is the potential of eroding this character. Sprawling subdivisions and strip commercial development along major roadways, typical of contemporary automobile-dependent development, is not in keeping with historic village settlement patterns. For these reasons, growth in our towns and villages must be carefully planned.

The County's Department of Planning will develop Master Plans for each designated Village and Town growth area within Kent County. These Master Plans are intended to guide future development within and surrounding the designated areas while responding to the unique character of each community. The County will develop these plans after consultation with incorporated towns, unincorporated villages and local residents. Until the master plan is completed for a village, proposed developments will be reviewed according to existing regulations and may require citizen's participation programs such as a charrette for major developments.

The Master Plans will promote traditional patterns of development and address components such as edges and boundaries, buildings, structures and signs, spatial relationships, public spaces and open spaces, transportation and circulation, historic sites and traditional uses, natural environment, significant views, and service facilities. The following elements are among those that define the character of each community and establish an identifiable sense of place:

Edges and Boundaries – The towns and villages will have well-defined growth boundaries in order to enhance community identity, preserve agricultural lands, and limit the extension of public services (water, sewer, etc.). Future development will be promoted within these boundaries and be restricted in the outlying rural land areas. The amount and location of designated growth areas around the existing towns and villages will be determined based on the ability to provide water and/or sewer service,

existing development, environmental constraints, the logical extension of existing roads, and the amount of anticipated growth. In some cases, there may be sufficient undeveloped land within the town or village to accommodate future development and no additional growth area will be designated.

Buildings – Buildings are an important part of a village's character. New buildings and additions to existing buildings can maintain and enhance this character. By incorporating the important architectural characteristics of a particular village, a new building or addition can blend with its surroundings. These important architectural design elements include roof shape, building proportion and scale, the number and spacing of doors and windows, massing, placement on the lot, building footprint, and building materials and details. Each town and village master plan will provide voluntary architectural design guidelines addressing these design elements. These guidelines are intended to help residents and businesses make improvements to their properties that enhance the overall character of the town or village.

Spatial Relationships – Spatial relationships are a vital element in the definition of community character. Historic patterns of development and traditional spatial relationships between elements will be maintained, enhanced, and encouraged to guide placement of future development.

Public Spaces and Open Space – Within the communities public and open spaces will be designated, prioritized, planned, and designed while considering location, access, linkages and function of these areas. These public and open spaces will provide a variety of uses including open space and natural environment, developed community spaces and recreational facilities. The designated communities will explore and implement financial options for the acquisition and maintenance of these public spaces and facilities.

Transportation and Circulation – Properly-planned and designed vehicular and pedestrian pathways provide efficient and safe circulation to and throughout the communities. The County will develop comprehensive transportation plans for the communities including: public transportation services, pedestrian linkages (bikeways, pathways, sidewalks and trails), vehicular corridors (public streets, alleys and roadways) and accessible public parking. These elements will be planned and designed to establish linkages and accessibility within the communities and throughout the County.

Historic Sites and Traditional Uses – Historic preservation promotes the revitalization of our towns, villages, and insures a sense of community. Economic benefits can be realized through increased property values and preservation of resources to support heritage tourism. The preservation of historic and cultural resources will be incorporated into the planning and development of the designated growth areas. Each Master Plan will include a discussion of eligibility for National Historic District status.

Natural Environment – The relationship of the natural environment to the community is an important element in the definition of community character. The protection and preservation of the natural environment will be incorporated into the planning and development of the communities and designated growth areas. The communities will promote and maintain the significance of the waterfront environment including the Chesapeake Bay, rivers, and streams.

Significant Views – Prominent views within and surrounding communities reflect and typify the community character. Significant visual elements and vantage points within and surrounding the communities will be identified and prioritized. Measures will then be established to protect these characteristic views and visual elements. These views could include significant elements within the community, an identifiable icon of the community's character, prominent views within the community, and entranceways or waterfront areas.

Community Service Facilities – Service facilities provide the means for a community to be self-sufficient and maintain cohesiveness and community identity. Public services such as water and sewer, post office, and community centers will be encouraged and promoted in the planning and development of the designated communities. The communities will also promote private enterprises such as retail stores, and professional services and businesses.

Timing and Phasing of Future Growth – Large developments, if developed without phasing, have the potential to overwhelm the existing villages. Each Village Master Plan will look at the infrastructure and amenities necessary to minimize the impact of new development on the existing village. In addition, the plans may identify a sustainable annual growth rate and identify tools designed to assure that development does not exceed that rate.

MODERATE DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

Kent County has residential areas of moderate density development. These Neighborhood Development Areas include the large rural subdivisions and residential concentrations such as Gregg Neck/Shorewood, Chesapeake Landing, Coopers Lane, Kentmore Park, and Tolchester. While these areas are largely developed, some additional development, infill and redevelopment are expected. The County does not expect to create new Neighborhood Development Areas.

GOAL: INSURE THAT ALL NEW DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT MEETS A HIGH STANDARD OF PLANNING, WORKMANSHIP, AND DESIGN

Strategy: Enhance the character of the Neighborhood Development Areas

The County will enhance the character of designated Neighborhood Development Areas by encouraging compatible infill development and community services, and reinforcing neighborhood identity through appropriate landscaping, signage and architecture.

Strategy: Insure that future development, redevelopment, and infill is completed in an environmentally and context sensitive manner

The County will encourage techniques such as conservation subdivision as a means to protect environmentally sensitive areas, groundwater resources and their recharge areas, historic archeological and cultural resources, and scenic viewsheds.

COMMUNITY DESIGN

Kent County's unique character and special sense of place did not happen by accident. It is a result of many years of effort by County citizens to preserve and enhance the County's diverse gifts. This plan seeks to maintain a traditional development pattern of compact towns and villages surrounded by working landscapes. Given the importance of the towns and villages to the County's overall character, the County will emphasize the traditional design, scale, and character through all new development and improvement efforts.

GOAL: ESTABLISH FOR ALL COMMUNITIES A DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS, INCLUDING DESIGN GUIDELINES AND A DESIGN OVERVIEW COMMITTEE, FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT AND MAJOR RENOVATIONS.

Strategy: Establish design guidelines

Design guidelines provide the means to guide future development in a manner which reflects existing community character. As part of the Master Plan process, the County will work with the designated growth areas to develop design guidelines. These guidelines will address landscaping, signage, and site design. Maintaining historic patterns of development and spatial relationships between buildings and the street will be required to insure future development is compatible with existing community character.

Voluntary architectural guidelines will also be developed as part of each town and village master plan. These architectural guidelines are intended to help residents and businesses make improvements that enhance the overall character of the town or village.

Strategy: Encourage a wide variety of housing styles and sizes in all developments

The wide variety of housing styles in the county's communities adds significantly to its sense of place. Throughout the country, communities have become increasingly concerned about the long-term impacts and sustainability of neighborhoods when rows of similar houses with repetitive rooflines, front facades, and garage doors come to define their character. Kent County will investigate ways to assure that new developments provide a varied street scene.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with village residents and community organizations to develop a street improvement, tree planting, and maintenance program for all villages and hamlets.

Street trees contribute to the health of the community, the beauty and the overall character of historic villages. The County will work cooperatively with property owners, residents, and business and community organizations to plant street trees along village roads and to implement other street and roadside improvements identified in the Village Master Plans.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

In order to achieve the County's goals and objectives, the County will investigate innovative growth management tools that control the scale, location, type, intensity, and timing of development and redevelopment. Where appropriate, the County will work with the incorporated towns in developing and implementing these tools. This system of tools must be consistent with the overall vision for the County and may only be successful through regional cooperation, active citizen involvement, and an ongoing evaluation of the actual result of the tools.

Strategy: Develop a pro-active Capital Improvement Program

A strong Capital Improvements Program (CIP) identifies the new or improved facilities and services required to support anticipated growth while realizing the County's vision for the future. A CIP may include an analysis of the fiscal impacts of growth, a prioritized list of needed improvements and facilities, their estimated cost (including operation, maintenance, and life cycle cost), and the proposed means of meeting those costs. Given the level of detail contained in a CIP, it usually extends only five or six years into the future but is updated every year as a part of the budget process.

Strategy: Coordinate future development with the provision of infrastructure

Kent County will explore options to coordinate development in the towns and villages with public infrastructure improvements. The county will carefully review these options for appropriateness to a rural community and for unintended consequences.

Strategy: Investigate means to insure that development pays its share of the cost of providing public facilities and services

Revenues from new growth should be sufficient to pay for all public service and facility expansions required by the new growth plus the wear and tear that the development imposes on existing infrastructure. It should include a proportionate share of funding for scheduled replacements and the potential impact on housing cost and of traffic congestion.

Strategy: Develop a series of indicators as a means of evaluating the success of the County's Plans and Policies

The County will develop and monitor various performance indicators on a regular basis over an extended period of time as a means to determine if the County's growth and development is consistent with the vision of the Comprehensive Plan.

C. COUNTRYSIDE

The open, flat expanses of rich fertile soil that blankets the county is a gift of immeasurable value. Approximately 57% of the County is defined as prime farmland as compared with 23% of Maryland as a whole. The County has some of the best farmland in the United States and this combined with the proximity to a variety of markets makes Kent County an ideal location for agribusinesses to thrive. According to the 2002 US Census of Agriculture, the market value of production was \$66.8 million – up 8% from 1997. Crop sales accounted for \$38 million and livestock sales accounted for \$28.8 million of the total value. In addition to being an important component of the local economy, agriculture also provides a picturesque agrarian landscape which contributes to the tourism industry and the overall quality of life for Kent County residents.

Growth in our region poses a serious threat to farmland. In 1997, the American Farmland Trust identified the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain (primarily Delaware and the Maryland Eastern Shore), as the ninth most threatened agricultural region in the United States. Sprawling residential and commercial developments are slowly eroding our agricultural base, an asset that can never be replaced. Not only does sprawl directly affect agriculture by consuming farmland but indirectly affects the farmland that remains. Agriculture is not always compatible with nearby homes. Non-farm residents in agricultural areas make it more difficult to farm by objecting to the noise, odor and dust associated with farming, and by making it more difficult to move equipment on busy roads. Non-farm neighbors may also oppose the expansion and diversification of nearby agricultural operations.

It only takes a short drive in any direction away from Kent County to see the development pressure which Kent County faces. Development pressure may not be as easily recognizable within Kent County but the symptoms are clear.

- ☞ Between 1996 and 2003, 221 new lots were created with 44% of those lots being created in 2002 and 2003. During this same time period, 55% of the new lots were created in the countryside.
- ☞ Between 2004 and 2005, the average size of new lots has decreased, although new lots in the countryside still tend to be larger than new lots in areas zoned for development.
- ☞ Between 1997 and 2002, the number of farm operations and the average farm size has remained fairly constant, but the median farm size has decreased from 179 acres to 160 acres.
- ☞ There continues to be a large percentage of absentee ownership of agricultural land which the National Agricultural Land Study identifies as a symptom of an urbanizing community.

However, agriculture in Kent County remains strong. Investment in machinery and buildings continues to be high. Competition for land to rent remains high and active farmers are purchasing agricultural land. At 66%, Kent County has the highest percentage of total land area in farms of any county in the State, as reported in the 2002 Census of Agriculture. In addition, in 2002 and 2003, the majority of the new lots created were located in areas zoned for development.

Agriculture is the thread which runs through our economy, our culture, our history, and our everyday experiences. We cannot afford to have this thread unravel. In many areas farmland is considered undeveloped land or an interim use. In Kent County, however, we view agriculture as a permanent and preferred land use. In order to preserve farmland, we must enhance the economic viability of agriculture in the County and discourage non-agriculturally related uses of rural land, while implementing strategies to encourage new development to locate in and around our existing towns and villages.

Kent County recognizes that a successful farmland preservation program requires a comprehensive approach that integrates a variety of techniques, promotes the purchase of farms by farmers and minimizes the potential conflicts between farmers and their non-farm neighbors. The following goals and strategies represent a broad based program for the support and preservation of agriculture in Kent County. It is a program that was not easily developed but is the key to the success of many of the goals of this plan.

GOAL: SUPPORT AGRICULTURE AS A PERMANENT AND PREFERRED LAND USE

Strategy: Promote Kent County as an agriculturally friendly county

The County will promote itself as an agriculturally friendly place. It has served and will continue to serve as a place for farmers who want to continue farming. The county will periodically review and, if necessary, update the right to farm ordinance.

Strategy: Support programs and initiatives to maintain the economic viability of agriculture

The County will consider the impact on agriculture when making decisions and will ensure that farmers are represented on appropriate boards and commissions.

Strategy: Identify Land for Agricultural Use

The Agricultural Advisory Commission has identified and mapped farmland that should be for agricultural use. The agricultural areas consist of a contiguous area predominantly devoted to agriculture or forestry, principally composed of Class I, II, and III Soils, and is large enough to support a variety of agricultural activities. The sum of these areas consists of enough land to help maintain a market for the necessary agricultural support services in the County. The agricultural areas will contain some sensitive areas not well suited for agriculture to provide large contiguous areas. The purchase of easements and efforts of local land conservancies will be targeted to these areas. This map will be periodically reviewed.

GOAL: SUPPORT AGRICULTURE THROUGH OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Strategy: Promote a regional Farm Link Program

The County will encourage a local agricultural interest group to establish a Farm Link Program which helps match farmers (especially young farmers) with those who want to sell or lease their farms.

Strategy: Develop an outreach program to recognize agriculture and its importance to the County

It is important for visitors and new county residents to recognize the importance of agriculture and its value to the County. Outreach through brochures, interpretive sites along the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway, or signs located at key gateways may encourage people to become more aware of the countryside and to better understand the needs of farmers.

Strategy: Promote the use of best management practices and support full funding of technical assistance and cost share programs

Although most farms already employ best management practices, there is a need to develop comprehensive farm management plans and update existing practices. Comprehensive farm management means coordinated nutrient and erosion control practices, which are one of the best ways to mitigate the environmental impacts of agriculture. One way to introduce new practices to farmers, contractors and the community is with agricultural and habitat restoration field days. Increased funding is necessary to provide the technical assistance to prepare the plans and the cost share to then implement the plans.

GOAL: MAINTAIN AGRICULTURAL LAND AND FORESTS

Strategy: Retain the Agricultural Zoning District

The County has established and will maintain the Agricultural Zoning District. It is important to focus attention on agriculture as an industry and not to merely address open space or the preservation of rural character. In Kent County, the continuance of agriculture as an industry, has always been and will continue to be a top priority. For agriculture to continue as a viable industry, specific standards which address preferred uses, farmland retention and diversification of the agricultural economy are essential.

