

In Loving Memory of

William C. Livingston, Director

*Salisbury-Wicomico County Department of Planning, Zoning and
Community Development
November, 1984 to June, 1997*

Mr. Livingston, a native of Wicomico County, was dedicated to the people of the County. From 1962 until his death in 1997, Mr. Livingston worked in planning the future for Salisbury and Wicomico County. As Director of the Salisbury-Wicomico County Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development from November, 1984 to June, 1997, Mr. Livingston strived to make Wicomico County a better place for everyone to live and enjoy. This document, in large part, preserves his vision.

*Comprehensive Development Plan
Wicomico County, Maryland
February 3, 1998*

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WICOMICO COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

Due in large part to its ideal location in the center of the Delmarva Peninsula and at the intersection of two major highways, Wicomico County will most likely maintain its current status as a regional center of economic activity (see Map 1) in the future. However, by capitalizing on the County's location and other advantages, growth and development will change the complexion of the County and its cities and towns. If not properly managed the benefits of economic expansion, new jobs and careers, business opportunities and income for County residents could mean the loss of those essential characteristics that make Wicomico County a great place to live and raise a family. Those charged with the responsibility making decisions that will affect growth and economic expansion of the County must ask themselves what the nature of these changes will be and what they will mean to Wicomico County and its residents.

Today Wicomico County's unique blend of urban and rural environments sets it apart from all other counties on the Eastern Shore. The City of Salisbury and the surrounding urban area offer a variety of quality residential environments. These are established neighborhoods with schools, parks and places of worship nearby. Goods and services can be purchased from a large assortment of businesses centrally located in the urban core. Shopping needs can be obtained from small, locally-owned business establishments or at a regional mall. Travel and the transport of goods is made easier by a good highway network, a regional airport located just a few miles from the City of Salisbury, rail and the Wicomico River, navigable for barge traffic all the way to Salisbury.

Beyond the urban core, farm fields, forests, wetlands, rivers and streams dominate the landscape. These land forms are part of the rural legacy that is Wicomico County's special offering to its residents. Wicomico County's rural legacy also includes quaint small towns, historic villages and scattered small cross-roads settlements that offer the best of rural life. An important part of the County's rural legacy is its heritage revealed in preserved historic and cultural resources. This legacy is given life and a profound meaning by wildlife that co-exist with the rural and urban populations due to the availability of essential habitat in the County. Places are connected by path systems, highways and scenic rural roads, farm lanes, river channels, and green corridors that provide for the movement of people, vehicles, and wildlife throughout the countryside and in the urban center. Collectively these features define a rural character that is uniquely Wicomico County. They are fragile features, easily destroyed or adversely impacted when the land is converted for urban or suburban development.

The Comprehensive Plan is an official statement of the County Council setting forth policies concerning desirable future physical development. It serves as a general guide to public and private development decisions. It is also the basis for the preparation of specific legislation, such as zoning and subdivision regulations, and other documents, such as the capital improvements program, which implement the policies set forth in the Plan.

Map 1

The Comprehensive Plan is characteristically comprehensive, general, and long range. It is comprehensive in that it encompasses the entire geographic area of the County and includes all functional elements that bear upon physical development, such as transportation, land use and community facilities. It is general in that it summarizes policies and proposals and does not establish detailed regulations or indicate specific locations, as subdivision regulations or a zoning map do. Long range means that it looks beyond current issues to problems and opportunities of future growth.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN This Plan is comprised of eight major elements, developed so that they form an integrated, unified Plan.

1. Land Use - Planning for the most appropriate future use of land.
2. Natural Resources and Sensitive Area Protection - Planning for the protection of natural resources and sensitive natural areas.
3. Transportation - Planning for the most appropriate general location, character, and extent of highways, rail, air and port facilities, and other means of moving people and commodities.
4. Community Facilities - Planning for the most appropriate future location, character, and extent of public lands, buildings, and facilities.
5. Historic and Cultural Preservation - Planning for the conservation of the County's historic and cultural resources.
6. Housing and Community Development - Recommending ways of assuring a decent residential environment for all citizens.
7. Mineral Resources - Planning to assure a future supply of mineral resources.
8. Implementation - Recommending policies, programs, and regulations which will carry out this Comprehensive Plan.

USE OF MAPS IN THIS PLAN

All maps provided as part of this Plan are general illustrations of County policies more specifically described in the text. While new geographic information technology was used to render these maps, the precise borders shown may not indicate the true or appropriate location for various boundaries.

A determination of consistency with this Plan and with specific geographic locations can only be made by the county Planning Commission under the delegated authority of the County Council. As implementation of this Plan commences through the County's various land use laws and regulations, specific determinations of policies described herein will be established and how this Plan affects specific properties will become clear.

PLANNING IN WICOMICO COUNTY

The first effort to develop a comprehensive plan covering the entire County took place in the early 1980's and culminated the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan for Wicomico County, Maryland in November 1982. A Plan for the Salisbury Region encompassing an area within a five mile radius of the center of Salisbury was prepared in 1961. The Salisbury Region Plan was revised in 1975 and renamed The Comprehensive Plan for the Salisbury Metropolitan Core (The Metro Core Plan).

Planning for Downtown Salisbury has been ongoing since the Revitalization Plan for the Central Business District was adopted in 1962. The most recent planning effort dealing with this area was undertaken in 1980 by the Regional/ Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) sponsored by the American Institute of Architects. This study was the basis for a subsequent plan adopted in 1981, entitled Salisbury, Maryland - Downtown Revitalization.

The City of Fruitland adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1975. Comprehensive Plans have been adopted by the respective councils of Delmar (1975), Willards (1976), and Sharptown (1980).

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992 (the Planning Act), which amended Article 66B, Zoning and Planning Act, establishes a State mandate for all local governments to revise their plans and implementing regulations. Revised plans are required to include the "visions" contained in the Act. These visions are:

1. Development is concentrated in suitable areas;
2. Sensitive areas are protected;
3. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected;
4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.
5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced;
6. To assure the achievement of 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined; and

7. Funding mechanisms are in place to achieve all other visions.

The Planning Act of 1992 also required jurisdictions to develop policies and management techniques for sensitive areas including:

- Streams and stream buffers,
- 100-year floodplains,
- endangered species habitats,
- steep slopes, and
- other sensitive areas a jurisdiction wants to protect from the adverse impacts of development.

Other requirements of the Planning Act of 1992 include:

- consideration of streamlining and innovative and flexible development regulations for environmental protection and growth management,
- consistency requirements, i.e., regulations, such as the zoning ordinance and maps that implement the Comprehensive Plan, must be consistent with the policies and recommendations of the Plan; other plans, e.g., functional plans such as Sewer and Water Master Plans, Solid Waste Plan, and Open Space and Recreation Plans, must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and its implementation regulations; and State and local funding decisions, e.g., capital improvements, must be consistent with the Plan, i.e., local government construction projects involving State funds must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Local governments must coordinate their planning and development efforts with adjacent jurisdictions.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Assumptions

The formulation of **GOALS** and **OBJECTIVES** is predicated upon a set of general assumptions concerning the future of Wicomico County. These assumptions are derived by analyzing past and current information, then formulating a general picture of future development of Wicomico County.

The Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan is based on the following assumptions:

1. Wicomico County will maintain its position in the foreseeable future as a major center of economic activity on the Eastern Shore.
2. The population of Wicomico County will continue to increase at a moderate rate (one to two percent per year) to a population of about 110,000 by the year 2020. At an average rate of 2.5 persons per household, this population increase will mean 14,246 new households will locate in Wicomico County by the year 2020.
3. If recent location and land consumption trends continue to the year 2020, less than 40 percent of County residents will live in designated growth areas (Metro Core and Town Growth Areas) in the future. More specifically, continuation of these trends would mean that 8,548 household will locate outside of the Metro Core area and 25,644 acres of land will be converted to residential use. Map 2 illustrates the relative size of 25,000 additional areas outside of Metro Core and underscores the potential impact of continuing these trends. Another 5,698 households will locate inside of the Metro Core area and 5,470 acres of land will be converted to residential use.
4. Environmental health considerations, particularly as they affect individual on-site water supply and sewage disposal, will remain an important public health responsibility. Future development will be more dependent upon the availability of central sewerage and water supply systems.
5. Increasing concern for the conservation of agricultural land and the natural environment, especially maintenance of water quality, will have a greater influence on the location of development.
6. The cost of commuting as it increases relative to housing costs will tend to discourage development remote from places of employment, shopping, and necessary services and facilities. It will also increase the interest in public transportation.

7. Access between metropolitan areas and the Eastern Shore will be easier because of regional and local transportation improvements. It is anticipated that increased air travel will mandate continued improvements to the Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport, maintenance of the Wicomico River channel on a regular basis will be needed to facilitate river transport, and regional highways will require continued improvement.
8. Planned industrial parks will continue to be the preferred industrial development alternative.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A Comprehensive Plan is based on background data and studies that provide a picture of past trends, the existing situation, and projections of the future of the County. Much of this information can be found in the following reports:

1. A Profile of the City of Salisbury, A Comprehensive Plan Background Study, April 1995, prepared by the Salisbury-Wicomico Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development
2. Growth Management Strategies, The City of Salisbury, Maryland, August 1993, prepared by the Salisbury-Wicomico Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development
3. Facing the Future, Alternative for Managing Growth in the Public Interest, 1991, prepared by the Salisbury-Wicomico Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development
4. Subdivision Activity, 1986 - 1992, Wicomico County, Maryland, 1993, prepared by the Salisbury-Wicomico Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development
5. Community Profile, 1995, prepared by the Wicomico County Quarter Century Committee
6. Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile, Wicomico County, Maryland, September 1994, Maryland Office of Planning

Map 2

Below is a presentation of some of the data and information upon which this Comprehensive Plan is based.

Population

Table 1 shows historic and projected population growth.

Table 1
Wicomico County Population, 1930 - 2020

Year	Population	Percent Increase
1930	31,229	
1940	34,530	10.6
1950	39,641	14.8
1960	49,050	23.7
1970	54,236	10.6
1980	64,540	19.0
1990	74,339	16.0
2000 ¹	84,700	13.9
2010 ¹	96,505	13.9
2020 ¹	109,955	13.9

Source: Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1930-1990

¹ Figures for 2000, 2010, and 2020 are based on projections by Salisbury-Wicomico Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development

Population Growth

Wicomico County contains the largest population on Maryland's Eastern Shore and is one of the most rapidly growing counties on the entire Delmarva Peninsula. The 1990 Census revealed that Wicomico County had 74,339 residents, an increase in population of 9,799 persons or 15.2 percent between 1980 and 1990. In 1980, Wicomico had a population of 64,540 residents, a 19 percent increase over the 1970 total of 54,236. County growth rates have ranged from lows of 10.6 percent between 1930-1940 and 1960-1970, to a high of 23.7 percent between 1950-1960. Over the past 60 years, the County has grown by 43,110 persons, a 138 percent increase for a long term growth rate and an average of 2.3 percent per year.

The Maryland Office Of Planning (using a projection of less than 1 percent per year) has predicted a total increase of population to 100,000 by 2020. The Wicomico County Planning Department (using

1 to 1.5 percent growth rate per year) has forecast a population of 109,995 by the year 2020. The County Planning Department's forecast takes into account the following factors:

- People of child-bearing age have increased 9 percent (from 35 percent to 44 percent) from 1970 to 1990.
- Increases in the number of children in the public school system averaged 2.5 percent in the early 1990's and 2 percent per year between 1984 and 1993.
- Historically, County growth has averaged more than 1 percent for over 50 years and close to 1.5 percent per year during the last 30 years.
- Based on building permits over the past three years (after the 1990 Census), an average of over 500 units per year were built in areas under County (not including Salisbury) jurisdiction, indicating that population outside Salisbury is increasing by about 2 percent per year.

Consequently, the County should continue to plan for a moderate population growth which will average 1 to 1.5 percent per year. Every effort should be made to provide jobs in the skilled categories in order to encourage the retention of existing residents and the in-migration of persons in the 20-64 years of age groups.

Population Location

The amount of subdivision activity is one indicator of the growth occurring within the County at a particular point in time. Map 3 Subdivision Development Trends for the Years 1986 to 1992, clearly shows that the trend in recent years has been a decline in the number of new subdivisions in the Metro Core and an increase in subdivision activity in areas more remote from the centers of population. This trend is further documented in Table 2.

The survey for the period 1986 to 1992 indicated that a total of 155 plats were processed that accounted for a total of 2,383 lots and 5,266 acres. The location analysis indicated that subdivisions took place on a widely scattered basis throughout the County during this seven year period. A considerable amount of acreage subdivided was located on lands used currently or formerly for agricultural purposes.

Over the seven year period analyzed development continued to occur beyond the Metro Core area, the area in the County where the Comprehensive Plan calls for intensive development. Subdivisions outside the Metro Core included 1,440 lots or 60 percent of all final lots and 83 percent (4,347 acres) of all land subdivided. The average lot size was 3.0 acres. Those subdivisions within the Metro Core area accounted for 943 lots or 40 percent of the total on 909.0 acres which was only 17 percent of the land subdivided. The average lot size was 0.96 acres.

Another indicator of the impact of subdivision activity in the County and its agricultural areas is the amount of activity occurring east and west of US 13. Subdivisions on the east side of US 13 accounted for 30 percent of all land subdivided in the County, with 41 percent of all lots. Final plats approved in this area included 770 lots on 1,330 acres of land. Lots on the County's east side averaged 1.60 acres each. Development on the west side of US 13 continued at an accelerated rate. Final subdivision plats west of US 13 accounted for 59 percent of all lots and 70 percent of all land subdivided. These plats included 1,413 lots on 3,687 acres with lots in this half of the County averaging 2.6 acres each.

Table 2
Urban-Rural Population Distribution, 1950 - 1990
Wicomico County, Maryland

Year	County Total	Population in			
		Incorporated Places	Unincorporated Areas		
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1950	39,641	20,445	51	19,196	49
1960	49,050	21,513	43	27,537	57
1970	54,236	21,450	41	32,786	60
1980	64,540	23,234	36	41,306	64
1990	74,399	24,103	32	50,236	68

Table 3
Final Plat Subdivision Activity
1986 - 1992
Wicomico County, Maryland

	Acres	% of Total	Lots	% of Total
Inside Metro Core	909	17%	943	40%
Outside Metro Core	4,347	83%	1,440	60%
Total	5,256	100%	2,383	100%
East of US 13	1,569	30%	970	41%
West of US 13	3,687	70%	1,413	59%
Total	5,256	100%	2,383	100%

Population density is an important consideration in planning for and guiding future growth. Table 4 presents density statistics for Wicomico County and the State of Maryland. When the County density for 1990 is compared to the 1990 density of the State, it is obvious that Wicomico County is still very much a rural county. However, the County trend is toward increased density and a more urban atmosphere in the future. County population shifts from the cities and towns to the rural outlying

areas of the County, and the implications of this movement, are the major planning problems facing Wicomico County.

Table 4
Population Density, 1960 - 2020

Year	Population	Density (Persons/Sq. Mile)	Density (Persons/Sq. Mile) ¹
1960	49,050	124	140
1970	54,236	137	155
1980	64,540	163	185
1990	74,399	197	222
2020	109,995	291	328
State of Maryland (1990)	4,781,468	489	612

¹ Land area is calculated as total area minus surface water and wetlands.

Employment and Economic Data

The economic situation of a community is an important consideration when planning for future development. An area with a promising economic future will naturally be a desirable and attractive place in which to live and thus will continue to grow. Some general economic data are presented in this section of the Plan.

Employment Distribution

Wicomico County's policy for economic development has been to promote three basic segments of the economy: agriculture, industry and trade and services. In the ten year period from 1984 to 1994, the total number of jobs in Wicomico County increased by 53.5 percent or about 1,600 per year. The largest increase in jobs (6,932) came in the Service sector. Although employment in the agriculture sector declined farm income has shown a resurgence in recent years. Recent employment data reported by the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation for the third quarter in 1996 showed that average monthly employment in the manufacturing during the first three quarters of 1996 indicated an increase over the 1994 level.

Map 3

Income

Table 5 shows the per capita income in Wicomico County in 1979 and 1989 compared to the State as a whole. Wicomico County's per capita income is about 76 percent of the statewide figure, but is six percent higher than the average per capita income figure of \$12,608 for the four Lower Shore Counties (Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset).

Table 5
Per Capita Income, 1979 and 1989
Wicomico County, Maryland

Jurisdiction	1979	1989	Percent Change 1979 - 1989
Wicomico County	\$6,666	\$13,425	101%
State of Maryland	\$8,293	\$17,730	114%

Source: Bureau of the Census

Table 6
Employment by Industry, 1984 - 1994
Wicomico County, Maryland

Employment Sector	1984		1994		Percent of Total Employment		Total Employment Change 1984 - 1994	
	1984	1994	1984	1994	1984	1994	1984	1994
Manuf.	6,311	7,022	21.0%	15.0%	21.0%	15.0%	-5.8%	
Wholesale Trade	2,285	2,079	8.0%	5.0%	8.0%	5.0%	-3.1%	
Construction	1,828	3,372	6.0%	7.0%	6.0%	7.0%	1.2%	
Transportation, Comm., Public Utilities	1,788	2,171	6.0%	5.0%	6.0%	5.0%	-1.2%	
Finance, Real Estate, Insurance	1,099	3,003	4.0%	7.0%	4.0%	7.0%	2.8%	
Retail	6,302	9,240	21.0%	20.0%	21.0%	20.0%	-0.9%	
Service	6,697	13,629	22.0%	30.0%	22.0%	30.0%	7.3%	
Government	3,788	5,682	13.0%	12.0%	13.0%	12.0%	-0.3%	
Total	30,098	46,198	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Source: Maryland *Department of Economic and Employment Development (D.E.E.D.)*

Existing Land Use and Development Trends Wicomico County, which encompasses 241,428 acres or 377 square miles, is primarily undeveloped. The major portion of the land area is in forest, crop land, wetland, and water features. Only seven percent, or about 15,000 acres, has been developed. Table 7 shows the general uses of land in the County in 1975.

In addition to the 241,440 acres of land in the County, there are approximately another 14,576 acres of land under water. The developed land categories (residential and non-residential) totaled 24,133 acres in 1990. This is an increase of 61 percent in the developed land category over the 15,000 acres reported in the 1982 Comprehensive Plan. This would indicate an average rate of land consumption for development of approximately 600 acres per year.

Table 7
Existing General Land Use 1990
Wicomico County, Maryland

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Forest	111,062	46
Agricultural	91,747	38
Wetland	14,486	6
Residential	16,900	7
Non Residential	7,233	3
Total	241,428	100.0

Source: Maryland Office of Planning, Maryland Land Use and Cover 1990 - 2020 Forecast, September 1992.

A comparison of the total buildable land (e.g., total land area minus water and wetlands) with the amount of land that is presently developed, indicates that Wicomico County has ample vacant land for development within the existing urban areas. For example, in the Metro Core area (totaling approximately 36,000 acres) it is estimated that there are nearly 20,000 acres of buildable land. This figure does not include vacant buildable land within the corporate limits of the City of Salisbury, City of Fruitland and Delmar, platted but undeveloped lots in existing subdivisions in the Metro Core area and land in the Wicomico County Critical Area.

The development data presented above indicates that there is ample land available in the Metro Core alone to accommodate the projected increase in County population by the year 2020. This is further illustrated by the fact that, considering all urban development (residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, etc.), there is approximately 0.3 of an acre of developed land per person in the County. The projected population in the year 2020 is 109,995, an increase of about 35,600 persons. Applying the 0.3 acre ratio, the demand for additional land in the year 2020 will be approximately 10,680 acres, well below the 20,000 available in the Metro Core alone. However, it should be noted that if recent land subdivision trends are allowed to continue the amount of developed land per person in Wicomico County could climb to over 0.5 acres per person by 2020, a 67 percent increase over historic trends.

In summary, the Growth Areas designated in this Comprehensive Plan are large enough to easily accommodate the expected growth to the year 2020. Further, recommended development policies for limited development in and around existing village centers and suburban (transition) areas,

southwest of the Metro Core area, will further increase the amount of available land for growth and provide a variety of living environments (urban, suburban, rural).

Soils and Drainage Map 4 is based on Natural Soils Groups information compiled and distributed by the Soil Conservation Service. This information generally indicates the potential of the various soils groups to accommodate cropland and urban development and is an important factor in planning and growth management because the capability of soils to accommodate development is critical to the health and safety of local residents, especially in rural areas. It is also important to know the locations of the best agricultural supporting soils so they may be protected from urban development whenever possible.

These maps clearly show that a large amount of the prime agricultural soils which are also, rated as best for urban development, are within the developed urban area. However, there are extensive areas of prime soils that lie outside the developed areas and are still in agricultural use. In addition, a substantial amount of soils rated fair to good for agriculture remains relatively free of development in the outlying areas.

It is particularly important, in keeping with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, to take measures to protect the productive agricultural lands that are relatively free of urban development. The development policies adopted by the County should strive to protect the agricultural land in the eastern part of the County that is still relatively free of development by limiting development outside of the Metro Core and Town Growth districts. The same policies should hold true for that part of the County west of the Metro Core since there is a substantial amount of productive agricultural land in that area, and it too should be protected from urban development.

Drainage is an important factor in both agriculture and urban development. Soil type and topography are the major determinants of the natural drainage capabilities of land. In agricultural areas where the soils do not permit adequate natural drainage, public drainage associations have been formed primarily for drainage of agricultural land.

Public Drainage Associations and River Basin Watersheds (Map 5) indicates, large portions of the County east of the Metro Core, as well as other scattered areas, are served by public drainage associations. These drainage facilities are designed to function during the spring and fall months, whereas urban development requires functioning drainage systems at all times. Increased urban development in rural areas will tend to absorb the capacity of these drainage facilities during the periods when agricultural need is greatest. In addition, residential development generates 1.5 to two times the amount of stormwater run-off as an equivalent amount of farm land, a further encroachment on the capacity of drainage systems designed for agricultural use.

Agricultural Land

Agriculture continues to be a major influence on the economic, social, and physical character of Wicomico County. The Land Use Plan element of this Plan discusses the importance of agriculture to the local economy and the historic trends of agricultural land use.

Past development has reduced the supply of agricultural land in Wicomico County in recent years. Over the past 23 years, there has been an overall 14 percent reduction in the amount of acres devoted to farming. In the period 1978 to 1992, the number of farms decreased (although average farm size increased), and farmland acres decreased as a percentage of total County land. In the 1978 to 1992 time period, 75 percent of all major subdivisions approved in the County were located outside the Metro Core, primarily in agricultural areas.

Without an effective growth management policy and supporting implementation measures, agriculture in Wicomico County could follow national and statewide trends of lessening economic and cultural importance. This Comprehensive Plan promotes growth in non-agricultural areas, maintains agriculture as an important part of the local economy, and protects the agricultural heritage of the County.

Map 4.

Map 5

Chapter 1

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The formulation of goals and objectives is a fundamental step in preparing plans, policies and programs for development of Wicomico County. These statements are an integral part of the public planning and development process because once established, they represent the overall growth policy of the County.

Goals and objectives provide broad direction for guiding both public actions and private activities in addressing a variety of land use activities related to growth. They establish a public policy framework for evaluating specific proposals to meet the needs of local residents while at the same time attempting to preserve the existing character and environmental attributes of the County. As conditions in the County change and the growth rate fluctuates, specific development proposals and plan revisions can be more consistently evaluated in the context of an established set of public growth policies.

In order to promote the general welfare and safety of all County residents, the following goals and objectives have been established to serve as a framework for preparing specific plans and policies, ensuring the continued, balanced, development of the County.

VISIONS

The following "Seven Visions," as outlined in the State of Maryland Planning Act of 1992 are the guiding principals for the development of the following goals and objectives and the Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan:

1. Development is concentrated in suitable areas;
2. Sensitive areas are protected;
3. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected;
4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic;
5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced;
6. To assure the achievement of 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined; and
7. Funding mechanisms are addressed to achieve these visions.

GOALS

Goals are statements summarizing County policy affecting growth and related development activities. When followed, they will enable continued balanced development which is financially sound, environmentally sensitive and the least disruptive to existing County residents.

The Comprehensive Plan is structured:

- *To promote high quality development in the County supporting it as a regional economic center, in a manner that best preserves and enhances the County's existing character while protecting its natural resources and accommodating the diverse needs of existing and future residents.*
- *To direct more dense growth into existing and pre-planned growth areas and less dense growth outside the Metro Core; so that, the public services and facilities necessary to meet existing and future growth can be provided and protect natural and agricultural areas are protected, consistent with the human and fiscal resources of the County.*

OBJECTIVES

Objectives establish specific methods for evaluating development activities in order to achieve the broad goals for the County. The following objectives indicate specific aims for a wide array of public actions necessary to accomplish stated public goals.

- Maintain moderate population growth for the County which should range between 1 percent and 2 percent per year and plan to accommodate approximately 103,010 people by 2015.
- Support policies and programs that encourage the expansion and diversification of the County's economic base by recruiting business providing a wide variety of skilled jobs in small, select industries and providing tourist oriented facilities and events.
- Encourage development of a variety of commercial, service and distribution activities necessary to serve an expanding three-state regional market.
- Support continued expansion of the Salisbury-Wicomico Metro Core as the multistate center of financial, educational, governmental, and medical institutions and facilities.
- Encourage greater recognition by all citizens that land is a finite resource and its wise use and effective conservation is essential for the survival of existing and future generations.

- Encourage continued growth of the County in a manner which preserves its significant natural features by requiring proper planning and design techniques for development, sensitive to environmental concerns.
- Promote the conservation of large portions of the County with existing natural resources, prime agricultural land and natural limitations on development.
- Direct medium and high density development into areas served or planned to be served by a complete array of public services.
- Establish appropriate development patterns which encourage a variety of attractive residential sites with a diversity of housing styles and types in order to increase the supply, variety, and availability of housing to citizens in every income level.
- Establish strong protective measures to stabilize and enhance existing residential neighborhoods in the County.
- Encourage a fully coordinated transportation system in recognition of the County's centralized location in a tri-state area which will facilitate the movement of people and goods by air, land and water.
- Establish a coordinated street and highway network that provides for the logical continuation and improvement of existing streets and highways in proper coordination with current State and municipal facilities.
- Provide a variety of publicly accessible open space areas and recreational facilities as well as protect undevelopable County natural areas for the enjoyment and benefit of all existing and future residents.
- Develop programs and incentives to protect historic and cultural resources.
- Concentrate development in suitable areas.
- Direct the majority of growth to existing population centers and protect resource areas.
- Protect sensitive environmental areas.
- Encourage stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land.
- Conserve resources, including reducing resource consumption.

Chapter 2 LAND USE

The Land Use Plan expresses the County's objectives and policies concerning the type, location, intensity and quality of public and private land use now and into the future. The Land Use Plan (Map 6) delineates areas deemed by the County to be appropriate locations for private land uses, such as residential and commercial uses, public uses including schools, parks and recreation facilities, resource utilization uses, such as agriculture and forestry, and areas deemed to be appropriate for special protection due to the presence of sensitive or important natural resources.

Implementation recommendations contained in the Land Use Plan and the Implementation section of this Plan are meant to establish an agenda for developing a land use regulatory and resource protection scheme for the County to achieve the Plan's objectives. As such, the Land Use Plan will serve as an integral part of the day-to-day administration of land use and related regulations and codes by providing a framework and basis for adopting new regulatory provisions and ordinance interpretation. This is essential because the Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 requires that regulations, such as the zoning ordinance and maps that implement the Comprehensive Plan, must be consistent with the Plan. In addition, other plans, e.g., functional plans such as Sewer and Water Master Plans and Open Space and Recreation Plans, must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Land Use Plan for Wicomico County includes eight land use districts described below. Five of these districts should be considered "designated for growth." Three of these districts, while permitting forms of growth significantly limited by design standards, natural suitability, and resource protection goals, may be considered "non-growth" areas.

Designated Growth Areas

Metro Core - the primary area where the majority higher density growth is to be directed.

Town Growth – higher density growth areas adjacent to the existing incorporated towns.

Urban Corridor - those areas along major highway corridors where commercial, institutional and employment development will be directed. The Airport would be a separate Urban Corridor growth area.

Suburban - those areas where urban growth is to be constrained, but not necessarily prohibited, with provisions made for retaining natural areas.

Village Center Areas – unincorporated population centers where growth is to be consistent with the existing level and character of development of rural villages in the County.

Non-Growth Areas

- **Rural** - those areas where future urban growth is to be constrained to the existing area, with provisions made for retaining natural areas.
- **Agriculture/Resource** - those areas where only developments compatible with the agricultural and resource base of the County may occur.
- **Conservation** - those areas of the County which are naturally unsuited for intensive development adjacent to all of the County's waterways generally coinciding with the limits of the 100-Year Floodplain or the natural floodplain of all waterways.

OVERALL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PRINCIPLES

The Land Use categories discussed above provide a reasoned basis for managing Wicomico County's growth. The following broad principles complement these concepts.

1. Maintain a moderate growth rate in order to develop in a timely, orderly fashion.

Managed growth is more economically and socially beneficial to the County than haphazard, unplanned development. Based upon historical growth trends, this rate should average 1 - 1.5 percent per year.

2. Provide a wide variety, opportunity and freedom of choice in development sites.

Insure that sufficient land area is available to permit a wide selection of sites, accommodating a diverse variety of uses supporting the County's role as a three state regional economic center.

3. Facilitate the efficient delivery of public and private services.

Cost-effective delivery of public and private services requires that the users of these services cannot be scattered throughout Wicomico County, but should be concentrated in areas where they may be most readily served.

4. Provide easy movement and access for people and materials.

The relationship of future development to the various modes of transportation in Wicomico County and the Eastern Shore should be designed to promote their most effective use, proomote local economic expansion, and strengthen the County's regional position.

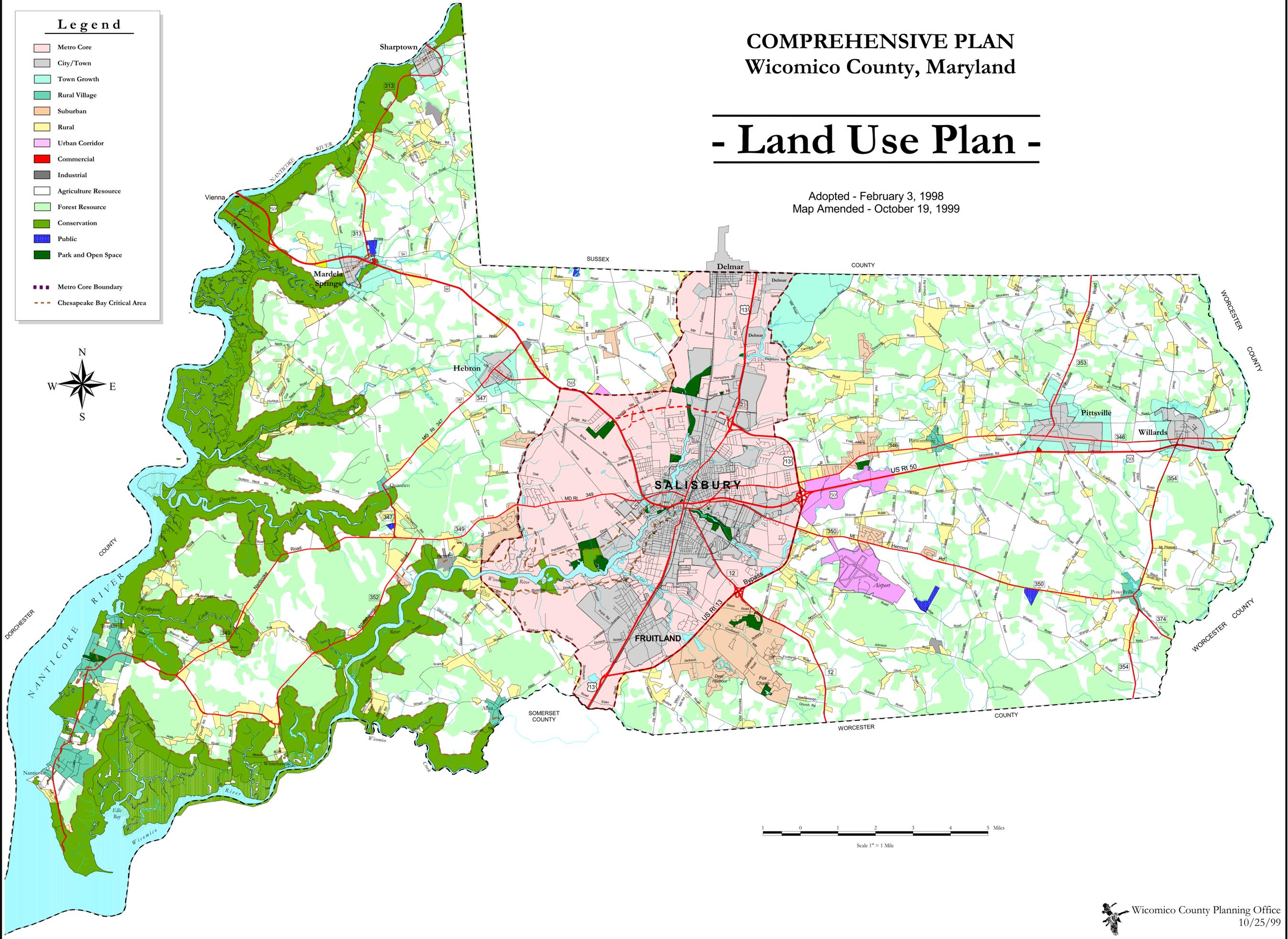
Legend

- Metro Core
- City/Town
- Town Growth
- Rural Village
- Suburban
- Rural
- Urban Corridor
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agriculture Resource
- Forest Resource
- Conservation
- Public
- Park and Open Space
- Metro Core Boundary
- Chesapeake Bay Critical Area

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Wicomico County, Maryland**

- Land Use Plan -

Adopted - February 3, 1998
Map Amended - October 19, 1999



5. Conserve agricultural lands.

The protection, maintenance, and promotion of a viable agricultural industry in Wicomico County requires that the land upon which it depends should be conserved primarily for that purpose.