- ☞ Farming, animal husbandry and agribusiness are the primary uses in the Agricultural Zoning District. Agriculture, including animal husbandry is the preferred and primary use in the agricultural zoning district. Non-farm construction is not appropriate. To minimize conflicts between land uses, non-farm construction must be limited and that which is allowed must officially recognize the characteristics of an active agricultural community, i.e. odor, dust, noise. In particular, housing development should be limited and consideration given in subdivision design to the potential effects on neighboring agricultural operations. Subdivisions and the sale of long strips of lots fronting on existing roads should be avoided.
- ☞ The ability to diversify agricultural operations and to expand agribusiness and agricultural support services is crucial to the continuance of agriculture as an industry. These businesses are critical adjuncts of the agricultural industry and may involve noise, dust and odor. The County will review existing setbacks and buffers for these types of business keeping in mind that agriculture is the preferred use in this area and non-farm construction is discouraged.
- ☞ Farm-based businesses and cottage and home-based occupations that are compatible with agricultural operations are encouraged in the agricultural zoning district as a means to further diversify the County's economy.

☞ Large contiguous areas of prime agricultural land are critical to an expanding and prosperous agricultural industry. The preservation of these large contiguous areas reduces the potential for conflicts between farmers and their non-farm neighbors, allows the diversification of agricultural operations and reduces the need for regulations governing nuisances sometimes associated with agribusiness. It is therefore essential to reduce the amount of land consumed by development and to promote the Agricultural Zoning District as the priority area for the targeting of easement programs.

☞ Public water and/or sewer systems will not be extended into this zoning district except to correct public health emergencies. The extension of services shall not be interpreted as allowing additional development and allocations will not be granted to parcels between developed areas and treatment facilities.

Strategy: Retain the Resource Conservation District

The County will maintain its current standards for the Resource Conservation District. This district is intended to:

- ☞ Conserve, protect, and enhance the overall ecological values of the Critical Area, its biological productivity, and its diversity;
- ☞ Provide adequate breeding, feeding, and wintering habitats for those wildlife populations that require the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, or coastal habitats to sustain populations of those species;
- ☞ Conserve the existing developed woodlands and forests for the water quality benefits that they provide.
- ☞ Conserve the land and water resource base necessary to maintain and support such uses as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture. It includes areas characterized by nature-dominated environments (that is, wetlands, forests, abandoned fields) and resource-utilization activities (that is, agriculture, forestry, fisheries activities, or aquaculture).

Countryside

Strategy: Review the Rural Character Zoning District

The purpose of the Rural Character Zoning District is to satisfy the market demand for rural lots in a location that minimizes conflicts with agricultural operations while maintaining rural character. The Rural Character District may function as a transition between towns, villages, existing developments and the Agricultural Zoning District.

- ☞ Residential development will follow design standards to preserve rural character. These design standards will provide guidelines for protecting significant rural features, preserving scenic views, designing with the natural topography, and locating of new buildings.
- ☞ Recreational uses, such as golf courses, racquet courts, and stables would be allowed in this area, but most commercial and industrial uses will be prohibited.
- ☞ Public water and/or sewer systems will not be extended into this zoning district except to correct public health emergencies. The extension of services shall not be interpreted as allowing additional development and allocations will not be granted to parcels between developed areas and treatment facilities.

Strategy: Reduce the number of undeveloped lots in the Countryside

Currently, a substantial number of undeveloped lots are scattered throughout the countryside. In order to achieve the goal of maintaining the rural and agricultural character of the County, the number of existing, scattered, undeveloped lots located in the agricultural and resource conservation areas must be reduced. The County will pursue methods for landowners to voluntarily incorporate these parcels into the main farm parcels.

GOAL: PROMOTE VOLUNTARY PROGRAMS TO PERMANENTLY PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Strategy: Investigate a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program

A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program is a private sector process for preserving farmland. TDR involves establishment of a "sending" area, which the county wishes to preserve, and designation of a "receiving" area where growth is planned and adequate public facilities are in place or planned. For example, a developer purchases development rights (density) from a landowner in the sending zone and uses them to build at a higher density in the receiving zone.

The Agricultural Zoning District will be designated as a "sending" zone for development rights. The TDR program would allow a higher density to be transferred than the allowable density if the farm was developed itself. This should make the sale of development rights more economically attractive for the farmer than to develop agricultural land.

The Rural Character Zone and planned growth areas around towns and villages would be designated as "receiving" zones, allowing densities to increase if TDRs are purchased. Through inter-jurisdictional agreements, the incorporated towns could also be designated as "receiving" zones. The densities of the designated growth areas would be low, with TDR as the only means to permit higher densities, thereby encouraging the use of TDRs. The TDR Program will set out the maximum permitted densities for these areas.

Strategy: Explore County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program

The County will explore options for funding a County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to supplement the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and Maryland Environmental Trust Program. The creation of a local PDR program would allow the county to establish its own standards for determining easement value, set its own procedures for paying landowners, and have more control over funding levels. The funds generated from this program will be used for acquiring development rights in the Agricultural Zoning District.

Strategy: Maintain a State Certified Agricultural Preservation Program

Kent County will maintain state certification of its agricultural preservation program. The Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation currently certify county agricultural land preservation programs, which affects the allocation of state agricultural transfer tax revenues. Counties which are certified, such as Kent, retain 75% of the locally derived agricultural transfer tax revenues. Part of maintaining certification requires the commitment of county funds towards easement acquisition. The County will continue to commit the minimum funds necessary to remain certified and will look for ways to increase funding above the minimum requirement.

Strategy: Participate in all available land preservation programs

There are a variety of land preservation programs available. The County will continue to participate in as many programs as possible. These programs may include but are not limited to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Maryland Environmental Trust, the Rural Legacy Program, the Federal Farmland and Ranchland Preservation Program, the Delmarva Conservation Corridor, and the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy Agricultural Security Corridor. The County supports the efforts of the Eastern Shore 2010 Agreement to preserve through permanent easements 50% of the Upper Eastern Shore's Resource Lands by 2010.

Strategy: Explore tax credit incentive program for lands protected by MALPF Districts and Easements

Many counties offer tax credits to landowners enrolled in the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Program as an incentive to encourage landowners to participate. It may also be possible to use a tax credit program to provide funding for land preservation by allowing landowners to pay the full tax but have the value of the credit placed in a land preservation fund.

Strategy: Support funding of all land preservation programs

It is important at all levels of government that funding for agricultural preservation programs be maintained or increased. These programs may include but are not limited to the Delmarva Conservation Corridor and Federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program and the Rural Legacy Program.

GOAL: PROTECT AGRICULTURAL AREAS, FORESTED LANDS AND OPEN SPACES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Strategy: Protect agricultural areas from incompatible capital projects

Often, public construction projects such as highways, schools, and sewer and water facilities can disrupt agricultural activities, take agricultural land, or encourage sprawling development patterns. Incompatible capital projects will not be located within the Agricultural District unless it can be proven that no other alternatives are available and located so as to minimize adverse effects on the agricultural land.

Strategy: Protect forested land and other open spaces in the countryside

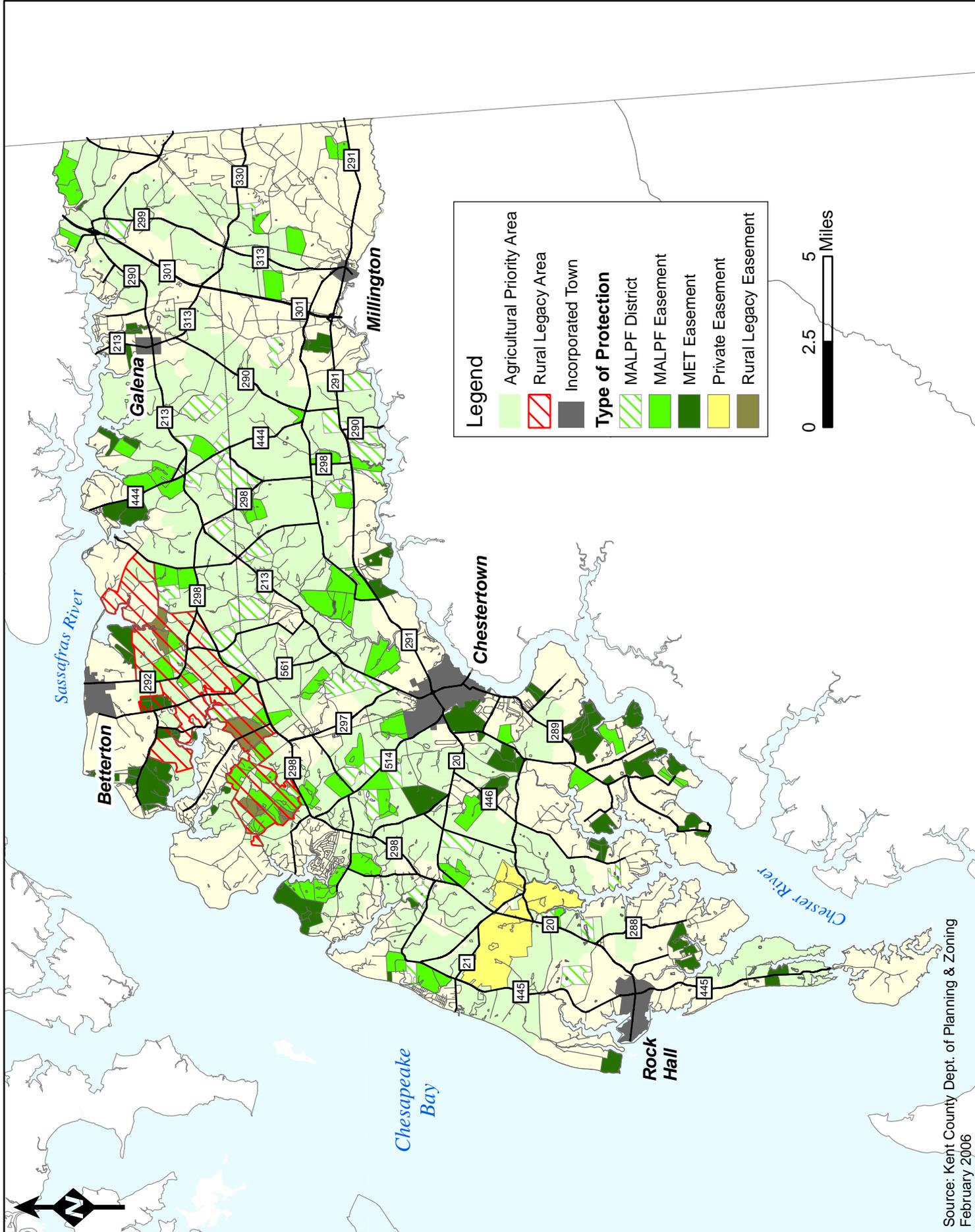
Not all land in the countryside is suitable for agriculture. Although these areas may not be productive agriculturally, they are an important part of our rural character and natural environment. Steep and poorly drained soils are often forested or are wetlands; both of which provide valuable wildlife habitats and protect water quality. The County will encourage the conservation of these areas.

Countryside

Strategy: Define scenic viewsheds and develop guidelines to protect most threatened views

The County will consider completing a study to define important scenic views and will consider developing guidelines to protect the most threatened views. The loss of scenic views especially along the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway will have a major impact on the rural character of the County.

Map 2 - Protected Lands



Source: Kent County Dept. of Planning & Zoning
February 2006

D. ENVIRONMENT

The hallmarks of Kent County are the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, good soils, rich marshlands, and a landscape teeming with wildlife. These resources are the foundation from which our local culture emerged. Today, they remain the foundation of Kent's economy and are the very essence of its character. These irreplaceable resources are the basis upon which we will continue to thrive and maintain our heritage.

The natural resources important to Kent County are clean air, prime agricultural land, tidal marshes, non-tidal wetlands, woodlands, large forests, ground water, the Chesapeake Bay, the Chester River, the Sassafras River and their tributaries, ponds, mineral resources, landscapes of agriculture, waterfront, open space, historic sites, dark nighttime skies and a peaceful, unhurried atmosphere.

The County also values its diverse ecosystems. We have hedgerows, cropped fields, shorelines, meadows, forests, wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation, and other plants. The varied wildlife include deer, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, waterfowl, game birds, songbirds, colonial nesting water birds, raptors, fish, crabs, and many species of shellfish.

WATERSHEDS

Located in the Atlantic Coastal Plain, Kent County is comparatively low-lying, with relief seldom exceeding 80 feet. The eastern and central portions of the County are characterized by a broad, gently rolling plain; the northwestern section is deeply incised by streams. These streams have steep banks along their shorelines and, in some cases, bluffs 20 to 80 feet high. The character of the southwestern portion of the County is characterized by flat plains and terraces sloping toward the water.

The Sassafras and Chester Rivers are tidal estuaries navigable by small boats almost to the Delaware line. These rivers and the Bay shape the County in the form of a long crescent, 40 miles

long and eight to ten miles wide narrowing to a peninsula at the southern end. The shoreline is irregular with numerous bays and inlets. A deep-water channel suitable for ocean-going vessels passes close to the coast between Tolchester and Howell Point. In many places the water is deep enough for pleasure boats to come within a few feet of shore.

Minor streams are few and short. A divide which separates the streams flowing north into the Sassafras River and those flowing south into the Chester River has a general westerly direction from Massey to Still Pond. At Still Pond the divide splits, one branch continuing west, the other turning southwest and gradually losing altitude toward Rock Hall. The County has 17,280 acres of surface water within its boundaries.

GOAL: ENCOURAGE STEWARDSHIP OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY, ITS TRIBUTARIES AND THEIR WATERSHEDS THROUGH PLANNING

Strategy: Encourage inter-jurisdictional watershed planning

The County will promote multi-jurisdictional watershed planning and watershed management within and adjacent to the County. Community involvement is a crucial aspect for the success of the program and will be incorporated throughout the process. This process will incorporate:

- ☞ Identification of the basic need and direction of the watershed management program, including the collection of preliminary data and the identification and assembly of all interested parties;
- ☞ Detailed data collection and analysis;
- ☞ Identification of specific goals and objectives for the watershed management program;
- ☞ Development of detailed implementation strategies and procedures to obtain the goals and objectives; and
- ☞ Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the watershed management program.

Strategy: Develop and implement Watershed Restoration Action Strategies for the six watersheds in the County

Developed with citizens, businesses, the agricultural community, and non-profit groups, Watershed Restoration Action Strategies (WRAS) serve as a blue print for restoring and maintaining a watershed's key environmental resources including water quality, and aquatic and terrestrial resources. In 2002, the County completed a WRAS for the Middle Chester River Watershed. Currently, a WRAS for the Upper Chester River is underway. The County will work cooperatively with adjacent jurisdictions to develop and implement watershed restoration action strategies for the remaining watersheds in Kent – the Sassafra River, Still Pond-Fairlee, Lower Chester River, and Langford Creek.

Strategy: Encourage comprehensive stormwater management

Although stormwater management needs to be addressed for each project, managing stormwater on a single site basis is costly in terms of land as well as money. Multiple project stormwater management will be investigated for each site. Comprehensive management should be investigated for each site and implemented where possible. The County will work cooperatively with the incorporated towns to develop watershed based stormwater management plans in the County designated growth areas.

GOAL: ENCOURAGE STEWARDSHIP OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY, ITS TRIBUTARIES AND THEIR WATERSHEDS THROUGH BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Strategy: Promote the use of “BayScapes”

The county will encourage homeowners and businesses to use native plants in their landscaping. Native plants tend to require less maintenance and flourish under normal weather conditions.

Strategy: Promote the use of bio-retention as a means of water quality improvement and stormwater management where appropriate

Bio-retention provides stormwater treatment that enhances the quality of downstream water bodies by using soil and both woody and herbaceous plants to remove pollutants from stormwater runoff. Also known as a rain garden, a disorientation facility consists of a porous soil covered by a thin layer of mulch and planted with grasses, shrubs, and small trees. These facilities are designed to promote evapotranspiration, maintain soil porosity, encourage biological activity, and promote uptake of some pollutants. Bio-retention systems function similarly to infiltration/filtration practices with the added advantage of attractive landscaping.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with federal, state, and non-profit organizations to achieve an increase in the amount and quality of non-tidal wetlands

Between 1950 and the late 1970's, the Bay experienced substantial losses of wetlands. The County recognizes the need to maintain and increase non-tidal wetlands as these wetlands play a vital role in the health of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries and provide critical habitat for birds, plants, and amphibians. Non-tidal wetlands play an important role in maintaining and improving water quality, provide plant and wildlife habitat, and in flood and stormwater control.

Strategy: Establish a Wetland Banking Program

Wetland banking refers to the restoration, creation, enhancement, and in certain defined circumstances, preservation of wetlands expressly for compensating for the loss of wetlands. Advanced planning will identify appropriate locations for, and uses of, wetland banks. Wetlands should be created where they can be a natural extension of existing habitat, such as along riparian areas. Creation of isolated wetlands should be avoided.

Strategy: Encourage the protection of important aquatic resources

Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) serves as important food, nursery and habitat for many species of fish and fowl. Over the past decade, SAV in Kent's tributaries have followed a pattern of abundant beds in some years followed by declines to almost nothing and then full recovery in a few years. Shellfish beds are both an economic resource and a natural resource. The bottom (benthic) community provides food for bottom feeders such as yellow perch and spot. Activities such as pier construction and sewage outfalls must be limited and those permitted must minimize impacts on these resources.

Strategy: Promote beneficial uses of dredge spoils

The County recognizes the need to maintain navigable depths in the Bay, harbors, and tributaries. Dredging needs to be executed in a manner that minimizes the effect on SAV, shellfish beds and the benthic community. Many islands in the County have washed away or been submerged. The County will coordinate with appropriate Federal and State agencies in investigating these islands as possible sites for the disposal of clean dredge spoil in those areas where the placement of clean dredge spoil is a benefit to the environment.

Strategy: Encourage shore erosion control and promote living shorelines as the preferred method of shoreline stabilization

The County will encourage stabilization of eroding shoreline. Kent County will encourage waterfront property owners to consider living shorelines as the preferred treatment to restore eroding shorelines. In many areas, living shorelines have proven effective at stabilizing shorelines while maintaining more of the vital fish and wildlife habitat at the water's edge. Where living shorelines are not appropriate, rip rap and stone revetments protect shorelines by the dispersal of wave energy. Technical assistance is available from the State and Federal government.

Strategy: Implement boating best management practices

The County will seek funds to install pump-out stations and oil recycling at marinas. The County should require all marinas to install pump-outs stations, recycle oil, and other toxic materials generated by that marine business. Wake limits must be established where necessary on county tributaries to prevent erosion of the shoreline. Community docks will be encouraged instead of individual piers in new development. The County will promote the distribution of boating courtesy pamphlets to residents and visitors.

GOAL: ENCOURAGE STEWARDSHIP OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY, ITS TRIBUTARIES AND THEIR WATERSHEDS THROUGH RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Strategy: Support water quality monitoring and enhance baseline-monitoring efforts on County streams and rivers

Kent County will foster a system of citizen water quality monitoring projects for each watershed in the County. All monitoring shall meet minimum standards to allow comparison over time and between watersheds.

Strategy: Identify the County's green infrastructure and strive to fill gaps

Kent County will identify those lands important to the County's ecological health. These lands, referred to as Kent's green infrastructure, provide the natural foundation needed to support diverse plant and wildlife populations and enable valuable natural processes such as filtering water and cleaning the air to take place.

Strategy: Establish an Environmental Protection, Education, and Restoration Clearinghouse

Kent's citizens have always been at the forefront in environmental protection. To promote use of the most effective best management practices, new technology, green building, and environmentally sensitive development practices, Kent will establish a clearinghouse for educational materials, grants, technical assistance, and literature concerning watershed restoration activities.

Strategy: Coordinate natural resource conservation, green infrastructure, and sensitive area policies with the incorporated towns

Environmental resources extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries. The County will work with the incorporated towns to develop policies to coordinate natural resource protection and enhancement. During development review, the County, where appropriate, will strive to connect open space with existing dedicated open space in the incorporated towns.

GROUND WATER

The majority of Kent County's water supply is obtained from groundwater resources. Likewise, much of the water entering the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries comes from groundwater. Groundwater potential is substantial and quality is generally good. Since there are many homes with old and shallow wells, the preservation of water quality for adequate consumption becomes crucial. Since there are also many properties with onsite septic systems, improving ground water and reducing nitrogen in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are also crucial.

GOAL: PROTECT GROUNDWATER RESOURCES IN THE COUNTY

Strategy: Incorporate the Maryland Geological Survey Ground Water Study into future county decisions

The county recognizes the importance of aquifers and their management and protection, an aquifer is a geologic formation containing saturated sand and gravel, saturated carbonate rock or saturated fractured rock that yields significant quantities of water. In order to protect an aquifer, the county needs information regarding the extent of the aquifer, the land overlying the aquifer and upgradient lands that recharge the aquifer. This study provides some of this information as well as the quality of the groundwater. Using information from this study, State and County agencies should consider the impact on ground water when reviewing development proposals. A wellhead protection plan must be prepared. Wellhead protection focuses on existing and proposed public water supply areas and their immediate recharge areas.

Strategy: Provide landowners with septic systems information on maintaining their current systems and availability of new nitrogen removal systems

Proper maintenance of septic systems prolongs their useful life and reduces the amount of nutrients that pass into the groundwater. However, even well-maintained septic systems do not remove more than a minimal amount of nitrogen from the effluent; therefore, Kent County, in partnership with the Upper Eastern Shore Tributary Strategy Team will provide information and contact information concerning the use, installation and maintenance of both conventional and nitrogen removing septic systems.

Strategy: Encourage innovative private septic systems and promote the use of nitrogen removing septic systems where appropriate

Innovative septic systems can improve ground water quality and allow for infill in existing subdivisions. Nitrogen removing systems have proven effective in improving ground water and in reducing nitrogen in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Kent County will promote their use in sensitive areas such as the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area buffers, ground water recharge areas, and other areas deemed appropriate by the Kent County Health Department.

PLANT AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Our quality of life is enhanced by Kent County's interrelated and diverse ecosystems. We must protect these resources if we are to maintain this quality of life. Multiple species planning is necessary before plants and animals become endangered or threatened.

GOAL: RESTORE, ENHANCE, AND PROTECT THE FINFISH, SHELLFISH, AND OTHER LIVING RESOURCES, THEIR HABITATS, AND ECOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS TO SUSTAIN OUR FISHERIES AND PROVIDE FOR A BALANCED ECOSYSTEM

Strategy: Work cooperatively with federal, state, and non-profit organizations to achieve an increase in the native oyster population

A restored oyster population in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary plays an invaluable role in the restoration of the Bay ecosystem. Oysters help improve water quality by reducing nutrients, turbidity, and chlorophyll. An increase in oyster reefs provides habitat for fish and other organisms. The County will look for opportunities on County owned lands and encourage waterfront property owners to participate in oyster grow out programs.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with federal, state, and non-profit organizations to achieve an increase in submerged aquatic vegetation

Submerged aquatic vegetation, bay grasses, are a unique yardstick in measuring the progress of Bay restoration efforts because they are not under harvest pressure and their health is closely linked to water quality. These grasses provide essential food and habitat for many important species of waterfowl, fish, shellfish and invertebrates, remove suspended solids from the water, protect shorelines from waves and erosion, and reoxygenate the waters of rivers and the Bay. The Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement adopted a goal to restore SAV to the highest level of SAV observed in an area during the 1938 to 2000 time frame.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with federal, state, and non-profit organizations to develop management plans to control phragmites and other invasive species deemed problematic to the restoration and integrity of the Bay's ecosystem

Also known as "common reed," phragmites is an invasive wetland plant species that spreads rapidly by rhizomes and seed in both tidal and non-tidal wetlands. Phragmites out-competes valuable wetland plants that provide both winter food and cover for a variety of wetland-dependent wildlife species. The Chesapeake Bay Program's Invasive Species Work Group has developed a list of priority invasive species in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and listed six as in need of regional management plans: mute swans, nutria, Phragmites australis, purple loosestrife, water chestnut and zebra mussels.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with federal, state, and non-profit organizations to provide fish passage to important anadromous species

In Maryland, the target fish species for restoration are: American shad, hickory shad, alewife herring, blueback herring, yellow perch, and white perch. Anadromous fish (shad and herring) spend most of their life cycle in marine waters and return to their natal streams to spawn in the spring of each year. Shad and herring are historic migratory species that spawned in most of the Bay's tributaries until hundreds of miles of spawning habitat were closed to them by the construction of various structures and by over-fishing in the Bay and in the Atlantic Ocean. Unlike West Coast salmon, shad and herring do not die after spawning, and will keep returning to spawn as long as they live. Semi-anadromous fish (perch) spend their life cycle in brackish water, such as the Bay and the lower reaches of its tributaries and return to streams to spawn. Striped bass are large anadromous fish that usually spawn in the freshwater tidal zone, and may move upstream to feed after spawning.

GOAL: PROTECT PLANT AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES WITHIN THE COUNTY

Strategy: Maintain and enforce existing county regulations for the protection of wildlife

The current county zoning ordinance requires the protection of forest interior dwelling birds and threatened species, endangered species and species in need of conservation.

Strategy: Prepare a Biological Resource Management Plan

Plans that protect individual species after they become endangered are costly, requiring species by species and project-by-project review. They also frequently fail in their goal of protection. It is apparent that more specific wildlife and ecosystem information is needed in order to give clear advice to landowners, developers and government officials that are interested in sensitive development practices.

The purpose of the Biological Resource Management Plan is to guide the management of plant and wildlife resources in Kent County. This Plan will provide all members of the community with the information needed to make informed and rational land use decisions. The Plan will require extensive public participation. Funding will be sought from state, federal and private sources. The Plan will include:

- ☞ An inventory of existing wildlife data, involving local wildlife groups, and relevant information gathered from state, federal agencies and research institutes;
- ☞ Analysis of existing data and broad goals for managing wildlife resources; establishment of specific management guidelines for each species (with assistance of wildlife resource specialists); and
- ☞ Public input and comments regarding defined goals and management guidelines from public hearings.

FOREST AND WOODLANDS

One of Kent County's many environmental assets is its tree-lined waterfront. There are 268 miles of tidal shoreline, virtually all of which is wooded. These woodlands provide a striking background for both land and water-related activities. Trees continue to line the major inland stream courses. Most of the larger forests still standing are in the extreme eastern section of the County.

GOAL: CONSERVE EXISTING WOODLANDS; ENCOURAGE REFORESTATION, AND PROMOTE PROPER FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Strategy: Retain and expand riparian forest and large forest areas

Riparian forests provide valuable habitat and remove nutrients from runoff. Large forest areas provide the unique habitat required by forest interior dwelling birds. Kent County recognizes that forests are protective land uses and should be managed to maximize values for timber, recreation, wildlife, and water quality.

Forest banking is the restoration, creation, enhancement, and in certain defined circumstances, preservation of forest to compensate for the disturbance to or removal of woodlands or forest. The priority for reforestation must expand riparian or large forested areas or protect highly erodible soils. The use of multiple native species will be required when possible.

Strategy: Implement woodland and forest management and harvest methods that maintain sustainable yields of forest products

Although logging is not a substantial part of our economy, forests still need to be managed properly for the future. Reforestation and afforestation should be encouraged on highly erodible soils and other appropriate areas. Reforestation is establishment of a forest through artificial production or natural regeneration. Afforestation is the planting of open areas not presently in forest cover or in areas where forest has always or very long been absent.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with federal, state, and non-profit organizations to achieve an increase in area of forest in the County

Forests perform important environmental, recreational, and economic functions. Forests protect stream banks and soils, clean the air, and provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife. Forests also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and supply raw materials for fuel, lumber, paper, and many other products.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with federal, state, and non-profit organizations to achieve to the habitat goals set forth in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement

On June 28, 2000, the Chesapeake Executive Council signed the “Chesapeake 2000” Agreement. This agreement will guide the Chesapeake Bay Program over the coming decade and establishes a series of habitat goals necessary to support the living resources of the Bay. In 1984, the Maryland General Assembly adopted the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Protection Law. Kent County is committed to doing its part to achieve the goals set forth in these documents.

AIR QUALITY

Kent County, along with much of the eastern United States, is a non-attainment area for ozone. The prevailing westerly winds carry pollutants from the industrial areas of the western shore as well as vehicle-generated smog from the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Kent County residents are also concerned about potential toxic air pollution from the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Harford County.

Strategy: Encourage the state to add additional air quality inspectors for the Eastern Shore

Kent County will encourage the state to strictly enforce federal and state air quality standards in Kent County and to provide additional inspectors to monitor air quality for the Eastern Shore.

Strategy: Investigate the need for an air quality monitoring station in Worton

Because of the existing development, schools and major regional park, it may be useful to place an air quality monitoring station near the industrial area in Worton.

Strategy: Implement the strategies identified in the Kent and Queen Anne’s Early Action Compact

The Early Action Compact serves as Kent and Queen Anne’s Counties’ official air quality improvement plan and contains quantified emission reduction measures. It is designed to enable early proactive approaches designed to enable the Counties to obtain the 8-hour ozone standard. Emission reduction measures set forth in the Plan include ozone action days outreach programs, ridesharing, promotion of alternative transportation, tree planting, and energy saving plans.

MINERAL RESOURCES

Kent County is overlaid by deposits of sand, clay, sandy clay and silt resting on crystalline rocks. These rocks slope to the south and southeast at the rate of 60-150 feet per mile. The depth of the Coastal Plain sediments ranges from 900 feet in the northeastern portion to 2,200 feet in the southeastern portion.

Sand and gravel are the predominant minerals found in Kent County. An unusual seam of high quality spec and concrete sand and gravel runs southeasterly from Baltimore through Kent County to Lewes, Delaware. These aggregates are vital to a healthy economy, and Kent County recognizes that sand and gravel are resources of increasing commercial value.