6. Preserve the significant natural environment of the County.

The health, safety and general welfare of County residents depends upon the proper functioning of natural systems. Our quality of life depends on the prudent use and protection of our natural systems.

7. Promote desirable development trends.

Promote development that supports the County's goals. Identify those uses and areas where it should occur. County policies and regulations should reflect the need to protect residential areas while providing flexibility in commercial and industrial areas.

8. Encourage development in existing communities and preservation of our rural heritage.

Civic pride and cultural heritage cannot be measured in statistical terms. The compatible growth and protection of existing towns and rural villages is important.

9. Ensure preservation of significant historic areas and structures.

There are significant historic areas, features and structures in the County which form an integral part of its overall attractiveness. As future development activities intensify, it is important for the County to protect and retain these features. New development should not destroy the historic attributes which are visual reminders of the County's past.

POLICIES

Metro Core - Urban Corridor - Town Growth Areas

These are the areas where higher density growth should be directed. They include the Metro Core, the Salisbury Wicomico Regional Airport, incorporated and unincorporated cities and towns with existing or planned sewer service. These areas together with Suburban and Rural Villages comprise the County's "designated growth areas."

The Metro core, Urban Corridor, and Town Growth areas presently contain approximately 68 percent of the total County population and a predominant portion of public and private capital investment in the form of dwellings, business and industrial enterprises, transportation facilities,

public and private institutions, and public improvements. A diversity of uses should be encouraged to locate in these areas.

There is sufficient vacant land in the designated growth areas to accommodate the urban development anticipated by the year 2020. These areas should receive priority in the provision of public and private services. The Metro Core is also the primary area where the County and municipalities should either agree on the extension of urban services to unincorporated areas or the County should seek alternative means of insuring that urban services are provided in a timely fashion.

The development concept for these areas envisions two levels of development necessary to accommodate the continued growth of the County.

Level One areas are the Metro Core area that extends from the Delaware line to Somerset County, the Urban Corridor areas adjacent to US 50, the City of Salisbury, City of Fruitland, Town of Delmar and their immediate suburbs. These areas would accommodate the more intensive development activities of the future. The Metro Core boundary was moved and the area of Metro Core increased with this Comprehensive Plan update. The new Metro Core boundary was drawn to include the urbanizing area surrounding Delmar, existing suburban developments, and to coincide with readily identifiable land features, e.g., State and County roads.

Level Two growth areas are the towns, Hebron, Pittsville, Sharptown and Willards, and adjacent areas. Each of the municipal centers in this plan district have sewer service and could accommodate a moderate level of different types of development activities. Future growth should be consistent with the growth policies of these towns and the capability of each jurisdiction to provide urban services. In general, the Town Growth areas are classified because of their proximity to the existing population centers. The areas around Hebron, Sharptown, Pittsville and Willards may be served by extension of existing sewer and/or water service and thus be capable of more intensive development. The area around Mardela Springs will remain in relatively low intensity/density uses.

The following policies pertain to Metro Core, Urban Corridor and Town Growth districts:

- They should accommodate the major portion of the County's future growth and related intensive urban development activities.
- They will be priority areas for the provision of public improvements and services necessary to support urban development.
- Higher density development will be directed into areas served or planned to be served by adequate public facilities.
- Commercial and industrial development will be directed into properly designed commercial centers and planned industrial parks wherever practical.

- Land development regulations and the provision of public improvements and services will be done in a manner that provides maximum protection to residential development.
- The County recognizes the airport and related activities as the predominant land use determinant in a large area near the Salisbury-Wicomico Regional Airport. The County will protect the airport and nearby residents through development regulations, easements and land acquisition programs.

Suburban Areas

The Suburban Area is comprised of existing development and the need to provide for additional development consistent with these growth areas. These areas already contain major subdivisions exhibiting a “suburban” rather than “rural” character. Undeveloped areas between existing developments may be considered for inclusion in the Suburban District. Future urban growth in the Suburban Area is to be constrained, but not prohibited, in order to (1) avoid the fiscal and physical problems of providing public services to these outlying areas; (2) respect the natural limitations on development (e.g. soils); and (3) minimize conflicts among urban, rural, and airport land uses.

The following policies pertain to Suburban Areas:

- They should accommodate additional low to medium density residential development in order to provide for a greater variety and number of sites for less intensive urban development.
- Minimize the provision of public improvements and services necessary to serve urban type of development in order to maintain a low density development pattern.
- Mitigate land use conflicts in and near residential development to the extent possible, through land development regulations and consistent with County “right to farm” law, with recognition that agriculture will remain a principal use in the area for the foreseeable future.
- Require that developers bear the cost of services and facilities, on-site and off-site, needed to serve development, including sewerage and water systems, recreation facilities, roads, storm drainage facilities.
- Encourage the clustering of urban development through land development regulations to avoid land use conflicts and enable public facilities to be installed when necessary.

Rural Areas

The Rural Area recognizes existing development areas situated within and adjacent to Agriculture/Resource and Conservation Areas. These are areas where future urban growth is to be constrained to the existing area, with provisions made for retaining natural areas and rural character.

Rural areas are not planned for urban services, i.e. public sewer and water. The Rural designation includes existing areas of subdivision activity that has resulted in enclaves of three or more lots, 10 acres or less in size. These areas include many of the strip developments that have adversely affected the County's rural character. For this reason, new design standards should include measures to mitigate and/or prevent further impacts.

The following policies pertain to Rural Areas:

- Limit these areas to their existing boundaries.
- Accommodate additional, low density in-fill development in order to provide for a greater variety and number of sites for less intensive, rural residential development.
- Minimize the provision of public improvements and services necessary to serve development in order to maintain a low density development pattern.
- Mitigate land use conflicts in and near residential development to the extent possible, through land development regulations which include buffers provided at the expense of the developer and, with recognition that agriculture is the principal use in the area for the foreseeable future.
- Cluster development is the preferred form of land subdivision to avoid land use conflicts and maintain or enhance rural character.

Village Centers

Village Centers provide for infill or limited peripheral expansion of unincorporated village centers of the County which once served as the centers of farm and waterway oriented communities. These areas may not be served with public sewer and water in the near future, but can accommodate some additional low intensity rural residential development. Like the Rural designation, the Village District also includes adjacent areas of existing subdivision activity that has resulted in groups of three or more lots, 10 acres or less in size.

Every effort should be made to maintain the rural lifestyle and atmosphere of these villages. The Plan recommends that sub-area plans and design standards be developed to insure that future development is consistent with the character of these Villages. Incidental commercial services necessary to meet the daily needs of area residents and small businesses that provide jobs may also be located in this district.

The following policies pertain to Village Center Areas:

- Encourage protection and restoration of existing structures to maintain the area character.
- Require through land development regulations, that new construction be architecturally consistent with existing structures to maintain community character.

- Protect areas from incompatible uses and intensive development through land development regulations, recognizing that until public water and sewer are provided in the distant future low density residential use and related services will be the predominant land use.
- Encourage new development to be compatible with the existing character of these centers and mitigate adverse impacts to maintain the amenities of these communities.
- Encourage only that development which is consistent with the level of services in these communities and by timing new development with the provision or expansion of public services.

Agriculture/Resource Areas

The Agricultural/Resources Area designation is intended to prevent developments that require urban services, and to preserve the agricultural base and rural lifestyle of the County. Most land devoted to farming and nearly all public drainage associations, which are formed to drain agricultural land, are within the Agriculture/Resource area. The primary land uses in these areas should be agriculture, forestry and related activities. Resource-based industries that must locate near their source of raw materials such as sand and gravel operations, food and wood processing, and seafood activities would also be accommodated.

The following policies pertain to Agricultural/Resource Areas:

- Support agriculture, forestry and related activities as a predominant use in these areas through land development regulations.
- Afford agricultural and forestry uses maximum protection and freedom from nuisance complaints in zoning regulations and through “right to farm” ordinances.
- Give priority to public improvements directed toward agriculture, forestry and related uses.
- Accommodate resource based and other industrial uses in accordance with strict performance standards.
- Establish land development regulations which will accommodate residential developments in a manner which will least disrupt agricultural uses.
- Cluster development is the preferred form of land subdivision to avoid land use conflicts and maintain or enhance rural character.

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas seek to identify environmentally sensitive and natural areas which need protection from more dense development. Growth should be directed away from these areas to protect and preserve scarce or unique natural areas such as rare forest, native wildlife habitats, and large undisturbed natural areas where natural processes continue undisturbed.

Protection measures applied to existing conservation areas (land held in conservation type ownership, e.g. State wildlife areas, State forests, conservation easements) should also apply to streams and their buffers, the habitats of threatened and endangered species, designated “greenways,” Natural Heritage Areas, and heritage corridors along the Pocomoke, Nanticoke and Wicomico Rivers, and the recharge areas of the Paleochannel, wherever these features occur.

Although the need for new development is an inherent factor for planning in the County, the locational requirements for new activities are highly flexible. In contrast, scarce or unique environmental features such as rare forested areas, native wildlife habitats, large unique areas where natural processes go on undisturbed, waterway corridors, natural drainageways, and historic sites and areas occur only in specific locations that cannot be duplicated elsewhere. It is essential, therefore, that all future development be located in such a manner as to protect these areas insofar as possible.

The following policies pertain to Conservation Areas:

- Direct more dense growth away from conservation areas and into manageable growth areas.
- Preserve areas adjacent to existing streams in order to protect conservation areas and the natural drainage system of the County.
- Preserve environmentally sensitive areas along the County's waterways.
- Establish specific development policies for reviewing all development activities within conservation areas.
- Preserve natural drainageways and provide public access points for maintenance purposes.
- Cluster development is the preferred form of land subdivision to avoid land use conflicts and maintain or enhance rural character.

RESIDENTIAL LAND

The principal type of development in Wicomico County, outside the Metro Core, is residential development. It occurs primarily in two forms: traditional single family homes and mobile homes. Both housing types are located on either isolated lots or clustered in scattered subdivisions or mobile home parks.

For the most part, residential development occurs haphazardly in an unguided and unrestrained manner. Such poorly planned residential growth has a number of negative aspects:

1. Community services such as parks, schools, emergency service, and water and sewerage systems are difficult to provide. When provided, these services are expensive, inefficient, and wasteful of the taxpayers money.

2. As homes line the roads, the function and capacity of the County' s road system is reduced; access to land off the roads is limited.
3. The rural character of Wicomico County is diminished and the fiscal and social advantages of coherent communities are not realized.
4. It becomes increasingly difficult to protect existing residential areas from encroachment by incompatible land uses.
5. Productive agricultural and forest lands are lost or at least burdened by encroaching residential activity.

Objectives

The following objectives seek to alter these residential trends and provide guidelines for future development:

- Provide a variety of suitable areas to accommodate all desirable types and densities of housing.
- Prevent land which is not suitable for residential development because of soil characteristics, water table, or other faults from being developed.
- Locate residential development convenient to services and amenities including public facilities (e.g. schools, parks, central water and sewerage, police and fire protection), employment centers, transportation facilities, shopping, cultural opportunities.
- Encourage residential development reflecting good urban design practices which make efficient use of available land and produce attractive subdivisions.
- Protect residential areas from encroachment by incompatible land uses.
- Encourage energy conservation in residential development and, where necessary, amend the subdivision regulations and zoning code to accommodate techniques that achieve greater energy efficiency.

Policies

This Comprehensive Plan is designed to address the above objectives. In keeping with the general development policies of the County, the following are recommended policies for residential development.

- The density of residential development should be based on the availability of community facilities.
 - Public sewerage and water supply should be either available or within a convenient distance to major developments.

- Developments should be evaluated with regard to the availability of, and impact on, public facilities.
 - Incentives should be offered to attract development to the growth areas designated in the Plan.
 - Installation and extension of public facilities should be consistent with the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan.
 - Adequate recreational facilities and open space should be required as part of major residential developments.
- A variety of housing and development types and locations should be encouraged to provide a mixture of living environments.
 - Alternative housing types, (e.g. apartments, townhouses, mobile homes) should be accommodated in appropriate locations.
 - Cluster design and planned unit developments should be encouraged.
 - Rural, urban, and small town residential environments should be provided, but major development should be directed to areas where public facilities exist or are planned.
 - Residential areas should be protected from incompatible land uses and be designed to insure a desirable living environment.
 - Through traffic and heavy vehicles should be prevented.
 - Strip residential development should be prevented.
 - Land development regulations should reflect current design standards.
 - Multi-family development should locate in areas having proper facilities and locational characteristics.
 - Multi-family projects should be located in such a manner that traffic is minimized on residential streets in established or potential single family areas.
 - Multi-family developments should be served by a collector street or highway rather than local residential streets, albeit direct access for individual units should be prohibited.
 - Multi-family developments should be adequately screened or buffered from adjoining single family neighborhoods.
 - Adequate recreational and open space facilities should be required as part of a major multi-family development.

Recommendations

Metro Core

For detailed recommendations see the *Metro Core Plan*.

Town Growth

In general these areas are classified because of their proximity to the existing town centers. The areas around Fruitland, Delmar, Sharptown, Pittsville and Willards may be served by extension of existing sewer and/or water service and thus be capable of more intensive development. The area around Mardela Springs will remain in relatively low intensity/density uses.

The purpose of the Town Growth District is to recognize and protect the land use and character of the towns. This district encourages development compatible with existing town development, incorporating efficient and orderly development at the periphery of incorporated towns. This consistency is to provide for extension of services.

Urban Corridor

These areas, located along major highway corridors, are where future intensive commercial, institutional and employment development outside the Metro Core area will be directed. The Wicomico County Airport is a separate Urban Corridor growth area.

Suburban

The purpose of the Suburban District is to recognize existing development patterns, conserve neighborhoods, provide an appropriate development area for medium density residential development, and to act as a transitional zone between rural and development areas. This District is intended to reduce development pressure on rural areas.

Rural

The purpose of the Rural District zone is to recognize existing developments and settlements in the rural and waterfront areas of the County. These areas do not have and are not currently planned for public water and sewer service.

Village Center Areas

The purpose of the Village Center District is to provide for the protection of existing villages by allowing development consistent with the character of these villages. The essential historic and aesthetic character of villages should be reflected in development within this district. Proposed

subdivisions in the Village Center District must demonstrate that the proposed development is consistent with the existing land-use character of the village.

COMMERCIAL LAND

The land use element of this Comprehensive Plan recognizes that the need exists for several types of commercial development. It is essential to recognize existing commercial areas and provide areas for necessary future expansion in order to allow healthy growth of this important sector of the economy.

Objectives

- Encourage a sufficient, but not excessive, number and variety of well designed and well located commercial facilities.
- Maintain and revitalize existing commercial areas, especially the Salisbury Central Business District and the CBD of the smaller cities and towns.
- Channel future commercial activity into selected areas of the Salisbury Metro Core, the Town Growth, or corridors where suitable public services are available.
- Encourage the clustering of commercial activities at optimal locations and discourage strip commercial development.
- Emphasize safety, convenience, and attractiveness in commercial development, ensuring that it is not disruptive to the surrounding neighborhood or the community as a whole.

Since there is a sharp difference between appropriate commercial activities in the Metro Core and the outlying sections of the County, the following discussion of the types of commercial areas will consider each area separately.

Commercial Areas - Metro Core

The Metro Core serves the dual function of being the regional retail trade center for the lower Eastern Shore and the local market place for area residents. It is assumed that most new commercial enterprises, especially those serving the regional market area, will want to locate in the Metro Core. The following is a discussion of commercial land use in the Metro Core.

Central Business District - Downtown Salisbury is the multi-purpose center of Wicomico County, serving as its governmental, institutional, business, and to a lesser extent, retail focal point. In order to reverse the decline of the CBD and ensure that it maintains its position of local and regional importance, the following policies and recommendations are suggested:

- The development regulations of the City of Salisbury and Wicomico County should be analyzed to determine if they encourage or discourage downtown development.

- Incentives for downtown development should be promoted.
- All sources of funding that can assist CBD development or redevelopment should be pursued.
- The County and City should assist developers by packaging available sites.
- Parking in the CBD should be analyzed and any problems should be resolved; the concept of free parking should be analyzed.
- The Wicomico River should be further incorporated into the scheme of the CBD by utilizing its scenic qualities for open space and recreational purposes.
- Pedestrian access to the CBD should be improved to more effectively link it to surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- The architectural heritage of downtown should be maintained in existing buildings and new construction.

Regional Commercial - Commercial activities, such as major shopping centers, motels, and distribution centers, that are dependent on a market much larger than their immediate area for successful operation are termed regional commercial. Because of its central location on the Peninsula, its excellent transportation network, and its established regional orientation, Wicomico County's status as a regional commercial center will continue. To ensure quality regional commercial areas in the future, the following policies are recommended.

- Regional commercial centers should have direct access to and visibility from major highways.
- Local and regional traffic should be separated to minimize congestion.
- Regional commercial areas should be separated from existing and potential incompatible development.
- All regional commercial areas should be served by central sewerage and water supply systems.
- All regional commercial proposals should be evaluated in terms of their social, physical, financial, and environmental impacts on the community.

Highway Commercial - Highway commercial is a term applied to commercial activities that depend on local and through highway traffic for business. These areas are generally retail and service establishments that locate in a lineal or strip fashion along high volume highways for accessibility and visibility.

Highway commercial, while serving an important function in the local economy, also creates numerous problems which impair the efficient operation of highways. In order to avoid some of these problems in the future, the following policies are recommended regarding highway commercial development:

- Minimize direct access points on major highways by consolidating individual entrances.
- Limit cross traffic turning to major intersections.
- Minimize direct access to major highways where alternate access is available; require service roads where possible.
- Develop more restrictive sign controls.

Business and Institutional - This is a special category of commercial activity that permits limited commercial uses. It is located between Mt. Hermon Road and US 50 and other major highways consistent with the intent of this district. The purpose of the Business and Institutional category is to protect nearby residential areas, establish a gradual transition from residential to more intensive land uses, and to maintain an open, orderly appearance along highways. The following policies regarding the Business and Institutional areas are recommended:

- Retail operations should be excluded from these areas.
- Approved landscaping should be required.
- Setbacks should be equivalent to residential setbacks.
- Off-street parking should be screened and landscaped.
- Special attention should be given to sign control.

Neighborhood Shopping - Neighborhood shopping areas are small commercial centers located within or near residential neighborhoods and designed to serve as a convenience to those areas. The following policies are recommended:

- Retail establishments locating in neighborhood shopping centers should be restricted to uses that are solely neighborhood-serving in character.
- Points of access to neighborhood centers should be minimized.

Commercial Areas - Delmar and the City of Fruitland

Both Delmar and the City of Fruitland have existing and proposed commercial areas, including central or neighborhood commercial areas and highway commercial areas, primarily located along the US 13 Corridor. Policies regarding future development of these commercial areas are contained in the Delmar and City of Fruitland comprehensive plans.

Commercial Areas - Urban Corridors

The Urban Corridor District is intended to accommodate highway oriented commercial enterprises. Highway commercial uses typically include restaurants, service stations, convenience stores, produce markets, farm equipment suppliers, and building suppliers.

In the future, Urban Corridor Commercial areas should be so designed as to prevent the lineal expansion of existing strip commercial development. Districts containing such development should be increased in depth to the extent needed to enable development of integrated commercial projects that depart from the typical strip commercial pattern. Such development should be characterized mixed-use development, shared access and parking, and, where possible and desirable, integration of the commercial area with the neighborhood. The County will prohibit the expansion of such districts where it would significantly diminish the livability or viability of an adjoining residential neighborhood.

Consistent with the Urban Corridor development concept, the recommended location for highway commercial activity would be in strategic portions along major highways. Other considerations are addressed in the following recommended policies:

- Highway commercial areas should be located adjacent to the intersection of the major thoroughfares and the primary town center access roads.
- Rather than strip commercial development along the highways, clustered commercial development is recommended.
- Individual entrances should be consolidated into as few access points as possible.
- Appropriate regulations should be developed to provide adequate off-street parking, sign control, and buffering to protect nearby residential areas.
- Suitable landscaping measures should be required.
- Uses should be regulated to ensure compatibility within the highway commercial cluster and with nearby non-commercial activities.

Commercial Areas - Town Growth District

In the Town Growth areas, commercial development will not be as intense or specialized as in the Metro Core. The primary focus of the commercial areas plan for the Town Growth areas outside the Metro Core is the revitalization of existing commercial areas, especially the small town business districts.

Town Growth Business Districts - These areas usually contain such commercial activities as grocery stores, post offices, drug stores, general stores, service stations, banks, and public buildings.

As a general rule, the major problems facing the Town Growth Business Districts are physical decay, functional obsolescence and abandonment. The causes of the decline in these commercial areas are primarily the lack of growth of the towns, the inability of the Town Growth Business Districts to

compete with the large commercial offerings of the Metro Core and the fact that, for the most part, through traffic bypasses the towns.

The Town Growth District seeks to channel growth into the towns to help revitalize their business districts. The following policies are recommended as the basis of maintaining and revitalizing the Town Growth Business Districts.

- All development regulations and ordinances should recognize the Town Growth Business Districts as essential to the economic well-being of the County and should allow them every opportunity to grow and prosper.
- Adequate parking, street lighting, sidewalks, and other public services and amenities should be provided.
- All possible means of revitalization, financial and otherwise, should be undertaken by each town and the County.

Commercial Areas - Rural

Commercial establishments may be warranted in areas defined as Rural. These activities include general stores, tourism-related businesses, service stations, antique shops, campgrounds, and other small businesses. Since this Plan cannot specifically deal with all eventualities, the following general policies are recommended:

- Existing, compatible commercial establishments outside the Town Growth areas and Urban Corridors should be accommodated.
- New commercial activities should be limited and, if permitted, only through special review procedures and only in areas where they will be compatible with existing or proposed development.
- Commercial uses outside of the urban areas should be limited to community-serving or recreation-related or resource-based commercial activities.

INDUSTRIAL LAND

A number of industrial land use types should be provided for in Wicomico County. These include light industry, heavy industry, and mineral extraction.

Light-industrial areas should be provided for the placement of business/professional office complexes, research and development, and certain industrial uses, activities and establishments that are compatible with commercial and residential uses, activities and establishments. These areas are intended for less outwardly intensive uses, activities and establishments. These uses, activities and establishments should not involve the processing of materials for shipment in bulk form where operations are conducted outside of enclosed buildings.

Heavy-industrial areas should be established to provide for industrial uses of a larger scale and more intensive usage, with areas of uncovered storage. The purpose of heavy-industrial areas is to provide for a wide range of business/professional, research and development, manufacturing and processing, and industrial uses, activities and establishments which are compatible with adjacent uses to the extent that any adverse effects on health, safety, welfare, or the environment are avoided.

Mineral extraction areas should be established where the County wants to protect economically important mineral resources for current and future use and to prevent incompatible development that may directly or indirectly preclude access to the mineral resources until such time that the resource can be removed. These areas should also be located so as to protect existing land uses adjacent to potential mineral lands from undue harm that may result from mineral extraction activity

Within the zoning ordinance consideration for industrial uses should also provide for **planned business park development** in designated growth areas. Planned business park provisions should be established in the Zoning Code so as to encourage innovative and creative design of commercial, business and industrial development, to facilitate use of the most advantageous construction techniques, and to maximize the conservation and efficient use of open space and natural features.

Both Delmar and the City of Fruitland have existing and proposed industrial areas. Policies regarding future development of these industrial areas are contained in the Delmar and City of Fruitland comprehensive plans.

Objectives

- Encourage industrial types that promote a stable, balanced economy.
- Encourage new industries to locate in planned industrial parks, whenever possible.
- Minimize the effects of industry, such as possible smoke, odor, noise.
- Provide buffer or transitional areas or design standards between industrial and residential areas.
- Provide a variety of attractive, safe, and convenient industrial sites that are suitable in terms of size, location, and physical characteristics of the land, accessibility of transportation, and availability of utilities.

Characteristics

Selecting sites for future industries is a difficult task because industrial operations require such special location access and site characteristics. Therefore, it is especially important to identify and reserve a sufficient number of prime industrial sites and protect them from encroachment by incompatible land uses.

The following site characteristics must be considered when identifying future industrial locations:

1. Industry should have convenient access to appropriate transportation facilities including rail, highway, air and shopping.
2. Industry should have an adequate supply of land with future expansion capabilities.
3. Industry should be located in reasonable proximity to the labor supply, source of raw materials, and product markets.
4. Industry should be served by public utilities including water, waste disposal, fiber optic cable and electricity if practical.
5. Industry should be located so as to minimize possible adverse effects on neighboring non-industrial development and should, in turn, be protected from encroachment by incompatible land uses.

Policies

In order to assure a healthy environment for industry, it is recommended that the County adopt certain policies regarding industrial development and location.

- Appropriate areas that take advantage of and encourage the use of the various transportation facilities in the County (e.g., rail lines, airport, regional highways, port) should be reserved for industry.
- Future industrial areas should be undeveloped or partially developed with other industrial uses.
- Where possible, natural and man-made features (e.g. trees, streams, valleys, highways) should be used to screen and separate industry from adjoining non-industrial uses.
- Industrial areas should be setback from highways and neighboring uses a sufficient distance for good planning.
- Appropriate landscaping should be required to buffer adjoining areas and to increase the aesthetic attractiveness of industrial areas.

Recommendations

Giving proper consideration to the objectives, standards, and policies described above, it becomes evident that the prime industrial sites are, for the most part, within the Metro Core. Outside the Metro Core, appropriate industrial areas are in the vicinity of the airport, along the mainline of the railroad north to Delmar, and in the smaller cities and towns.

This Plan generally identifies and describes several recommended future industrial sites:

1. Brick Kiln (Newland Park) - Situated between Rt. 50 West and the rail line to Hebron; suitable for heavy industrial uses that require large sites.
2. Northwood Area - It is recommended that the Northwood Industrial Park be expanded in an easterly direction to incorporate the open tracts of land east of Northwood Drive, and to the north to Leonard Pond Run; this area should continue to be light industrial.
3. West Isabella -West Road Area - It is recommended that this area remain in heavy industrial use.
4. Wicomico River - The area along the river southwest of the sewage treatment plant should be reserved for industry dependent on waterborne transportation.
5. Fruitland Area - The Fruitland Comprehensive Plan recommends sites for industrial activity at Cedar Lane and at the intersection of Brown and Division Streets.

The following recommended industrial areas outside the Metro Core are also identified:

6. Airport Industrial Area - The State noise standards for airports, which discourage residential development in close proximity to airports, make the Salisbury-Wicomico County Airport and vicinity generally unsuitable for any land uses except industry, agriculture, and airport-related commercial uses. The continued expansion of the airport, its proximity to the urban area, and proposed highway improvements should increase the attractiveness of the airport vicinity for industrial activity. It is recommended that this airport industrial site be reserved for industrial uses that are compatible with airport operations.
7. Main Line of Railroad to Delmar Corridor - The area along the railroad from Leonard Mill Run to Delmar is recommended to be reserved for industrial use. This area is relatively undeveloped and poorly suited for residential development due to soil limitations. The area is convenient to the Metro Core and Delmar and is accessible to the regional highway system.

8. Hebron - The area southeast of Hebron should be reserved for industrial development. This area is traversed by the abandoned railroad and is accessible to Route 50. Existing industry and proximity to the Salisbury area make this area suitable for industry.
9. Town Growth Industrial Areas - Industrial areas have been identified in each of the Town Growth areas. Many of the sites are expansions of existing sites while some are new industrial areas. Industries locating in these areas should be screened carefully regarding their compatibility with surrounding development. Existing industries, in many cases seafood and food processing and waterborne industry, should be recognized and accommodated.
10. Rural, Agriculture/Resource, and Conservation Area - Industrial uses, other than resource-based industries that must locate near their source of raw materials such as sand and gravel operations, food and wood processing, and seafood activities, should not be permitted in these districts.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Agricultural/Resource District

The Agricultural/Resource District identifies areas inappropriate for higher density urban type developments requiring urban services. These areas also seek to preserve the agricultural base and rural lifestyle of the County. The primary land uses in these areas should be agriculture, forestry and related activities. Resource-based industries that must locate near their source of raw materials such as sand and gravel operations, food and wood processing, and seafood activities should also be accommodated.

Objectives

- Recognize productive agricultural land as a valuable natural resource in the sense that it is difficult and expensive to bring new land into production, it occurs only under special circumstances, and there is a limited amount available.
- Protect Wicomico County's agricultural heritage and vitality.
- Work with the local agricultural community in order to find viable means of keeping land in farming and to provide proper protection of productive agricultural land and agricultural business.

Agricultural Land Use

Agriculture and related industries have always been a major component of the economy and lifestyle of Wicomico County. In the period 1978 to 1992, the market value of agricultural products produced in Wicomico County grew from over \$108 million to \$164 million, a 51.8 percent increase (See Table 1).

According to the most recent United States Department of Agriculture statistics, Wicomico County ranked 5th among America's counties in broiler chicken production. Figures provided by the Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. placed the value to growers of poultry in 1992 at nearly \$16 million (See Table 2). In addition to the poultry industry, Wicomico County farmers also raise cattle, swine, horses, and a small number of sheep. Crops grown by County farmers include corn, soybeans, wheat, potatoes, tomatoes, various vegetables, melons, and other fruit.

Table 1
Selected Agricultural Characteristics And Changes
Wicomico County 1978-1992

Value of Land and Buildings	1978	1982	1987	1992	Change 1978 - 1992	
					Number	Percent
- Average per Farm	\$186,734	\$212,515	\$244,509	\$339,581	\$152,847	81.9%
- Average per acre	\$1,508	\$1,705	\$1,885	\$2,280	\$772	51.2%
Market Value of Products	\$108,125,000	\$121,512,000	\$134,061,000	\$164,101,000	\$55,976,000	51.8%
- Average per farm	\$117,527	\$144,318	\$173,205	\$240,763	\$123,236	104.9%
- Crops	\$16,295,000	\$18,636,000	\$14,520,000	\$20,654,000	\$4,359,000	26.8%
- Poultry Products	\$88,636,000	\$99,347,000	\$119,541,000	\$141,367,000	\$52,731,000	59.5%
Average age of Operators (in years)	50.2	51.0	51.6	52.8		

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of the Census; 1978, 1982, and 1987; Census of Agriculture Compiled by the Salisbury-Wicomico County Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development July 17, 1990

Table 2
Wicomico County Fact Sheet
1992

Number of Poultry Growers	443
Number of Poultry Houses	986
Number of Chickens Grown	81,194,617
Value of Poultry Grown	\$185,123,727
Value to Growers of Poultry Grown	\$15,914,145

Source: Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.