GOAL: CONSERVE THE COUNTY’S MINERAL RESOURCES FOR FUTURE USE WHILE SAFEGUARDING THE ENVIRONMENT AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

Strategy: Determine the impact of mining on the County’s infrastructure

Mining operations in Kent County have been limited and have not significantly impacted the County road system. However, an increase in mining activity may cause increased damage to low-capacity county roads. The County should continue to monitor levels of extraction activity and be prepared to insure that extraction operations pay their fair share of roadway maintenance or improvements.

Strategy: Review the existing regulations governing sand and gravel extraction

Kent County has established and will maintain regulations governing mineral extraction. The County will periodically review the existing regulations governing sand and gravel extraction to assure reasonable access to these resources while safeguarding the environment and the community from potential negative impacts of extraction and the transportation of extracted materials. Reclamation and post-extraction plans are essential to assure that mining sites are restored to a usable state.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture, basic to the character and economy of the County, will be encouraged. The importance of agricultural productivity to the economy of Kent County underscores the need to avoid the wholesale or wasteful encroachment on farmland. Kent County has the highest percentage of prime farmland in the State. The unique combination of quality soils, topography, and climate makes Kent County an ideal location for productive agriculture and bestows upon the County a particular responsibility for the stewardship of the land.

GOAL: PROMOTE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

Strategy: Establish conservation and management plans for agricultural land in the County

The Federal and State government strongly encourage farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to develop farm management plans to minimize agricultural water pollution. Conservation and management plans include, but are not limited to, soil conservation, water quality, nutrient management, and pest management.

To fulfill the County's obligation as stewards of our farmland, the County:

- ☞ Encourages the development of the full range of conservation plans incorporated into a single farm management plan for all agricultural land in the County;
- ☞ Supports additional funding or incentives to ensure the implementation of these plans on all agricultural land;

- ☞ Recommends coordinating the preparation of all plans under the direction of the Soil Conservation District and University of Maryland Cooperative Extension;
- ☞ Encourages the private sector to prepare conservation plans; and
- ☞ Promotes precision farming.

Strategy: Protect the County's agricultural soils through the use of Best Management Practices

Best Management Practices (BMP) are measures developed for controlling point and non-point sources of pollution. BMPs are intended to allow for productive use of the land while mitigating potential negative influences of that land use. BMPs utilize a variety of structural, regulatory and non-regulatory measures to encourage farmers to incorporate soil conservation measures for cultivated cropland. Examples include: conservation tillage, contour farming, conservation structures (e.g. detention basins, gully control structures), grazing restrictions, and animal waste management facilities.

Strategy: Seek additional funds to fully staff the Soil Conservation District to speed in the review and thereby the implementation of conservation plans

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

Several areas of the County are not desirable for habitation because of development constraints. These areas include 100 year floodplains, cliffs, steep banks subject to possible failure, and highly eroding shoreline.

Floodplains, the products of natural floods, moderate and store floodwaters, absorb wave energies, and reduce erosion and sedimentation. Wetlands found within floodplains help maintain water quality, recharge groundwater, protect fisheries, and provide habitat and natural corridors for wildlife. Stream buffers found within floodplains also help to maintain water quality.

Safeguarding the many natural functions performed by floodplains benefits adjoining and downstream communities by minimizing the risks (and cost) associated with the loss of life and property; by contributing to the maintenance of

water quality and quantity which may directly affect drinking water supplies and recreational opportunities; and in many cases, by helping to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay - a goal which will benefit the entire public.

The preservation and protection of steep slopes adjacent to watercourses is especially important because of the potential harm to water quality and aquatic habitat. Communities pay the economic costs associated with loss of water quality, as well as hazards such as flooding and landslides and other problems caused by the disturbance of steep slopes. The identification and protection of steep slopes within a community helps to protect the community, and downstream communities, from these hazards. Protection also provides aesthetically pleasing open space and maintains local biodiversity found on the slopes.

GOAL: LIMIT DEVELOPMENT IN AREAS WITH CONSTRAINTS IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE THE LOSS OF LIFE AND STRUCTURES AND IMPACTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Strategy: Maintain, enforce and if necessary, strengthen existing regulations for floodplains and buffers
Kent County's existing regulations address building, filling and other disturbances within stream buffers, shoreline cliffs, and floodplains.

Strategy: Investigate the impacts of sea level rise and subsidence on floodplains and other low lying areas in the County
Tide gauges for the Chesapeake Bay and the Mid-Atlantic coast show rates of sea-level rise twice that of the worldwide average. Scientists disagree on the cause of the recent increase in the rate of rise. There is little awareness, however, that the rapidly rising relative sea level within the bay is also having dramatic and wide-ranging effects. Islands once populated in colonial time and during the past century have disappeared due to submergence and related shore erosion.

Strategy: Participate in the Community Rating System Program

The Federal Insurance Administration will grant flood insurance premium credits to property owners whose community participates in the Community Rating System (CRS). In order to qualify for the CRS program, a community must have floodplain programs which address four broad categories:

- ☞ Public information
- ☞ Mapping and regulation
- ☞ Flood damage reduction
- ☞ Flood preparedness

Strategy: Work cooperatively with federal, state, and nonprofit organizations to acquire new digital elevation models to more accurately determine the locations of floodplains

Strategy: Maintain and enforce existing regulations for steep slopes and shoreline cliffs

The County has standards for protecting steep slopes in the Critical Area and shoreline cliff setbacks in the current zoning ordinance. The County will review the impacts of Hurricanes Isabel and Floyd to identify ways to mitigate future damage from severe storms.

Strategy: Inventory steep slopes outside of Critical Area and if necessary protect the steep slopes

Most steep slopes in Kent County occur along the shore. The County will use the U.S. Geological Survey maps to determine if the extent of steep slopes outside the critical area is large enough to require protection. Soils on steep slopes will also be checked for erodibility.

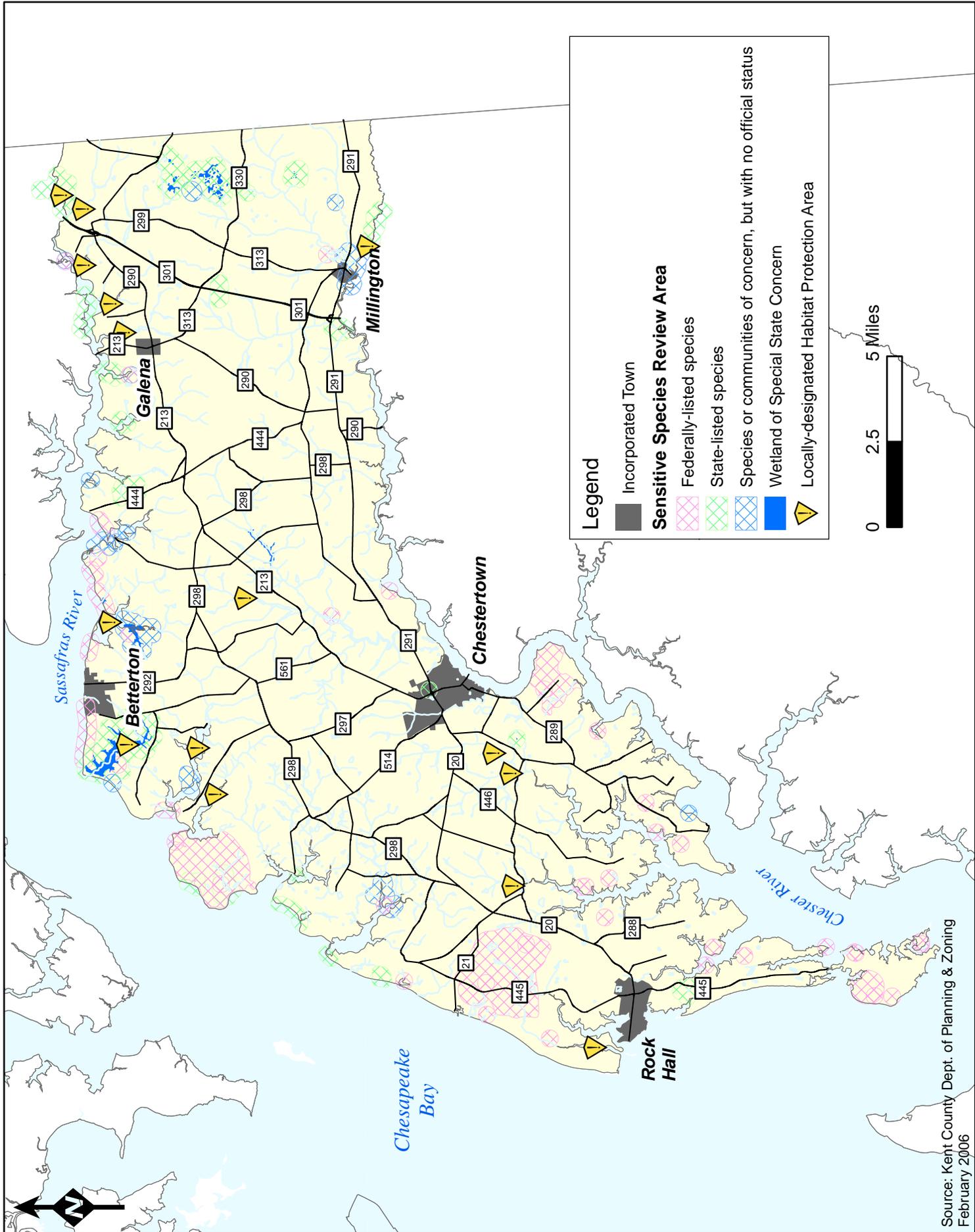
GOAL: PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE BUILDING PRACTICES

Sustainable building is the practice of creating and operating healthier and more resource efficient construction, renovation, operation, maintenance, and demolition. The many elements of sustainable building include the efficient use of energy and water; the use of building materials, in comparison to other brands, that have a reduced effect on the environment throughout its lifecycle; the reduction of waste from construction, remodeling, and demolition; and designing and operating buildings that are healthy for their occupants.

Strategy: Encourage the design and operation of buildings to achieve the effective utilization of energy and water and to use alternative sources of energy

Kent County will encourage the design and operation of buildings for adequate thermal resistance and low air leakage and the design and selection of mechanical, electrical, service water heating, and illumination systems and equipment which enable the effective use of energy in new building construction. Kent County will also encourage the use of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, and biomass and investigate federal and state incentives such as tax credits for the use of alternative energy sources. The County will provide information to area residents on available programs.

Map 3 - Sensitive Species



E. HOUSING

Kent County recognizes the need for a wide range of housing types meeting the needs of all County residents. The quality of housing affects the socioeconomic characteristics of the County's population and helps determine the County's economic growth. Housing also greatly affects the County's general attractiveness as a place to live and conduct business.

Traditionally, single family detached housing has been and continues to be recognized as the principle and preferred housing type. Of the County's 9,410 housing units, 77.9 % are single family detached units. However, many sectors of the County population may prefer smaller, more easily maintained and more affordable attached units or apartments. This is especially true for our senior citizens; by the year 2020, it is predicted, that one out of five Kent County residents will be over 65 years old.

Seasonal and vacant homes represent a significant percentage (18.5%) of the County's housing supply. This underscores the increasing desirability of second homes in Kent County.

The primary challenge of the Housing Section is to meet local housing needs while ensuring that new housing be suitably located and compatible with existing community character. Kent offers one of the most desirable residential locations on the Eastern Shore due to its natural beauty, desirable communities, and proximity to major metropolitan areas. Many of the County's current housing problems – escalating housing cost and rents, overall demand for housing, and pressure of growth result from these attractive qualities.

Kent County recognizes that a successful housing program requires a comprehensive approach that integrates a variety of techniques and is one that is critical to maintaining a strong and vibrant community. The following goals and strategies represent a broad based program to address the housing needs of the County.

GOAL: PROVIDE A WIDE RANGE OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF KENT COUNTY RESIDENTS

Strategy: Assume a leadership role

Affordable housing is an important County priority and the County will take a proactive leadership role in working with community groups and each jurisdiction within the County to collaborate and coordinate housing efforts. The County will establish a housing clearinghouse which will provide educational materials, technical information concerning grants, and information on best practices. The responsibility for effectively addressing the County's housing needs and assuring effective application of Fair Housing Laws needs to be shared by community groups, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. The purpose of this approach is to be creative in developing and responding to opportunities to achieve the County's housing goals.

Strategy: Convene a housing summit

Kent County will convene a housing summit for the following purpose:

- ☞ Coordinate existing housing efforts
- ☞ Clearly define the housing issues and to define affordable housing
- ☞ Reframe the question of affordable housing as a market inefficiency to be corrected rather than charity or welfare for the poor or less deserving
- ☞ Identify partnerships and creative strategies to address the needs of Kent's workforce
- ☞ Identify strategies to reduce the County's dependence on State and Federal funding
- ☞ Identify those housing "best practices" applicable to Kent County

Housing

Strategy: Review County and State tax policies

Tax policies have the potential to both positively and negatively effect housing affordability. Tax incentives can encourage rehabilitation of substandard structures and development of vacant, dilapidated, or underutilized land. Increasing taxes can also result in displacement of long time elderly residents. Kent County will review its tax policies to encourage rehabilitation and creation of affordable housing and to limit the negative impacts of gentrification on existing residents.

Strategy: Conduct a countywide housing inventory

The Department of Housing and Community Development will periodically conduct a countywide housing inventory. The results of this inventory will be used to identify the housing needs in the County and to target future housing efforts. It will include a summary of housing types, conditions, and an inventory of vacant lots. The study should also address any increase in price and ownership retention of those homes built as “affordable housing.” Washington College is a potential partner for completing the inventory.

Strategy: Review the County’s infrastructure and development policies

The County will evaluate its policies to encourage a mix of housing types, sizes, and prices. In reviewing its infrastructure plans, the County will look for incentives to promote affordable housing.

Strategy: Assist in the rehabilitation of substandard units

The County Commissioners will continue to take advantage of and promote federal and state programs for rehabilitating substandard housing units for low and moderate income families, as well as encouraging private sector rehabilitation projects. Reuse of existing structures not only offers opportunities for a variety of housing but also strengthens and revitalizes existing communities through the maintenance of structures and elimination of blight. The Department of Housing and Community Development will assist applicants in the permit process.

Strategy: Encourage the development of housing for all income levels

The County Commissioners will provide incentives to encourage private sector investment in the development of a variety of housing types. Incentives may include development at higher densities without the purchase of development rights in the Villages and their designated growth areas and variations in development requirements.

The County will encourage the creation of new and the expansion of existing mobile home parks to meet the need for this type of housing. Without encouraging the proliferation of scattered mobile homes, the County will encourage the improvement and upgrading of existing legal mobile homes.

Strategy: Allow for the creation of accessory apartments

Accessory apartments are independent, complete living-units typically created from surplus space in a single-family home. These units add affordable rental housing to the market while keeping the dream of homeownership alive even when housing costs seem prohibitive.

Strategy: Permit migrant labor camps

Migrant farm camps are permitted subject to all federal, state, and local regulations. These camps are important to enable acquisition of the labor necessary in some types of agriculture. Substandard conditions will not be tolerated.

Strategy: Address the need for housing for special populations

Simply addressing the need for additional affordable housing will not address the housing needs of all Kent County residents. There is a need to provide housing for the homeless, as well as residents who have special needs and require group home or assisted living facilities. A number of community organizations attempt to address these needs but some county residents still slip through the cracks. The County should help organizations find additional resources to expand existing programs or create new programs to better provide housing for all of Kent County’s residents.

Strategy: Work cooperatively with Washington College to mitigate the impacts of the increased demand for off-campus housing

Students living off campus have a significant impact on the rental market in the County. These impacts include a number of issues, such as raising rental prices, loss of affordable housing, displacement of existing residents, and increased nuisance and noise complaints. The County will work with Washington College to identify immediate and long-term solutions to accommodate and mitigate the impact of increased off-campus housing.

Strategy: Support the development of a range of housing options for the elderly

The Planning Commission will encourage the development of alternative housing options for senior citizens within towns, villages, and their designated growth areas. These options include congregate care housing, sheltered housing, accessory apartments, assisted living and institutional care facilities.

Strategy: Provide equal opportunity for housing

No person shall, on the basis of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, handicap or disability, use of guide dogs because of blindness or deafness of the user, age, sex, or national origin, be discriminated against in terms of housing and rights at places of public accommodation.

Strategy: Promote energy efficient design

The Planning Commission will continue to enforce its Building and Housing Codes to insure sound construction and require safe decent housing. The County will encourage use of construction and design techniques that conserve energy, fuel, and materials. Such investments in energy-efficiency and long lasting construction are affordable and provide long term housing benefits.

Strategy: Establish a Kent County Housing Trust

Kent County will strive to establish a countywide nonprofit housing trust whose purpose is to encourage affordable options for homeownership and rental housing, provide housing counseling, and education.

Strategy: Investigate inclusionary housing practices

The County will investigate programs which encourage new developments to construct more diverse and economical housing that meets the needs of moderate income families.

Strategy: Coordinate with local employers to encourage employee housing programs

Employer-assisted housing, live near your work, and other innovative partnerships between local government, businesses, non-profit housing agencies, and employees may benefit a range of stakeholders. The employer benefits from a more stable workforce including improved morale, less turnover and reduced recruitment which result in bottom line savings. The employee, beyond receiving support from an employer to buy a home closer to work, may gain the ability to buy a first home or extra time—formerly spent in traffic—for family or community life. The surrounding community may trade-in a portion of its traffic congestion for the new investment and property taxes as former commuters buy homes near their jobs.

Strategy: Aggressively enforce building code violations

The Planning Commission will aggressively enforce its Building and Housing Codes to insure sound construction and require safe and decent housing.

F. TRANSPORTATION

The County's transportation system serves two important functions. First, it affects where growth occurs by providing access to land. In addition, it also affects the local economy by providing for the movement of people, goods, and materials. A well-planned and properly constructed transportation system is essential to the orderly and efficient development of the County and its individual towns.

Several of the towns in Kent County developed as ports on the Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries. This emphasis on water transportation continued well into the twentieth century. The completion of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in the 1950's contributed to making vehicular transportation dominant and spurred development on the Eastern shore. Although we have not experienced the same level of growth as neighboring Queen Anne's County, improvements to U.S. Route 301 in Delaware may make Kent County a more attractive location for people working in New Castle County. However, the County's priority is to not view Route 301 as a housing corridor. We must remain cognizant of the potential effects of transportation improvements in neighboring areas on growth in Kent County.

We must also be aware of the effects of our own automobile dependence here in Kent County. There is increasing attention at all levels of government for creating a more integrated multi-modal transportation system. Although in Kent County population densities will not support expensive public transportation options such as light rail, there are things we can do to reduce our dependence on private automobiles. These include promoting employment development so fewer residents need to commute out of the County for well paying jobs, preserving rail right-of-ways for potential future use, encouraging ride-sharing, and changing our growth patterns to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycles, walking and public transportation.

The following principles will guide Kent County's transportation policies:

- ☞ Shorten distances between trip origins and destinations by encouraging growth to occur in the towns and villages;
- ☞ Promote alternatives to conventional automobile travel;
- ☞ Promote safe access to roadways by minimizing the number of, and controlling the spacing between, access points along arterial and collector roads;
- ☞ Maximize separation of through and local traffic;
- ☞ Provide adequate internal access to all properties;
- ☞ Promote development patterns that require road improvements only where they will not detract from environmental and scenic resources; and
- ☞ Assure "real need" for new roads or highways.

GOAL: DEVELOP A SAFE, CONVENIENT, ACCESSIBLE, AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT PRESERVES THE COUNTY'S HISTORIC, SCENIC, AGRICULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND SERVES THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF COUNTY RESIDENTS

Strategy: Review County road standards and classification

The County will review and revise, as necessary, the road standards for new development. The Planning Commission will review and update the County functional road classification system and map. In reviewing the road system, the Planning Commission will also review and revise, if necessary, its private road standards and policies.

Transportation

Strategy: Existing and committed funds will be used to improve the county road network, provided the improvements support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan

The County will review all proposed road improvements for consistency with this Comprehensive Plan. In general, funding will be focused in the towns and villages and designated growth areas and along major roads linking these areas to Routes 301 or 213. The County strongly supports the State's funding and construction of a round-about at the intersection of Routes 20 and 291 and the Route 213 bypass around Chestertown to reduce traffic congestion. A secondary priority is funding and construction of a grade separated interchange at US 301 and MD 313. Road improvements in rural and agricultural areas will be limited to those addressing safety, rehabilitation, and structural concerns.

Strategy: Analyze traffic impact of proposed development

The County will evaluate the potential traffic impact of proposed development and look for opportunities to provide pedestrian and bicycle pathways as part of the subdivision and site plan approval process. Primary access points from large scale, traffic-generating development will be located to minimize impacts on residential communities. The County will also encourage truck traffic to avoid traveling through small communities and residential areas. Where appropriate, the County may include conditions on which routes trucks may use when granting site approval.

Strategy: Require developers to address the need for internal connections between adjacent land uses

The County will require developers to address the need for internal connections (roads, pathways, and open space) between adjacent land uses, such as residential subdivisions or commercial developments, so as to provide a secondary means of emergency access, encourage more of a sense of community, and minimize local traffic on major roads.

Strategy: Explore options to preserve historic and scenic resources along transportation corridors within the County

Kent County recognizes that maintaining the scenic quality of our roads and highways is essential to maintaining the character of the County. Maryland Routes 213, 20 and 445 from Rock Hall to Eastern Neck Island have been designated as a National Scenic Byway. The County will investigate the designation of other scenic highways. The County will coordinate preservation efforts along these byways with the SHA's *Scenic Byway Design Guidelines* initiative. In addition, the County will continue to prohibit new billboards, and will coordinate directional signage throughout the County and with our neighboring counties. The County will work to develop safe bike and pedestrian trails along the scenic highways.

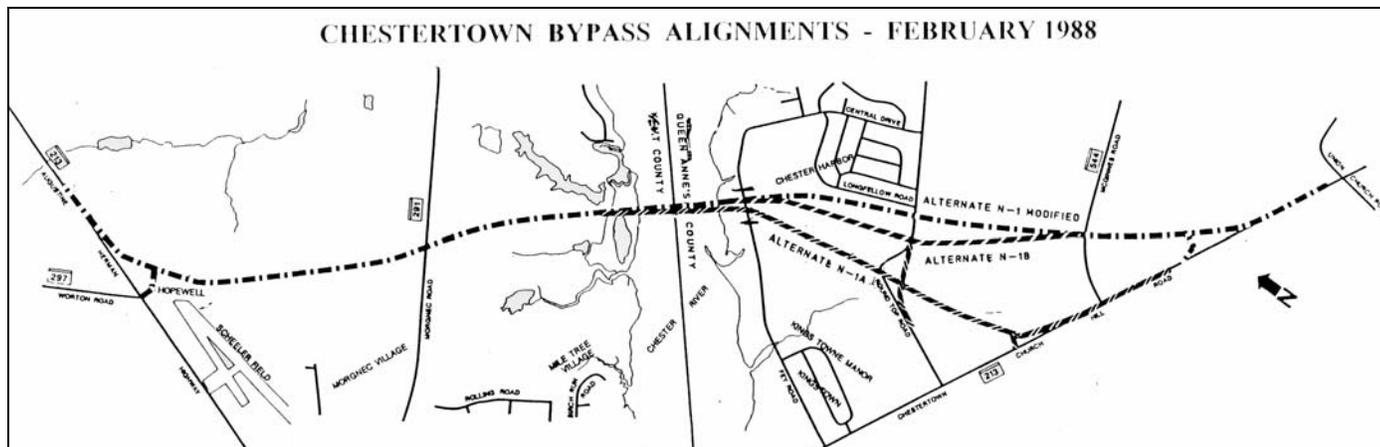
GOAL: WORK WITH THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO IMPROVE THE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Strategy: Construct the Chestertown Route 213 Bypass

The current truck and agricultural equipment traffic over the Chester River Bridge and through Chestertown causes traffic congestion, safety hazards, and adversely affects local scenic and historic resources. Heavy vehicle loads also cause structural deterioration of the bridge which results in increased maintenance costs and time. The proposed Route 213 Bypass is necessary to provide an alternative route for these vehicles and to mitigate the negative impacts of escalating roadway traffic. The intent of the bypass is to create a parkway with access limited to Route 291 and Hopewell Corner.

The County will ensure that the proposed right-of-way, as shown below, is incorporated into any future development plans. So as to preserve the capacity of the bypass within Kent County, access to this road will be limited to just the intersections with Routes 291 and 213. Since this road will function as a gateway to Kent County, attractive landscaping, controls on signage, and provision of appropriate buffers along the road will be required.

The County will continue to encourage Queen Anne's County to support a bypass but will also work towards construction of a bypass between Routes 291 and 213. This project is a high priority among the County's transportation improvements.



Source: Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration

Strategy: Continue opposition to any proposal for a north Bay Bridge

Kent County adamantly opposes any proposal for constructing another bridge crossing of the Chesapeake Bay north of the existing Bay Bridges with a terminus in Kent County. A northern bridge crossing will have a detrimental impact on the County's rural landscape and natural resource-based economy. It will undermine the County's efforts to preserve our agricultural industry and develop a tourism industry based on our cultural, historical, natural and scenic assets. Limiting access to Kent County will discourage development resulting from urban expansion of the Baltimore region and, therefore, help maintain the County's rural character.

Strategy: Complete neighborhood conservation projects

The County will encourage the State Highway Administration to utilize the neighborhood conservation planning process when making improvements in any of the county's towns and villages. Neighborhood conservation projects look beyond the edge of the pavement and involve community residents in the planning process. The resulting designs often include traffic calming techniques and improvements to drainage, sidewalks, crosswalks, and streetscapes that were often ignored in the past.

Strategy: Encourage context sensitive design for all highway projects

The County will encourage the use of context sensitive design when making improvements along highways. It will be particularly important to develop a consistent look for highway overpasses along the Chestertown Bypass and US Route 301 that respect the region's heritage. US Route 301 is an important gateway to the Eastern Shore and because overpass construction will occur sporadically, it is important that a consistent look be developed that can be implemented throughout the region.

Strategy: Preserve the existing rail right-of-ways in the County

The County will work with the Maryland Department of Transportation to maintain all existing rail right-of-ways for potential freight or passenger use.

GOAL: DEVELOP AND ENCOURAGE THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES

Strategy: Enhance existing and create additional bicycle and pedestrian routes and linkages throughout the county

Safe bicycle and pedestrian routes and linkages provide alternative means for residents and visitors to move throughout the county and can reduce the number of trips requiring a car. A trail network may make it easier for residents, especially children, to utilize county recreation facilities and connect houses to jobs.

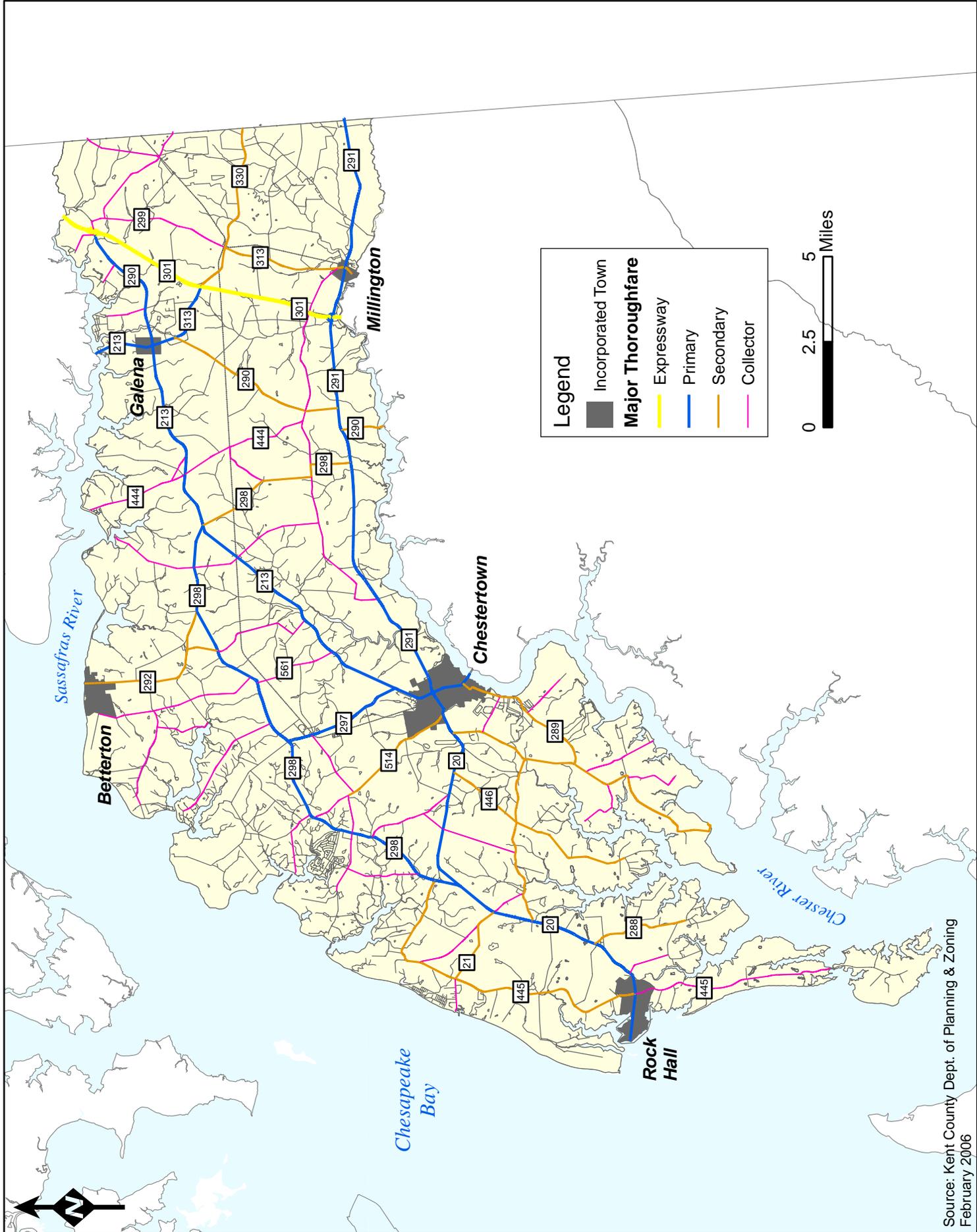
Strategy: Develop and promote the use of park and ride lots and ridesharing programs

With more commuters moving into the county, the need for designated park and ride lots has increased. County agencies and businesses could also be encouraged to develop rideshare program for employees. Both are ways to reduce both traffic congestion and air pollution. Also, the county tourism industry will benefit from park and ride opportunities.