Urbanization has caused a serious decline in the supply of agricultural land in Wicomico County in recent years. Over the past 23 years, there has been an overall decline of almost 15 percent in the

amount of acres devoted to farming. In the period 1978 to 1992, the number of farms decreased (although average farm size increased), and farmland acres decreased as a percentage of total County land (See Table 3). In the 1978 to 1992 time period, 75 percent of all major subdivisions approved in the County were located outside the Metro Core, primarily in agricultural areas.

Table 3
Agricultural Land Use 1964 - 1987
Wicomico County

	1978	1982	1987	1992	Number	Percent
Number of All Farms	920	842	774	684	-236	-25.7%
Acres in Farms	107,102	111,109	95,542	91,254	(15,848)	-14.8%
Percent of County	44.0%	45.7%	39.3%	37.5%		
Average Farm Size	116	132	123	133	17	14.7%

Source: *Bureau of the Census, Census of Agriculture (Various Years)*

Wicomico County is slowly losing the opportunity to guide future development to areas that are not detrimental to agriculture before substantial farmland is lost. Without an effective growth management policy and supporting implementation measures, agriculture in Wicomico County could follow national and statewide trends of lessening economic and cultural importance. The development concept that is the basis of this Comprehensive Plan attempts to guide major growth to non-agricultural areas, maintain agriculture as an important part of the local economy, and protect the agricultural heritage of the County.

Public and Private Purpose in Saving Agricultural Land

The growing interest in preserving agricultural land is based on the public interest. Local, state, and federal agencies have studied the problem and adopted policies that encourage farm land preservation. There are many reasons for preservation that are related to the general welfare of the public.

1. Conserving energy. Prime soils require less energy to farm than do other soils because less fertilization, irrigation, and other improvements are needed. In addition, when prime soils are maintained near the urban centers, energy is conserved by reducing transportation distances and costs.
2. Preventing urban sprawl. By preventing urban encroachment in rural areas, government promotes compact urban development. Compact versus sprawling development conserves energy, natural resources, and fiscal resources.
3. Maintaining open space. Farmland is open space. Even though it is not publicly usable open space, it is still a valuable asset to the community.

4. Retaining natural systems and natural processes. By preserving farmland, the community also preserves wetlands, watersheds, aquifer recharge areas, floodplains, and special wildlife habitats. The increasing sensitivity of farmers to the environmental effects of agricultural practices further maintains these resources.
5. Controlling public costs. Generally, the tax returns to the community from farms are greater than the public services and facilities they require. The public costs of scattered development far outweigh the tax returns.
6. Preserving the local economic base. Farming is an important element in the local economy. Since farming is an exporter of goods and an importer of income, it is especially important to the economic health of the community. In addition, farming supports many other activities such as retail businesses and farm related enterprises.
7. Promoting self-sufficiency. A central characteristic of agriculture is that it is based on the quality of local resources. Agriculture is less sensitive to outside influences than are many other industries, and thus farming communities are more self-sufficient and less dependent upon decisions made elsewhere.
8. Preserving rural lifestyle. Our rural heritage and way of life and all of its amenities are important. Agricultural preservation maintains the rural lifestyle.
9. Maintaining speciality products. The poultry industry in Wicomico County is unique and projects a local identity. Preserving this industry is important to the local image, as well as to the local economy.
10. Maintaining drainage districts for agricultural use. Stormwater runoff from residential development is 1.5 to 2 times greater than from farmland. Drainage associations formed to promote agricultural use should be maintained principally for that purpose.
11. Maintain rural areas for resource based and other industrial uses. Urban development, primarily residential, includes the use of land far beyond its immediate boundaries. Sites are difficult to find for other development that is necessary to the economy of the County and is unacceptable or economically unfeasible in urban areas. This kind of development includes resource based industry, such as sand and gravel pits, wood processing operations, feed and grain mills, storage and food processing operations, other farm related support business and industry, as well as heavy industrial uses that are incompatible with intensive urban development.

Agriculture in Designated Growth Areas

Three recommendations are made regarding agriculture in the Town Growth areas:

1. The Zoning Code should continue to permit agriculture as an inherent use, but certain activities that may be offensive to surrounding development should be permitted only by Special Exception.
2. State Agricultural Land Preservation Districts under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program should not be permitted in designated growth areas.
3. Farmers in the growth areas should be protected from nuisance complaints by neighboring property owners with regard to normal and customary field activities (e.g., irrigation, planting, fertilizer application, harvesting).

Policies for the Formation of Agricultural Preservation Districts

The Planning Commission recommends the formation of Agricultural Districts in accordance with the following overall development policies:

- Land situated in the Agricultural/Resource areas may be recommended for inclusion in an Agricultural District, consistent with the qualifying criteria listed in the State Agricultural Land Preservation Act.
- Land situated in the Metro Core, Suburban, Town Growth or Urban Corridor areas will not be recommended for inclusion in Agricultural Districts.

Recommendations

The Wicomico County Council adopted “right-to-farm” legislation in June 1997. The Act protects a person’s right to farm or engage in agriculture operations and limits the circumstances under which agriculture operations may be deemed a nuisance, trespass, or other interference with the reasonable use and enjoyment of land. It defines pertinent terms, e.g., agricultural land and agricultural operations. The County’s right-to-farm law applies to: 1) property located in the Agriculture-Rural Residential Zoning District, 2) property carried on the taxation rolls of the State Department of Assessments and taxation as agricultural, or 3) all other land that has been used as an agricultural operation continuously for one (1) year. The Wicomico County Agricultural Reconciliation Committee was appointed to arbitrate disputes between landowners over agriculture operations. In addition, the law requires right-to-farm notice and real estate transfer disclosure be included for prospective land purchasers in the County’s rural agriculture areas. At the appropriate time, it is recommended that the right-to-farm law be amended to include the zoning district or districts that will be applied to the proposed Agriculture/Resource and Conservation areas shown on the Land Use Plan.

It is recommended that the County establish a purchase of development rights (PDR) program to supplement the State's Agriculture Land Preservation Program. If at some later date the County establishes a Transfer of Development Rights Program (TDR), the County can then sell the rights they have acquired and thereby recoup some or all of the original purchase price. These funds will provide resources for a revolving acquisition fund. It is also recommended that the County develop a sustained source of funding for its PDR program, e.g., a county real estate transfer tax, the Maryland agriculture transfer tax, or installment purchases using 30 year zero-coupon bonds.

Location criteria for agriculture preservation, particularly the County's program, should be established to insure that the funding resources are being targeted for the maximum effect and not scattered about with no consideration for growth management and agriculture preservation objectives.

It is recommended that the County appoint an advisory committee consisting of, among others, a Planning Commission representative, a member of the Farm Bureau, a member of Young Farmers, a member of the Delmarva Poultry Industry, a member of the Coastal Board of Realtors and a member of the Wicomico County Soil Conservation District to recommend agriculture preservation areas.

Agriculture preservation areas should be prioritized by categories, e.g., first, second and third priorities for application of State and County agriculture preservation funds and should be shown on a map. Criteria should be developed for creation of agriculture districts. These criteria would be used by the Planning Commission when evaluating applications of formation of proposed new agriculture districts under the State Agriculture Preservation Program and by the County Council when considering applications for purchase of development rights under a County PDR program.

Criteria should be developed based on the previously discussed mapped areas. The area encompassed should be adequate to insure an ample land base for a continuing agriculture industry in the County. It should also encompass all areas where farming is currently viable and land owners may be interested in participating in an agriculture preservation program at some time in the future.

In addition, it is recommended that the County consider other techniques for preserving agriculture land resources in the future. Among others, techniques that should be evaluated include a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program and a regular fund source for the proposed PDR program, e.g., local transfer tax proceeds. In order to assure the successful implementation of any new land preservation technique selected by the County it is imperative that the farm community be directly involved in the evaluation process.

CONSERVATION AREAS

The natural environment of Wicomico County includes abundant resources that support a variety of habitats for plant and wildlife communities throughout the County. These diverse environments greatly contribute to the overall beauty of the area, contributing to the County's visual quality and rural character. Important environmental features include wetlands, floodplains, forests, diverse and unique wildlife habitats, and ponds. These features help maintain the ecological balance of life and contribute to the quality of our environment, both urban and rural.

Despite a continuing debate concerning the degree to which the natural environment should be subjected to the needs and desires of people, there are few people who have experienced some part of nature's offering available in Wicomico County, who do not appreciate the environmental amenities of the County. The wildlife, plant, land and water resources of the County have historically been a source of income, enjoyment and sense of well-being for many generations.

There are major differences between resource preservation and agriculture preservation. Agricultural lands are preserved for active use by man (to produce crops) and hence have a significant and immediate land use value. Most natural resource areas are preserved by leaving them, in whole or in part, in an undisturbed state, and therefore do not have the same use value. Thus, the direct economic benefits associated with the protection of the County's natural resources are less than those produced by protecting agriculture. The second major difference is the amenity value that many natural resources have in the residential market place. These values make them premium house sites. Some waterfront locations are ideal for recreational and water-dependent uses, such as marinas, which also creates higher land values for development. Together, these differences greatly complicate many efforts to protect natural resources.

Objectives

The following are the County's objectives for Conservation areas:

- Retain the County's open spaces, wetlands and forests and discourage exploitation.
- Safeguard County wetlands and ecologically sensitive areas.
- Minimize pollution of County waters, land areas, and air. County ordinances should assist implementation of state and federal rules.
- Retard erosion and control flooding where feasible.
- Encourage the proper and conservative use of navigable County waters by commercial transport, watermen and recreational users. Protect these waters from abuse.
- Protect County fresh water supplies and aquifers from pollution, depletion and indiscriminate lowering of water tables.

- Reclaim areas such as shoreline, timberlands, worked out gravel pits, and abandoned industrial sites blighted by improper management practices.
- Reforest vacant lands not suitable for field crops. Encourage sound management and harvesting of timber as suggested by the Maryland Forest Practices Committee.
- Encourage land management practices which will improve where possible the environment for natural wildlife.
- Protect County waters from sedimentation through the use of improved drainage structures and practices.

Existing Protection Programs

The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area District - The Wicomico County Chesapeake Bay Protection Program provides special regulatory protection for the land and water resources located within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area in Wicomico County. Land use development standards and requirements for the Critical Area are intended to foster more sensitive development activity for shoreline areas and to minimize the adverse impacts of development activities on water quality and natural habitats. The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area District includes all lands and waters within one-thousand (1,000) feet beyond the landward boundaries of State or private wetlands and the heads of tides designated under Title 9 of the Natural Resources Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. Development standards for the Critical Area have already been established in the Wicomico County Natural Resources Protection Ordinance.

Section 6217 Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Program - When Congress re-authorized the Coastal Zone Management Act in 1990, they added a new section 6217. Section 6217 requires that all states with approved coastal zone management programs, such as Maryland, develop and implement programs to protect coastal waters from nonpoint pollution. As it is a coastal county, this program will affect Wicomico County.

Section 6217 requires that the state control nonpoint source pollution (including sediment, nutrients, pathogens, and toxics) for five categories of sources: 1) agriculture, 2) forestry, 3) urban development, 4) marinas and recreational boating, and 5) hydromodifications (channelization and dams).

The federal guidelines divide each category into subcategories. Maryland must control pollution for each of these subcategories by implementing "management measures." The management measures are goal statements, some of which include performance standards. Urban development is divided into five categories which are:

- Urban runoff in development areas;
- Construction activities;

- Existing development;
- Onsite disposal systems;
- Pollution prevention; and
- Roads, highways and bridges.

Maryland was to submit a program by July 1995. The management measures for new sources must be implemented starting in 1996. The State has three years, or until 1999 to implement the measures for existing sources.

Tributary-Specific Nutrient Reduction Strategies - In 1993, the states began the process of developing and implementing tributary-specific nutrient reduction strategies. The development of tributary strategies is called for in the 1992 amendments to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. These amendments recognized the commanding influence of the Bay's rivers on water quality of the main stem and commit the signatories, including the State of Maryland, to develop nutrient reduction strategies specific to each major river basin. The objectives of the strategies is a 40 percent reduction (over 1985 levels) in nutrients in the Bay by the year 2000 and achievement of a water quality level in each tributary sufficient to support living resources.

The 1991 Bay Program computer modeling runs determined the nutrient load reduction that was needed for each river basin. Based on this information each basin has been allocated specific nutrient reduction targets, measured in pounds of nitrogen and phosphorous, that must be achieved to meet the basin reduction goals.

Specific reduction strategies are at the option of the States. There are many options that can reduce nutrients. Although the options chosen will differ from basin to basin, the range of strategy options can be divided into five basic categories:

- Wastewater treatment plant options, including various intensities of Biological Nutrient Reduction (BNR) and phosphorous removal.
- Developed land nonpoint source options, such as erosion and sediment control, stormwater management techniques, septic system regulations and standards, and pollution prevention practices to reduce energy use and the application of home fertilizers.
- Agriculture nonpoint source options, such as conservation planning, nutrient management, animal waste systems, and stream protection measures.
- Resource protection options, including maintaining and restoring forest buffers, wetland protection, shore erosion control, reforestation plans, and recreational boating sewage pump-out facilities.

- Land use and watershed management options, including comprehensive land use planning and growth management, clustering of subdivisions, preservation of open space, improved transportation planning, and promotion of transportation alternatives that reduce automobile use.

The strategies will be used to meet many of the management measures required under Section 6217 discussed above.

Recommendations

As shown on the Land Use Plan map, the Conservation district includes land held in conservation type ownership, e.g. State wildlife areas, State forests, conservation easements. By definition, the Conservation classification and related implementation measures should also apply to the following areas:

- The Resource Conservation Area (RCA) within the Wicomico County Critical Area;
- The identified recharge area of the Paleochannel; and
- Identified plant and wildlife habitats of significance to the State and Wicomico County.

Chapter 3

NATURAL RESOURCE AND SENSITIVE AREAS PROTECTION

Wicomico County, like the Eastern Shore, has a rich variety of natural features that should be conserved. These features include wetlands, rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, floodplains, forests, diverse and unique wildlife habitats, aquifers, and unique Chesapeake Bay tributary basins, among others. These features contribute to the quality of our environment, both urban and rural. Wetlands and floodplains, in particular, are an essential element of Wicomico's natural ecological system. Both help preserve the quality of the County's groundwater, support living resources by providing vital habitat, and exist as natural stormwater and flood management systems.

Wicomico County is blessed with an abundance of valuable natural resources which contributes to the County's pleasant quality of life. The effects of increased population and physical development can manifest themselves on the natural environment in many ways including:

- Clearing of trees and natural vegetation;
- Loss of plant and wildlife habitats and populations;
- Loss of farmland;
- Loss of important wetlands and aquatic habitats;
- Contamination of groundwater for drinking supplies;
- Reduced surface water quality in streams, rivers and the Bay;
- Disruption of natural water drainage systems;
- Increased air pollution;
- Increased amounts of solid wastes and litter; and
- Loss of scenic natural views.

Environmental deterioration is not an inevitable consequence of growth. The construction of the new homes, businesses, industries, schools and roads necessary to accommodate growth can occur without unduly threatening the area's environmental quality, provided that new development is designed and constructed in an environmentally-sensitive manner.

Throughout the County there are areas much more susceptible to environmental degradation than others due to their proximity to sensitive natural features. Future development should be directed

away from sensitive areas and guided towards areas where environmental impacts would be less severe. All future development should be subject to minimum performance standards for environmental protection and natural resource conservation.

OBJECTIVES

To help insure the protection of natural resources, the County has established the following objectives:

- Identify the wetlands and floodplains in order to provide the special protection they may need.
- Provide open space, scenic areas, and natural breaks in the landscape.
- Protect water quality and wildlife, and conserve natural features that make a significant contribution to the character of the County.
- Limit development in floodplains, on steep slopes, and in other sensitive natural areas.
- Protect water quality by reducing pollution and its effects.
- Conserve fish, wildlife and plant habitats.
- Establish protection measures for sensitive areas including streams and their buffers, 100-year floodplains, steep slopes adjacent to streams, and habitats of threatened and endangered species to reinforce existing regulatory protection programs.
- Conserve forest and woodland resources. Utilize and require tree conservation measures and replanting programs in compliance with the Maryland Forest Conservation Act.
- Exclude development from the 100-year floodplain.
- Develop local regulations which encourage the landscape to be preserved in its natural state, by minimizing tree and soil removal.
- Ensure that all new development and redevelopment minimizes pollutant loadings and runoff from sites through implementation of sediment, stormwater and erosion control plans and practices.
- Encourage property owners to place environmentally sensitive lands under public and private conservation easements.

SENSITIVE AREAS

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992 added provisions to Article 66B of the Annotated Code for the State of Maryland that require this Comprehensive Plan to contain a Sensitive Areas Element which describes how the County will protect the following sensitive areas:

- Streams and stream buffers;

- 100-year floodplains;
- Habitats of threatened and endangered species; and
- Steep slopes.

Sensitive environmental areas extend throughout the County (See Map 7) and the potential for harm exists every time development activities result in land disturbance. Performance standards that protect sensitive resource areas should be included in the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations. These standards should establish minimum protection levels for stream valleys, wetlands, forests, wildlife habitats, and sensitive soils.

Streams and Stream Buffers

Streams and rivers in Wicomico County offer a great diversity of form and function. The small first and second order streams are often the most critical in terms of downstream water quality and aquatic species. Buffer requirements should be enacted by the County to ensure its stream systems are protected and that the water quality is preserved.

Streams and their buffers are important resources. Streams support recreational fishing and serve as spawning areas for commercial fish stock. Development near stream areas subject to flooding can result in the loss of life and property. Streams and adjacent areas are home to many plant and animal species. Streams transport nutrients and minerals to rivers and creeks and, in turn, the Chesapeake Bay. The floodplains, wetlands, and wooded slopes along streams are important parts of the stream ecosystem.

As development activity occupies land, forest cover and natural vegetation along streams are sometimes diminished. The cumulative loss of open space and natural growth places a greater burden on remaining land along streams to mollify the effects of increased stormwater runoff, sedimentation, and nutrient loading. Stream buffers serve as protection zones and serve to filter sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous, and other runoff pollutants, reducing stream damage. The effectiveness of buffers to protect stream water quality is influenced by their width, the type of vegetation within the buffer, and buffer maintenance.

Buffers also provide habitat for wetland and upland plants which are the foundation of healthy biological communities. Animals use the natural vegetation as a source of food and as protection from predators. A natural stream buffer system can provide connections between forested areas to enable wildlife migration. Connecting fairly large forested tracts is important to the long term survival of Forest Interior Dwelling Birds (FIDS) and other species.

Map 7

In summary, riparian forest buffers provide the following water quality benefits:

- ***Preserving Wetlands and Floodplains*** - Riparian Forest Buffers help maintain floodplains and wetlands contained in floodplains, which reduce flooding and improve water quality.
- ***Stabilizing Banks and Limiting Channel Erosion*** - By preserving grasses and woody plants along the shoreline, buffers help stabilize stream banks and reduce channel erosion. Buffers also moderate water temperature and create habitat for aquatic species.
- ***Reducing Runoff Volume*** - A riparian buffer can reduce runoff by intercepting and absorbing it before it reaches the stream or river.
- ***Reducing Pollutant Loads*** - A buffer may remove some pollutants present in runoff. Depending on site conditions, removal of pollutants from subsurface flow and groundwater may also occur.

100-Year Floodplains

Floodplains are an important asset to the community. They perform vital natural functions. These include temporary storage of floodwater, moderation of peak flood flows, maintenance of water quality, groundwater recharge, prevention of erosion, and provision of habitat for wildlife. They also provide recreational opportunities, and establish an aesthetic quality to natural areas. These functions are best served if floodplains are kept in their natural state.

Some areas of the County are subject to periodic flooding which pose risks to public health and safety, and potential loss of property. Flood losses and flood-related losses are created by inappropriately located structures which are inadequately elevated or otherwise unprotected and vulnerable to floods or by development which increases flood damage to other lands or development. While protection of life and property provided the initial basis for protection of floodplains, there has been a growing recognition in recent years that limiting disturbances within floodplains can serve a variety of additional functions with important public purposes and benefits.

Floodplain regulations have been enacted in Wicomico County to, wherever possible, preserve and enhance the natural characteristics of the floodplain and their associated wetlands and water bodies. The legal purposes of floodplain regulations are to protect human life and health, minimize property damage, encourage appropriate construction practices to minimize future damage, protect individuals from unwittingly buying land subject to flood hazards, and to protect water supply, sanitary sewage disposal, and natural drainage. The prevention of unwise development in areas subject to flooding helps reduce financial burdens to the community and the State, and prevents future displacement and suffering of its residents. This protection is achieved through the review of all activities proposed within identified floodplain and by the issuance of permits for those activities that comply with the objectives of the floodplain regulations.

The minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program do not prohibit development within the 100-year floodplain from development. However, to adhere to the minimum Federal requirements the County requires development and new structures in the floodplain to meet certain flood protection measures including elevating the first floor of structures a minimum of one foot above 100-year flood elevations and utilizing specified flood proof construction techniques. Moreover, where alternative building sites on a parcel are available for construction outside the 100-year floodplain, then construction in the floodplain is prohibited. These requirements are established in the County's Floodplain Management Ordinance.

Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species

Maintenance of biological diversity today sustains future opportunities to advance health care and provide a number of other societal benefits. Habitat destruction and degradation is currently estimated to threaten some 400 native Maryland species with extinction. The key to protecting threatened and endangered species is protecting the habitat in which they exist.

According to information provided by Maryland Natural Heritage Program, Department of Natural Resources there are currently seven (7) animal and about 126 plant species listed as current and historical rare, threatened and endangered species in Wicomico County. The list of these species and a description of their habitat requirements can be obtained from the Maryland Department Natural Resource's Heritage and Biodiversity Conservation Programs (HBCP) through the County planning office.

The Maryland Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act (Natural Resources Article, 10-2A-01 through 06) provides definitions of threatened and endangered species. Maryland law and regulations do not currently provide a definition of habitat. As a basis for establishing protection measures for habitats of threatened and endangered species, habitat is defined in this Plan as "areas which, due to their physical or biological features, provide important elements for the maintenance, expansion and long-term survival of threatened and endangered species listed in COMAR 08.03.08. Such areas may include breeding, feeding, resting, migratory, or overwintering areas".

Steep Slopes

Slopes provide an environment that facilitates movement of soil and pollutants when land disturbances occur. Control of erosion potential is usually achieved through regulation of development on steep slopes because such areas represent the greatest opportunity for accelerated soil loss and resultant sedimentation and pollution to streams.

Steep slopes can be areas with a surprising number of different plant and animal species, largely because they have not been disturbed by farming and other activities. As a result they are often areas of high biodiversity compared with adjacent areas of the landscape with relatively uniform living

conditions. Despite these concerns, Wicomico County is still characterized by very flat topography and as a result does not present serious steep slope policy issues.

Wetlands

There was a time not too long ago, when marshes, bogs and swamps were viewed solely as sources of disease and pestilence. Early government involvement with wetlands consisted of give-away programs with the condition that they be drained and filled for purposes such as farming. In the 20th century, well-intentioned public and private efforts to provide flood protection, mosquito control, greater agricultural productivity, better highways and many other benefits to society often resulted in filling or draining wetlands for farming, forestry, industry and development.

In more recent years, research has concluded that certain wetlands play a vital role in the environment. Wetlands are valuable for the many physical, hydrological, biological and cultural functions they perform. These functions include:

Physical

- Wetland vegetation and shallow waters absorb shoreline wave energy and reduce erosion;
- Wetlands slow water velocities and reduce sediments in surface waters;
- Wetland plants and bottom sediments are sinks or collectors of excess nutrients such as nitrates and phosphorus;
- Wetlands trap waterborne heavy metals, herbicides and pesticides; and
- Wetland plants reoxygenate water and increase oxygen availability.

Hydrological

- Wetlands act as floodways when associated with rivers and streams and adjacent floodplains which convey water downstream;
- Wetlands store water during floods and release volumes slowly, reducing drastic flood surges; and
- Wetlands, while often located in water discharge areas, also act as water recharge areas.

Biological

- Wetland plants and invertebrates are the base of a highly productive food chain;

- Wetlands are nursery and spawning areas for many species of finfish and shellfish. Between 60 and 80 percent of all commercially caught fish depend on coastal wetlands for food or spawning;
- Wetlands are important habitat for many waterfowl and wildlife species, serving as protected areas for feeding, resting and breeding; and
- Wetlands are home to many rare and endangered species. Almost 35 percent of protected animal species are found in wetlands, although wetlands cover only about 5 percent of the nation's land area.

Cultural

- Wetlands often contain important historical and archeological sites since wetlands were early sources of food;
- Wetlands offer important recreational and commercial values for fishing, hunting and trapping;
- Wetlands which are forested may be managed for valuable timber production; and
- Wetlands provide scenic open spaces and often serve as areas for bird and wildlife observation.

In Wicomico County, wetlands activities are currently regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Maryland Department of the Environment through a joint permitting process. Tidal wetlands are protected by a 100 foot wide natural Buffer and non-tidal wetlands are protected by a 25 foot wide natural buffer. No development activities are allowed within the wetlands or the buffer areas. Exceptions are allowed for certain water-dependent activities.

Forest

“Acre for acre, forests are the most beneficial land use in terms of water quality. Acting as living filters, forests capture rainfall, regulate stormwater and streamflow, filter nutrients and sediment, and stabilize soils. Forests typically retain 70 to 80 percent of atmospherically deposited nitrogen. Forest habitats are essential for much of the watershed's animal, bird and plant life. Riparian forests along stream, rivers and shorelines provide critical habitat for over half the terrestrial wildlife species. Forests serve human values - people enjoy wooded areas for their aesthetic qualities and recreation opportunities - but they also serve human needs for food, building materials, and sustaining the environmental integrity of a region.” “Retaining large areas of managed woodlands is an important goal for resource use and development management. Forest land retention is one means to protect our environment, maintain our quality of life, and use and enjoy our landscape in a sustainable way. Conserving forests as growth and development take place allows us to benefit from our forests today while still granting the option for future generations to use them tomorrow.”

(Source: Conserving the Forests of the Chesapeake: the Status, Trends, and Importance of Forests of the Bay's Sustainable Future, United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeastern Area, NA-TP-03-96.)

Wicomico County has extensive forest cover (90,000 acres) throughout the County. A large percentage of these forest resources are owned and managed by timber companies indicating that forestry is a significant land use in Wicomico County. Many of these tracts are located along stream corridors and over soils with severe development limitations. In addition to the ecological benefits of large forested tracts, this land use (and industry) requires few County services. These large forested areas also make a significant contribution to rural character.

The Forest Conservation Act of 1991 (Natural Resources Article Sections 5-1601-5-1613) was enacted to protect the forests of Maryland by making forest conditions and character an integral part of the site planning process. It is regulated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, but implemented and administered by local governments. The Forest Conservation Act seeks to maximize the benefits of forests and slow the loss of forest land in Maryland, while allowing development to take place.

The Wicomico County Forest Conservation Regulations proscribe all requirements for development impacting forest resources. This ordinance requires that all land development is required to limit clearing of natural vegetation and retain specimen trees to the extent possible. This is determined by a forest stand delineation study, in accordance with the Forest Conservation Ordinance.

The Forest Conservation Ordinance requires that a person making application for subdivision, site plan approval, project plan approval, a grading permit, or a sediment control permit for an area of land of 40,000 square feet or greater must submit to the County or City a forest stand delineation and a forest conservation plan for the lot or parcel on which the development is located. The ordinance establishes forest conservation thresholds for all land use categories. The forest conservation threshold sets the percentage of the net tract area at which the reforestation requirement changes from a ratio of 1/4 acre planted for each acre removed above the threshold to a ratio of 2 acres planted for each acre removed below the threshold.

After reasonable efforts to minimize the cutting or clearing of trees and other woody plants have been exhausted in the development of a subdivision, site plan or project plan, grading and sediment control activities, and implementation of the forest conservation plan, the forest conservation plan must provide for reforestation, or payment into the forest conservation fund.

The following forest conservation threshold apply depending on the area where the development activity is proposed and the land use category:

Category of Use	Threshold Percentage
Agricultural and resource areas	50 percent
Institutional development areas	20 percent
High density residential areas	20 percent
Mixed use and planned unit development areas	15 percent
Commercial and industrial use area	15 percent

Each acre of forest retained on the net tract area above the applicable forest conservation threshold will be credited towards the total number of acres required to be reforested for all existing forest cover cleared on the net tract area below the applicable forest conservation threshold, the area of forest removed shall be reforested at a ratio of 2 acres planted for each acre removed below the threshold.

If little or no forest exists on the site, the applicant must conduct afforestation on the lot or parcel. An agriculture or resource area tract having less than 20 percent of the net tract area in forest cover must be afforested up to at least 20 percent of the net tract area. Institutional development areas, high density residential areas, mixed use and planned unit development areas, and commercial and industrial use areas with less than 15 percent of its net tract area in forest cover must be afforested up to at least 15 percent of the net tract area.

Many recent studies have determined that forests, open spaces and buffers are an economic benefit to State and local governments.

- A recent study by the Piedmont Environmental Council in Virginia determined that “for every dollar collected from farms, forests, open spaces, 19 cents is spent on services”.¹ The economic benefits result from lower costs of services, increased property values resulting in higher tax rates, greater recreational opportunities, and free natural water quality control.
- In Maryland, wood manufacturing industry employs over 41,000 people.
- \$300 million was contributed to the Maryland economy as a result of the recreational use of its forests and open spaces in 1991/1992.

¹ Sources: *United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, “Conserving the Forests of the Chesapeake”, and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, “Riparian Buffer Strategies for Urban Watersheds”.*

The Paleochannel

Wicomico County has a unique resource in the buried riverbed called the Paleochannel. The Paleochannel extends for some 10 miles from eastern Dorchester County to US 13, about two miles northeast of Salisbury. It is potentially one of the most prolific sources of ground water in the Atlantic Coastal Plain, estimated to store approximately seven billion gallons of water.

In order to preserve this vast resource, the County adopted the Paleochannel Overlay District. The restrictions and standards in the Paleochannel Overlay District were developed in order to conserve and protect this vital resource. The purpose of the Overlay District is to establish protective measures, in the form of use limitations, performance standards and detailed review procedures, to ensure protection of the riverbed from contamination resulting from environmentally incompatible land uses.

The Overlay District will be shown on the Official Zoning Map as a district overlying the existing underlying zoning. Prohibited uses in the Overlay District include: soil remediation facility; hazardous waste storage or facility; toxic waste storage or facility; any principal use that will store or generate wastes that are ignitable, corrosive, reactive, toxic, hazardous, infectious or chemical or petroleum laden; borrow pits; and sanitary landfill.

The Watersheds

The Nanticoke River

The 33 mile long Nanticoke River flows southwest from the central portion of Delaware through the eastern shore of Maryland to Tangier Sound and the Chesapeake Bay. The River, which forms the western border of Wicomico County with Dorchester County, remains largely unchanged. In the Wicomico portion of the river's watershed, four significant creeks flow into the Nanticoke; the Quantico, Rewastico, Barren and Wetipquin.

The Nanticoke River provides valuable commercial and recreational fisheries. Sport fishing includes white and yellow perch, pickerel, catfish, largemouth bass, bluefish, sea trout, weakfish, and rock fish (stripped bass). Commercial fisheries include white perch, alewife, river herring, rockfish, oysters and blue crabs. Blue crab is the most viable commercial fishery in the Nanticoke. In addition, the Nanticoke River watershed is known for the quality of its waterfowl habitat, and along with the neighboring Blackwater River watershed support 35 percent of all wintering waterfowl which use the Atlantic Flyway (Source: Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay). It is listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory due to its undeveloped nature.

The Wicomico River

The Wicomico River originates near Delmar, Delaware and flows from the heart of Salisbury to Tangier Sound. The Tony Tank Creek and Walton Branch are the two major tributaries that contribute fresh water to the Wicomico River. In addition to its important commercial and port related activities the river has many stream corridors that provide habitat to diverse living resources, including the Bald eagle, osprey and other important animals and plants.

The Wicomico River joins with the Nanticoke River at Tangier Sound which has been recognized by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and others as one of the largest shellfish producing areas in the Chesapeake Bay. Wetlands and small bays dominate the confluence area which includes several state wildlife management areas within and outside of the County.