Strategy: Encourage public and private transportation efforts

The County will continue to support and promote public, semi-public and private transportation systems such as Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST). MUST is a coordinated effort to create a regional transit system for Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, Talbot and Dorchester counties. MUST is a system serving these five counties with fixed route bus service. Several public and private companies also provide transportation service in the County. These include "special needs" transportation, cab service, shuttle service to nearby airports and train stations, and van service to the western shore and large regional employers.

Map 5 - Major Thoroughfares



Source: Kent County Dept. of Planning & Zoning
February 2006

G. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Community facilities and public services promote the overall health, safety, education, and well-being of County residents. These services and facilities include: schools, libraries, water and sewer systems, solid waste collection and disposal, and parks and recreation. The challenge to County government is to assure that these services and facilities are accessible, well maintained, and responsive to the needs of Kent County residents. The county regularly evaluates the adequacy of community facilities and services in meeting the needs of County residents. This evaluation considers the function, use, and location of existing community facilities; maintenance requirements and renovation schedules; and the need for new facilities. Few new community facilities are expected in the near future given the County's projected slow rate of growth. The following locational criteria are, however, used for locating any new public facilities:

Efficient Location – Location must be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan and take into consideration zoning, proximity to population centers, topography, environmental features, utilities, and infrastructure. A single, centralized location is required for facilities that provide a county-wide function. Multiple, decentralized locations are required for facilities that serve a local service area. Whenever possible, government buildings should be located in incorporated towns or designated villages in a manner that enhances the community.

Accessibility – The site should be accessible to everyone who will use the facility. Site accessibility considers various modes of transportation including pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motorized vehicles.

Linkage with Related and Supporting Facilities – Grouping of related facilities within one complex or area enhances public convenience, operational economics, and provides opportunities for sharing accessory facilities, such as parking. Schools, libraries,

local and community parks, and many non-county facilities like post offices are more accessible and convenient when they are located in a town or village where they can also serve as community gathering places.

Adequate Size – There must be ample buildable area available to satisfy the present and projected space needs. Adequate area for employee and visitor parking areas, vehicular and pedestrian access, maintenance and service access, landscaping, and other applicable regulatory requirements must also be provided.

Architectural Quality – Public buildings should set an example for quality.

EDUCATION

The public school system in Kent County consists of four elementary schools (grades Pre-K, kindergarten through 4), three middle schools (grades 5 through 8), and one senior high school (grades 9 through 12). Enrollment for the public schools in 2005-2006 totaled 2,440. The Board of Education sponsors an adult continuing education program.

Private schools located in Kent County include Kent School, Inc. (grades K through 8), Chestertown Christian Academy (grades K through 12) and Radcliffe Creek School (teaches ages 6-13).

Echo Hill Outdoor School provides environmental education classes, camps, and trips. Washington College, a private non-sectarian liberal arts and science institution with a student population of approximately 1,400, is located in Chestertown. It was the first private college established in Maryland and is the tenth oldest private college in the country. The College is responsible for many of the cultural activities in the County and hosts many special events each year to which the public is invited, often without charge. Washington College provides college-level courses for advanced high school students in cooperation with the County Board of Education.

Chesapeake College is a four-year community college offering liberal arts and career programs located in Queen Anne's County. It serves students from Kent, Dorchester, Queen Anne's, Caroline, and Talbot counties and is financially supported by these counties.

The major trend in public school enrollment in Kent County in recent decades was a prolonged decline beginning in the early 1970's and ending in 1987, followed by a period of enrollment growth from the "mini baby boom" that ended in 1997. Since the peak in 1997, total enrollment has trended lower. While the Maryland Department of Planning projects a relatively slow population growth for Kent County during the next three decades, it also forecasts a continued low rate of births. Consequently, the State enrollment projections call for a gradual decline in the total public school enrollment in Kent County during the next 10 years to 2,054 in 2014. At this time, Kent County continues to have excess school capacity at all levels, especially at the middle schools. However, because of the small total size of Kent County enrollment, a single event such as a large new residential development can have a significant impact on public school enrollment.

GOAL: MAINTAIN EXISTING AND PROMOTE NEW EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS WITHIN THE COUNTY

Strategy: Maintain and upgrade existing educational facilities and programs

Many of the County schools are aging. The County and the Board of Education will cooperate in aggressively pursuing funding from the State for major renovations, modernization and necessary maintenance of the existing educational facilities within the public school system.

Strategy: Promote the use of schools as community centers

Existing school facilities within the County public school system will continue to be available for community activities, such as evening or weekend meetings and workshops. Further utilization of school facilities for cultural, recreational, athletic, and civic activities will be encouraged.

Strategy: Support vocational and technical training
The County will coordinate with the Board of Education to promote the development of vocational and technical training, and apprenticeships in conjunction with local businesses.

Strategy: Revitalize the adult education program
The average age of Kent County residents is projected to increase over the next fifteen years. This creates a need for adult continuing education programs and provides an opportunity to garner support for school programs

Strategy: Involve county citizens in planning for facilities and programs

The Board of Education should identify ways to engage county citizens in the provision of educational services. This could include an annual open meeting to review program progress and hear public comments.

GOAL: DEVELOP AN EDUCATED WORK FORCE WITH THE SKILLS AND TRAINING REQUIRED TO SERVE CURRENT AND FUTURE KENT COUNTY EMPLOYERS

Strategy: Develop secondary and post-secondary school training and apprenticeship programs that will train local residents and provide skilled workers

The presence of a skilled labor force is a critical ingredient in attracting new employers as well as satisfying the growth demands of existing businesses. Training and apprenticeship programs developed in cooperation with local business including resource-based business will help meet their needs while also providing opportunities for Kent County workers to advance and obtain better-paying jobs.

The Economic Development Advisory Board will foster a cooperative relationship among the Board of Education, the Upper Shore Regional Council, private employers, community colleges and training facilities to establish and/or nurture vocational training programs. The programs that satisfy the training needs of local businesses will develop skills in younger workers and re-train existing workers. These programs will emphasize skills that will be needed in the future and training that enables workers to learn and adapt to new technologies.

LIBRARY SERVICES

The Kent County Library, established in 1962 and expanded in 1978, provides library services to the residents of Kent, northern Queen Anne's and southern Cecil Counties. The library, supported by county, state and some private donations, presently has approximately 52,433 volumes, and an annual 2004 circulation of 157,169 volumes. Expansion of the library facilities are needed particularly additional and upgraded meeting facilities.

Escalating cost associated with contemporary library services such as audio-visual technology and the ongoing computer upgrades are a continuing concern. Kent County receives approximately 15% of all revenue from the State.

GOAL: PROVIDE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES FOR KENT COUNTY RESIDENTS WHICH INCORPORATE NEW TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

Strategy: Explore alternative funding sources to support acquisition of new library technologies
Working with the Foundation for the Kent County Public Library, the County will explore alternative funding sources to expand computer, digital, and video technologies into current library services. Such technologies will increase accessibility of information to local citizens and increase opportunities for networking and resource sharing among other library and educational facilities.

Strategy: Expand Kent County Public Library presence outside of Chestertown

There is a growing interest in expanding the libraries presence into the outlying areas of the County, either by establishing additional branches or through the provision of bookmobile service to towns, villages, group homes, and schools.

Strategy: Explore opportunities to expand the Central Branch of the Kent County Public Library

Projected growth in the County will result in pressure for the Kent County Public Library to provide additional and expanded services. The current facility was not designed to accommodate the growing needs of the current projected

population. The County will investigate innovative methods of providing for the needs of the growing population, including consideration of impact of development of library resources during project review, annexation agreements, and development agreements.

WATER AND SEWER

Kent County obtains all of its domestic water supply from groundwater sources. Four aquifers supply nearly all of this supply: the Aquia, Monmouth, Magothy and Raritan-Patapsco Formations. Although groundwater in Kent County is generally abundant and generally of good quality, some areas have high iron content.

There are five existing municipal water systems in the County serving about 42 % of County residents: Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington, and Rock Hall. The Kent County Sanitary District also operates four County water systems serving about 10% of County residents: Kennedyville, Fairlee/Georgetown, Worton/Butlertown and Edesville. One private water system serves the Delta Heights condominium project.

The remaining County residents (approximately 48 %) are served with individual wells. Most new wells are drilled to depths ranging from 60 to over 200 feet. There are, however, homes with old, shallow hand-dug or driven wells that are more susceptible to contamination or drying-up during droughts.

Approximately half of Kent County's population utilizes municipal, county, and private wastewater systems. Existing systems include the five municipalities: Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington and Rock Hall; six County systems: Kennedyville, Fairlee/Georgetown, Rudnick, Little Neck, Worton/Butlertown, and Edesville; and three private systems: Campbell Soup, Velsicol Chemical Corporation, and the Great Oak Resort Club.

The remaining half of the County's population uses individual on-site septic systems. Many areas of Kent County have soil conditions that are not well-suited for on-site sewage disposal

systems. Individual septic systems can be acceptable in these areas when development remains fairly scattered, but the need for replacement with central sewer systems becomes greater as development densities increase. The County is currently investigating ways to address failing septic system problems in several areas.

GOAL: PROTECT DRINKING WATER QUALITY AND INSURE PROPER WASTEWATER TREATMENT WITHIN THE COUNTY

Strategy: Implement the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan

The County's Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan shall be in compliance with and conform to this Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides policy direction and guides the development of the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan. New and existing development will conform to the requirements and guidelines established in the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan. The County will explore solutions to the water supply and sewerage problem areas identified in the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan. County citizens will be involved in the development of the Plan.

Strategy: Establish a policy to address the provision of adequate public water and sewer facilities in designated growth areas

This Comprehensive Plan directs new growth to the existing towns and villages. In order for the towns and villages to accommodate this growth, adequate water and sewer facilities are essential. However, the County will investigate means to ensure that new development pays its share of the cost of providing water and sewer facilities. The water and sewer systems priority for the County is to locate these systems in the designated growth areas. Public water and/or sewer systems will not be extended into the Countryside except to correct public health emergencies. The extension of services will not be granted to parcels between developed areas and treatment facilities.

Strategy: Identify cost effective technologies to assure that all upgraded and new wastewater treatment facilities remove nutrients utilizing the most innovative, approved methods

Nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, are a major cause of the ecological decline of the Chesapeake Bay. Most wastewater treatment plants in Kent County provide secondary treatment of wastewater and then discharge to a river or stream. Secondary treated wastewater still contains relatively high nutrient concentrations. Since much of the County's history, culture, and economy is related to the Bay, the County will encourage all new and upgraded wastewater treatment facilities to remove nutrients in the most economically feasible way.

Strategy: Promote the implementation of alternative sewage treatment technologies

The County will promote the implementation of alternative sewage treatment technologies. Alternative technologies, such as land treatment, wastewater irrigation, mound systems, and wetlands systems, can lower operating costs, reduce energy demand, reuse wastewater, and eliminate pollutant discharges. These technologies will, however, only serve the towns, villages, and their designated growth areas and areas with public health emergencies.

Strategy: Maintain and enforce current County sludge regulation

Kent County requires that the Board of Appeals grant a special exception before sewage sludge may be placed on land in Kent County. The special exception includes criteria which address impact on water quality, groundwater, and other environmentally sensitive areas. Additional regulations are found in the Code of Public Local Laws of Kent County.

Strategy: Investigate composting and pelletization of Kent County sludge

Kent County will investigate state of the art procedures for composting and pelletization of sewage sludge as an alternative to land application.

SOLID WASTE

Kent County is a participant in a regional solid waste management agreement within a four-county region. The region includes Kent as well as the counties of Caroline, Queen Anne's and Talbot. The current disposal facility, which only accepts solid waste generated within this region, is located near Easton, Maryland (Talbot County). By agreement, each of these counties will, in turn, host solid waste disposal facilities. Kent County is also part of a cooperative agreement with these same counties to reduce and recycle solid waste in joint compliance with the Maryland Recycling Act.

GOAL: PROMOTE RECYCLING AND RESPONSIBLE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Strategy: Encourage household and business recycling
The County will support increased household and business recycling by continuing curbside pickup and increasing the number, improving the accessibility, and publicizing the location of recycling collection centers. The County will also promote public education regarding the benefits of recycling, the end use of recyclables and explore incentives for increasing the level of recycling.

Strategy: Require county agencies to recycle and use recycled products

The County will set the example for recycling and the use of recycled products through the active pursuit and promotion of the use of recycled, recyclable, and reusable products. County agencies will also participate in existing or establishing new cooperative recycling programs.

Strategy: Promote waste reduction alternatives

The County will promote alternatives for reducing waste such as backyard composting, commercial and residential waste exchanges, and source reduction measures. Source reduction measures include minimal packaging design, improving manufacturing processes, and changing buying habits.

Strategy: Address other solid waste management issues

The County will explore alternative solutions to county and regional solid waste management issues, such as:

- ☞ Alternative funding options, including variable rate and incentive-based fee alternatives for waste reduction and disposal;
- ☞ Coordination with other regional agencies regarding household hazardous waste and agricultural chemicals.

Strategy: Begin investigating potential sites for a regional solid waste disposal facility

As part of the regional solid waste agreement, Kent County will eventually have to host a solid waste disposal facility. Although this is not likely to occur for at least 20 years, the County will initiate this process by eliminating areas that are unsuitable because of environmental considerations, proximity to population centers, prime agricultural land, and other factors. The County should establish a timeline for site selection.

PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

Kent County has an abundance of natural areas - the Chesapeake Bay, the Chester and Sassafras rivers, wetlands, and forests. These natural areas provide many Kent County residents with a wide variety of recreational opportunities as well as resource-based employment. As the County grows, and particularly as growth is concentrated in towns and villages, it is important that the County provide open spaces and foster in-town and village recreational opportunities.

Major parks and open space within Kent County include: Millington Game Refuge (State Wildlife Management Area), Urieville Lake (State Fish Management Area), Eastern Neck Island (Federal Wildlife Refuge), Sassafras River Natural Resource Management Area, Worton Regional Park, Turner's Creek County-wide Park, community and neighborhood parks, and school play fields. Other recreational facilities include: Betterton Beach area, Bayside Landing, Edesville Community Park, Millington Pool, Toal Park, Cann Woodlot, Stillpond Station, Kent County Agricultural Center, Kent County Farm Museum, and 31 public landings.

GOAL: ENHANCE EXISTING AND PROVIDE NEW, RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS TO MEET THE RECREATIONAL NEEDS OF ALL COUNTY RESIDENTS

Strategy: Provide and promote recreational programs

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will identify and target citizens in need of recreational programs with an emphasis on "at-risk" youths, school-aged children, and the elderly. Representatives from these groups will be involved in developing, promoting, and implementing programs to meet their needs.

Strategy: Seek funding to ensure program stability

The County and the Board of Parks and Recreation will actively seek public and private funding to support recreational programming.

Strategy: Promote cooperation among recreation-related agencies

The County will foster cooperation among the various public agencies and other relevant public and private recreation interest groups. These efforts will increase communication and coordination regarding recreational programming and provide the opportunity to share resources to meet the needs of local citizens.

Strategy: Encourage private sector involvement at all levels of recreational development in the county

The County will actively seek participation of local volunteer and civic groups in enhancing existing recreational facilities and in creating new ones. Community efforts, such as the High School Football Field Lights, build community spirit, reduce costs, and engender "stake-holding" by local citizens. Local citizen participation will also be encouraged in the development, enhancement, and implementation of recreational programs.

GOAL: PROVIDE FOR THE VARIED RECREATIONAL NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF CITIZENS AND VISITORS IN KENT COUNTY BY DEVELOPING AND ENHANCING FACILITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

Strategy: Promote multiple-use of existing facilities to more effectively serve community needs

In order to attract growth to the designated growth areas, the County will develop strategies to insure provision of recreational facilities that satisfy the demands of projected growth. Strategies may include development exactions, targeting of existing funding and continued public/private partnerships.

Strategy: Focus development of recreational facilities in the towns and villages

The County will assure that adequate recreational facilities are provided in the towns and villages to satisfy the demands of projected growth. These facilities are essential to help attract growth to the designated growth areas.

Strategy: Seek funding for the County Community and Recreation Center

The County will investigate potential funding for an indoor County Recreation Center. This center would serve all the residents of Kent County while complementing the facilities at the County's High School and the County's Regional Park.

Strategy: Promote sporting facilities

The County will promote private sector facilities for competitive shooting, archery, and other individual sport shooting activities in agricultural areas. These kinds of facilities will draw visitors to the County, provide recreation for local citizens, and serve as a complement to the hunting industry. Playing fields/courts will be established in existing communities with an emphasis on creating multi-use facilities.

Strategy: Seek funding to establish hiking, biking, kayak, canoe, and horseback trails throughout the county

The County will identify, prioritize, and seek funding to establish existing and potential hiking, biking, horseback, and water trails throughout the County. The County will include in these trails the development of a hiking/biking trail along the rail line between Chestertown and the Worton Regional Park to link existing residential, employment, and recreational areas along the 4-mile corridor.

GOAL: ENHANCE AND PROMOTE THE PRESERVATION AND RECREATIONAL USE OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL AREAS

Strategy: Establish a Greenways Program

The County will coordinate efforts with other public and private agencies, as well as individuals to establish a county-wide Greenways Program. The Greenways Program will establish a network of parks and open spaces throughout the County and with connections to adjoining counties that would provide pedestrian trails, access ways and linkages between urban and residential areas, and parks and open spaces. Greenway corridors are often established through acquisition of linear parks and open spaces along prominent physical features such as streams, railways or utility lines.

Strategy: Coordinate the acquisition of public parks and open spaces with other natural resource protection programs

Recreational amenities will be developed in natural resource areas to allow for both active and passive recreation, such as primitive campgrounds, walking trails, environmental education areas, and open space, where possible. Information guides and related programs will be developed to promote the recreational and educational use of these areas by local citizens and visitors. Preservation of these areas for recreational use also can protect groundwater recharge areas, stream and reservoir water quality, and wetlands.

Strategy: Improve public access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries

The County will pursue any opportunity to improve and expand the existing public landings to allow for additional parking, picnic areas, beaches, and passive park and open space areas. Improvements will be constructed in an environmentally sensitive manner. The County will also look for opportunities to acquire park and open space contiguous to, or providing linkages with, the Chesapeake Bay.

Strategy: Assure that public open space and recreational land keeps pace with population growth and development

In 2000, Kent County met the State of Maryland's acreage goal of 30 acres of open space per 1000 residents. It is the County's policy to maintain or exceed this ratio of open space to population as the County grows. To that end, Kent County, will identify areas for future recreational sites, will review and evaluate programs and policies, such as the required open space and open space fee in lieu regulations or developers rights and responsibilities agreements, to assure that new development provide its share of open space and recreational land. The County will encourage the incorporated towns to consider the provision of open space and recreation land in annexation agreements.

CULTURE

GOAL: SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH AND IN THE ARTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

Kent County recognizes and supports the arts as a central part of the county's character and as a clean business that contributes significantly to the County's economy. The County will investigate ways to incorporate artistic elements in to public projects whenever possible and will encourage the provision of public art and facilities in public buildings and spaces.

Strategy: Identify and promote theatrical and cultural arts and entertainment districts

Artists and craftsmen are a vital part of the County's economy. Arts and entertainment activities stimulate business development and improve the quality of life for the entire community. There are a number of programs to help attract new artists or assist existing artists and some require the establishment of arts and entertainment districts. The County recognizes the contributions of its artists and craftsmen and will support efforts to encourage expansion or new growth in arts-related fields.

Strategy: Commit to preserving County-owned cultural and historic structures and sites

The County will set the example for preservation of historic and cultural structures and sites through designation, maintenance, and compatible use of County-owned sites and areas. The County will encourage the state to preserve state-owned cultural and historic sites.

Strategy: Promote community awareness of local culture and history through the development of educational programs

The County will encourage the Board of Education to work cooperatively with local historic preservation groups to develop education programs for both students and adults which emphasize Kent County history and the importance of preserving our historic landscapes and buildings. As part of these programs, the county will encourage the development of a preservation/restoration component in the building trades' vocational education program.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Kent County Emergency Management Agency coordinates local emergency services within the County through its 911 system. Fire, rescue, and ambulance services are provided by the six volunteer fire companies in the county. Volunteer Fire Companies are located in Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Kennedyville, Millington, and Rock Hall. Emergency medical services are provided by the volunteer fire companies, the volunteer Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad, and paid paramedics. Responsibility for law enforcement in the county

is shared by the Kent County Sheriff's Department, Chestertown Police Department, Rock Hall Police Department, and the Maryland State Police.

GOAL: PROVIDE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT EMERGENCY SERVICES THROUGH A UNIFIED EMERGENCY SERVICES SYSTEM USING NATIONAL AND STATE REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS TO GUIDE FUTURE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Strategy: Maintain and update as necessary, the Kent County Emergency Operations Plan

The Kent County Emergency Management Agency is responsible for developing and maintaining the Kent County Emergency Operations Plan. This Plan delineates the roles and responsibilities of local and state government, private agencies, and volunteer organizations for the response and recovery phase of emergency activities. It will comply with the standards of the National Incident Management System.

Strategy: Implement and evaluate annually the Hazard Mitigation Plan

Kent County and its five municipalities adopted the Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2004. This Plan represents the essential aspects of comprehensive disaster mitigation planning through evaluation and understanding of potential hazards, vulnerabilities, and risks. It includes strategies to help guide the County in building its disaster resistance and in selecting mitigation measures to address hazard vulnerabilities.

Strategy: Provide a centrally located Emergency Services Building

The current emergency management agency is located in the basement of the detention center and does not have adequate office or meeting space. The County will investigate options for providing centrally located offices for emergency management personnel and the paramedics.

Strategy: Maintain the viability of the volunteer fire companies and rescue squad

The Volunteer Fire Companies and the Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad have a critical role in the delivery of fire, medical, ambulance, and other emergency services throughout the County. To maintain this system, the County should evaluate strategies to assist these organizations in the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Strategy: Investigate the need to provide a modern law enforcement facility that will service the needs of the County for a 20 to 25 year period

The Sheriff's Department occupies a portion of a building that houses the Kent County Detention Center, the 911 Center, and other emergency service agencies. This building does not have the office space, interview rooms, secure evidence storage areas, or meeting space to meet the future needs of the Sheriff's Department.

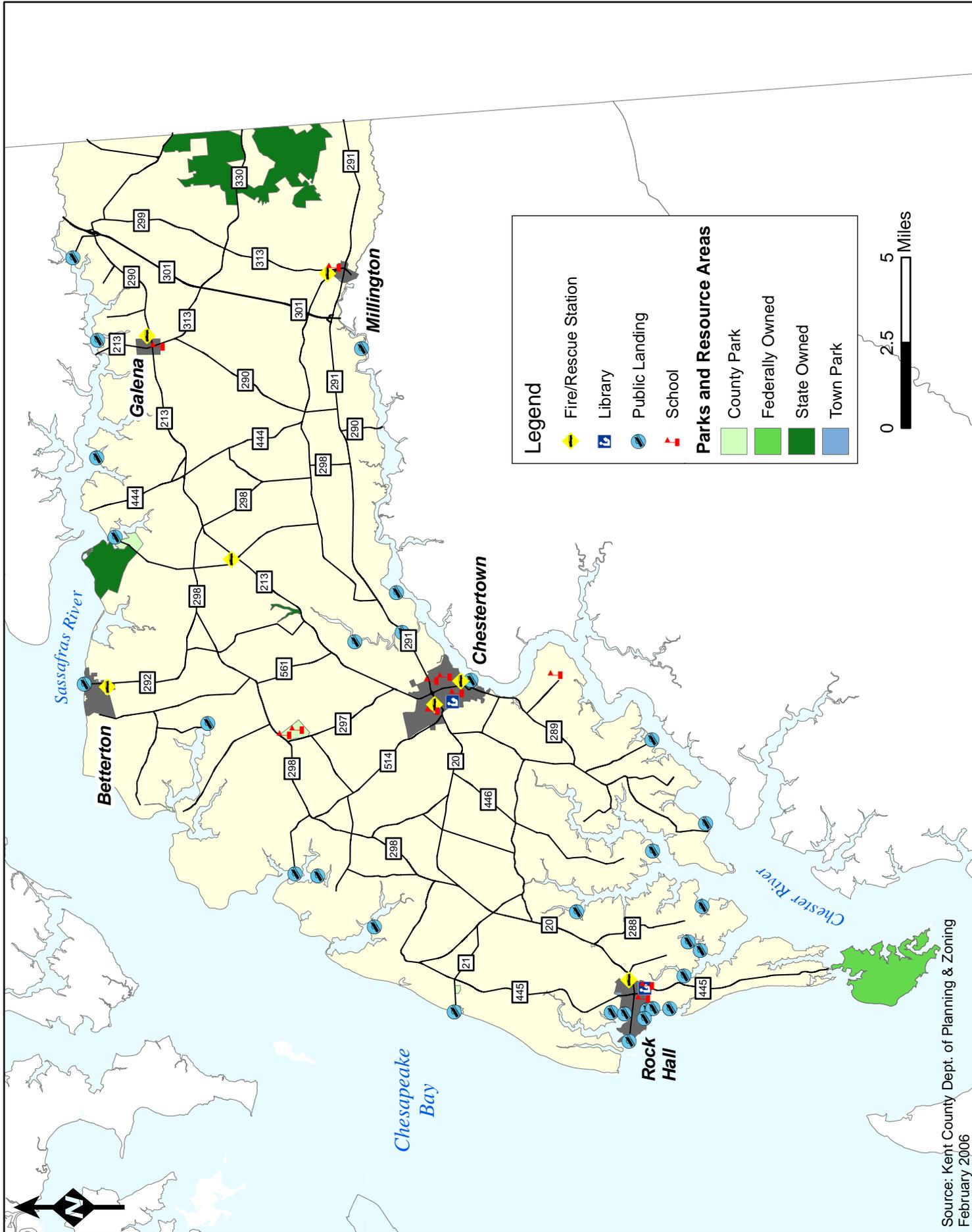
Strategy: Maintain adequate staffing for the Sheriff's Department

Future growth and development, demographic shifts, crime patterns, and technological changes may suggest changes in the staffing needs of the Sheriff's Department. A common practice for estimating staffing needs is based on the number of officers per 1000 population. While the ratio of officers to population is valuable for comparison and baseline purposes, the County may wish to establish a service standard that reflects changing policing philosophy and expressed community needs.

Strategy: Investigate the feasibility of constructing a regional detention and treatment facilities

The Upper Eastern Shore Counties broached the idea of a detention facility designed to handle the regional needs of the area. Before moving forward, the Counties must conduct a needs and feasibility study.

Map 6 - Community Facilities



H. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

The Upper Eastern Shore is one of the oldest working landscapes in North America and one of the last intact colonial and early American landscapes anywhere. Historic buildings, old churches, and traditional landscapes are all evidence of Kent County's long and significant history. These historic sites and structures remind us of our cultural richness and provide a reassuring sense of time and place. They also remind us of the importance of building to a human - not a freeway - scale, and exemplify quality design and high standards of construction.

Kent County's traditional lifestyles centered on our fertile farmlands and waterways much as our community life does today. Preservation of our rural landscapes and built environment and support for traditional resource-based industries, preserve our links with the past and carry our legacy into the future.

Through private efforts, many houses, buildings, and landscapes have been restored and protected. New uses have been found for historic buildings. Chestertown and Betterton have created historic districts. The Kent County Historical Society, the Kent County Historical Trust, and Preservation, Inc. all play a major role in the preservation of the County's resources. The National Park Service has created the Chesapeake Bay Gateways program in which several Kent County sites participate. The Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan and the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan also promote the preservation and enhancement of the County's rich historic and cultural resources.

In response to the increasing interest in heritage tourism, new attractions have been developed and existing sites have made improvements. The Historical Society operates a museum and genealogical research center from their headquarters in the Geddes-Piper House in Chestertown. Rock Hall now has three museums, one which honors the watermen who formed the heritage of the area, one which interprets elements of the general cultural history of the

region, and one which is dedicated to the Tolchester Amusement Park. Kent Museum is located at Turners Creek, and in 2001, the Schooner Sultana was launched as a floating classroom dedicated to ecology and colonial history. Additional sites include the African American Schoolhouse Museum, Charles Sumner G.A.R. Hall, Cliffs schoolhouse, and the Massey Air Museum.

Through the C. V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience and the Center for the Environment and Society, Washington College is participating in the restoration and research on the Charles Sumner Post GAR Hall, conducting marine archeology studies, and developing a Geographic Information System predictive model for archeological sites. These and other research activities provide the foundation for the future preservation and celebration of the County's rich history.

Historic preservation is about much more than the preservation of historic buildings and structures—it is about the preservation of the context in which they are found. Kent County's past is not only reflected in the architecture of individual buildings but in the working landscapes of towns, villages, farms and waterways. It is present in archeological sites and cultural events.

Preservation of the objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials and association preserves the County's character and promotes a sense of community. Preservation promotes the revitalization of our towns, villages, and countryside as well as individual structures of all types. The economic value of historic preservation has been proven again and again; it increases property values and provides for heritage tourism, the cleanest of clean industries.