The Pocomoke River

The Pocomoke River Basin includes areas of Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset Counties in Maryland, part of Sussex County in Delaware, and part of Accomack County in Virginia. The Pocomoke River flows through 49 miles of Maryland before it reaches Pocomoke Sound. The lower portion of the river consists of brackish waters, a combination of fresh water and salt water, and is primarily tidal marsh. The headwaters of the Pocomoke River, beginning at the mouth of Nassowango Creek, are provide habitat for fresh water species of plants and animals.

The Pocomoke River basin is a rich ecosystem providing habitat for fish and wildlife, including many indigenous species considered to be rare, threatened or endangered. It has been described by ornithologists as having one of the best environments for bird life on the Atlantic Coast. Due to its unique resource values, including stands of bald cypress, extensive wetlands, unusual fauna and flora and other characteristics, the Pocomoke River was designated a Scenic River by the Maryland legislature in 1971. In recognition of its exceptional ecological importance, the Pocomoke River was classified by the Maryland Office of Planning as an Critical Area of State Concern.

The Pocomoke River Basin has numerous parks, forests and recreation areas that provide recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike, including hunting, fishing, trapping, swimming, hiking and nature studies. Recreational fishing is economically important in the Pocomoke River, with an estimated 40,000 man-days spent fishing in the freshwater areas of the Pocomoke basin each year (Source: "Pocomoke River Basin: Environmental Assessment of Stream Conditions", Chesapeake Bay and Watershed Programs, Maryland Department of Natural Resources). Recreational and commercial fish of importance in the Pocomoke River include blueback herring, alewife, white and yellow perch, large mouth bass and black crappie.

Recommendations

The rivers and related waterways in Wicomico County are important natural resource asset to the County and should be protected. The requirements of the existing Wicomico County Chesapeake Natural Resource Protection Plan, which apply to portions of the Nanticoke and Wicomico River watersheds, have done much to help insure the long term health of these important ecosystems. Stream buffer requirements recommended in this Comprehensive Plan should also help reduce the effects of harmful runoff to all County rivers.

Various Federal, State and local agencies and organizations interested in the protection of these rivers are conducting programs to better understand the protection needs of these river basins and identify management strategies to protect the quality of these rivers and related tributary streams. The work of these organizations often influences Federal and State programs and regulations that directly impact land use and environmental management in the County. Wicomico County should be an active participant in these efforts. More importantly, the County should be directly involved in the development of any recommended management strategies and implementation techniques to protect the rivers.

While cooperating and participating in these national, State, and regional efforts, the County should maintain its primary control and authority over land use policy development, administration, and enforcement affecting natural resources within the County.

Chapter 4

TRANSPORTATION

One of the most vital elements of Wicomico County is its transportation system, particularly its network of roads, streets and highways. A good roadway system is essential to the orderly functioning of a county in order to provide mobility for people, emergency services and goods as well as access to land. A road and highway system that is free from congestion also contributes to a high quality of life in the County.

The movement of people and goods is an important concern in any community's growth plan. To provide a safe and efficient transportation network with minimal disruption to the area can sometimes be difficult to achieve. The Transportation Plan must be closely coordinated with other elements of the Plan to assure that transportation plans and policies complement and promote those of other sections.

Too often, transportation planning begins in reaction to a problem. The Comprehensive Plan and the Planning Act of 1992 suggests that a proactive approach to mobility issues is needed. Wicomico County and its municipalities need to plan in a manner that defines a coordinated, evolutionary approach toward achieving less reliance on driving alone, in order to enhance the choice, mobility and quality of life for all citizens.

With this Comprehensive Plan should also come a new awareness of the importance of highways, roads and streets to the quality of life in Wicomico County. Highways and streets can no longer be considered a backdrop on the stage, but must be considered a central character. The form that the transportation system takes and the newly defined functions it serves will determine how quickly the County's vision of future growth is achieved, or whether the vision can be achieved at all.

The future vision for Wicomico County should be streets that are pleasant to walk along, safe and efficient bike routes, effective incentives for carpools and vanpools, and a network of roads that moves people and goods efficiently throughout the County. The goal must be to shift from moving vehicles, to strategies that will result in balancing the need for cars and trucks, transit riders, bike riders, walkers, agricultural operations and emergency services.

To become a less car dependent community, there must be more opportunities to live closer to work, in livable, walkable neighborhoods. In addition, streets must be well connected to make travel from one place to another as straightforward as possible. The key to achieving this vision is to redefine streets as a network that will serve the pedestrian, bike riders, and vehicles that will use them. In areas where we want to increase density and where we want more people to live and work, existing streets need to be retrofitted with sidewalks and street trees. These improvements will help attract people back to these streets and investors to redevelop and infill in these areas. A balanced

transportation system that provides for the economical and efficient movement of people and goods is essential to the future growth and proper development of any community.

Historically, Wicomico County has been in the fortunate position of being the transportation center of the three-state area known as the Delmarva Peninsula. It is located at the intersection of two major regional highways, US Route 50 and US 13, and adjacent to the main north-south rail line through the Delmarva Peninsula. The area includes a river-oriented port and a modern airport facility. These four modes of transportation provide a balanced transportation system providing for intra-county, inter-state, and regional movement of goods and people.

The purpose of the Transportation Element of the Plan is to make recommendations to alleviate existing problems and to identify and properly plan for future transportation needs as a result of current development trends and projected population growth increases.

GOALS

- *To provide a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system necessary to serve the County's role as a regional employment and marketing center.*
- *To encourage development of a comprehensive transportation network which will ensure the safe, convenient and efficient movement of people and goods among places of residence, employment, recreation, shopping, service, and education in a manner as least disruptive as possible to existing and future residents.*

OBJECTIVES

- Coordinate various modes of transportation so that they complement each other.
- Establish a transportation network that moves people and goods efficiently, yet safely.
- Coordinate City, town, County, State, and Federal efforts in providing an efficient transportation system.
- Maximize the desired use of transportation systems while minimizing possible negative effects upon neighborhoods, the environment, and the general public.
- Maximize the capacity, safety, and efficiency of the existing highway system.
- Provide new and improved access to and within the population centers of the County.
- Provide a logical pattern of local streets and highways in order to maximize the public investment in its existing highway facilities.

- Promote the separation of local and through traffic.
- Maintain river channel maintenance projects and to rehabilitate and develop the Port of Salisbury in an effort to encourage additional waterborne traffic which will serve the Delmarva Peninsula and strengthen Wicomico County's role as a regional marketing and distribution center.
- Support the preservation and revitalization of the Delmarva rail system as it relates to and serves Wicomico County and the tri-state area.
- Encourage the continued expansion and improvement to the Salisbury-Wicomico County Regional Airport as a primary facility serving a multi-county and tri-state region.
- Prevent the infringement of incompatible land uses in the vicinity of the airport.
- Encourage the improvement of an efficient, convenient public transportation system to serve the specialized needs of citizens, for the Metro Core area, and, if feasible, for the entire County.
- Support the needed improvement of facilities necessary to serve expanded motor carrier service.
- Explore the possibility of the development of a multi-modal transportation and distribution complex, which would provide efficient transportation services to the entire region.
- Provide for the safe and efficient integration of private, commercial, emergency and seasonal traffic, including application of effective and enforceable traffic controls and restrictions.
- Provide and preserve scenic areas and other open space areas along major highways.
- Provide the Salisbury-Wicomico County Airport with improved and direct access to US 50.
- Acquire property adjacent to the Salisbury-Wicomico County Airport, to protect the airport from urban encroachment and to allow greater flexibility in future expansion plans.
- Realign Airport Road to the west of its present location to allow greater flexibility in the expansion of the Airport and to permit the extension of runways to the southwest.

POLICIES

General

- The County should not permit development that would create a traffic or safety hazard on roads serving the development unless the developer agrees to make or fund necessary improvements to the off-site access roadway.
- Where possible and appropriate, existing roads and highways should be improved and new linkages built to support the use of land as proposed by the County's Land Use Plan. Responsibility for these improvements should be fairly shared by the public and private sectors.
- Roadway capacity on County and State roads should be conserved by limiting and controlling future access points.
- Development of land in "strips" along county roads should be discouraged. Access onto major public roads should be reduced whenever possible.
- When new roads are built by the public or private sector, the roads should be constructed with an appropriate design which is suited to the road's primary function.
- New roadway construction and major improvement projects for existing County roads should be scheduled as part of an overall County Capital Improvements Program.
- The County will coordinate with the State Highway Administration during the planning and design of State Highway improvements within Wicomico County.
- The County will work with the State Highway Administration to ensure that improvements to major State Highways in Wicomico County will continue to allow these routes to function as important components of the local transportation system.
- The County will coordinate with the Mass Transit Administration to preserve existing rail service rights-of-way in Wicomico County for the purpose of future rail transportation and other public purposes.
- The County will continue to ensure that adequate access is provided to County waters for marine transportation.
- The County will support safe, convenient, and attractive routes and walkways between activity centers for bicyclists and pedestrians.

- The County will promote safe and convenient access for people to transportation systems and ensure that there is adequate access from individual properties.
- The County will plan for adequate rights-of-way taking into account existing and future development and proposed transportation support facilities and programs.
- All developments will have adequate access and circulation for public service vehicles, but actual paved street sections should be as narrow as possible to maintain a human scale. Alternative road designs which permit emergency vehicle access, while minimizing impervious surfaces, will be considered.
- Traffic and roadway planning initiatives will be coordinated with emergency management agencies including development and maintenance of an emergency evacuation plan for use in the event of severe weather or catastrophic event.

Highway Policies

The following policies are recommended to ensure that existing and future highway systems perform as effectively as possible and do not adversely affect existing or future County development:

- Steps will be taken to assure that highways do not adversely affect the County in the following ways:
 - Highways should be located to have the least negative impact practical on the environment.
 - Major highways should not dissect established homogenous residential areas.
 - Residential development in areas prone to excessive highway noise should be permitted only with proper buffering or noise controls.
 - Areas along major highways at certain key interchanges will be reserved for quality planned light industrial developments, highway oriented services and multi-family and other medium and high density residential uses.
- Development along highways will be effectively controlled to ensure that the highways perform efficiently; in part, by using the following:
 - Limited access will be provided to arterial highways and restrictions placed on access to major collectors.
 - Incentives will be created to establish clustered design standards as the preferred alternative to “strip” development along highways.

- All developments should be served by interior streets with common access to collectors or arterials and will not have direct access to such major roads.
- All major developments should be evaluated with respect to their impact on the highway network.
- Large intensive developments should be located near major highways where possible so as not to generate excessive traffic on local roads or through residential neighborhoods.
- Provisions should be made for the logical extension and connection of the existing local highway system to serve newly developing areas prior to the time the proposed development is scheduled for official approval.

Growth Centers

- The County and municipalities will coordinate the planning and design of roadway improvements in or near municipalities.
- At the appropriate time, the County will explore the feasibility of improved transit service for County residents and encourage such services when they are needed and economically feasible.
- The County will continue air transportation services improvement at the Airport.
- The County will require that new street and road design in undeveloped areas ensures connectivity to the overall street and highway system.
- New local access streets serving commercial land uses should (1) be safe and convenient; and (2) be designed to preserve or enhance the function of the uses they serve. Construction of new local access will:
 - exclude difficult driveway approaches;
 - promote safe, convenient pedestrian and bicycle travel;
 - separate truck traffic from shoppers and employees where possible; and
 - control truck loading and unloading that occurs on-street during morning and evening peak traffic periods.

- New residential streets serving residential neighborhoods will be designed to:
 - provide safe and convenient access for motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and emergency vehicles;
 - maintain the integrity of the land use and streetscapes they serve;
 - provide access within new neighborhoods and to adjacent neighborhoods, shopping areas, and schools;
 - operate at appropriate traffic volume capacities; minimize speed, required local travel distances, and congestion; and
 - provide for the safety of vehicles and pedestrians at intersections by ensuring adequate sight distances and by using traffic control devices and geometric design features such as “T” intersections, marked crosswalks where sidewalks and road meet, traffic signals, stop signs, and other strategies where appropriate.
- The County should require sidewalks in growth centers, where appropriate.

Rural Areas

- Agricultural transportation requirements should be recognized in the management of the County road system.

THE HIGHWAY NETWORK

The County's highway system has tremendous influence on its development patterns. Historically, roads followed development rather than guiding it. When properly planned, however, a coordinated highway system opens land to the proper type of development at the proper time, protecting existing residential development and facilitating the orderly and efficient growth of the area.

Wicomico County's road system includes widely dispersed rural roads, an urban network serving the Metro Core, and an excellent regional highway network. This network links the County to Baltimore and Washington to the west; Wilmington, Philadelphia and New York to the north; Norfolk to the south, and the ocean resorts to the east. To assure that this system continues to contribute to the future of the County in the most beneficial manner possible, this highway plan component of the Transportation Element identifies existing deficiencies, future needs, and makes recommendations consistent with the overall growth policies presented in this Comprehensive Plan.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The functional classification of the County's street and highway system is an essential step in the preparation of a coordinated transportation network for Wicomico County. By establishing such a system, local streets and highways can be designated according to a planned level of service. The system also allows the County Council to provide for the coordination of newly constructed or improved County roads. Use of this system should upgrade circulation in existing and newly developing areas.

The Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration, has classified all State and Federally funded highways as well as many local roads within Wicomico County in accordance with a State Functional Classification System and Map which have been approved by the County (see Map 8). The Functional Classification System includes a separate classification for urban highways (the urban system) which is related to federal highway funding programs (see Tables 1 and 2).

Arterial System

The highest level of highway service provided in the County is the arterial system. The primary purpose of all arterial highways is to provide continuous and efficient routes for movement of high volume traffic between towns or major traffic generators particularly that of an intra-state or inter-state nature. Direct access to adjoining land should not be provided except at certain key points. Arterial highways are designed to maintain homogeneous neighborhoods and to serve as boundaries between various neighborhoods. On-street parking should be prohibited.

Collector System

Collector streets serve the function of moving traffic from local streets, providing limited access to abutting land and providing for the movement of traffic to arterial highways. For some collectors, route continuity is not always essential but it should be encouraged. Wherever possible, existing street patterns and major traffic generators should be recognized as integral parts of the system and all proposed roads designed accordingly. Improvements to existing County roads should be made consistent with these functional classification standards.

Table 1
Federal Highway Functional Classification System
Urban System Classifications

Freeway/Expressway	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Collector
US 13 Bypass	US 13 Bus.	Jersey Rd.	West Rd.
US 50	MD 12	Lake St.	Booth St.
	MD 349	Division St.	Marvel Rd.
		Mill St.	Scenic Dr.
		Main St.	Northwood Dr.
		Parsons Rd.	Zion Rd.
		Fitzwater St.	Truitt St.
		Carroll St.	Riverside Dr.
		Priscilla St.	Cypress St.
		Md 346.	Brown St.
		Morris Dr.	Guilford Ave.
		Mt Hermon Rd.	Long Ave.
		Beaglin Park Dr.	Civic Ave.
		College Ave.	Glen Ave.
		Point Road	Gunby Rd.
		Main St. (Fruitland)	Schumaker Dr.
		Camden Ave.	Circle St.
		Cedar Lane	Newton St.
		Riverside Dr.	South Blvd.
		Waverly Dr.	Webster St.
		South Blvd.	Roger St.
		Glen Ave.	Kendall St.
			Johnson Rd.
			Milford St.
			Pine Bluff Rd.
			Clyde Ave.
			St. Lukes Rd.
			South Division

Table 2
Federal Highway Functional Classification System
Rural System Classifications

Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major Collector	Minor Collector
US 13	US 13 (Bus)	MD 313	Norris Twilley Rd.
US 50	MD 349	MD 347 (S. of MD 670)	MD 54
	MD 12	MD 670	Athol Rd.
		Lukes Rd.	MD 352
		MD 350	Capitola Rd.
		MD 354	Upper Ferry Rd.
		MD 374	Allen Rd.
		Walston Switch Rd.	Old Railroad Rd.
		MD 346	Jersey Rd.
		Dagsboro Rd.	MD 347 (N. of Hebron)
		MD 353	Riverside Dr.
		MD 349 (S. of Cox's Cr.)	Johnson Rd.
		MD 348	Swamp Rd.
		MD 675	Wango Rd.
		MD 54 (US 13 to MD 675)	Laws Rd.
		Airport Rd.	Forrest Grove Rd.
			Zion Church Rd.
			Zion Rd.
			Bethel Rd.
			Mt. Pleasant Rd.
			Sheppard's Crossing Rd.

Map 8

Normally, a ROW (right-of-way) of 60 feet is sufficient for providing limited access to abutting properties and moving traffic. Due to the nature of adjoining land uses or the volume of traffic to be served, however, collector streets may be designed to provide service for specialized functions such as commercial, industrial or high density residential activities. In such cases, the ROW may be as wide as 80 feet.

Establishment of a planned network of collector streets to provide access to arterial highways is the most important part of the Transportation Plan. Wicomico County uses a local classification system for County highways. The County road classification system distinguishes between State and County highways, classifying County roads as part of a Major Collector System and a Minor Collector System (see Map 9).

Major Collector

The purpose of a major collector is to carry relatively large volumes of primarily local traffic from major development centers in the County to the closest arterial or a local traffic destination. A major collector should have a minimum ROW of 60 feet but could include a ROW as large as 80 feet. Moving traffic lanes should be approximately 12 feet wide and a median strip may be provided where possible. On-street parking would be discouraged and limited. Sufficient space should be left at the outer edge of the ROW for the future installation of drainage ways, bikeways, sidewalks, or utilities. Lot by lot driveway access would be controlled and limited so as to minimize friction points along the road. Properly located, major collectors can separate conflicting land uses.

Minor Collector

The basic purpose of a minor collector street is to collect traffic from primarily local activity centers in order to provide access to major collector streets. A minor collector would provide direct access to adjoining land uses.

A minor collector should have a minimum ROW of 50 feet with travel ways of approximately 22 feet with parking allowed on one or both sides. This type of arrangement would require a total paved surface ranging from 30 to 40 feet curb to curb. The remaining ROW should be used for grass plot, sidewalk or utility extensions, if necessary. If the future status of the road is uncertain, an additional 5' ROW reservation for future use could be required.

Under the provisions of the current County subdivision regulations, minor residential streets, marginal access streets, and rural roads are minor collectors.

Map 9

Local Street System

The most extensive part of the County's highway network is local streets which have the primary purpose of providing direct access to adjoining properties. A secondary purpose is to provide linkages with minor collector streets. This type of street is normally found within planned subdivisions.

In newly developing areas, the local street pattern can be planned so that through traffic is discouraged. The intent of the local pattern is to provide immediate access to property not the movement of traffic. Therefore, the careful design of local streets can encourage the exclusiveness of residential areas. Improvements to these streets can be made on an "as needed" basis.

Capacity/Level of Service

Existing and programmed system capacity, i.e. the number of vehicles which can be safely accommodated on a facility or any segment of a facility, is both a measure of system efficiency and the intensity of land uses which can be served. Capacity is measured as the relationship between actual or programmed capacity and actual or projected traffic volumes. It is expressed as the v/c ratio or vehicles to capacity ratio.

Level of service (LOS) is descriptive of the operating conditions a driver will experience while traveling on a particular facility. They are also often used to express public policy concerning performance expectations for a given road type. Level of service reflects driver satisfaction with a number of factors that influence the degree of congestion, including speed and travel time, traffic interruption, freedom to maneuver, safety, driving comfort and convenience, and delays. Six level of service are used to describe highway flow conditions. Commonly accepted definitions for each category are:

LOS A, represents a free flow where individual users are virtually unaffected by others in the traffic stream. LOS A describes a condition with low traffic volumes and high speeds with little or no delays. There is little or no restriction in maneuverability due to the presence of other vehicles. Drivers can maintain their desired speeds and can proceed through signals without having to wait unnecessarily;

LOS B, is in the range of stable flow, but the presence of other users in the traffic stream begins to be noticeable. LOS B affords above average conditions, and is typically used for design of rural highways;

LOS C, is also in the range of stable flows, but marks the beginning of the range of flow in which the operation of individual users becomes significantly affected by interactions with others in the traffic stream. LOS C is normally utilized as a measure of "average conditions" for design of facilities in suburban and urban locations. It is also considered acceptable in rural locations;

LOS D, represents high density, but stable flow. Speed and freedom to maneuver are severely restricted and the driver experiences a generally poor level of comfort. Small increases in traffic flow will generally cause operational problems at this level. LOS D is considered acceptable during short periods of time and is often used in large urban areas;

LOS E, represents operating conditions at or near capacity. Operations at this level are usually unstable, because small increases in flow or minor perturbations within the traffic stream will cause breakdowns.

LOS F, is used to define forced or breakdown flow. This condition exists wherever the amount of traffic approaching a point exceeds the amount which can traverse the point and queues form behind the point. LOS F is characterized by demand volumes greater than the roadway capacity. As complete congestion occurs and, in the extreme case, the volume passing a given point drops to zero. Under these conditions motorists seek other routes in order to bypass congestion, thus impacting adjacent streets.

The County's Level of Service (LOS) policies establish a recognizable basis for evaluating alternative plans and/or policies. With establishment of LOS policies, the County makes a clear statement to developers of the quality of highway service the public expects to achieve or maintain as growth occurs. Level of service policies also establish the basis for an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance.

Once set, these criteria are used to evaluate the transportation system impacts of the proposed land use plan. LOS policies provide the basis and criteria on which to evaluate alternatives and to determine capital requirements. Alternative land use scenarios can be modeled to determine the highway implication of each.

Level of Service C is generally acceptable for use in the Metro Core area of Wicomico County. In rural farm areas, the acceptable level of service expressed in terms of the traffic manual are inadequate to describe the real needs of the area. As described in highway traffic manuals a rural highway is a major arterial or a regional arterial running through a rural or suburban area. These roads become problems for farmers as they approach Level of Service B. At that level of service, one or two cars per minute would be expected on the roads, a level that would cause problems to the farmer moving farm equipment on the highways. In rural areas of the County, a totally different treatment is needed.

The recommended minimum level of service (LOS) for developments in planning districts in Wicomico County are as follows:

Planning District	Off-Peak Hour	Peak Hour
Metro Core	LOS C	LOS D
Suburban, Town Growth, Village Center	LOS C	LOS D
Rural	LOS B	LOS C
Resource Protection	LOS B	LOS C

Current LOS deficiencies on roadways should not necessarily stop future development adjacent to these roadways. However, when the proposed new development reduces the LOS below the roadway's current level, the development should not be approved until the development's adverse effects are mitigated by the developer.

With level of service established, the County will have a policy-based, quantified capacity measure from which to assess new development traffic impacts. Whether a development will generate traffic exceeding the capacity of the road can be determined from analysis and the question of road impacts is then no longer subjective. The legal mechanism for implementing this policy could be either Adequate Public Facilities provisions or an Impact Fee Ordinance.

PROGRAMMED STATE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

US 50 relocated, Salisbury Bypass

An immediate priority project for the County and City is construction of a new 4 lane freeway from US 50 west of Salisbury to US 13. This 5.2 mile improvement will complete the Salisbury Bypass and provide relief for existing US 50 through Salisbury. Existing US 50 is currently experiencing seasonal capacity problems and has several high accident sections and intersections. The State estimates current usage at 29,925 vehicles per day and projects that by 2020 average daily traffic on the Bypass will reach 28,850 vehicles per day and average daily traffic (ADT) on existing US 50 will have dropped to 15,000 vehicles per day. Final engineering and right-of-way acquisition for the project are currently underway.

US 50 Access Management Study

Access management is the process of limiting and/or removing the number of points at which a vehicle may enter or leave a highway. A controlled access roadway only permits access from other publicly owned roadways.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) has established an access management program for the US Route 50 corridor, including the stretch from the Vienna Bypass to Naylor Mill Road. According to the State Highway Administration this section of the US 50 corridor is experiencing deterioration in safety and service quality due to high seasonal traffic volumes (ADT is projected to be 39,000 vehicles per day by 2020) coupled with local commercial and residential development pressure along the highway. The project would improve the highway's safety and service by minimizing points of access.

Access management is a key tool for preserving and enhancing the existing road system. The purpose of access management is to maintain and improve the traffic carrying capacity of the existing roads. Access management that improves traffic flow also improves air quality and energy savings. Goals of an access management program are:

- Improving safety,
- Reducing travel time and increasing mobility,
- Improving traffic volume capacity, and
- Orderly land use.

The State Highway Administration has established an Access Management Team that includes representatives from the Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering, Office of Real Estate, Division of Engineering Access Permits, and the Office of Counsel. The Access Management Team develops recommendations for the State Highway Administration in cases where acquisition of properties or control of access are involved.

The County should support the State's Access Management Program and the work of the Access Management Team. Supporting actions should include:

- Developing a Land Use Plan and Transportation Plan policies, with emphasis on protecting State Primary Highway corridors.
- Developing zoning ordinances that require dedications/reservations of land, when future right-of-way needs are known.
- Developing local roadways to enhance land access and provide auxiliary support for the primary state highway corridors. This could include developers constructing a service road as a condition of site plan approval.
- Requiring adequate setback of structures through the zoning ordinances to minimize right-of-way costs.

- Purchasing strategically located properties.
- Coordinating County planning and development approval processes with the State Highway Administration.

RECOMMENDED STATE HIGHWAY PROJECTS

To continue to provide excellent access on both an intra and inter-state basis, the following improvements are necessary for State Highways in the County.

1. Maryland Route 350 - Mt. Hermon Road. Continue improvements between Civic Avenue and Airport Road as required in order to provide additional capacity and safety features necessary to serve development locating north of Mt. Hermon Road and south of US 50 East.
2. Westerly Bypass Extension. Begin preliminary, long range planning for the extension of the existing US 13-US Bypass to extend in a westerly direction then crossing the Wicomico River to provide access to US 13 in the south. A part of this recommendation will be a state analysis of the need for an additional bridge crossing on the westerly side of the County.
3. Maryland Route 12 - Worcester County line to US 13 Bypass. Two lane reconstruction.
4. Maryland Route 350 - Beaglin Park Drive to Airport Road. Multi-lane urban reconstruction.
5. Maryland Route 12 - US 13 Bypass to Johnson Road. Multi-lane urban reconstruction.
6. Maryland Route 349 - Levin Dashiell Road to US 50. Multi-lane reconstruction.
7. US 13 - Somerset County line to US 13 Business. Divided highway reconstruct with access control improvements.
8. US 50 - Vienna Bypass (MD731A) to Naylor Mill Road. Access control improvements.
9. US 13 - Salisbury Bypass to Delaware State Line. Divided highway reconstruction with access control improvements.
10. US 50 - US 50 West of Salisbury to existing US 13 North of Salisbury. Freeway construction.

RECOMMENDED COUNTY HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

The highway network of Wicomico County has been firmly established by the construction of state and local roads based upon historical development trends. The backbone of the network is formed by the State Highway System. Increased development pressures and changing land use patterns in various areas of the County have created an additional need for addressing existing and future

highway traffic flow problems. The following recommendations address the need for a coordinated approach to the highway system between City, County and State governments.

METRO CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

The highway network in the Metro Core is a radial system, originally developed to bring traffic into and out of the City of Salisbury. Through the years, the changing patterns of land development in many sections of the County, particularly in key areas in the Metro Core, resulted in major traffic generators and destination points being outside of the Central Business District of the City. The change in development areas results in the need to provide better circumferential movement of traffic between major traffic generators by linking existing roads with existing radial highways.

The following are recommended County and/or City projects (see Map 10). These recommended projects for local roads are consistent with the objective of improving the circumferential movement of traffic throughout the area.

Immediate Priority (1 to 5 years)

1. Northeast Collector

The Northeast Collector is a new road that would extend from Gordy Road on the north to Middle Neck Drive extended, Old Ocean City Road (Phase I) and eventually to US 50 (Phase II). The Northeast Collector is part of a system of new and relocated roads, intended to provide an inner loop collector system diverting traffic from existing residential streets and neighborhoods and providing connections to shopping, employment, recreation and other activities located in the northern and eastern portion of Metro Core.

2. Naylor Mill (Industrial Access) Road

In order to develop an area for low intensity, heavy, industrial use in the northwest sector of Metro Core, between the Baltimore and Eastern Railroad and US 50 West, a direct means of access should be provided in the vicinity of the US 50 - Naylor Mill Road intersection. Direct access is needed to permit development of this area. This proposed route would provide access to US 50 and to US 13 via Naylor Mill Road and connect with the proposed northerly By-pass when completed.

3. US 13 Corridor

The City and County should institute an Access Management Program for the US 13 corridor. To increase the safety and capacity of US 13 within the City of Salisbury, the number of direct access points along US 13 should be substantially reduced. This is accomplished by combining the numerous minor direct access points into a fewer number

serving the same properties and by making use of service roads for access to individual businesses. By eliminating direct private access to the highway where reasonable alternative routes can provide an adequate level of accessibility, it will be possible to reduce the number of turning movements, decrease the number of potential accident points and provide smoother overall flow of traffic on US 13.

This direct access restriction policy will be difficult to implement because most of the businesses along US 13 are long established and were designed with direct access to US 13. These businesses cannot rearrange their circulation and parking patterns without substantial investment. Nevertheless, the restriction of access along a major arterial, such as US 13 or US 50 must be implemented if future transportation planning efforts are to be successful.

4. **Traffic Control Studies**

Metro Core is the single largest concentration of residents, visitors and employees in the County. Because of the regional nature of traffic moving into and through the area, additional traffic control measures should be undertaken on local streets and highways. Of particular concern is the proper evaluation of intersections for possible installation of traffic lights, proper turning lane markings, and proper striping of four lane highways. In some cases, additional directional signs may be required to provide regional visitors with a more convenient method of locating major destination points.

Intermediate Range (6 to 9 Years)

5. **Deers Head Boulevard Connector**

It is recommended that a direct means of access be provided between Emerson Avenue in the vicinity of Deer's Head State Hospital and US 13 North. Employees and visitors to Deer's Head State Hospital and residents of subdivisions adjacent to Emerson Avenue are presently forced to funnel into Union Avenue and then out to US 13. This indirect approach is inadequate and forces large volumes of traffic to pass in front of North Salisbury Elementary School, an area that is now congested, and decreases the safety of children attending this school. The steady growth of homes in this area along with the large volume of traffic generated by Deer's Head State Hospital warrants a direct means of access to US 13.

6. **Newtown Bypass**

Using existing abandoned rail right-of-way, the City should construct a direct link from the West Isabella Street bridge to North Salisbury Boulevard (US 13 North). This will divert truck traffic from Isabella Street which runs through established residential areas. Mill Street should be extended to intersect with this new street.

7. **Snow Hill Bridge - Ward Street Connection**

Relocate Snow Hill Road to intersect with Ward Street and replace the existing bridge with a new structure similar to the South Division Street Bridge to allow for pedestrian access under the bridge. This would allow for a future connection with River Walk Park through the railroad bridge and a pedestrian crossing at Main Street.

8. **Johnson Road - Robbins Avenue Connection**

The existing Johnson Road alignment should be relocated to connect with Robbins Avenue at Snow Hill Road to serve the south-southeasterly portion of Metro Core.

Long Range (10 years and beyond)

Many of the projects listed in this category are based on anticipated land use development patterns. These projects will be subject to an evaluation of land use and traffic conditions prior to any decision to advance their status.

9. **Northeast Corridor (Phase II)**

Extend the Northeast Collector from Old Ocean City Road (MD 346) to US 50 at the intersection of Beaglin Park Drive on the south. Beaglin Park Drive should be extended as a major collector across US 50 north of its current intersection. The road will eventually connect with Phase I of the Northeast Collector completing an inner loop road system from US 13 South (via College Avenue) to US 13 North. This project may also include the Merritt Mill Road Connector. This route will parallel US 50 and connect from Beaglin Park Drive east to intersect with the Northeast Collector, Middle Neck Drive and Merritt Mill Road.

10. **Middle Neck Drive**

Extend Middle Neck Drive through to Parker Road with further connection east and south to Tilghman Road.

11. **Civic Avenue to Pine Way**

Align Civic Avenue with Moss Hill Lane and connect Moss Hill Lane with Pine Way.

12. **Booth Street Extension**

Booth Street, a minor collector, should be extended in an easterly direction and upgraded in order to connect with Lake Street to provide residents of this area with a direct route to US 50 West. An extension to Brick Kiln Road should also be considered as part of the planning for this project.

13. **Glen Avenue Extension**

The increasing amount of development in the southeast quadrant of Metro Core indicates a need to provide improved north-south access for the area. It is recommended that the County consider extending Glen Avenue to intersect with Tilghman Road at Mt. Hermon Road.

14. **Northwood Drive Extension**

Northwood Drive should be extended as a major collector north of Naylor Mill Road to eventually connect with the Connelly Mill Road.

15. **North Point Drive Development**

North Point Drive, a minor collector, should be developed from US 13 in the east in a westerly direction towards the railroad to eventually connect with the Northwood Drive extension.

16. **Westside Collector**

The Westside Collector is proposed to connect US 50 at Naylor Mill Road with Levin Dashiell Road and eventually to Crooked Oak Lane. Since Naylor Mill Road now connects US 50 with US 13 and is proposed to eventually be extended east to Brown Road and south to Zion Road, the construction of the Westside Collector will result in a mini-bypass around Salisbury, linking the Westside residents with areas north and east of the City. With commercial development expected north of Salisbury near the US 13-US 50 interchange, the Westside Collector will provide an alternative route to travel through downtown Salisbury. The proposed road should also alleviate traffic on MD 349 and Pemberton Drive caused by residents previously using these roads to reach US 50.

The Westside Collector should be classified a major collector with high design standards. Given the rural character of the area in which it will be located, strong consideration should be given to designing the Westside Collector with a grass median strip with restricted access to abutting properties. Since this road will eventually extend to Crooked Oak Lane, improvement may also be needed to Crooked Oak Lane, to MD 349 and possibly Pemberton Drive.

As part of a Westside traffic management strategy the County should limit access on MD 349. Proposed development adjacent to the roadway should be required to install acceleration/deceleration lanes and individual lot access should be prohibited.

17. **New River Crossing**

A river crossing out of the Pemberton-Rockawalkin Corridor would provide access to areas south and east of Salisbury. Currently there are three bridges crossing the Wicomico River in Salisbury - at West Main Street, US 50 and Isabella Street. All are located relatively close to Salisbury's downtown.

The City and County should jointly cooperate in evaluating the need for additional bridge crossings of the Wicomico River in the westerly-southwesterly sections of Metro Core. It is suggested that at least three different areas be evaluated in any study: 1) a rural crossing; 2) a suburban crossing; and 3) an urban crossing within the City. Because of the location of the City of Salisbury corporate limits on the east bank of the Wicomico River, City and County coordination is essential because the accessway and bridge would begin in the County but terminate within the City.

Each of the three general locations proposed for a new bridge has its advantages. An urban location has the advantage of improving traffic circulation around Salisbury's downtown and would be located between Parsons Road and Salisbury's Central Business District. The SHA and the City of Salisbury are in the process of conducting a feasibility study to determine alternatives for an urban location.

A suburban location has the advantage of being located away from the more congested areas near Salisbury's downtown and would allow residents to travel circumferentially around Salisbury. The suburban location would be located in the general vicinity between Rockawalkin Road and Ellegood Street.

A rural location may eventually be incorporated in the completion of the bypass around Salisbury. The Koppers' property west of High Banks Estate is one possible location. The rural and suburban locations would have significant environmental concerns to overcome.

18. **Airport Road Relocation**

This project is discussed in the Airport section of this plan element which recommends that a direct access road be constructed from the intersection of Hobbs Road and US 50 to the intersection of Airport Road and MD 350 (Mt. Hermon Road). As stated, this new alignment would provide a much needed direct means of access from US 50 to the airport.

The Airport Master Plan also recommends that Airport Road be realigned to the west of its present location before any substantial development occurs on the west side of the road in order to provide more land to accommodate future development between existing development and Airport Road.

19. **Marine Industrial Highway**

The purpose of this highway is to provide improved access to US 50 for truck traffic serving marine related uses along the industrial area on the westerly side of the Wicomico River. It also serves the undeveloped land adjoining the City's wastewater treatment plant which is intended for marine related industrial development. Another purpose of the highway is to open new land along the river for industry that is dependent upon waterborne transportation.

Because of the number of alternatives that have been recommended and the numerous considerations regarding the timing, location, and financing of major changes to access to the marine industrial area, a detailed study considering all variables is needed. This study should involve all interested parties and be based on the following policies:

- to minimize adverse effects on nearby residential development and downtown revitalization efforts by removing truck traffic, and by providing screening and adequate physical separation;
- to provide adequate roadways to accommodate the type of vehicles used by industry down river; and
- to provide access that considers the potential for longer range marine industrial development south of the wastewater treatment plant.

20. **Johnson Road - Snow Hill Road Connection (Study)**

A feasibility study should be undertaken to determine the benefits of providing a limited access, minor collector road between Johnson Road and Snow Hill Road in the vicinity of the intersection of Sandy Acres Road (on the south) and Montrose Drive on the north.

21. **Belmont Street - Northeast Collector Connection (Study)**

A feasibility study should be undertaken to determine the benefits of extending Belmont Avenue east to connect with the proposed Northeast Collector. This road could serve as part of a service road system that parallels US 50 and provide improved access to the Northeast Collector for area residents.

22. **Dagsboro Road Extension (Study)**

Consideration should be given to extending Dagsboro Road from its intersection at US 13 west to the proposed Northwood Drive extension.

23. **Stage Road Connector (Study)**

A study should be conducted to evaluate the benefits of a new road that would run along the Brown Road corridor. The purpose of this road would be to connect Naylor Mill Road east and North Point Drive extensions north to Williams Mill Road and eventually to Stage Road. The purpose of this road would be to provide local residents alternative north-south route options and relieve traffic on US 13.

24. **Hobbs Road (Study)**

The County should study the desirability of extending a service road connector between Hobbs Road and Wallston Switch Road.

RURAL AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

Service to the outlying areas of the County is basically provided by the existing State Highway system. The County Plan designates many towns, villages, and communities as growth centers. As these development modes expand, the highway network should be evaluated in terms of a Functional Classification System. In this manner, adequate rights of way can be obtained and protected to assure proper coordination between local highways and the State system.

Map10.

SALISBURY-OCEAN CITY: WICOMICO REGIONAL AIRPORT

The Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport is centrally located on the Delmarva Peninsula on an 1,081 acre tract of land approximately 5 miles southeast of Salisbury and two miles southeast of the new US 13 By-pass. This regional facility is bounded on the west by Airport Road, on the north by Mt. Hermon Road (MD 350), on the east by Twilley's Bridge Road and on the south by Fooks School Road. The present airport site is linked to the surrounding population by roads alone, since the nearest rail siding or port facility is several miles away.

The regional Airport represents a vital segment of the overall transportation network of Wicomico County which is steadily increasing in regional importance. The service area for airline passengers extends outward from the City of Salisbury to include a significant portion of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the southern portion of Delaware and the northern portion of Virginia's eastern shore. The service area for general aviation activity is predominantly contained within Wicomico County.

The physical facilities consist of the following:

- Runway 14-32 - the primary runway at 5,500 feet by 150 feet with full length parallel taxiway, high intensity runway lights (HIRL) and a precision instrument approach landing system (ILS).
- Runway 5-23 - serves as a crosswind runway at 5,000 feet by 150 feet with partial parallel taxiway with medium intensity runway lighting (MIRL)
- New Commercial Terminal Building (completed in 1990) - 26,000 square feet with a commercial aircraft apron.
- Old Terminal Building - 10,800 square feet with available for lease space.
- General Aviation Terminal Building - 3,000 square feet leased by Bayland Aviation.
- Air Cargo Building- 21,500 square feet occupied by Federal Express.
- T-Hangars - 68 T-hangars located in 6 separate buildings with all spaces leased.
- Corporate and Community Hangars - 5 corporate hangars, 1 community hangar, 1 maintenance hangar and 2 Henson hangars
- Aprons - 79,600 square yards of apron area
- 34 paved tie downs
- Commercial Tenants - 15 commercial tenants

Airport Operations

Airport operations are summarized in Figure 3, including forecasts prepared for the Airport Master Plan. As can be seen, growth is expected in all aspects of airport operations, with the most substantial increase expected scheduled air cargo.

The current capacity of the airport, expressed as an Annual Service Volume (ASV), is 236,150 operations per year. ASV is based on a reasonable estimate of an airport's annual capacity,

accounting for differences in runway use, aircraft mix and weather that can be encountered in a normal year. For more specific information concerning the airport, please refer to "Master Plan for Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport" completed by Delta Airport Consultants, Inc., in 1993.

Airport Proposals

The Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport will become an increasingly important segment of the overall regional transportation network. The Master Plan for the airport anticipates continued growth of population in the airport service area and a corresponding increase in total airport operations.

To accommodate the anticipated growth in airport operations a number of improvements to the airport facility are recommended. Interested persons should refer to the "Airport Master Plan". The Metro Core Comprehensive Plan is concerned with improvement of access and land use at the airport. To achieve this end, the following are proposed:

1. **Improve Access to Airport from US 50.**

Since the majority of traffic to and from the airport is heavily oriented toward US 50, it is recommended that a direct access road be constructed from the intersection of Hobbs Road and US 50 to the intersection of Airport Road and MD 350 (Mt. Hermon Road). It is felt that this new alignment will provide a much needed direct means of access from US 50 to the airport.

It is further recommended that Airport Road be realigned to the west of its present location before any substantial development occurs on the west side of the road in order to provide more land to accommodate future development between existing development and Airport Road.

2. **Land Acquisition**

The existing airport property consists of some 1,085 acres owned by the Wicomico County Airport Commission. Nearly all proposed development is located on dedicated airport property. In addition the Airport Commission owns property in fee simple or has aviation easements under all geometric runway protection zones. The Federal Aviation Administration has recommended that the Runway Protection Zones be owned wholly in fee simple. Approximately 105 acres of land, in the approach to Runway 32, will be needed when Runway 14-32 is extended to 7,000 feet in length. Land acquisition for Runway 5-23 has also been proposed, for a total acquisition target of 125 acres.

The Goldman property (6 acres), is located adjacent to Runway 14-32 and is needed for future terminal area expansions. This is listed as a priority property and should be acquired.

Approximately 40 acres of land just west of the airport, along Airport Road, will be needed to accommodate relocation of Airport Road and future expansion for terminal parking and hangar development.

Table 3
Airport Operations Summary and Forecasts

	1995	Forecast 2000	Forecast 2010	Change 1995 - 2000	
TOTAL OPERATIONS					
- Certified Carriers	17,400	20,200	27,100	56%	
- Nonscheduled	137,400	155,900	200,800	46%	
OPERATIONAL MIX					
- Local	45,340	49,900	60,240	33%	
- Itinerate	92,060	106,000	140,560	53%	
SCHEDULED ENPLANED PASSENGERS	93,200	116,200	172,000	85%	
SCHEDULED AIR CARGO		970	1,710	5,310	447%
NONSCHEDULED OPERATIONS	120,000	135,700	173,700	45%	
TOTAL BASED AIRCRAFT	89	98	119	34%	
PEAK DAY OPERATIONS		452	513	661	46%
PEAK HOUR OPERATIONS	45	51	66	47%	

RAILROAD SYSTEM

Rail transportation has always been important to Wicomico County for the movement of grain, aggregates and other bulk shipments not practical by water or not economical by highway. The main rail line, currently a part of the Conrail System, provides businesses and industries in Wicomico County with vital rail service. It extends from Delmar, Delaware to the Somerset County Line in a north-south direction. This Delmarva Main Line system currently offers only freight service.

The weak link in the rail system is the Cape Charles to Norfolk car float, which is an impediment to North-South traffic below Southern Delaware. The nearest bulk market is the delivery of coal to the Indian River Power Plant in Sussex County, Delaware and now the option to serve the new coal burning unit at Vienna, Maryland, both operated by Delmarva Power. Approximately 7,000 cars per year are used, but they are supplied by the Conrail system in the north.

With water transport facing increasing environmental regulations it is even more important to keep the rail option open. Periodically, the lower end of this line has been recommended for abandonment. When this threat has occurred before, efforts have been made to secure the

rights-of-way and possible management by a user group. If this occurs in the future a similar action or some other course must be chosen to prevent loss of rail transportation.

To help insure every opportunity for continued and increasing rail service, the Plan recommends:

1. Provide Adequate Rail Oriented Industrial Sites

Due to the bulk shipping requirements of many industries, and the energy shortage which may make rail service more efficient in the future, it is recommended that industrial lands be located in close proximity to rail lines. This would provide industries with rail service should it be necessary and encourage greater use of the rail lines.

2. Maintain Rail Right-Of-Way

Should any of the County rail lines be abandoned, it is recommended that the rights-of-way be purchased by the public. The abandoned, rights-of-way would be maintained and could be used for bike, bridle, or walk paths. If rail service should again become feasible on that right-of-way, it could easily be converted to a rail line at minimal expense.

WATERBORNE TRANSPORTATION

The Wicomico River, navigable to Salisbury, provides an economical means to transport bulk commodities into and out of the Metropolitan Core. Commercial traffic cargos consist mainly of grain, fuel oil, fertilizers, and construction aggregates. Because the Delmarva Peninsula has limited highway and rail access and is not served by a petroleum pipeline, it is particularly dependent on marine transport of gasoline (which is not allowed through the Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel), fuel oil and other bulk products.

Commercial transportation on the Wicomico River makes the Port of Salisbury the second largest port in the State of Maryland with cargo totaling more than a million tons each year. A large percentage of the product is petroleum, which is brought into the port by barge and trucked out to points as far south as Cape Charles, Virginia and north to Seaford, Delaware.

Barge transport is not only an economical method for most bulk products, it is also more environmentally friendly than many other methods. Studies have shown that water transportation is extremely safe, causes little congestion and produces little air and noise pollution compared to other modes of transportation.

Size is the key to water transport's efficiency. The capacity of an inland barge, which can carry five times its own weight, is impressive. It would take 150 tractor-trailer trucks to carry the equivalent petroleum product of one barge. For stone and sand, it would take 100 trucks to haul what one barge can. For agricultural products, the comparison is 50 to 60 trucks per barge.

Those numbers are compounded by a comparison of the number of miles one ton can be carried per gallon of fuel. For a truck it is 59 miles; by rail it is 202 miles; but for a barge it is 514 miles. The barge tonnage into the Port of Salisbury would equate to more than 30,000 truck loads each year.

Shoaling of the Wicomico River remains a challenge. Undetermined depths of from 3 to 12 feet do not permit large vessels to navigate the river. This shallowness has caused numerous inefficiencies, countless delays, and hazardous situations with the danger of accidents and spills.

Making sure the Wicomico River and other “federally authorized navigation channels” in the country remain navigable falls to the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps has undertaken dredging and maintenance project for the Wicomico River. This project would entail maintenance of a channel 14 feet deep and 150 feet wide from the Chesapeake Bay to Salisbury.

The Delmarva Water Transport Committee (DWTC) was established in 1974 to monitor Delmarva Peninsula waterways and provide liaison with the Corps and Coast Guard as well as other federal, state and local agencies which directly impact waterborne commerce. More maintenance takes place each year in Delmarva than occurred during the ten-year period before DWTC was formed.

DWTC's effort with the Coast Guard involves, for the most part, assistance to navigation and ice operations. Proper placement and maintenance of navigational aids are critical to marine commerce, and it is vitally important that the channels of communication be kept open to help make sure problems are addressed quickly. Communication is also vital during times of severe weather when ice might disrupt marine petroleum deliveries. DWTC provides centralized liaison and keeps in touch with the various Delmarva Coast Guard units. This contact helps ensure proper attention for these two areas.

Dredging is the main focus with the Corps of Engineers, which is the national agency charged with maintaining federally authorized channels throughout the country. A major facet of the federal navigation program involves dredged material placement, which is where the “local sponsor” comes in. A local sponsor is designated for each commercially navigable waterway, and is responsible for providing various requirements for dredging, including, in many instances, an upland site for placement of the material removed from the channel to bring it to its authorized project depth.

Acquisition of environmentally acceptable placement sites and the easements necessary to get the material to the site has become a very difficult proposition for the local sponsor. High property values along navigable waterways, the lack of upland as opposed to wetlands sites, and ever changing environmental rules and regulations have combined to make site acquisition a nearly impossible task.

Those jurisdictions that showed enough foresight to acquire long-term sites over the years are in an excellent position. Projects in their areas are much more likely to receive attention simply because the work can be completed within the timeframe and budget restrictions under which the Corps of Engineers must operate.

Wicomico County, the local sponsor for the Wicomico River project, showed considerable wisdom and foresight in acquiring a site at Sharps Point on the Wicomico River. Although long-term easements to the property are still needed, this 120-acre parcel should provide placement options for dredging in the mid-reaches of the river for many years to come. Unfortunately, the Sharps Point site is the only long-term site owned by the County. Long-term placement sites are needed for other sections of the river that require periodic dredging including the upper river (Salisbury), the Webster Cove area and a section at the mouth of the river.

With the foregoing information as background, the following is a long-term plan to maintain the navigability of the Wicomico River:

- Adequately fund the Coast Guard and Corps of Engineers to maintain their work programs and in turn the navigability of area waterways;
- Help educate the public to the important, and relatively safe, nature of marine transport;
- Secure long-term easements for influent to the Sharps Point placement site;
- Assist in developing plans to remove material from the first cell at the Sharps Point site or clear and prepare another cell of approximately 40 acres for the next dredging cycle (somewhere around 1997-98);
- Help locate and acquire long-term placement sites for the mouth of the river, the Websters Cove area, and the upper reaches (Salisbury).

The Salisbury urban area has the potential for an increase in commercial marine traffic. No other means of transportation can as economically and efficiently move bulk commodities as waterborne shipping. The proposed dredging of the Wicomico River will serve to expand waterborne transportation in Salisbury and incur numerous economic benefits to the Metro Core. The maintenance of a channel for shallow draft vessels should provide impetus for marine industrial area development along the southwesterly side of the Wicomico River. Maintenance of a channel complements the proposal in the highway section of the Transportation Plan for a marine industrial highway connecting directly to US 50.

TRUCKING SERVICE

The central geographic location of Salisbury and Wicomico County is ideally suited for the development of a significant trucking sector of the economy. The Salisbury-Wicomico County area is within overnight trucking distance of ten states and all the major cities in the northeast sector of the United States. The American Motor Carrier Directory lists ten motor freight common carriers of general commodities authorized to serve Wicomico County with truckload or less than truckload service. Three of these common carriers have terminal facilities in Salisbury.

The trucking industry serves as a vital link connecting the market areas of the northeast with production points on the Delmarva Peninsula and vice versa. The trucking industry is essential to the economy of the Salisbury-Wicomico County area and significant steps must be taken to improve the efficiency of motor carrier service to business and industries in the area.

In order to provide for the expanding requirements of the trucking industry and simultaneously achieve an efficient, balanced, transportation system, the following proposals are recommended:

1. Improve the Highway System

The highway recommendations, as proposed in the Highway Plan, will provide improved highway connections to the major truck generators.

2. Develop a Multi-Modal Transportation System

The Salisbury-Wicomico County area is the only place on the Delmarva Peninsula south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal where all four transportation modes, (highway, air, rail and port) come together in a significant volume. A feasibility study should be conducted to determine multi-modal transportation opportunities for the Salisbury area.

TRANSIT

Wicomico Transit is Wicomico County's and the City of Salisbury's public transportation agency. Recent estimates indicate that it is serving an estimated 1,800 people monthly, primarily the transportation disadvantaged. Wicomico Transit is administered by the Superintendent of Transit under the guidance and direction of the Wicomico County Council and the citizen's Public Transportation Advisory Committee. Wicomico Transit provides demand responsive transit service to destinations within the Salisbury Metropolitan Area, including Regional Medical Center, Downtown Plaza, Government Office Building, Centre at Salisbury, Salisbury Mall, Wor-Wic Community College, social services, senior citizen centers and food services.

Service is provided to the general public and paid for with tickets previously purchased. Costs are discounted for County certified elderly, disabled, students and children under 12. Routes include urban and rural routes, including service to the outlying communities of Allen/Eden, Mardela Springs, Sharptown, Hebron, Pittsville, Willards, Walston, Powellville, Parsonsburg, Nanticoke, Bivalve, Whitehaven, and Quantico.

Fixed-route transit service for the general public in Wicomico County is not feasible at this time without substantial subsidy and would not likely prove to be cost effective under any circumstances given the existing settlement pattern. At such time as settlement patterns, demand, or other circumstances warrant, the County should explore the feasibility of providing public or private bus service between major residential, commercial and employment centers within the Metro Core area.

In the immediate future, the County can be most effective in reducing drive alone auto trips by cooperating with the State in the planning and provision of "park and ride" facilities to encourage ride-sharing and commuting. The County should encourage business and industry to provide reserved parking spaces for carpools, vanpools, and bicycle racks at office and industrial sites to accommodate and encourage high occupancy vehicle (HOV) commuting.

PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Bicycle Planning

According to the Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan, the Salisbury Bicycle Club has 14 bicycle routes currently established in the County (See Map 11). Many of these routes feed into and circulate through the Metro Core area. In addition, bike paths are currently being planned for the City Park.

A bikeway is any road, path or way which is designed to be open to bicycle travel, regardless of whether it is for the exclusive use of bicycles or shared with other transportation modes. A bike path is physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier either within the highway right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way. A bicycle lane is a portion of a roadway which has been designated for preferential use by bicycles and bicycle route is roadway designated for bicycles by signing only. These bike facilities are divided into three bicycle route classifications, namely:

- Class I - Path or trail totally separated from roadways.
- Class II - Lanes along road sides designated for bicycle traffic.
- Class III - Shared roadways with motor vehicles.

Source: Federal Highway Administration's "Guide for Bicycle Facilities", 1991.

Existing roads, together with new bikeways can serve as the system to provide bicyclist’s travel needs, including recreation biking and commuter biking. Planning for bicycles should be conducted in conjunction with planning for other transportation modes. The following design guidelines are typical criteria for determining the appropriate type of facility for a given county road corridor.

Design	Auto Travel Speeds	Vehicle Per Day	Percent of Trucks
Share roadway	>25 mph	2,000	
Striped lane	>40 mph	1,000	>5%
Separated route	<40 mph	<1,000	<5%

Source: *Accommodating the Pedestrian*, Richard K. Untermaun, 1984.

In the Metro Core area bike riders need to be encouraged with good bike routes, bike racks at destinations, and showers and lockers at work and school. The City and County should amend their zoning ordinances to require space be provided for parking of bicycles in non-residential developments and permit an appropriate reduction in parking based on the availability of space for parking bicycles. Future widening plans for planned bicycle routes should include right-of-way for bicycle lanes to provide for a paved lane of eight (minimum) to ten (desirable) feet in width separated by a minimum six foot shoulder wherever possible.

Greenways

Greenways are protected corridors of open space, maintained in a largely natural state for a variety of purposes, including water quality protection, wildlife habitat enhancement, aesthetic relief, recreation, non-motorized transportation and environmental education. All greenways serve at least one of these primary functions, and most offer some combination. Greenways are often associated with a linear natural feature like a stream, a coast or the ridge of a mountain. Ideally, they incorporate or link large open space. (Maryland Greenway Atlas, Introduction).

Greenway development offers the opportunity to achieve multiple Plan objectives, that include providing:

- alternative means of travel (walking or bicycle),
- open space,
- recreation,
- environmental protection, and
- tourism/economic development.

Map 11.

As stated in Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan, the abandoned railroad rights-of-way, existing bikeways, wide shoulders along selected highways, corridors within parks, the 180 miles of Public Drainage Association tax ditches (60' wide), selected sidewalks and pathways are corridors that represent opportunities for development of greenway system in Wicomico County. In

the Metro Core area these greenways can form an urban trail system wherein pedestrians can move between their residences and schools, shopping, recreation and other activity centers.

The County should recognize the benefit and importance of Greenways. The Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan recommends the formation of a Greenways Commission to guide the development of a network of greenways within the County.

This Plan includes a Greenways Map that shows the location of existing and natural man-made features that offer greenway opportunities. This Plan emphasizes the following seven greenways:

- Nanitoke River Greenway
- Nassawango Creek Preserve
- Pocomoke River Recreational Greenway
- Salisbury/Pocomoke River Greenway
- Salisbury Tri-Town Trail
- Salisbury Urban Park Greenway
- Wicomico River Greenway

Greenways can also be major components of a County Heritage Tourism program. Heritage tourism is an economic development strategy that attempts to increase visits by persons from outside of the County who are interested in the historical or lifestyle offerings of the community. Heritage tourism emphasizes the linkages and interaction between the County's physical features (rivers, streams, vegetation, wildlife) and its cultural features such as towns, roads, buildings, art, history, etc.

Recognizing the potential benefits of "eco-tourism," the Maryland Legislature passed House Bill 1, entitled "Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas," in April 1996. Among other things this legislation authorizes grant and loan funds for planning, design, development, preservation, restoration, interpretation, marketing, and programming of certified heritage areas. In addition, the legislation expands the local jurisdiction's authorized income tax credits for qualified rehabilitation of properties included in the boundaries of a certified Heritage Area.

The Planning Commission should assist in the implementation a county-wide greenways development program. In consultation with the Greenways Commission, the County should prepare and adopt an official Greenways Map (in the County and Metro Core Comprehensive Plans) that includes designated greenways (existing and planned). City and County zoning land use laws should provide that development impacting on a Greenway provide a public easement, dedication-to-public-

use, or a cross-use easements along the greenway or along any perennial stream buffers that feed into designated Greenways.

As an alternative to requiring dedication of greenways in the development process, the Planning Commission should consider establishing incentive provisions in the zoning ordinance, where a developer voluntarily includes provision for greenway development as part of their overall project design.

At a minimum, perennial stream buffers should be targeted as common open space areas during the subdivision process. Where public dedication or public access easements have not been provided, the County should promote the use of cross-use easements for contiguous subdivisions for use of the residents within those subdivisions. The cross-use easements could be provided along the greenways or along tributaries streams or wooded corridors that feed into the greenway system. Where the greenways do not follow an easily recognizable physical feature, such alignments should be designated before public dedication or public access easements are provided.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains a listing of recommendations designed to implement the Transportation Goals and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Thoroughfare Plan

The County already has initiated a thoroughfare plan by establishing a classification system for County roads on the Federal and State Functional Classification System (see Map 9). As part of this program the County should regularly:

- Inventory existing roadways, analyze conditions and establish a schedule for needed improvements;
- Evaluate State Highway Administration proposals for State Highway projects in the County and
- Update and revise, as necessary, all existing roadway design standards.

Policies for access management, sidewalk and bikeway improvements should be keyed to the road classification system. The Thoroughfare Plan should also include an assessment of the need for improved transit service in the County, development of special use criteria for HAZMAT traffic through the County and recommendations for controlling vehicular traffic impacts at marine accesses, including parking demand.

Capital Improvements Program

The County incorporates planned transportation system improvements into an overall Capital Improvements Program (CIP). The CIP is a revolving 5 or 6 year schedule for all County capital projects. The CIP process allows the County to plan for transportation improvements in advance, and identifies funding sources for needed improvements.

Adequate Public Facilities Regulations

The County should adopt Adequate Public Facilities (APF) regulations and accompanying level of service standards for roadways within the County. New development should not be allowed which would reduce the level of service below acceptable standards on a given segment of roadway.

Adequate Public Facilities regulations would help ensure that new development would not create undue traffic and safety problems on the transportation system. With the establishment of level of service standards, the County makes a clear statement to developers about the quality of highway service it expects to achieve as growth and development occurs.

Traffic Impact Analysis

Proposed large-scale developments should be required to prepare a traffic impact analysis as part of the development review and approval process. The traffic impact analysis would determine the amount of traffic which would be generated by a new development and assess the impact this additional traffic would have on the roadway system serving the development. Where it is determined that the impact of the development would reduce the level of service below acceptable standards (as defined by County policy), the analysis should recommend improvements the developer would need to make as a condition of development approval.

Transportation Impact Fees

The County should explore the feasibility of establishing impact fees for roadway improvements, which would be required by the transportation demands of new development.

Roadway Design and Construction Standards

The County should review and revise, as needed, its existing standards for roadway construction and design. It is recommended that road design standards and right-of-way widths be scaled to the particular function of the intended roadway. Excessive standards can require roads to be over-designed and costly. Inadequate standards can lead to future traffic and maintenance problems. Flexible alternative standards should be developed for use in rural cluster developments.

Transit Development

Transit service for the general public in Wicomico County is not feasible at this time without substantial subsidy and may never prove cost effective given the existing settlement pattern and economies affecting personal vehicle use. When settlement patterns, demand, or other circumstances warrant, the County should explore the feasibility of providing public or private bus service between major residential, commercial and employment centers within the County. In the immediate future, the County can be most effective in reducing drive alone auto trips by cooperating with the State in the planning and provision of “park and ride” facilities to encourage ride-sharing and commuting.

Bicycle Facilities

The County should amend the Wicomico County Zoning Ordinance to require space be provided for parking of bicycles in non-residential developments and permit an appropriate reduction in parking based on the availability of space for parking bicycles.

Ridesharing

The County should encourage business and industry to provide reserved parking spaces for carpools, vanpools, and bicycle racks at office and industrial sites to accommodate and encourage high occupancy vehicle (HOV) commuting.

Scenic Roadways

Public perception of community character is most commonly experienced moving along public roads. Roadways where access and aesthetics should be controlled in order to either avoid unappealing forms of strip-development or to preserve scenic rural views should be designated in the Plan as important corridors. Both of these objectives have great merit for the maintenance and improvement of rural character.

Buffers should be required along all rural roads, especially scenic roadways. In addition, development should be limited and buffered from roadway view. Any permitted signage should avoid detracting from rural vistas. Limiting access along County roads is vital to preserving roadway capacity, decreasing congestion, and improving safety.

The large-scale and permanent loss of scenic views, characteristic landscapes, and open space is a significant negative visual impact of conventional rural subdivisions. Traditional zoning has inadvertently permitted development to line both sides of rural roadways, eventually obscuring the fields, pastures, or woodlands behind the lots. This kind of homogenous development is a principal cause of the loss of rural character and community identity.

Bufferyards should be required along roads to maintain and enhance visual character of the area. Where appropriate, the Planning Commission may agree that it is more desirable to leave openings in bufferyards to permit views of scenic areas or over open space areas.

Chapter 5

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

As Wicomico County grows by a projected 34,600 people by the year 2020, the demand for public facilities and services such as schools, parks, sewerage and water systems, police and fire protection, and garbage collection will increase. Meeting this demand is an important responsibility of the County government, the State and cooperating municipalities, and is financed with taxpayers money. Therefore, in order to provide services as efficiently as possible, they must be carefully planned and programmed, and based on the County Comprehensive Plan.

The growth pattern that has emerged over the past decade, with new development locating outside the Metro Core, is a major obstacle to the cost-effective provision of community facilities and services. Extending a full range of public services and facilities to scattered development is expensive and inefficient.

The land use development policy advocated by this Comprehensive Plan provides a rational basis for effectively providing community facilities and services. By directing future development toward population centers, existing facilities can be maximized and new and improved facilities provided. County population centers include the Metro Core, municipalities, unincorporated communities, and adjacent areas which may reasonably benefit from enhanced facilities and services.

GOALS

The following goals refer to the provision of community facilities and services in general.

- Provide a system of community facilities which will assure an adequate level of public services to all residents of Wicomico County.
- Provide community facilities sized to meet demands and located to serve future development and land use patterns.
- Make the best use of existing facilities.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives follow that apply to each specific facility type (sewerage and water, solid waste, fire service, and education).

Water and Sewerage Facilities

- Protect the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the County by maintaining or constructing water and sewerage systems where needed to meet public demand.
- Provide sewerage and water facilities in areas identified by this Plan and encourage development in these areas.

Stormwater Drainage

- Provide functionally adequate drainage systems to accommodate urban development and to support agriculture.
- Require that functionally adequate drainage systems be provided for all development.

Solid Waste Management

- Provide adequate management and disposal of all non-hazardous waste materials generated within Wicomico County in an efficient and environmentally sound manner.

Education

- Locate future schools on sites in a manner that meets the needs of the population served.
- Provide educational facilities large enough to accommodate anticipated enrollment in the service areas.

Open Space and Recreation

- Encourage the preservation of land and cultural resources. Increase the availability of recreational areas to improve the quality of life within the County.
- Provide an array of recreational facilities and programs throughout the County to make recreational available to all County citizens.

WATER AND SEWERAGE FACILITIES

One of the critical concerns of the Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan is the provision of adequate water and sewerage systems to areas with higher population density. As the Natural Soils Groups map (Map 4) indicates, most of the County is generally poorly suited for septic system use, making sewerage and water systems necessary to protect public health in these areas.