GOAL: PRESERVE THE CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES OF KENT COUNTY

Strategy: Investigate preservation policies that will enable county residents to qualify for state and federal tax credits

Tax credits are a proven technique for promoting the restoration and rehabilitation of structures. The County will identify the existing tax credit programs available from the state and federal governments, review the requirements of these programs, and explore policies that will enable county residents to take advantage of these programs.

Strategy: Assure that new development complements and enhances the County's rural and historic character

New development can either enhance or erode the county's historic character. Therefore, the County will consider the applicant's effort to design developments to complement or enhance our rural and historic nature.

Strategy: Facilitate a partnership between preservationists and the development community

A partnership between the County, the preservation, and development (developers, builders, financial institutions) communities is essential to achieve the goal of preserving the county's cultural, historical and archeological resources. Through a cooperative effort, this partnership will promote the retention and reuse of historic and cultural resources; advance construction and development techniques that protect historic, cultural, and archeological resources; and identify and develop innovative and wide ranging incentives to support a variety of historic preservation activities. This partnership will also review fundraising opportunities to create a preservation revolving loan fund.

Strategy: Complete the Heritage Resource Survey and Evaluation Plan

With the assistance and guidance of the Heritage Preservation Advisory Committee, the county will survey and evaluate all heritage resources including archeological sites and districts; history museums and collections of objects; monuments, structures, buildings and districts; cultural

landscapes; and living traditions. This survey and plan will address the current state of heritage resource preservation in the county by summarizing past survey and evaluation efforts and identifying known gaps or outdated information. The plan will also identify known threats for each resource type and contain goals, objectives and a prioritized list of activities for each resource. This plan is a precursor to the development of a more in-depth Heritage Preservation Plan.

Strategy: Review and update the inventory of historic buildings and sites

The partnership of the County, preservation and development communities will seek funding to review and update the existing inventory and to include in this update all eligible historic and cultural sites, buildings, communities, land and under-water archeology, landscapes, shorelines, and historic transportation corridors within the County and to include this inventory on the County's web site. Preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings will be considered in the development of the Village Master Plans. Methods to preserve these historic and cultural resources will be investigated.

Strategy: Assist property owners in preserving historic sites

The County will work with local organizations to develop education and outreach programs to help citizens better understand the benefits and values of owning historic properties. This partnership will make owners of historic properties aware of tax credit, grant and loan programs for restoring historic buildings and provide information on the proper maintenance and repair of historic buildings. The County will maintain a clearinghouse of available resources to help citizens make educated decisions about what to do with their properties. In addition, the County will continue to promote the compatible adaptive reuse of significant historic structures through the use of flexible regulations. The County will include this information on its web site.

Strategy: Promote the listing of structures, sites, and districts to the National Register of Historic Places

The County will support the efforts of a local historic preservation interest group to assist property owners and communities in understanding the benefits of, and preparing nominations for, National Register of Historic Places listing. The County will also encourage the development of a county-wide context statement for use in nominations. Yearly goals for nominations will be established. The County will include this information on its web site.

Strategy: Commit to preserving County-owned cultural and historic structures and sites

The County will set the example for preservation of historic and cultural structures and sites through designation, maintenance, and compatible use of County-owned sites and areas.

Strategy: Promote community awareness of local culture and history through the development of educational programs

The County will encourage the Board of Education to work cooperatively with local historic preservation groups to develop education programs for both students and adults which emphasize Kent County history and the importance of preserving our historic landscapes and buildings. As part of these programs the county will actively support the development of a preservation/restoration component in the building trades vocational education program.

Strategy: Investigate "delay of demolition" ordinance

The County will investigate adopting a "delay of demolition" ordinance to encourage owners of historic structures to explore options for avoiding demolition or at a minimum allowing time for documentation of the structure and salvage of reusable materials. The County will investigate innovative programs which would result in the movement or preservation of these structures.

Strategy: Explore designation of significant landscapes as Rural Historic Districts

Preserving landscapes can be as important as preserving structures. The National Register of Historic Places allows for the designation of rural historic districts. Rural historic districts could include large tracts of agricultural land surrounding small crossroads communities that are important to preserving the cultural heritage of Kent County. The scenic assessment conducted for the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area could be a starting point for selecting areas.

Strategy: Work with local organizations to gather oral histories

Oral histories are an important component to understanding and archiving our historic and cultural past. Traditional lifestyles are disappearing and the histories are slowly fading away as older community members pass on. Many local organizations are already gathering oral histories. The county will encourage these organizations to work together to establish a standard methodology and central depository for collected histories.

Strategy: Promote preservation of the County's archeological resources

The County's rich past is evident not only in its numerous historic structures but also in its numerous archeological sites which range from Native American settlements and burial sites to colonial and early American sites. Identifying and protecting these resources is important.

GOAL: PROMOTE HERITAGE TOURISM AS A MEANS TO ENHANCE THE COUNTY'S ECONOMY THROUGH INVESTMENT IN HISTORIC, ARCHEOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES.

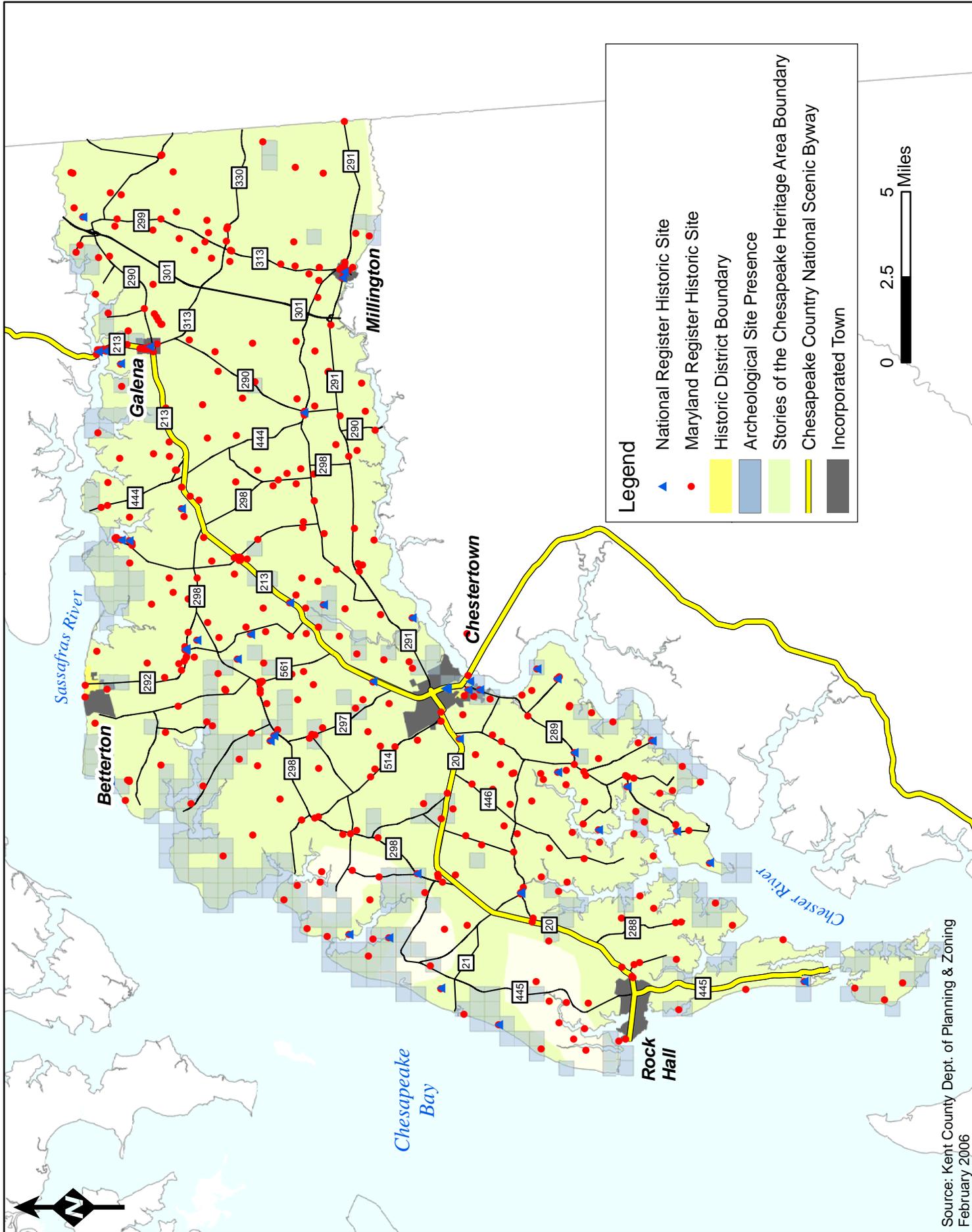
Strategy: Encourage development of heritage-related services as supplemental sources of income

Interpreting the county's history through guided tours and demonstrations would allow residents and visitors to truly experience what make this area so special. It could also provide income to those employed in natural-resource based industries during the off seasons

Strategy: Develop marketing approaches to promote and encourage heritage tourism

The County will encourage local historic preservation groups to explore alternatives for promoting regional heritage tourism and the history and culture of Kent County. They will initiate and promote local events and museums that celebrate our local heritage, as well as recognize state and national events such as National Historic Preservation Week.

Map 7 - Heritage Resources

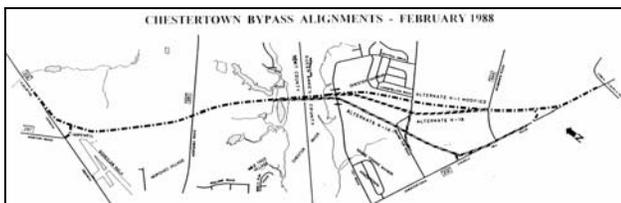


V. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES – PUTTING THE PLAN INTO ACTION

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan is an ambitious undertaking which will involve concerted effort and committed leadership of many individuals, organizations, public agencies, and elected officials. Well over one hundred fifty individual strategies and initiatives were identified during the planning process and can be organized into four categories: Ongoing Initiatives, Statements of Policy Direction, Reviews and Updates, and New Initiatives. While all of these strategies are listed elsewhere in the Plan, the County believes it is important to make a clear, concise statement of priorities for the new initiatives requiring County action. This list is not all-inclusive and may change as circumstances in the County change.

New Initiatives – Highest Priorities

- ☞ Develop a strategy to prevent a Northern Bay Bridge in Kent County
- ☞ Develop Village and Town Master Plans; Coordinate development of the Master Plans for the Town Growth Areas with the respective incorporated towns
- ☞ Work with Queen Anne’s County and the State Highway Administration to ensure the construction of a new Chester River Bridge Crossing with a limited access parkway from the intersection of MD Route 297 and MD Route 213 to intersect with MD Route 213 in Queen Anne’s County
- ☞ Convene a housing summit for the purpose of identifying actions to address the County’s affordable housing needs
- ☞ Develop a proactive Capital Improvement Program that coordinates future development with the provision of infrastructure, includes measures to insure that new development pays its share of the cost of providing public facilities and services, and protects agricultural lands from incompatible capital projects
- ☞ Encourage a continued dialog between the county business community and the various educational institutions to develop the programs, training, apprenticeships and trade education to assure that graduates of Kent County schools have the skills necessary to successfully compete in the job market
- ☞ Adopt Right to Fish and Right to Hunt Laws
- ☞ Appoint the Village Advisory Council
- ☞ Provide landowners with septic systems information on maintaining their current systems and availability of new nitrogen removal systems and promote the use of innovative and nitrogen removing septic system
- ☞ Complete the Heritage Resource Survey and Evaluation Plan
- ☞ Investigate a “delay of demolition” ordinance



Source: Maryland Department of Transportation, SHA

New Initiatives – High Priorities

- ☞ Conduct research and analysis to better focus economic development efforts
- ☞ Encourage the protection of important aquatic resources
- ☞ Maintain and enforce existing county regulations for the protection of wildlife
- ☞ Explore designation of significant landscapes, including villages, as Rural Historic Districts
- ☞ Review plans, policies, and regulations to ensure support for the continuance of agriculture as a viable industry in the county and promote regional initiatives to expand resource based economies

Ongoing Initiatives

- ☞ Support expansion of existing businesses and the development of locally owned businesses
- ☞ Participate in all available land preservation programs including the development of a local Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights Programs; support the full funding of these programs and investigate tax credits for participants in easement programs
- ☞ Integrate Kent County sites, facilities and activities with a coordinated regional tourism and marketing program
- ☞ Enhance the character of Neighborhood Development Areas
- ☞ Protect, retain, and expand riparian forest and existing large forest areas

Appendix A

Consistency with the Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992

This plan is consistent with the requirements of the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992 as amended in 2000. It reflects the eight visions identified in the Act which directly address problems created by current patterns of development in the State of Maryland.

The eight visions are:

- ☞ Development shall be concentrated in suitable areas;
- ☞ Sensitive areas shall be protected;
- ☞ In rural areas, growth shall be directed to existing population centers and resource areas shall be protected;
- ☞ Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land shall be a universal ethic;
- ☞ Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, shall be practiced;
- ☞ To encourage the achievement of 1 – 5 above, economic growth shall be encouraged and regulatory mechanisms shall be streamlined;
- ☞ Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the county or municipal corporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur; and
- ☞ Funding mechanisms shall be addressed to achieve these visions.

The Plan also protects the identified sensitive areas and establishes a means for intergovernmental cooperation.

Appendix B

Priority Funding Areas – Rural Villages

The “Smart Growth” Areas Act of 1997, Chapter 759 of the Laws of Maryland of 1997, requires the State to target funding for “growth-related” projects to Priority Funding Areas beginning October 1, 1998. Several types of Priority Funding Areas are designated by the Act. Rural villages identified in the Comprehensive Plan as of July 1, 1998 may be designated as Priority Funding Areas.

For the purposes of the “Smart Growth” Areas Act of 1997, Priority Funding Areas, the following communities are considered rural villages:

Big Woods	Massey
Colemans	Melitota
Chesterville	Morgnec
Chesterville Forest	Newtown
Cliffs City	Olivet Hill
Crosby	Peacocks Corner
Georgetown – 1 st Election District	Pomona
Golts	Quaker Neck Landing
Johnsontown	Sassafras
Locust Grove	Sharptown
Lynch	Still Pond
McKinleyville	

Appendix C

Adoption of The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan

The “Heritage Area and Tourism Areas” Act of 1996, Chapter 601 of the Laws of 1996 requires that each jurisdiction included in a certified heritage area amend its Comprehensive Plan to include by reference the management plan for the heritage area. The Maryland Heritage Area Authority certified, with conditions, the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, thereby recognizing heritage areas in Kent, Queen Anne’s, Talbot, and Caroline Counties and their municipalities and offering a mechanism for coordinated and enhanced heritage tourism in these counties. Therefore, Kent County recognizes and references The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan as a means to further opportunities for heritage tourism and economic development.