Policies

The installation, operation, and maintenance of public water and sewerage systems is an important and expensive responsibility of government. The following policies are recommended to serve as guidelines for the location and timing of these facilities.

- Water and sewerage facilities location will stimulate growth in appropriate areas rather than react to pre-established development.
- Service lines will be extended to undeveloped areas, designated for service beyond municipal boundaries and within planned service areas, such as the Metro Core, rural villages and future locally designated priority funding areas.
- Service should be extended to encourage orderly growth, avoid scattered site development, and ensure cost-effective development and operations. This can, in part, be accomplished by avoiding traverse of large undeveloped areas.
- Land use patterns and regulations must be consistent with service capabilities and higher density development should be permitted only where water and sewerage capacities are sufficient.
- To the extent practicable, water and sewer line extensions should occur simultaneously to reduce costs.
- Wastewater that is disruptive to the treatment process, e.g., many industrial wastes, should receive primary on-site treatment before being accepted into the public system.
- New development should be encouraged to locate in areas currently served or scheduled to be served by public water and sewerage facilities.

The Wicomico County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, which was adopted in January, 1978, and has been revised annually since adoption, contains a comprehensive study of the existing water and sewerage facilities in the County. It also makes recommendations for the improvement and extension of services in the future. Maps 12 and 13 which follow summarize the recommendations contained in the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, and add, for long-range planning purposes, a 25 year water and sewerage category. The County Water and Sewerage Plan is required

Maps 12

Map 13

to be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan. Should a conflict be observed, the Water and Sewerage Plan shall be subordinate to the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendation

Proper growth management is dependent on the timely provision of urban services to designated growth areas. The County, State, the City of Salisbury, and other cooperating municipalities, should undertake an aggressive program to extend public sewer and water service both within and beyond municipal boundaries to facilitate future growth within all areas planned for service. This sewer and water development will be managed by the Metropolitan Services Commission under the terms of Urban Service Agreements such as those utilized during the past several decades the City of Salisbury and Wicomico County. This agreement has been a State model for cooperative government.

URBAN SERVICE DISTRICT AGREEMENTS

This County Plan establishes areas planned for provision of urban services such as public water and sewerage. These areas are also identified within the Metro Core Plan and within several town plans. Some of these “designated growth areas” are not wholly within the boundaries of a single municipality. Some are not incorporated. It is therefore essential, in order to insure appropriate and timely “need based” delivery of services, that water and sewer service development and expansion be managed by an extra-municipal Metropolitan Services Commission. The County Charter has already designated such a Commission for these purposes under Chapter 97 of the County Code.

The provision of urban services is essential to attract future development to planned growth areas. A portion of these areas is within municipalities, but a larger portion is outside municipal jurisdictional boundaries. It is appropriate and perhaps necessary to provide limited urban services outside of municipalities, but within planned growth areas. This promotes growth that is consistent with the Plan and also can provide greater economic returns to developers than in unserved areas.

While not receiving the full complement of municipal services, the proximity of these properties to the urban core, combined with their increased population densities, will provide immediate economic benefits to the municipality, consistent with the “Visions” espoused in this Plan. Absent these incentives, market behavior creating scattered, inefficient peripheral development patterns is likely to continue.

The costs of system expansion and improvement should be borne fairly and proportionally by developers, system users, and their respective governments. In addition, County and municipal codes should be amended to permit cooperative agreements for the development, operation, and improvement of existing and new facilities shared by both municipal and non-municipal property owners, without requiring purchase of such facilities by the County.

Cooperative provision of urban services using an urban services agreement is the preferred method for providing these services. However, reluctance by a municipality to enter into an urban services agreement shall not impede nor be determinative of the County proceeding to construct new facilities for the provision of services to planned areas adjacent to municipal borders.

STORMWATER DRAINAGE

During the next twenty years the provision of adequate stormwater drainage will require attention on a comprehensive basis to effectively accommodate anticipated urban development and promote agricultural activity. County provision of adequate stormwater drainage can be considered as serving two functional systems; one to serve urban development, and the other to provide drainage principally for agricultural lands.

Land in Wicomico County is easily manipulated because of the absence of rock structure. Sand comprises soil texture over most of the County with silt and clay contributing to a lesser degree. Large areas of the County, particularly in the west, are composed of easily permeable sands. Wet seasons occur in late Winter and early Spring, but for the most part precipitation is evenly distributed throughout the year. The surface of the land is a lacework of drainage swales and branches, so that a drainage outfall is generally not far removed from a building site. For these reasons adequate stormwater drainage is often treated as a secondary consideration.

Several features in the topography and geology of Wicomico County inhibit the flow of stormwater. The County is formed of several poorly defined marine terraces rising in broad step-like fashion from west to east, reaching the highest terrace at Parsonsburg. The surface of these terraces is interrupted by numerous dunes and basins which are instrumental in establishing local drainage characteristics. The basins, referred to as Maryland Basins, are circular or oval in shape and range from 0.15 to 7 miles in diameter. The basin centers are poorly drained and usually unsuitable for farming or urban development. It is believed that they are important facets of groundwater recharge.

Many soils, particularly in the east side of the County, are underlain by nearby impermeable clay layers. After a rain, these clay layers create a perched water table; that is, stormwater must drain around the edges of the clay to reach more permeable soils. The water table remains high until the slow process of underground seepage takes place. This combination of gently sloping terraces interrupted by dunes and basins and underlying clay form the natural limitations to adequate drainage.

In part, public policy toward determining the location of subdivisions has been based primarily upon whether soils of each lot will percolate adequately to permit the use of septic drain fields. For these reasons, and because of increased urban development, the incidence of various kinds of drainage problems (e.g. downstream flooding, impassible roads, flooded fields, and standing water on residential lots) have become more pronounced.

Rather than rushing floods that sweep buildings away, flooding in Wicomico County is characterized by slowly rising waters that inundate property. Damage is localized and often is more of an inconvenience than a disaster. Water damage to property does occur, but it is significant to scattered individual sites, not to large segments of the population, or extensive areas.

Agriculture, generally in the east side of the County where clay is more of a factor, experiences the most persistent drainage problems. Agricultural drainage systems, unlike urban drainage systems, are constructed to permit field operations during Spring and Fall. Poor drainage hampers field preparation, germination and plant growth in the Spring, and harvesting operations in the Fall. During the dryer months of Summer, as much water is retained as possible to promote growth.

Urban systems must function twelve months of the year. An acre of residentially developed land will generate one and one half to two times more stormwater runoff than an acre of farm land. The capacity of agricultural drainage systems may be absorbed or seriously affected by extensive residential development during the Spring and Fall months of agricultural dependence, leading to failure of a system designed to support agricultural use.

Policies

It is recommended that the County adopt the following general policies for stormwater management in each of the planning districts depicted on the Land Use Plan Map (Map 6)

Town Growth-Metro Core

- Support the development of urban drainage systems that promote development in the towns and the central urban areas.
- Make multiple use of drainage facilities where possible for recreation and conservation purposes.

Urban Corridor-Suburban Area

- Give priority to the construction of agricultural drainage systems.
- Base development decisions, as they relate to stormwater management, on soil conditions and the capacity of streams and branches to accommodate additional stormwater.
- Place the burden of providing adequate off-site facilities to accommodate additional development on the developer.

- Prevent the discharge of excess stormwater from development into County road drainage systems.

Rural-Resource Areas

- Support and promote the development of agricultural drainage systems.

Recommendations

Stormwater drainage, like other community facilities, should be adequate for proposed development. Where these systems are not adequate, development should not be permitted; or the developer should pay the cost of increasing stormwater drainage system capacity. This concept should be implemented through adoption of an adequate public facilities ordinance by the County.

The County should investigate the feasibility of applying/permitting Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in Wicomico County. This concept seeks to eliminate, minimize, or mitigate the causes of development generated negative environmental impacts. Improved designs attempt to preserve sensitive habitats, and a site's hydrologic function while allowing development to occur. Such approaches have also had the effect of lowering developer and maintenance costs which can result in lower housing costs or increased profits.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

As a community grows and its population increases, the amount of solid waste generated also increases. The proper disposal of solid waste is the responsibility of the County government. Wicomico County has a Solid Waste Management Plan in effect which has made the County Department of Public Works responsible for administration and operation of the County landfill and collection system.

Policies

- Protect public health, safety and welfare by providing and maintaining an adequate waste management and disposal system.
- Insure that the County waste waste management and disposal system remains consistent with the Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan.
- Work to reduce the number of items present in the waste stream by promoting reuse, reduction and recycling of glass, plastic, cardboard, paper, natural wood waste, tin and aluminum cans, white goods, rubble (concrete, brick and asphalt) and any other materials that can be economically eliminated.

- Achieve at least a 15 percent “reduce, recycle, reuse” rate for county solid waste, consistent with the State’s Recycling Act.

Management

Solid waste acceptance facilities are regulated by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and through local zoning for these facilities. MDE issues permit for Solid Waste and Recycling facilities as per Maryland Law, COMAR 26.07. The Wicomico County Council, with technical assistance from the Wicomico County Department of Public Works and the Department of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development, is responsible for the solid waste acceptance facilities not controlled by incorporated municipalities or private companies.

Solid Waste Management System

Solid Waste Collection Systems

Municipal waste collection is available to the residents of the City of Salisbury, the City of Fruitland, Delmar and Sharptown. Users not located in these municipalities must either hire a private hauler or haul the waste themselves. The towns of Pittsville, Willards, Mardela Springs, and Hebron contract for services from private haulers for their collection systems.

Solid Waste Acceptance Facilities

The County's Solid Waste is collected, disposed, and recycled through a network of twenty-two collection stations and a central landfill (See Map 14). The latter facility receives the waste from the collection stations, commercial and municipal haulers and individuals. The facility and the collection stations are manned by 30 full-time employees and 23 part-time employees.

The landfill consists of approximately 100 acres for disposal sites. Thirty acres are currently in use and scheduled to close in 1997. Seventy acres are planned for future use. Two-hundred acres adjoining the landfill are used for borrow for the daily cover. The present landfill and borrow has a remaining expected life of approximately 45 years.

By 1997, the County expects to have completed the first of a programmed ten disposal cells, each constructed to meet E.P.A. requirements. Leachate from new cells at the Newland Park landfill will be pumped to a storage facility (2 million gallons capacity). From there it will be hauled to the Salisbury Waste Water Treatment Plant for treatment and disposal.

In 1991 waste accepted at the Newland Park Landfill totaled 87,500 tons of residential, commercial, industrial and institutional waste. The facility also accepted 14,400 tons of demolition debris, 400 tons of special bulk waste, and 74,000 tons of vehicle tires.

Tire disposal is conducted at the Blackwater Transfer Station. Here tires are shredded and transported to the landfill, to be used as a cover supplement.

Septage Handling Facilities

Under a joint-agreement between the City and County, septage is handled at the City of Salisbury's wastewater treatment plant. In 1990 this facility handled approximately 3.2 million gallons of septage from private septage haulers.

Solid Waste Management Plan

The most recent Wicomico County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan was prepared in 1992 in accordance with the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 26.03.03). Its purpose is to outline the County's proposed methods for achieving solid waste management goals, objectives and policies.

Recommendations

The Solid Waste Management Plan should be periodically reviewed and revised to reflect changes, additions, and future plans for the County solid waste management system. Any new technology which may benefit the County regarding resource recovery and waste reduction should be studied and utilized, when feasible, to continually modernize the system.

The County's goal for solid waste management is to "provide adequate management and disposal of waste materials in an efficient and environmentally sound manner. State designated hazardous wastes should be disposed of in appropriate State approved facilities and not as part of the county's solid waste management system.

Wicomico County contains many highly sensitive natural resource areas such as the Paleochannel and wetlands. These areas must be minimally impacted to protect public drinking water supplies, State fisheries, and the Chesapeake Bay. Private waste management facility zoning approvals should mandate biannual permit renewal provisions. Renewals should be conditioned on facility performance over the previous permit term as noted in regular inspections. Other approval conditions of approval should include county monitoring. Monitoring and inspections should be similar to those conducted by the State at County operated facilities. The applicant should be responsible for costs associated with inspections and any related testing.

Map 14

EDUCATION

The educational system, more than any other single institution, is instrumental in shaping the future of the community. This system is the critical element in developing an educated citizenry, capable of coping with the complexities of modern society. The effective placement of school facilities helps guide community development and promotes the efficient functioning of this essential public service. Although physical facilities do not determine the quality of education, it is reasonable to assume that well placed, properly sized, and efficient educational facilities can contribute extensively to the quality of our community's educational success.

Objective

- Provide educational facilities large enough to handle the anticipated enrollment in their service areas.
- Locate these facilities to minimize traveling distance, especially at the elementary level, so they best serve the future land use pattern.

Policies

- To the extent feasible, place new school facilities to guide development toward desired locations.
- Require all new school facilities to have a complete range of urban services.
- Combine, whenever possible, school and recreation sites in order to provide benefits of safety, convenience, and economy.

Existing Wicomico County Public School System

The Wicomico County school system is composed of twenty-six public schools. This includes sixteen elementary schools, one elementary/middle school, two middle schools, one middle/high school, three high schools, one career technology and two alternative schools. The geographic distribution of school facilities is shown on Map 15.

The latest enrollment figures indicate that 13,796 students were enrolled in Wicomico County Public Schools in the fall of 1995, making the Wicomico County system the 13th largest in the State. There is an average of 35 students per acre of school site and 24 students per classroom for all elementary and secondary schools in the County. (For more detailed enrollment figures by individual grades and schools, see Tables.)

Map 15

Facility Needs

Table 1 summarizes the most recently documented capacity versus enrollment situation in the County school system.

Table 1
School Capacity/Enrollment
Wicomico County, Maryland

LEVEL/FACILITY	CAPACITY 1995	1995-1996 ENROLLMENT	REMAINING CAPACITY
ELEMENTARY			
Beaver Run	554	530	24
Chipman	421	560	(139)
Delmar	688	912	(224)
East Salisbury	474	581	(107)
Fruitland Intermediate	375	361	14
Fruitland Primary	458	594	(136)
Glen Ave.	454	426	28
North Salisbury	482	1,067	(585)
Northwestern	247	320	(73)
Pemberton	197	268	(71)
Pinehurst	394	481	(87)
Pittsville Elem/Middle	244	440	(196)
Prince Street	449	463	(14)
West Salisbury	239	369	(130)
Westside Primary	300	349	(49)
Westside Intermediate	219	322	(103)
Willards	72	109	(37)
TOTAL	6,267	8,152	(1,885)
MIDDLE			
Bennett Middle	1,062	866	196
Pittsville Middle	225	152	73
Wicomico Middle	962	822	140
TOTAL	2,249	1,840	409
HIGH			
J.M. Bennett Sr. High	1,107	1,218	(111)
Mardela High/Middle	657	503	154
Parkside High	1,000	1,044	(44)
Wicomico Senior High	1,268	1,039	229
TOTAL	4,032	3,804	228
GRAND TOTAL	12,548	13,796	1,248

According to the Educational Facilities Master Plan 1994 - 1995 prepared by the Wicomico County Board of Education, facilities in the Wicomico County school system is in serious condition. The report states that major growth continues to occur in the western and southern areas of the County while minor growth remains in the northern and eastern areas of the County and the eastern part of

the City of Salisbury. As shown in Table 1, school enrollment in nearly every elementary school exceeds capacity. Overall there is a current need for an additional capacity for nearly 1,900 elementary school students.

Enrollment growth is also occurring at middle and high school levels. Overall, middle and high schools are 1,248 students beyond state-rated capacity. Although there is currently excess capacity in the middle schools, implementation of 6, 7, and 8 grade middle school combination will absorb any available capacity as well as require additional space. For this reason, the school capital facilities program includes a new middle school planned to be available in 1998.

School Enrollment Trends

Enrollment in Wicomico County declined slightly for three years in the early 1980s but has increased steadily since the 1984-1985 school year. Enrollments increased a total of 17.2 percent from the 1984-1985 school year to 1992-1993 school year, or an average of 2 percent per year. The increases were even more significant in the early 1990s when the average rate of increase was 2.5 percent per year. Compared with other school systems in Maryland, Wicomico County was the eighth fastest growing (out of 24) school district during the five year period 1986 to 1991. Total enrollment growth during that time period was 12.5 percent in Wicomico County while the State average was 9.0 percent.

In the five year period from the 1991-1992 to the 1995-1996 school year, enrollment grew by nearly 800 students. This represented an average annual increase of approximately 1.2 percent per year (see Table 2) with the largest growth occurring in high school enrollment.

Table 2
Enrollment Trends 1991 - 1995
Wicomico County, Maryland

FACILITY	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Chg.	% Chg. 91 - 95	Annual Chg. %
ELEM.	7,772	7,823	7,789	8,095	8,152	380	4.9%	1.0%
MIDDLE	1,735	1,783	1,818	1,789	1,840	105	6.1%	1.2%
HIGH	3,495	3,541	3,645	3,765	3,804	309	8.8%	1.8%
TOTAL	13,002	13,147	13,252	13,649	13,796	794	6.1%	1.2%

Enrollment Projections

The Board of Education projects an increase in the Wicomico County of school system of an additional 1,482 students by the year 2001 (See Table 3). This represents slightly less than a 2.0 percent increase per year. Increase capacity will be needed at all grade levels, particularly at the elementary and high school levels.

Proposed Capital Improvements

The age of many school buildings has made major systemic repairs and renovations imperative. Priorities include roofs, lighting, heating, ventilation and air conditioning. In addition, many existing school facilities need to be modernized to meet regulatory and code compliance requirements. These compliance issues include life safety and fire code requirements as well as indoor air quality. Many school facilities need aging systems replaced with more energy efficient controls and operating systems. The 1998-2002 Wicomico County Board of Education's Capital Improvements Program includes numerous renovation projects to address some of these issues.

The Board of Education is planning four new portable classrooms and a new elementary school. The elementary school project is scheduled to start in 1998. The following are other school facility projects being planned by the Wicomico County Board of Education:

1. Close Wicomico Applied Technology Center building,
2. Complete construction of facilities at Parkside Senior High School for new career and technical education addition.
3. Renovate Wicomico Applied Technology Center building and convert to a middle school.
4. Renovate and upgrade Willards Elementary School.

Table 3
Projected Public School Enrollment
Projected 1996 - 2001

Facility	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-2000	2000-01	Change 1996-2001	Percent 1996-2001
ELEMENTARY							
Beaver Run	545	544	558	575	582	52	9.4%
Chipman	595	600	605	615	625	65	15.4%
Delmar	940	939	953	955	955	43	6.3%
East Salisbury	602	576	550	555	550	(31)	-6.5%
Fruitland Intermediate	349	366	392	417	434	73	19.5%
Fruitland Primary	618	639	641	653	667	73	15.9%
Glen Ave.	441	464	478	493	504	78	17.2%
North Salisbury	1,134	1,196	1,212	1,226	1,238	171	35.5%
Northwestern	328	342	347	357	370	50	20.2%
Pemberton	320	380	433	489	538	270	137.1%
Pinehurst	529	548	558	556	565	84	21.3%

Facility	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-2000	2000-01	Change	Percent
						1996-2001	1996-2001
Pittsville Elem/Middle	443	429	417	394	395	(45)	-18.4%
Prince Street	487	500	514	523	536	73	16.3%
West Salisbury	362	365	371	367	365	(4)	-1.7%
Westside Primary	360	375	392	423	442	93	31.0%
Westside Intermediate	328	328	321	332	347	25	11.4%
Willards	116	128	131	130	131	22	30.6%
Total	8,497	8,719	8,873	9,060	9,244	1,092	17.4%
MIDDLE							
Bennett Middle	915	928	937	903	879	13	1.2%
Pittsville Middle	164	145	156	140	112	(40)	-17.8%
Wicomico Middle	834	846	855	865	893	71	7.4%
Total	1,913	1,919	1,948	1,908	1,884	44	2.0%
HIGH							
J.M. Bennett Sr. High	1,281	1,289	1,285	1,275	1,265	47	4.2%
Mardela High/Middle	509	536	557	575	594	91	13.9%
Parkside High	1,073	1,131	1,139	1,164	1,199	155	15.5%
Wicomico Senior High	1,052	1,072	107	1,079	1,092	53	4.2%
Total	3,915	4,028	3,088	4,093	4,150	346	8.6%
GRAND TOTAL	14,325	14,666	13,909	15,061	15,278	1,482	11.8%

Source: Capital Improvements Program 1998 - 2002, Wicomico County Board of Education

Colleges and Universities

Salisbury State University

Salisbury State University Main Campus is located on the west side of US 13, between College Avenue to the north, Camden Avenue to the west, and commercial development along US 13 to the south. Continued expansion of the college has resulted in maximum development of the main campus, and purchase and development of available lands adjoining the main campus on the west side of US 13. To accommodate further expansion of college facilities and to meet increased enrollments, the college purchased an additional 28 acres of land on the east side of US 13 between the railroad and S. Division Street, in a Light Industrial District. A stadium and recreational complex have been constructed in this area and future plans include a student dorm and pedestrian crossover of US 13. Direct access across from the college to the recreational complex is provided at Bateman Street.

A significant characteristic of Salisbury State University in recent years has been its success in creating a partnership between the public institution and the private sector that it serves in the greater Salisbury Area and Wicomico County. This is illustrated by the substantial private sector contributions made to enhance the University and diversify Curriculum. Noteworthy changes include the addition of the Franklin P. Perdue School of Business, the recent opening of "Fulton Hall" to house the liberal arts program and the Richard A. Henson School of Science and Technology.

By 1990, Salisbury State University was fast approaching its enrollment goal of 4,000 Full time Day Equivalent Students (FTDES) or 6,000 students in head count while suffering from a shortage of space. Growth in recent years has caused significant aspects of the University to become located on the East Campus, across Route 13 (Salisbury Boulevard). The 1990 University Master Plan recommends acquisition of additional land in this area, currently occupied by Sports and playfields and the Power Professional Center. Additional land is recommended to permit relocation of the warehousing and maintenance function from the Main Campus and provide land for future reserve needs and possible parking for students who do not require immediate access to vehicles.

One of the significant planning factors for the University has been an enrollment cap of about 6,000 students. The 1990 Master Plan notes that “whether or not the institution can hold the line on enrollment is a serious question” that the university will continue to face in the future.

If the enrollment of the University grows significantly beyond 4,000 FTDE students, it may be necessary to seek land in the vicinity of the Main Campus for expansion, parking and limited green space. The University has been fortunate in the past in being able to secure undeveloped land contiguous to it’s main Campus. Available land for academic facility expansion include land occupied by the maintenance building and the privately owned commercial property adjacent to the southeast corner of the Main Campus. The University Plan also suggests that Caruthers Hall could be replaced by a higher density use building. This further illustrates that the main Campus is approaching saturation.

The City has created a college-university district to encompass all those lands owned by the college on the west side of US 13, and all those lands to the east of US 13 between Bateman Street on the north, South Division Street on the east, the railroad on the west, and the corporate limits to the south. The purpose of this district is:

- To recognize the college and existing related uses, and encourage further expansion in an area convenient to the main campus;
- To provide an area for development of college housing convenient to the main campus; and
- To provide for recreational and other accessory uses intended to complement college uses.

Wor-Wic Community College

Wor-Wic Community College, established in 1975, offers certificates of efficiency and associate degrees in accounting, business management, chemical dependency counseling, computer technology, criminal justice, electronic technology, general studies, hotel-motel-restaurant management, nursing, office technology, and radiologic technology. In addition, the Community College offers a long list of non-credit, community and continuing education courses.

Its main campus is located on 200 acres of land on the southeast corner of US 50 and Walston Switch Road. The College also leases a number of outreach facilities that provide office, classroom, and laboratory space throughout its service area. The Community College currently plans construction in 1988 of an Allied Health and Science Building which will be 26,070 square foot facility which will house the departments of mathematics and science, radiologic technology, and nursing.

LIBRARY

The Wicomico County Free Library (WCFL) provides services to a broad section of the Wicomico County residents. Sixty-two percent of County residents have a library card and the annual circulation of materials is over 550,000. Annual number of visitors to the library building is 250,000 and the bookmobile is on the road six days a week.

A government service which enjoys this amount of use by residents will have to be prepared to accommodate the projected population growth in the County. Providing excellent public library services will continue to be an important responsibility of the County government.

In addition to traditional services, the library and the County government are working together to create a new service utilizing computer and telecommunication technology. This service is called WILL_{TM} (Wicomico Information and Learning Library). The purpose of WILL is to provide County residents with the fullest possible access to information technology and electronic resources.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Different types of open space have always been an essential ingredient of the physical attractiveness and rural atmosphere of the County. Historically, these areas have included farmland, wetlands, woodlands, other lands in a natural state adjacent to the County's waterways, and other lands noted for their environmental, scenic, and historic value. The undeveloped character of these areas conserves vital natural functions which are a part of the intricate environmental structure of the County. In the future, these areas will become even more important as efforts continue to preserve the County's rural heritage and quality of life.

Demand for additional land, prompted by continual, long term population increases, will add pressure to convert open space to other uses. Current population projections indicate an increase from 74,399 persons in 1990 to nearly 109,995 persons by the year 2020, an increase of nearly 35,600 people. Open land will be converted to accommodate some of this growth for both living and working areas. While open space can frequently be changed in use and retain some of its natural beauty and natural function, this can only occur after carefully evaluating the impact of such changes.

This Plan element emphasizes making optimum use of the natural resource areas in the County to maintain a quality living environment while providing appropriate sites to meet recreational demand.

Additional property will also be acquired to provide parks and open space areas near new proposed growth areas.

A detailed presentation of County policies, planning and programming to achieve its open space and recreation objectives are contained in the Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan. This Plan is an extension of this County Comprehensive Plan. The Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan has established open space and recreation goals for the County. These goals support many of the growth management, land use and sensitive area goals and objectives established in this Plan.

Policies

- Provide sufficient, diversified, recreational and open space facilities in proximity to existing and future residential developments.
- Ensure the accessibility of recreation and open space facilities for all local residents, including the elderly and handicapped.
- Preserve open land within natural area corridors adjacent to rivers and stream branches which are not suitable for intense development.
- Protect existing outdoor recreation areas and open space from encroachment by incompatible land uses.
- Maximize the use of existing facilities as stabilizing influences on the residential areas of the County.
- Recognize the value of agricultural land and other natural resource areas as important components of an open space system.
- Preserve the unique natural characteristics of the County's land and waterways and to their ability to reduce potential dangers from flooding, erosion, siltation, and pollution.
- Give high priority to providing open space in growth centers established in the Goals and Objectives element.
- Provide strategically located river access points for both active and passive recreational pursuits.

Existing Parks and Parkland

There are 82 publicly-owned parks totaling 1,242 acres in Wicomico County (See Table 4). The majority of these parks are located in the highly populated Central Planning Area. The West Side Planning Area ranks second, followed by Tri-Town, East and South. A complete inventory of each public, semi-public and private recreational facility is included in the County's adopted Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.

The existing system of parks and recreation areas is well-distributed in the County in relation to the centers of population. Although the majority of facilities are in and near the City of Salisbury, numerous additional sites are located throughout the County in or near other towns and villages.

All together, the State of Maryland, Wicomico County, the municipalities, the quasi-public and the private sector own 7,550 acres of parkland and open space in the County. In addition to the 1,242 acres of public parkland, there are 750 acres of quasi-public and private recreation land and 4,865 acres of State Forest in the County. These State-owned areas include the Wicomico State Forest (1,200 acres), Ellis Bay Wildlife Management Area (1,924 acres), Johnson Wildlife Management Area (153 acres), and Eastern Shore Wildlife Management Area (1,588 acres). Finally, 684 acres are held in the Nassawango Creek Preserve which is owned by Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit conservation group. In 1994 these park and open space lands collectively equated to 90 acres of parkland or open space per 1,000 people.

Standards

The Maryland Office of Planning has established a goal of 90 acres of public park land and certain dedicated nonpublic lands per 1,000 population for all Maryland Counties. According to the Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan, the goal is to be attained through provision of Federal and State parkland according to the following standards:

- 30 acres of County parkland for every 1,000 people
- 60 acres of State and Federal parkland for every 1,000 people

Citing unique factors present in Wicomico County, the most recent County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan (1994) established a goal of 23 acres per 1,000 population. These factors include:

- 750 acres of quasi public and private sector recreation land
- 4,865 acres of State-owned forest and wildlife areas
- 694 acres of land owned by Nature Conservancy
- Approximately 30-40 percent of the County remaining open space due to natural limitations, i.e., extensive wetlands, critical areas, floodplains and other natural resources.

The County provides three major types of existing recreation areas, "Neighborhood Recreation Areas", "Community Parks" and "County-wide Parks". Each type of facility is described below:

Neighborhood Recreation Areas - These facilities mainly serve the surrounding neighborhood. They are sometimes best located as a part of or adjoining an elementary school. Children's play equipment, basketball courts and tennis courts are usually available. The standard used for neighborhood parks is 3 acres for every 1,000 people.

Community Parks - These parks serve a larger area than a neighborhood park and include a wider variety and greater number of facilities. Often, these areas serve a municipality and surround a junior or senior high school. These facilities usually include a playground, hard surface courts, picnic tables and several athletic fields. The standard used for community parks is 3 acres for every 1,000 people.

County-wide Parks - These parks serve residents of the entire County or the entire Metro Core. They are often found in a unique setting and include specialized facilities, such as a harbor, historic site, zoo or stadium. Also, large areas may be preserved in a natural state. The standard used for county-wide parks is 14 acres for every 1,000 people.

Table 4
Public Parks and Parkland
Wicomico County - 1992

Planning Area	Type of Park	Number of Parks	Park Acreage
Central	Neighborhood	21	79
	Community	12	104
	County-wide	15	774
	Subtotal	48	956
South	Neighborhood	3	11
	Community	2	26
	County-wide	1	3
	Subtotal	6	40
East	Neighborhood	3	11
	Community	3	18
	County-wide	1	34
	Total	7	63
Tri-Town	Neighborhood	7	52
	Community	6	35
	County-wide	1	2
	Total	14	89
West Side	Neighborhood	1	2
	Community	4	4
	County-wide	2	89
	Total	7	63
Entire County	Neighborhood	35	153
	Community	27	187
	County-wide	20	902
	Total	82	1,242

Future Recreation and Park Needs

Use of recreational standards provides a meaningful measure for determining park and recreation facilities needs. These standards are applied to population projections for each planning area.

Actual decisions about what types of parks are needed and where they should be located must be based upon careful study of many different factors. These include how current facilities are being used and current growth trends at the time the park is planned.

According to the Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan the County is provides 16 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. To meet parkland goals an additional 519 acres of public sector parkland is needed to meet the 23 acres per 1,000 population standard (Note: this deficit was recorded in 1994).

The Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan states that almost 400 acres of neighborhood and community parks will be needed by 2010. Of this total, about 305 acres is or will be needed for community parks and 92 acres for neighborhood parks. This Plan indicates that the central and south planning areas are the priority locations for these facilities. The Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan also indicates that an addition 237 acres of County-wide parkland will be needed between 1992 and 2010.

Recommendations

The Recreation and Open Space Element provides a basis for the coordination of recreation facilities for a given level of growth. To meet the demand for public recreation and open space facilities created by its increasing population, the County should:

1. Require Neighborhood Greens and Open Spaces

All residential developers should be required to provide adequate on-site neighborhood greens and open space areas to serve their developments. This should be achieved through dedication of suitable land to the County to be used for recreation and open space, fees in lieu of dedication, or reservation for use by residents of the subdivision.

2. Establish Utility and Drainage Easements

Utility and drainage easements should be integrated into the recreation and open space system and used as passive or active recreation areas.

3. Providing Open Space and Recreation through Natural Resource Protection

Outstanding natural areas, (e.g., wetlands, unique wildlife and plant habitats, floodplains, and scenic areas) should be preserved and become part of the total open space system. Natural area corridors along the tributaries, rivers, and ponds of the Wicomico, Nanticoke, and Pocomoke drainage basins should be maintained by acquisition of easements, regulation of use, or some other method. Opportunities for multiple uses of conservation lands should be encouraged, provided that the objectives of the areas are not compromised.

4. Establish Scenic Roads, Trails and Bike Paths

Scenic trails, roads or bike paths, should be established to link parks, natural areas, scenic areas, historic and cultural areas and residential areas.

5. Expand Public Access

Public access continues to be limited by the private acquisition and development of lands which provide access to public areas, such as rivers and streams. Opportunities to expand public access opportunities to local rivers and ponds should be explored and existing public access locations should be protected.

6. Explore Alternative Financing Options to Implement Open Space and Recreation Objectives

The County should utilize the many alternative financing mechanisms available to implement the recommendations of this Plan Element. These include:

- The acquisition of land. In addition to local purchasing programs, there are several sources of State and Federal funding assistance including: Community Development Block Grants (State Department of Housing and Community Development); Land and Water Conservation Fund (Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Department of Interior); and Program Open Space (Department of Natural Resources, State of Maryland).
- The purchase or requirement of easements, or partial rights, from private land owners which restrict the owners' use of the land and can preserve the land as open space. Examples include conservation easements, historic easements, scenic easements and agricultural land preservation easements.
- The establishment of subdivision regulations. Subdivision regulations should require the developer of both single family and multi-family developments to dedicate suitable portions of the subdivision for recreational use. In lieu of dedication, a fee equal to the value of the required land could be paid to the County to be used to purchase park land.

- The revision of zoning regulations. Zoning regulations can provide open space to some extent by preventing development in sensitive areas. Examples include: Floodplain zoning, which prevents or limits development in areas subject to flooding, thus preserving shorelines as open space; conservation zoning, which prevents or limits development in areas designated for conservation due to unique natural conditions (e.g., wetlands, poor soils, steep slopes) or great recreational potential; resource protection zoning, which limits development in productive agricultural/forest resource areas, thus maintaining these areas for farming and open spaces; and cluster development, which permits smaller lot sizes if the buildings are grouped together with the remaining land retained in open space provided that the density allowed by zoning is maintained.

7. **Develop a Comprehensive Greenways Policy**

In cooperation with the Department of Parks and Recreation and its Greenways Commission, develop “Greenway” policies and an official Greenways map and incorporate them into the Comprehensive Plan for the County and Metro Core area.

Greenways can be major components of a County Heritage Tourism program. Heritage tourism is an economic development strategy that attempts to increase visits by persons from outside of the County who are interested in the historical or lifestyle offerings of the community. Heritage tourism emphasizes the linkages and interaction between the County’s physical features (rivers, streams, vegetation, wildlife) and its cultural features such as towns, roads, buildings, art, history, etc.

Recognizing the potential benefits of “eco-tourism,” the Maryland Legislature passed House Bill 1, entitled “Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas,” in April 1996. Among other things this legislation authorizes grant and loan funds for planning, design, development, preservation, restoration, interpretation, marketing, and programming of certified heritage areas. In addition, the legislation expands the local jurisdiction’s authorized income tax credits for qualified rehabilitation of properties included in the boundaries of a certified Heritage Area.

The Planning Commission should assist in the implementation of a County-wide greenways development program. In consultation with the Greenways Commission, the County should prepare and adopt an official Greenways Map (in the County and Metro Core Comprehensive Plans) that includes designated greenways (existing and planned). The City and County zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations should provide that the Planning Commission may require dedication of land for public use and development of greenways on properties which include portions of a designated Greenway.

POLICE

The County is served by the Wicomico County Sheriffs Office, which has 61 full-time deputies, and 52 patrol vehicles. The offices of the Wicomico County Sheriff's Department are located in the Public Safety Complex located on Naylor Mill Road. The Department now operates a substation at the Wicomico County Housing Authority on Booth Street and additional substations are currently proposed in Pittsville-Willards area in the old town hall, on East Road in the County, and in the Hebron-Mardela area.

In addition, Salisbury, Delmar, and Fruitland, have municipal police departments. The Salisbury Police force, a nationally accredited agency, is made up of 83 full-time officers and has 33 radio-equipped vehicles. The Salisbury Police Department headquarters are located at 699 West Salisbury Parkway. Substations are located at 653 Fitzwater Street, 731 East Church Street and 605 Smith Street.

The County is also served by the Maryland State Police, who have a barrack in Salisbury, with a complement of approximately 40 troopers.

FIRE, RESCUE AND AMBULANCE PROTECTION

The Salisbury Fire Department, consisting of three fire stations and more than 37 paid firefighters, is the only full-time, paid fire department on the Delmarva Peninsula. The Salisbury companies have a supplemental force of more than 105 volunteer firefighters organized into three companies. Fire protection outside Salisbury is provided by 14 volunteer fire companies. Seven of the County's fire companies operate ambulance companies on a 24-hour basis. All fire and ambulance companies in the County are connected by a County operated Central Alarm system under the direction of a Director of Emergency Communications. The County operates a County-wide enhanced 911 emergency communications system.

Ambulance service is provided to all County residents through 13 emergency service units, 4 of which are assisted to the City's emergency medical services division.

Chapter 6

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

History can be kept alive through education and preservation, both of which can take many forms and vary in intensity. History touches many aspects of our day-to-day lives. Old homes can be restored into comfortable homes of today or they can be refurbished as an office. Historic sites can honor the past while providing a place for leisure activities. An old church can still hold worship services similar to those held one hundred years ago. A number of programs exist to help individuals and groups temporarily or permanently protect sites and structures considered significant. The past is a building block for the future and, if a plan is to be comprehensive, it must incorporate that past as a key element of planning for the future.

Historic preservation is a program which involves the inventorying, researching, restoration, and on-going protection of sites and structures having a significant local or national historic interest. Continued historic and cultural resource preservation and enhancement through sensitive land use planning and other administrative means would provide the County with a number of benefits including:

- Promotion of a strong sense of community pride for County residents;
- Community revitalization through the renovation or adaptive reuse of older structures;
- Increased property values and tax revenues as a result of renovation and restoration; and
- Increased revenues from tourism.

There are a number of structures and sites within the County that are of historic, cultural, or architectural significance. These structures, given proper concern and recognition, have tremendous potential to serve as physical reminders of the history and heritage of our past.

In recent years, there has been considerable public concern that the vestiges of our heritage will be irretrievably lost. It has been found that an active historic and architectural preservation program could have beneficial social, economic and aesthetic impacts on the area. Therefore, rather than permit demolition, destruction, or abandonment of our rich heritage, an active historic preservation program is recommended. Such a program shall permit the continued use of the identified sites and structures while simultaneously discouraging inappropriate exterior alterations.

The City of Salisbury, which was laid out in 1732, has the richest collection of historic buildings in the County. The 1982 County Comprehensive Plan lists 35 major historic sites in the City. The Newtown and Downtown Plaza areas have been established as official Historic Districts. Major historic buildings include Old City Hall.

The 217-acre Pemberton Historic Park along the Wicomico River is the largest historic land area in the Central Planning Area. With the exception of Pemberton Hall, this site was undeveloped until 1984. This park includes parking, a contact building, wharf, picnic area, pond restoration and nature trail. Future plans include: farm museum, visitor's center, gardens, nature trails, a complex of local historic structures and buildings to demonstrate blacksmithing and other activities of colonial life.

GOALS

- *Safeguard and promote the history and heritage of Wicomico County by preserving areas, structures, and sites of cultural, social, economic, political, architectural, and historical significance.*
- *Foster civic and neighborhood pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past by establishing, preserving, and enhancing the County's historic identity.*
- *Establish programs which effectively identify, recognize, and encourage the preservation and continued use of historic buildings, districts, structures and sites which give physical evidence of the County's history and development periods.*
- *Use historic resources to promote economic stability in the County.*

OBJECTIVES

- Foster public interest, concern, and understanding of the history of Wicomico County.
- Stabilize and improve property values.
- Promote the use and preservation of historic areas for the education, welfare, and pleasure of the residents.
- Promote the use of historic sites and structures as functional areas.
- Develop appropriate measures and incentives to encourage the preservation of historic sites and structures.

POLICIES

- Views that strongly influence the scenic qualities of the County should be identified and protected to the extent practical. They are also important to the historic character of the community in enhancing the area as a center for tourism and recreation.

- Zoning should be compatible with and conducive to continued preservation of historic neighborhoods and properties.
- The County should safeguard and manifest its heritage which is represented by those sites, buildings, districts, structures and objects that reflect significant elements of the County's history.
- Older neighborhoods should be assisted in discovering their social and economic origins and in appreciating their historic features. Preservation of their historic character and identity should be facilitated in order to:
 - a. provide focal points of historic interest,
 - b. preserve those elements which are unique to the County or which exemplify its past development periods,
 - c. provide a blending of outstanding older structures with newer development, and
 - d. enhance the richness and diversity of the County.
- New developments should complement and not detract from historic structures, by use of compatible mass, scale, materials, setting, setback, architectural details etc.
- The County should provide assistance, encouragement, and incentives to private owners for preservation, restoration, redevelopment, and use of historic buildings, districts, neighborhoods, streets, structures, objects and sites.
 - a. The County should assist owners of significant properties in using those properties in a manner compatible with preservation objectives.
 - b. Preservation should be encouraged through voluntary action with emphasis on incentives and information.
 - c. Incentives and recognition should be provided for rehabilitation or restoration which is compatible with preservation objectives.
 - d. The County should assist historic preservation through programs for property tax special valuation for improvements to historic buildings. The County should mitigate building code requirements for historic register properties.
- The County should support public or nonprofit acquisition of its most important historic resources.
- As part of capital planning for parks, consideration should be given to budgeting park development funds to restore historic sites on park property or to put interpretive historic information at park sites.
- Transportation planning should take into account impacts on historic properties, archaeological sites, historic districts, etc.

- Historic resources should be used to protect and enhance the County's ability to attract tourists and visitors.
- Where redevelopment projects are proposed for sites containing designated historic buildings, a reasonable effort should be made to incorporate the historic building into the new site plan before considering demolition or moving it from its original location.

The Maryland Historic Trust and the Salisbury Historic District Commission have identified and surveyed structures and sites of the City and County of historic and architectural significance. The inventory process is on-going and new sites are identified as information becomes complete.

Arising from the historic sites inventory is the recognition that the County and Metro Core contain numerous structures and sites representing a variety of historic and architectural periods. While many of the identified sites are of the "Victorian" Period, they are representative of a unique chapter of state and local history and warrant preservation efforts.

PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

A number of existing programs provide assistance in protection or preservation, offer tax benefits, provide professional historical/architectural consulting, and so forth. More detailed information on programs including the National Historic Landmark, National Register of Historic Places, Conservation and Preservation Easements, and Historic Overlay Districts can be found from various historic preservation organizations such as the Maryland Historical Trust and the Salisbury Historic District Commission in Wicomico County.

National Register of Historic Places

In 1966, Congress established the National Register of Historic Places as the Federal Government's official list of properties, including districts, significant in American history and culture. In Maryland, the Register is administered by the Maryland Historical Trust. Some benefits resulting from a listing in the National Register include the following:

- National recognition of the value of historic properties individually and collectively to the Nation.
- Eligibility for Federal tax incentives and other preservation assistance.
- Eligibility for a Maryland income tax benefit for the approved rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential buildings.
- Consideration in the planning for federally and state assisted projects.

Listing does not interfere with a private property owner's right to alter, manage or dispose of property.

Wicomico County is certified by the Maryland Historical Trust and the National Park Service to participate in the nomination process for properties to be considered for the National Register of Historic Places. In its role as a Certified Local Government, Wicomico County is charged with evaluating the eligibility of a property for inclusion on the National Register.

Maryland Historical Trust

The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) surveys historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites to determine eligibility of being listed on the state register. As with being on the National Register of Historic Places, listing does not limit or regulate the property owner in what can or cannot be done with the property. In order to be considered for listing on the National Register or having an easement on the property to be accepted by the MHT, the site usually must first be listed on the Maryland Historical Trust Register.

Maryland Historic Preservation Easement

A state-held historic preservation easement monitored by the MHT is an excellent means of perpetually preserving a historical structure and property for future generations. Regulations state that easements may be assignable to other parties or run with the land. The benefits for a property owner to donate his land to the MHT include income, estate, inheritance, gift and property tax benefits. In exchange, the owner gives the MHT the final word regarding proposed alterations. However, for properties whose fair market value is largely based on the value of development rights, this method of preservation may not be the most financially expedient for the property owner or for the MHT.

Preservation Incentives

The Maryland Historical Trust also provides financial assistance programs to encourage heritage resource activities. They include grants, loans, and tax incentives.

Historic Preservation Grant Fund

The Historic Preservation Grant Fund was created to encourage the preservation of historic properties statewide. Capital grant monies are available to non-profit organizations, local jurisdictions, business entities and individual citizens committed to preserving their historic resources. The funds can be used for pre-development and development activities including acquisition, rehabilitation, or restoration of historic properties. The maximum grant award is \$40,000 and some matching requirements apply. Applicants must convey a perpetual historic preservation easement to the Trust prior to the receipt of funds.

Historic Preservation Loan Program

The Historic Preservation Loan Program provides loans to non-profit organizations, local jurisdictions, business entities and individual citizens to assist in the protection of historic property. Loan funds can be used to acquire, rehabilitate or restore historic property. They may also be used for short-term financing of studies, survey, plans and specifications, and architectural, engineering, or other special services directly related to pre-construction work. The low interest loans, which average \$100,000, are available on a first-come, first-served basis throughout the year. Successful applicants must convey a perpetual historic preservation easement to the Trust.

Rehabilitation Tax Incentive Programs

Historic structure rehabilitation tax incentives are available at the federal and state level. The federal tax program allows homeowners or long-term lease holders of income-producing certified historic structures to receive a federal tax credit of up to 20 percent of the cost of the rehabilitation. The state program allows owner-occupants to receive a state income tax subtraction for 100 percent of the cost of rehabilitation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Inventory

The County maintains a comprehensive listing of historical districts and sites which includes discussion of significant sites. This listing with an accompanying map should be readily accessible in the Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development to alert planners of historic sites in or near proposed developments.

Adaptive Re-Use

The County should adopt zoning provisions that promote the adaptive reuse of historic structures for public and private uses including, but not limited to, Bed and Breakfast establishments, craft/gift shops, museums, and studio space for artisans, when such uses minimize exterior structural alteration.

Support Owners

The County should encourage, through the use of various incentives, the preservation of historic structures. Include tax incentives for major structural or exterior renovation or the donation of protective historic easements.

Local Historic Overlay Zone

Historic districts are a tool used to protect the community character of unique portions of a locality which exhibit a consistency and quality of development from a particular period and/or in a certain architectural style. Historic districts are administered as an area within the larger community context, and are subject to distinct and specifically-tailored design guidelines. Typically, a Historic District Commission is established to review both development proposals and property-improvement projects which would alter the exterior appearance of a building or its grounds. Generally, building materials, colors, and styles are subject to approval by the Commission. Historic district regulations can be applied as an overlay district, that is, the historic regulations are applied in addition to the underlying zoning and building regulations.

Historic district overlay zones are legally allowed by Section 8.01 of Article 66B in the Annotated Code of Maryland. Local provisions may include an appointed Commission to monitor changes, alterations and demolition of buildings and structures of architectural or historic significance. The main purpose of such zoning is:

- to safeguard the heritage ... by preserving the Districts that reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history;
- to stabilize or improve property values in such a District;
- to foster civic beauty;
- to strengthen the local economy;
- use and preservation of Historic Districts for the education, welfare and pleasure of the residents of the County or municipal corporation.

Historic districts are the only logical approach to preserving the integrity of areas where a significant number of historic buildings are present. In Wicomico County there are a large number of historic structures, particularly farmsteads, that are scattered individually across the County. The problem presented by these isolated structures is more difficult to come to grips with. For the most part, these rural buildings are set in an environment that is part of their character. While it is probably better to save the historic building than lose it entirely, a program that provides such structures with sufficient land to preserve the character of their setting is warranted. One strategy for protecting scattered historic sites is to allow enough flexibility in the land use regulation to permit adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Development Proposal Review

The Zoning and Subdivision regulations of the County should require developers to identify cemeteries/burial grounds/archaeological sites/historical structures on a property prior to any disturbance of the site and support archaeological and historical research through preservation of significant sites.

Chapter 7

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

The Housing and Community Redevelopment Section is one of the most essential ingredients of the Comprehensive Plan. No other element so directly affects the quality of life of the family as the environment found in the home and the surrounding neighborhood. To assure that each family has adequate shelter within a suitable living environment, the Housing and Community Redevelopment Section was completed within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan so that housing and redevelopment proposals can be fully integrated into the Plan.

The quality of neighborhoods is determined by the cumulative impact of the community's housing supply and living environment. Since major community goals are to improve the quality of life and to promote the availability and affordability of decent, safe, and sanitary housing for all residents, housing ranks as an important local concern. Housing is an important factor in forming Comprehensive Plan policy. Housing is a(n):

- durable, physical product in a neighborhood setting.
- major user of the County and City's land.
- generator of local public facilities and services.
- object of local real estate taxes.
- major influence on the County and City's physical and social environment.
- essential requirement for continued economic development.
- source of employment through construction activity.
- investment or expenditure for individual families and for the private financial community.
- major ingredient in family satisfaction or dissatisfaction and in a community's sense of well-being.

GOALS

- *Promote and encourage safe, decent, and sanitary housing of a variety of types to assure a wide possibility of choice and adequately provide for the housing needs of all social and economic segments of Salisbury and Wicomico County.*
- *Provide for the redevelopment of neighborhoods with concentrations of deteriorated housing by providing incentives for the rehabilitation of housing and revitalization of communities.*
- *Reduce the concentration of low-income housing in any one area.*

OBJECTIVES

- Improve the residential environment and provide an adequate supply of decent, safe, and sanitary housing for families of all income levels.
 - Recognize housing and community development issues and develop a comprehensive City and County policy to deal with them.
 - Encourage the conservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock in the County.
 - Increase the supply of decent housing that is available to low and middle income families.
 - Consult with residents and citizen groups to ensure that housing and redevelopment programs will complement citizen needs and desires.

- Administer, plan, and implement federally-funded housing and community development activities principally benefiting low and moderate income persons. Such activities shall include, but are not limited to, elimination of slums and blight, provision of public facilities, creation or improvement of decent, affordable housing, public services, job creation and economic development, and historic preservation.
 - Administer federal funds used to plan and implement activities permitted under the Community Development Block Grant program.
 - Administer federal funds used to implement housing activities permitted under the HOME Investment Partnership Program.
 - Develop, administer and monitor agreements with providers of public services and facilities benefiting low and moderate income persons.
 - Administer funds used to promote economic development and job creation activities.

- Increase and maintain the supply of housing affordable to low and moderate income persons, including renters, owner occupants, and persons with special needs.
 - Provide financial and technical advice and assistance to property owners seeking to repair, rehabilitate and improve residential properties.
 - Assist property owners in obtaining financing to repair, rehabilitate and improve residential properties occupied by low and moderate income persons.
 - Assist property owners in obtaining the services of qualified building contractors in making such repairs and improvements.
 - Provide rehabilitation contract management services for property owners.
 - Preserve the affordability of housing assisted with federal or state resources through technical or financial assistance, where appropriate.

- Use public resources to encourage the continuous upgrading of substandard housing to desirable levels and to retard deterioration causing factors.
 - Work with other non-profit organizations and agencies to coordinate housing development efforts and financing alternatives.
- Increase home ownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons.
- Provide potential home buyers with advice and assistance related to obtaining mortgage financing, including construction and rehabilitation financing.
 - Develop and administer funding sources for permanent residential mortgage financing, including interim financing for acquisition, rehabilitation and construction.
- Promote neighborhood stabilization and reinvestment in areas at risk of economic, physical and social decline.
- In cooperation with non-profits, community organizations and citizens, identify neighborhoods at risk of economic, physical and social decline.
 - Plan, develop and, as appropriate, coordinate and implement strategies to stabilize and revitalize at risk neighborhoods.
 - Develop and identify financial and social resources needed to implement appropriate stabilization and revitalization strategies.
- Plan and implement economic development activities in coordination with Salisbury-Wicomico County Economic Development (SWED).
- Identify properties and areas with redevelopment potential which may provide a catalyst for private sector investment.
 - Work with owners, investors and business representatives to strengthen older business districts, revitalize and redevelop underutilized commercial properties and to create and retain employment.
 - Implement reinvestment strategies, maximizing private sector involvement.
 - Stimulate the construction of low income and subsidized housing while simultaneously encouraging the selective demolition of dilapidated housing stock.
 - Reduce housing development cost factors.
 - Ensure that all housing receives a proper and equitable delivery of public facilities and services.
 - Reduce the conflict between incompatible land uses.

Figure 1

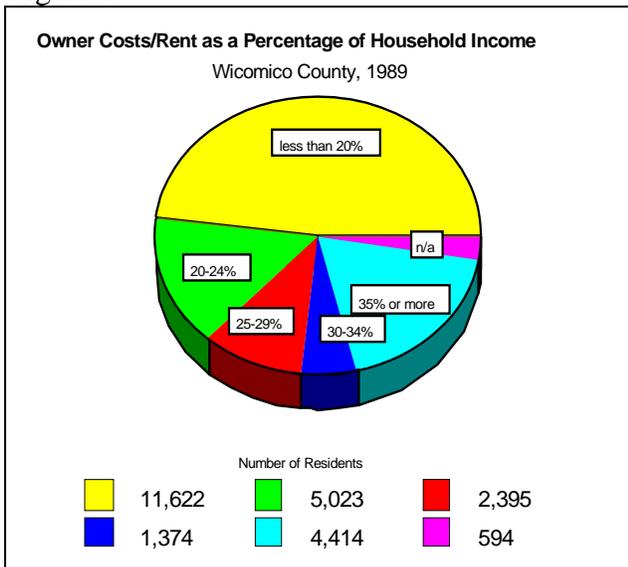
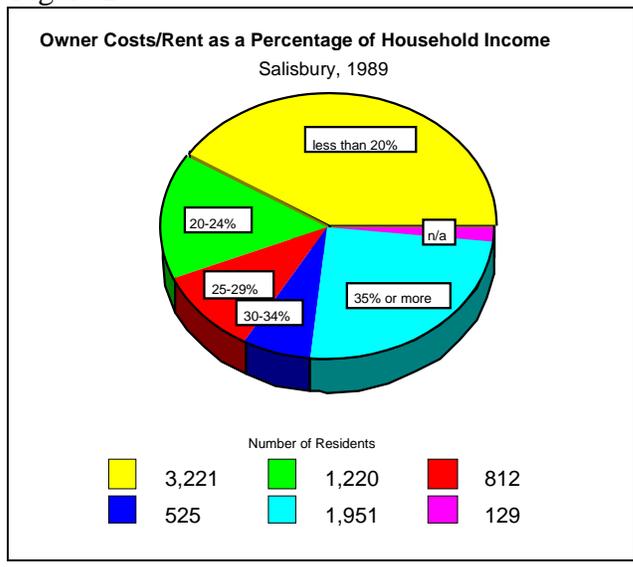


Figure 2



HOUSING NEEDS

Housing needs are measured in three ways: (1) amount of income spent on housing; (2) housing needs versus housing deficiencies; and, (3) future projections of housing construction.

Ability to Pay for Housing

Traditionally, the ability to pay for housing is based upon the presumption that 20 percent of annual net income should be allocated to housing. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the percentage of net income that residents in Wicomico County and Salisbury pay towards housing costs.

In the County, almost half of the residents pay less than 20 percent of income towards housing. For Salisbury, about 40 percent of residents fall into this category. In both scenarios, a large number of households are paying more than 35 percent of income to housing costs. This is especially severe in Salisbury where nearly 25 percent of the residents dedicate a significant amount of income to housing.

However, evaluating percentage of income spent on housing may not adequately explain the situation in the County. While households may be spending less than 20 percent of income on housing, this does not account for different sizes of households or for different amounts of income. For instance, two households of comparable disposable incomes, but one consisting of a single person and the other a family of four, are not able to live on equal amounts after paying 20 percent of income towards rent -- the second household would require more money than the single person to purchase non-housing necessities. Therefore, the larger household would have to spend less on housing if it were to be able to meet other needs.

While the 20 percent figure is not the most accurate concept by which to evaluate housing needs, the numbers do illustrate the deficiency in low-income housing in the County. According to the 20 percent guideline, the 5.4 percent of the population that earns less than \$5,000 per year should pay

less than \$83 per month towards housing, but only approximately 3.7 percent of housing stock (881 houses or rental units) exist in this price range. The shortage is probably even more severe if larger households with salaries of \$5,000-\$9,999 are seeking housing in the lower price range.

The abundance of the housing supply is in the \$300-\$999 range which, using the 20 percent scale, is an affordable price range for a majority of the population. There is a lack of housing supply in the upper price range, but this is not a critical concern because higher income families can afford adequate shelter that is available in the lower price ranges.

Table 1

Income vs. Housing Costs

Wicomico County, 1989

Annual Net Income	20 percent of Monthly Income	Percent of Households	Monthly Costs/Rent	Owner	Percent of Housing
less than \$5,000	\$83	5.4%	less than \$200		3.7%
\$5,000-\$9,999	\$84 - \$166	9.6%	less than \$300		24%
\$10,000-\$24,999	\$167 - \$416	27.9%	\$300-\$499		29%
\$25,000-\$49,999	\$417 - \$833	37.3%	\$500-\$999		35%
\$50,000-\$99,999	\$834 - \$1,666	16.8%	\$1,000-\$1,999		5.6%
\$100,000 or more	\$1,666 +	3%	\$2,000 or more		.5%

Source: U.S. Census

Table 2

Income vs. Housing Costs

Salisbury, 1989

Annual Net Income	20 percent of Monthly Income	Percent of Households	Monthly Costs/Rent	Owner	Percent of Housing
less than \$5,000	\$83	7.4%	less than \$200		3.6%
\$5,000-\$9,999	\$84 - \$166	10.3%	less than \$300		18.6%
\$10,000-\$24,999	\$167 - \$416	32.9%	\$300-\$499		35.2%
\$25,000-\$49,999	\$417 - \$833	37.5%	\$500-\$999		35%
\$50,000-\$99,999	\$834 - \$1,666	10.3%	\$1,000-\$1,999		2.2%
\$100,000 or more	\$1,666 +	1.6%	\$2,000 or more		.25%

Source: U.S. Census

In the City of Salisbury, the low-income housing situation is more bleak. The number of residents making less than \$5,000 per year is higher than in the County, but housing options below \$200 are more scarce.

Housing Supply and Demand

Although low-income residents in Wicomico County may be lacking adequate housing options, the County overall has sufficient housing stock. The 1990 population was 74,339 and the persons per

households was 2.56. This means approximately 29,050 units are necessary to house the population and according to the 1990 Census, there are 30,108 units. Housing stock grew by 22 percent from 1980 to 1990. During that time period, vacancy rates rose from 6.7 percent to 7.8 percent. This occurred due to an increase in owner vacancy rates, but a reduction in rental vacancy rates.

Table 3

Existing Housing, 1980-1990	1980	1990
Total Housing Units	24,672	30,108
Occupied	22,876	27,772
Vacant	1,637	2,336
Vacancy Rate	6.7%	7.8%
Vacancy Rate (sale)	1.9%	2.7%
Vacancy Rate (rent)	8.1%	6%
Mean Housing Value	\$42,931	\$84,395
% increase	96.6%	
Mean Monthly Rent	\$176	\$339
% increase	92.6%	

The overall quality of the housing stock appears to be improving in the County. The number of units lacking adequate plumbing facilities has continued to decline since 1970 and overcrowded conditions have been reduced.

Table 4

Condition of Housing Stock	1970		1980		1990	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	5,422	10.3%	1,482	2.4%	332	1.1%
Overcrowded (1.01 persons or more/room)	7,472	14.1%	3,868	6.2%	579	2.1%

Population projections by Maryland Department of State Planning indicate that in 2010, Wicomico County will have 92,600 residents. Assuming 2.4 persons per family, there would be an estimated need for approximately 38,600 housing units.

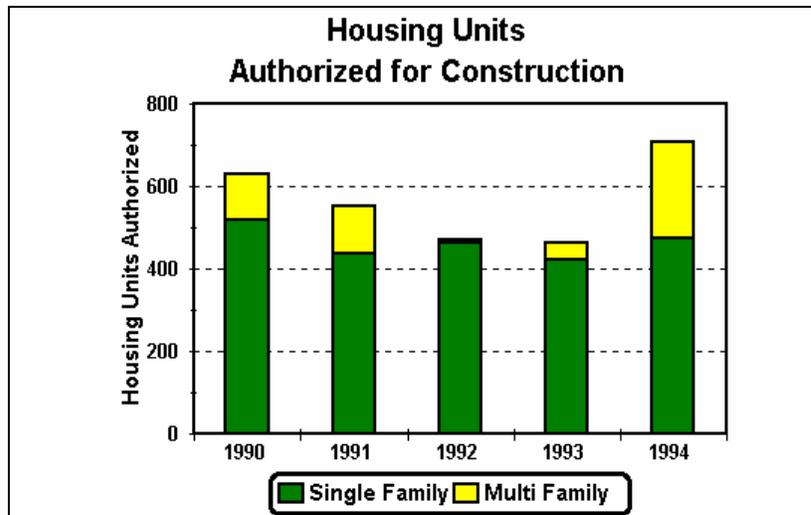
Housing Projections

The County should continue to meet the overall housing demand based on an analysis of past trends in new housing starts. While numbers in the 1990s have declined somewhat as compared to late 1980s figures, the growth has been steady and should meet future demand.

Table 5

New Housing Units					
	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94		
Total	1,558	3,469	2,818		
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Total	628	551	470	463	706
single family	519	436	462	423	475

Recent trends indicate that multi-family housing units and mobile homes are increasing in proportion to single family housing. Growth in multi-family units has also been matched by a growth in renter occupied units. In Salisbury, the number of rentals increased by 97.1 percent between 1970 and 1990.



Source: Maryland Office of Planning

HOUSING PROGRAMS

City/County Programs

In response to the dramatic changes that occurred in both the City and County over the past years, the County Council in 1989 designated the former Planning Office as the Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development. The department is an agency of County government and follows all County administrative policies and procedures. It is funded by the County with financial support from the City of Salisbury. Services are provided to other municipalities after County Council approval.

That Division of the department which addresses housing and community development issues serves to benefit the citizens of both the City and County in a variety of ways.

This Division has been responsible for housing rehabilitation, administration of economic development funding for local businesses, and non-profit service organization using Federal, State, County and private funding sources. The total amount of funding administered by this division within the Department of Planning and Zoning is approximately \$3.7 million which is derived from several sources: Federal Community Development Block Grant, Emergency Shelter Grants Programs; and the State of Maryland housing rehabilitation loan programs.

At the present time the staff consists of one grants administrator/planner and one housing specialist concentrating in the areas of: grants administration, loan underwriting, construction contract management, construction and rehabilitation specifications, progress inspections, project planning and coordination with federal and state programs, and compliance with federal labor, environmental, fair housing and equal opportunity acquisition and relocation, and historic preservation regulations.

Primary activities of the division are directed toward neighborhood revitalization, improving housing opportunities, economic development and improved public facilities and services. In the housing rehabilitation program, grants and deferred loans are made to income eligible homeowners to rehabilitate homes and correct code violations. Approximately 50-75 homes are rehabilitated annually with loans ranging from \$10,000 to \$33,000, using a combination of federal, state, and private funds, if available. For deferred loans, repayment is required only upon sale or termination of the 20 year mortgage term. Other recipients may qualify for a below market rate interest of 0-7 percent.

Improvements to public facilities and the provision of public services completes the range of services offered by the Wicomico County Community Development Programs. Activities aimed primarily at benefiting low and moderate income County residents vary from start-up and operating subsidies to newly established services to construction of community facilities.

State Programs

As federal housing and other related programs have disappeared, cities and counties have sought to aid the would-be homeowner. Maryland mounted an ambitious housing program in 1986 in response to federal cutbacks. Most of the state housing programs are administered by the State of Maryland's Department of Housing and Community Development which offers a variety of housing programs. The current programs are briefly described below:

Home Ownership Programs

Maryland Mortgage Program (MMP) - The purpose of the MMP is to enable low- and moderate-income households to purchase homes by providing below-market interest rate mortgage financing through private lending institutions. The MMP, which targets first-time home buyers, is available to individuals and households that meet income limits and maximum house prices. The Department provides low-interest rate financing for local lenders to process the loans for home buyers.

Settlement Expenses Loan Program (SELP) - SELP provides financial assistance in the form of low interest loans of up to \$5,000 to pay for settlement expenses. To qualify, the borrower must earn no more than \$33,600, be a first-time homebuyer, have a mortgage commitment from a lender, and be able to pay back the loan.

Rental Housing Programs

Multi-Family Bond Program (MBP) - This program is designed to increase the construction and rehabilitation of multi-family rental housing for families with limited incomes. Tax exempt bonds and notes provide below-market rate construction and permanent financing to profit and nonprofit developers. A certain percentage of units in the project must be made available to low-income persons and households.

Rental Housing Production Program (RHPP) - The purpose of the RHPP is to increase the supply of rental housing for low-income families by providing below-market rate and deferred payment loans to developers. The program is designed to be used in conjunction with tax-exempt, private, local and federal loans.

Nonprofit Rehabilitation Program (NRP) - The purpose of the NRP is to provide low-interest mortgage loans to nonprofit organizations and local governments to rehabilitate housing for low-income households.

Partnership Rental Housing Program (PRHP) - The PRHP is intended to expand the supply of affordable housing for poor families through State and local government partnerships. Eligible projects include new construction and acquisition or rehabilitation of rental housing.

Maryland Housing Rehabilitation Program - Multi-Family (MHRP-MF) - The purpose of the Multi-Family Program is to provide loans to assist owners in bringing their multi-family units up to applicable building codes and standards.

Special Loan Programs

Maryland Housing Rehabilitation Program - Single Family (MHRP SF) - The purpose of the program is to preserve and improve existing small residential properties by bringing the properties up to applicable codes and standards. In 1990 this program was merged with the Liveability Code Rehabilitation Program.

Accessory, Shared and Sheltered Housing Program (ACCESS) - The purpose of ACCESS is to expand low cost housing opportunities for low-income households and low-income elderly, handicapped or disabled persons by financing the creation of accessory, shared, and sheltered housing facilities.

Indoor Plumbing Program (IPP) - The purpose of the IPP is to provide indoor plumbing in residential properties. Loans are made to income eligible households in owner-occupied single family units.

Residential Lead Paint Abatement Program (RELAP) - Loans are provided through the RELAP to reduce instances of lead poisoning of children by financing the abatement of lead paint in residential buildings.

Group Home Financing Program (GHFP) - The purpose of this loan program is to assist individuals and nonprofit organizations to construct or acquire and modify existing housing to serve as group homes or temporary and emergency shelter for income-eligible persons and households with special housing needs.

Other Revitalization Tools

Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) - The CDBG Program provides grants to primarily rural local governments for development or expansion of economic opportunities and the provision of decent housing and public facilities. Funds may be used for rehabilitation, construction, planning studies, and counseling that benefit low and moderate income households.

Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program - The Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, created by the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and extended by the Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1989 and 1992, is designed to encourage private sector investment in the construction and rehabilitation of housing for low- and moderate-income families. The law gives states annual tax credit allocation based on population. DHCD is the agency which allocates the state's tax credits on a competitive basis.

Infrastructure Program - The purpose of this program is to provide an efficient and economical means of access to capital markets in order to finance infrastructure projects to local governments.

This program is administered through the Maryland DHCD which is able to bypass the costly and inefficient impediments that local governments face when utilizing capital markets.

Circuit Rider Town Manager Program - The purpose of this program is to improve the management capacity of small town governments by providing grants to hire public management professionals. One administrator serves several towns and provides assistance in public administration, financial management, and community development.

Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) - The NPP encourages non-profit organizations to build partnerships with private sector businesses in order to improve the health of communities. The partnerships are promoted through \$1 million in Maryland tax credits which help non-profits to raise \$2 million in private contributions to implement community revitalization projects.

Housing Subsidy Programs

Rental Allowance Program (RAP) - This program provides grants to local governments to provide flat rent subsidies to low-income families who are homeless or have emergency housing needs. The purpose of the program is to help these families to move from temporary housing to permanent housing and self sufficiency.

Section 8 Existing Certificate/Voucher Program - A U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Program (HUD), Section 8 Existing is a rental assistance program which subsidizes the rent of low income families through the use of federal grants. This program is administered through the Maryland DHCD.

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

There are several areas within the Metro Core suffering from concentration of deteriorating housing. The purpose of Community Redevelopment is to identify and analyze neighborhoods with symptoms of deterioration and neighborhood decay and to provide the format for remedial action programs. Five areas have been identified as having sufficient evidence of urban blight to warrant redevelopment efforts. These areas, listed by priority and severity of deterioration, include (See Map 16):

1. The portion of the City of Salisbury west of the Wicomico River including adjacent neighborhoods within the County.
2. The East Church Street area in the proximity of the railroads.

Map 16

3. The Vine Street - Race Street area between Salisbury Boulevard and Snow Hill Road.
4. The Happy Lane - Ellen Street area off Broad Street and Poplar Hill Avenue.
5. The South Division Street - Salisbury Boulevard area.

Each of the neighborhoods presents varying degrees of urban blight and as a consequence face differing problems and issues. However, it appears that most neighborhoods have similar symptoms which contribute to the blight. These are:

- functional obsolescence and deterioration of structures due to age, poor construction and inadequate maintenance
- low and moderate income occupancy of residences
- high incidence of conflicting land use, especially industrial activities undermining surrounding residential uses
- high incidence of absentee landlords and rental units
- small lots with inadequate setbacks and sideyards and high building coverage
- poor internal street alignment with inadequate off-street parking and heavy through traffic
- inadequate recreation, open space, and public facilities.

While these contributors of urban blight are not evident in all the redevelopment neighborhoods, these factors are typical of most blighted neighborhoods within the Metro Core.

Policies

Rather than permit a continuation of the existing deterioration in these neighborhoods, a redevelopment program which is consistent with the guidelines of the "Housing and Community Development Act of 1974" should be undertaken. Such a redevelopment program would be comprehensive in outlook and seek to provide a suitable living environment for the affected neighborhoods. Federal funding for community redevelopment programs require that no specific programs be developed prior to direct citizen involvement. As a consequence, community redevelopment programs should come as a result of in-depth analysis accomplished by an alliance of local citizens and public agencies.

The following are policies recommended to stimulate community redevelopment:

- Create a separate Three Year Community Development Plan for each of the five identified neighborhoods.
- Provide a mechanism for citizen and neighborhood participation in the planning process.
- Seek to retain the residential character of the neighborhoods while simultaneously improving the housing stock and living environment.

- Increase the supply of housing.

Recommendations

1. Increase housing code enforcement programs in conjunction with the use of federally assisted housing rehabilitation and loan programs.
2. Use of public works to remove dilapidated housing and simultaneously provide recreation and open space.
3. Include in Capital Improvements Programs public improvements (street realignment, street closing, playgrounds, sewerage, water mains, lighting) in order to reinforce and protect residential use and demonstrate public commitment and interest in the preservation of such areas.
4. Selective placement of public housing and subsidized housing in order to provide safe, sanitary, and decent shelter.
5. Discourage additional industrial and commercial land uses in areas which are predominately residential and buffer existing incompatible uses.
6. Local towns should take advantage of State programs, as well as County staff technical assistance.

THE LOW INCOME HOUSING AND HOUSING DEFICIT PROBLEM

One of the most significant findings of the housing analysis is the shortage of the supply of housing for low income households in Wicomico County. A corollary to the low income housing shortage currently existing in Wicomico County is that a large number of households pay a disproportionate share of their income for shelter and, therefore, greatly restrict their household budgets in other vital areas.

The current cost of new housing is beyond the means of lower income households. The private sector of the housing market cannot profitably provide new housing for the low income sector of the housing market, unless publicly subsidized. Thus, due to current new housing minimum construction costs, it is impossible to increase the supply of low value housing and rental units in the County without direct subsidy.

Policies

The solution to the current low income housing problem in Wicomico County is a substantial increase in the supply of low value housing units. Few corrective actions are available that do not involve direct or indirect subsidy programs, funded either publicly or through non-profit corporations, to provide new low income housing and rehabilitate existing, older, low value housing.

The following are policies of recommended corrective action programs:

- Retain and rehabilitate the maximum number of existing older age housing units possible;
- Retard deterioration and eliminate deterioration causing factors;
- Increase the supply of low income housing;
- Stimulate construction of all shelter types, including rental and ownership tenure;
- Reduce all housing construction cost factors; and
- Make provision for housing innovations.

Recommendations

1. Increase housing code enforcement programs in conjunction with the use of federally assisted housing rehabilitation and loan programs.
2. Provide for direct public housing construction where privately built federally subsidized programs are unable to meet the low income housing need.
3. Collect and disseminate housing market data of gross housing need, size, value and location of housing demand to home building concerns in order to reduce supply demand lag time and provide accurate market indicators to induce appropriate development.
4. Provide sufficient residentially zoned land to allow developers adequate market choice and discourage land speculation, thereby reducing appreciation costs.
5. Adopt, promote, and facilitate the use of Planned Unit and Cluster developments which allow greater economic returns and incentives to the developer, and encourage housing innovations and prefab techniques.
6. Encourage the development of mobile home parks in selected areas of the County as a cheaper alternative and supplement to conventional construction.

7. Extend sewer and water service lines into County urban areas to facilitate residential construction, allow higher densities and lower land costs per unit.
8. Program and phase supporting community facilities (roads, fire protection, schools, recreational facilities, etc.) to anticipate and induce demand for residential development.
9. Consider incentives for the creation of affordable housing such as bonus densities or discount or waive impact fees.

IMPLEMENTATION

The problems of inadequate and substandard housing and the larger problem of neighborhood blight have existed for decades. A simple prescription to quickly remedy these problems is not possible. A detailed plan which develops a comprehensive strategy backed by a long-term commitment by the City and County is needed.

The following recommendations are seen as a means of initiating a housing and community development program for Salisbury-Wicomico County:

Inventory and Analysis. Areas with a concentration of blight should be identified, causes of the problems determined, and a neighborhood plan of action developed. The study should involve appropriate governmental and public agencies and residents of the study areas.

Community Facilities. Rehabilitation of blighted neighborhoods can be partially accomplished by improving community facilities such as recreation and open space, water and sewerage systems, curbs and gutters, streets, sidewalks, and street landscaping.

Central Clearinghouse. A committee should be organized to address housing issues and concerns in the County. This committee should be jointly appointed by the City and County Councils and consist of members that work in housing related functions.

Funding. The City and County should continue to take advantage of federal and state programs to finance the improvement of the residential environment.

Public and Subsidized Housing. Public and private subsidized housing should be selectively located to avoid future concentrations of low income and minority families and to further stabilize marginal neighborhoods. Sites should be near services for the target group.

Land Uses. Land uses which are detrimental to the residential environment should be prevented from locating in predominantly residential areas. Existing incompatible uses should be buffered from residential areas.

Code Enforcement. Code enforcement and housing rehabilitation grant and/or loan programs should continue to be used to upgrade the existing housing stock or to remove vacant dilapidated housing.

Growth Management. Supporting community facilities (e.g., roads, utilities, fire and police protection, schools, recreational facilities) should be programmed and phased to induce future residential development into areas favored by the growth concerns of this proposition and to encourage in-fill in predetermined growth areas.

Chapter 8

MINERAL RESOURCES

The sand and gravel extraction industry in Wicomico County provides basic raw materials for the construction and paving industries and plays an important role in supporting local growth and development. Because geologic conditions dictate the location of economically recoverable mineral deposits, opportunities to meet the future demand of the County construction industry will be controlled by the availability of these deposits and future access to these deposits for construction industry use.

Sand and gravel are necessary materials for almost all types of construction. Their continued availability at economical prices, is important if such goals as affordable housing, reasonable tax rates, and a strong and diverse economic base are to be realized.

Sand and gravel have not always been recognized as being a critical resource. However, as a result of preemption of prime mining opportunities in urban or urbanizing areas of the State, increasing attention is being focused on protecting remaining resource areas. Ironically, in many areas of the State of Maryland, promising mineral resource deposits have been consumed by the development the resource supports.

Currently, there are fourteen licensed sand and gravel facilities in the County. These facilities utilize 238.7 acres of land.

EXISTING POLICIES AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Surface mining activities are regulated within the State of Maryland under Subtitle 6A, Natural Resources Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. This law is administered by the Maryland Water Resources Administration, Department of Natural Resources. This 1977 law requires the following:

- Any person intending to mine sand and gravel must first obtain a Surface Mining Operator's license from the Water Resources Administration (WRA). Licenses must be renewed on an annual basis.
- A surface mining permit must be obtained from WRA before mining commences on a particular site.
- Upon completion of the mining operation, the site must be reclaimed in a fashion satisfactory to WRA.

In recent years, the County has enacted policies directed toward satisfying the requirements of the Critical Areas Law for mineral resources (COMAR 14.15.07). These policies involve prohibition of

mining activities in the Critical area buffer and designated habitat protection areas within the critical area.

Surface mining or mineral extraction activities are also regulated at the local level in Wicomico County through the zoning ordinance. Such activity is permitted by special exception only in the Agriculture-Rural Residential and Industrial Zoning Districts. No specific conditions of approval are contained in the Zoning Ordinance.

PLANNING FOR MINERAL RESOURCES

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland establishes specific plan requirements that must be applied to mineral resources, if current geological information is available. Since the Maryland Geologic Survey has assessed the County for potential mineral resource deposits and this information indicates extensive deposits of recoverable sand and to a more limited extent gravel, the Comprehensive Plan must include a mineral resources element. Article 66B requires this plan element to:

- Identify undeveloped land that should be kept in its undeveloped state until the land can be used to provide or assist in providing a continuous supply of minerals;
- Identify appropriate post-excavation uses for this land that are consistent with the County's land planning process; and
- Incorporate land use policies and recommendations for regulation to prevent the preemption of mineral resource extraction by other land uses.

In identifying mineral containing lands which should be kept undeveloped prior to extraction, there are several factors to be considered. They include:

- Proximity of significant mineral deposits to sensitive land uses.
- Location of known mineral deposits with respect to areas where growth can go due to government investment in infrastructure.
- When the mineral deposits will be extracted.
- Quality of the deposits.
- Ownership of the deposits.
- Vested interest of mineral operators in exploratory work and documentation of recoverable deposits.

- Road access, capacity, and desired level of service.

Each of these factors should be considered to protect mineral resource deposits.

GOAL

- *Conserve major accessible mineral resource deposits for future extraction while safeguarding the public by minimizing environmental impacts resulting from extraction and transport of resource deposits.*

POLICIES

- Assure that all available measures are taken to protect the natural environment from all sources of pollution resulting from mineral extraction activities.
- Maintain land use policies and regulations that discourage the preemption of known mineral extraction areas by other uses.
- Require that post-excavation uses for mined sites be consistent with the County plans and regulations.
- Utilize appropriate methods for protecting existing neighborhoods from the impacts of adjacent extraction operations and the transportation of extracted resources.
- Provide adequate regulation and monitoring of mineral extraction operations to assure compliance with applicable permitting requirements including those established for reclamation or restoration of mined sites.
- Identify and utilize any programs which can support reclamation or reforestation of older borrow pits or mined sites which were not subject to reclamation requirements established by the Surface Mining Law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Monitor the Effectiveness of Current Zoning Provisions

Current and proposed ordinance provisions should be monitored to assure they accomplish two purposes. Foremost, they should maintain low permitted densities and encourage cluster development in the majority of the land area where recoverable sand and gravel deposits may be located to assure access to these resources is available in future years. Second, they should not

create a cumbersome permitting process which denies reasonable access by sand and gravel operators to lands with economically recoverable deposits.

The County should continue to monitor the future development activity which occurs in those areas which serve as home to deposits. Should the rate of development activity accelerate, the County should consider additional measures to assure their protection for future access. Such measures may include establishing an overlay zone restricting development where accessible deposits which are economically recoverable are known to exist.

Special Exception Conditions

The current Special Exception process required for operators to establish mining activities on a site are minimal and the Zoning Ordinance provides no specific guidance to the Board of Appeals in the review and approval of such activities. The following conditions of approval should be added to the Wicomico County Zoning Ordinance.

Mineral extraction may be permitted provided that any mineral extraction activity shall only be permitted in accordance with a site plan prepared in accordance with the Wicomico County Zoning Ordinance and shall meet the following requirements:

1. No excavation shall take place within 100 feet from any right-of-way line of any road.
2. No excavation shall take place, nor shall the slope of the natural land surface be altered as a result of such excavation, nor shall the storage of materials take place nearer than one hundred (100) feet to any property line. This setback shall not apply where the adjoining property is used for mineral extraction.
3. All environmental standards shall be met and documented in an Environmental Impact Assessment.
4. Operation structures shall not be erected within two hundred (200) feet of any property line or within one hundred (100) feet of any road. The setback to adjoining property lines shall not apply where the adjoining property is used for mineral extraction or heavy industry.
5. A bufferyard shall be required between any operation structures and the right-of-way of any road.
6. Mineral extraction may be permitted within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area provided that:
 - a. No mineral extraction activity takes place within the Buffer.

- b. The mineral extraction activity is consistent with the Habitat Protection Program Element of the Wicomico County Critical Area Program.
 - c. The mineral extraction activity is consistent with the Mineral Resources Program Element of the Wicomico County Critical Area Program.
 - d. The requirements of the applicable Critical Area land use management area are met.
 - e. New wash plants shall not be located within the Buffer of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.
 - f. The mineral extraction activity is consistent with the Habitat Protection Program Element of the Wicomico County Critical Area Program.
 - g. The mineral extraction activity is consistent with the Mineral Resources Program Element of the Wicomico County Critical Area Program.
7. Mineral processing may be permitted provided that:
- a. Operation structures shall not be erected and storage of materials shall not take place within two hundred (200) feet of any property line or one hundred (100) feet to the right-of-way of any road.
 - b. The setback from property line shall not apply if the adjoining lot is being used for heavy industry or mineral extraction.
 - c. A bufferyard shall be required between any operation structures and the right-of-way of any road.

Protecting the Natural Environment

The County's Critical Area Protection program, State Surface Mining Law, and measures recommended in this Plan for sensitive areas protection provide a sound framework for review of proposed mineral extraction activities. These existing laws and regulations establish protection measures for sensitive environmental features are established and monitored as part of the permitting process.

Mining operators currently must comply with extensive State environmental regulations relating to operating and closure requirements. Any duplication required by current state regulations and local ordinances should be minimized. As recommended, any duplication in these processes will be limited to information related to environmental impact assessment, particularly for control of

sediment and erosion. While both processes require similar information, the distinction between the regulatory purposes served by both State and County review appear to be justified. The State reviews information primarily to determine appropriate engineering and technical design. The County is responsible for on- and off-site land use, health, safety, and general welfare impacts; including traffic, dust, noise, odor, use intensity and disturbance to adjacent land uses.

All new mineral extraction sites should provide a minimum 100 foot buffer of natural vegetation between the operation and the edges of streams. Wash plants, including ponds and spoil piles should not be located and equipment should not be stored within this buffer area.

Reclamation and Post Excavation Use

To ensure mining sites are restored to a usable state, appropriate action must be taken before, during, and after extraction. Currently, the licensing process for an extraction permit requires reclamation plans for any site mined. In addition, bonds are posted to ensure the availability of funds for reclamation should an operator abandon the site. These restorative guidelines and regulations have been successful in ensuring the restoration of sites where extraction has taken place since the licensing process was established.

As part of the application process, the post-extraction intended use of the property must be identified. The restoration plan should be consistent with the future land use of the site. The following are recommended post extraction land uses:

- Recreational land use: parks and lakes
- Forestry
- Farmland
- Aquaculture
- Low density residential development
- Disposal of non-toxic solid fill material; clean fill material and disposal of inorganic solid fill material (such as fly ash)

Note: Rubblefill material such as that from from construction and demolition projects is no longer considered clean “non-toxic solid fill material. New State regulations requiring liners and leachate treatment for rubblefills preclude such material being considered suitable for mining site reclamation.

Inventory Abandoned Extraction Sites

Reclamation of abandoned extraction sites is also a concern for (i.e. pre-Natural Resources Law) unrestored mining sites for which no closure bond was required. An initial step toward reclaiming these abandoned sites would be conduct of an inventory and evaluation of all abandoned sites to

determine reclamation needs and their potential for other land uses. The County should seek the assistance of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to conduct such an inventory.

This inventory could help establish future reclamation priorities, evaluate funding needs, and assess funding opportunities for priority site reclamation. Funding options for reclaiming abandoned sites include imposing a tax on mineral products, much as the Federal Superfund program is funded by a tax on certain chemical feedstocks.

Reducing Impacts to County Infrastructure

To date, mining operations in Wicomico have been limited in number and have not significantly impacted the County road system. However, if mining activity in the County accelerates consistent with recent trends, the lack of consideration for long-term mining operation needs can cause increased damage to low-capacity roads, and disturb neighbors and travelers on these routes. The County should continue to monitor mining and be prepared in the future to seek legislation allowing imposition of a surcharge or tax on mineral products that would generate revenue for a roadway maintenance or improvement fund. Such funding could be derived using mechanisms such as a road tax on haulers, or a tax on sales of mineral products.

In conjunction with planning efforts to direct development away from mineral resource areas, the County could also initiate efforts to upgrade transportation routes where mineral resource traffic occurs now, and is expected to continue in the future. In this way, improvements to the transportation system could be made before truck traffic from mining operations begins to overload substandard or undersized roadways.

Chapter 9

IMPLEMENTATION

ZONING

Zoning is one of the primary methods available for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Zoning is defined as the division of a county or municipality into districts and the application of uniform regulations within those districts. Such regulations apply to:

1. The height and bulk of buildings and other structures.
2. The area of a lot which may be occupied and the size of required open spaces.
3. The density of population.
4. The uses of land and buildings for trade, industry, residence, or other purposes.

The existing County Zoning Ordinance and its concepts were satisfactory in a rural, slowly developing County. However, Wicomico County is now growing faster and exhibits many urban-type challenges. The Comprehensive Plan and its implementation must incorporate the “Visions” contained in the Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 (the “Planning Act”). The Planning Act requires that all local land use laws as well as State and local capital expenditures, must be consistent with the policies and recommendations of the County’s Comprehensive Plan.

To implement the recommendations of this Plan, Wicomico County should undertake a comprehensive revision of local land use laws and regulations. Principle among these is the County Zoning Ordinance and Maps. The following outlines recommended revisions to the zoning ordinance and zoning maps.

The Districts

The Land Use element of the Comprehensive Plan lays out the County’s proposed growth management scheme to achieve the visions in the 1992 Planning Act and provides the basis for the establishment of new zoning districts. The regulatory approach taken should be keyed to the primary purpose of each district and reflect the Comprehensive Plan’s goals and objectives for how land is used and managed in the future. Zoning districts should be used that are consistent with the purpose of each of the recommended Plan Districts. The purpose of each Plan District is summarized as follows:

Agriculture/Rural (AR)

This District is comprised of most of that land previously describe as rural residential. The purpose of the Agriculture/Rural District is to preserve agricultural lands, forests, environmentally sensitive areas and open spaces while preserving the fundamental rights of landowners to utilize these lands for either resource-based uses or low-impact residential development. This is accomplished by creating significant incentives to preserve and manage these resources in a manner that sustains the resource and preserves the long-term character and use of these areas. This approach maintains individual “freedom of choice,” while appropriately directing those choices to protect resources and provide a substantial economic return for property owners.

The AR District will assist in preserving open areas of the County as areas for development of active or passive outdoor recreation use. Through carefully implemented design standards it will protect existing natural resources and areas of scenic, historic, or cultural value. This District includes areas naturally unsuited for intensive development adjacent to all of the County's waterways (generally coinciding with the limits of the 100-Year Floodplain or the natural floodplain of all waterways), streams and their buffers, the habitats of threatened and endangered species, designated “greenways,” the Critical Area Buffer, and designated Natural Heritage Corridors along the Pocomoke, Nanticoke and Wicomico Rivers

The creation of an Agriculture/Rural District in the County that preserves resources and provides opportunity for development requires establishment of incentives and programs promoting appropriate market responses. In Wicomico County these include:

- Creation of Rural Development Standards
- Creation of Cluster Development Standards and other incentives
- Agriculture/Sensitive Area Overlay Districts
- Modification of Current Zoning Uses
- State and County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs
- County Heritage Area
- Rural Legacy Program

Landowners in AR districts are guaranteed choices about how to mange their land. The preferred use of land in the Agriculture/Rural District is for sustainable resource protection. However, other development is permitted in a manner that minimizes negative impacts on existing resources and allows a substantial economic return for the landowner. This is accomplished by the creation of cluster development densities and standards.

Minor Subdivisions

Each property owner in the AR district retains the right to create two minor subdivision parcels (reduced from three) and one residual parcel. The creation of parcels is counted from the date of the first applicable subdivision ordinance in the county (either July 9, 1957 or April 1, 1968 depending on parcel location).

“Rural Base Density” Subdivision

Creation of “rural base density” parcels after adoption of this Plan will be subject to a set of Rural Development Standards (RDS’s) to be implemented through zoning and subdivision ordinances. These RDS’s will describe site development criteria designed to preserve the rural character and minimize the impacts of new residential development on existing agricultural, forest, or sensitive area resources. Such standards will likely include, but not be limited to, increased setbacks, buffers, visual screening, and lot size limitations.

The density of Rural Base Density Subdivision in AR districts will be 1 unit allowed for every 15 acres of gross area in an original parcel subdivided.

Rural Cluster subdivision

AR district land may be developed using rural cluster development. Rural Cluster Development Standards (RCDS) will be prepared that provide maximum design flexibility, separate residential uses from agricultural uses, and serve to preserve the rural character of the AR district to the maximum extent possible, while still permitting new residential uses.

The following rules will apply in cluster subdivisions:

- The density permitted in cluster subdivisions will be 1 unit for every 3 acres of gross land area of the parcel.
- Each parcel in a rural cluster subdivision shall be no larger than the minimum lot size approved by the County Health Department.
- All parcels in a cluster subdivision except the residual parcel shall be grouped together and contiguous.
- For each “Rural Base Density” parcel created after the adoption of the plan, the number of cluster lots permitted shall be reduced by 10 lots.
- Contiguous parcels under the same ownership may combine all allowable subdivision rights on one parcel, using the gross area of all or any portion of the contiguous parcels.

"Set-asides"

All subdivisions except minor subdivisions in an Agricultural/Rural District shall set aside fifty percent (50%) of the gross area of the parcel subdivided to be restricted from any future development or subdivision.

Advantages of Clustering

Applying cluster development in a community preserves open space without requiring the expenditure of public funds to purchase the development rights from landowners. The shorter road network needed to serve the cluster development results in lower costs for roads, sewer, and water lines. Costs can also be lowered through reduced street and right-of-way standards.

The open space that is created through clustering allows stormwater to be channelized or detained by grass swales and ponding areas. In this way, the need for curbs, gutters, inlets, headwalls, and pipes is reduced. Flooding potential is also minimized. Local rivers and streams and thus, the Chesapeake Bay, benefit from land that is preserved. Undeveloped land minimizes runoff and is more permeable to stormwater than land that is developed. Clustering preserves open spaces that provide natural habitat areas. It also allows for some portion of agricultural lands to continue to be farmed.

As open space tracts are preserved in developments utilizing clustering, a greenway system can be established. Land to be conserved in several residential neighborhoods can be linked to form interconnected open space corridors which can be used for recreational purposes, wildlife habitat, greenways or woodland conservation.

The location of buildings is a key element of clustering if protecting rural character is one of the goals. There are several criteria for site selection:

- Open fields should be avoided.
- Buildings should be built on least fertile soils.
- Buildings should not occur on wetlands, buffers, transition areas, floodplains, or areas with steep slopes.
- Buildings should be clustered in the least visible portions of the site, such as the edges of fields or in wooded areas.

In cases where the protected open space of the cluster development is to be used for agricultural purposes, it is necessary to ensure that residents are not affected by nearby farming operations. To do this, it is prudent to require a substantial (75 to 100 feet or more) of buffer between residential and agricultural uses. Existing woodlands can serve this purpose or native trees and shrubs can be planted.

An essential step in implementing cluster development provisions is to revise the zoning ordinance and/or subdivision regulation to establish procedures for the review and approval of cluster development and set the selected planning standards and/or design guidelines to permit or encourage cluster development. The standards/guidelines should establish minimum performance measures for:

- the amount, location and usability of open space to be provided;
- the location of buildings to minimize visual impact to preserve rural character;
- buffering between residential properties and incompatible neighboring uses;
- the protection of trees, shorelines, and sensitive environmental features including, floodplains, steep slopes or wildlife habitat; and
- the location and design of roadways.

Agricultural/Environmental Overlay District (A/EOD)

Some property owners may want to reduce the density of development allowable on their own land. Such voluntary reduction in development density is a legitimate choice that can further the resource protection goals of this plan. The process for applying a A/EOD requires a public hearing and action by the county council. The county shall approve any application for an A/EOD unless such application would be found contrary to the public interest.

The county may grant preferential treatment to landowners that elect to place their property in an Agricultural/Environmental Overlay District for purposes of local agricultural land preservation, rural legacy, and heritage area programs.

The density permitted in a designated agricultural overlay district shall be 1 unit for every 40 acres of gross land area, which shall also establish the number of “by-right” parcels that may be subdivided.

Once a landowner elects to place their property in an A/EOD and the County Council enacts the district, the designation cannot be removed except as part of a comprehensive rezoning by the County Council.

Other methods may be used by landowners to protect their property from development and for conservation. These include a number of public and private easement donation and purchase programs.

Modification of Existing Uses in an A/EOD

A property owner may elect either an agriculture focus or environmental focus overlay. Different sets of permitted and special exception uses will be developed for each of these overlay districts.

Uses in an Agriculture Focus Overlay District shall provide an extensive number of “by-right” uses consistent with use of the land for agri-business uses. Special Exceptions will also be provided that permit an expansion of more intense agri-business uses in this area, subject to impact review and appropriate conditions.

Uses in an Environmental Focus Overlay shall significantly limit the uses permissible with the goal of providing maximum protection for natural resources.

State and County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs

The State operates a program for the protection and designation of agricultural districts and the subsequent purchase of development rights on priority agricultural lands. This program is funded through State transfer taxes collected in the County and state-wide.

Wicomico County is developing a comparable local agricultural land preservation program that will target local important agricultural lands for protection through the purchase of development rights.

County Heritage Area

In 1996, the State created the Maryland Heritage Program, administered by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. This program is a partnership between state agencies and communities for the purpose of optimizing the appeal of the State’s distinctive regions as heritage tourism experiences. The Lower Eastern Shore Region is developing an application to become a Recognized Heritage Area (RHA). Such designation will make the county eligible for a matching grant to prepare a management plan. Following completion of a management plan the area can become a Certified Heritage Area (CHA), eligible for a variety of financial benefits, including matching grants, loans for economic development projects, State income tax credits and broad agency support for activities within the CHA.

A successful heritage area has ten core components:

1. A strong focus or theme that makes the area distinctive from the areas around it.
2. Evidence of the areas heritage.
3. Enthusiastic and able local leadership.
4. Visitor services, including, accommodations, restaurants, shopping and recreational attractions.
5. Ease of Accessibility
6. Interpretive Structure and Programs

7. Viable Local Economy.
8. Financial Leverage.
9. Vision
10. Strong, professionally staffed management organization.

Rural Legacy Program

In 1997, the State adopted as part of its “Smart Growth” initiatives, the Rural Legacy Program. This program provides funding for the purchase of land and easements on lands for the purpose of protecting agricultural land, environmentally sensitive lands, and culturally significant areas. Areas subject to loss due to development pressure are specifically targeted.

Wicomico County has analyzed land uses throughout the county and established two general areas where rural legacy program goals would be met and program funds would be a beneficial addition to ongoing land protection efforts. These include lands both west and east of the designated Metro Core area described in this plan.

In the first year of this program, Wicomico County will submit a management plan for a more narrowly targeted area; where all the program’s policy objectives are present and where strong property owner and private land trust interest has been expressed. As the County has experience with the program, other areas will emerge as appropriate for participation.

Locally Designated Growth Areas

The 1997 “Smart Growth Areas” Legislation authorizes local governments to designate areas for planned growth. These areas will inherently have higher densities for residential use and receive preferential treatment for State funds for services and infrastructure. While Wicomico County may designate other areas in the future as “designated growth areas” according to the 1997 legislation, the following areas have been identified as suitable for consideration.

Town Growth - The purpose of the Town Growth District is to recognize and protect the existing character of the towns in the County. Implementation provisions for this district should encourage new development that is compatible with existing town character, including town scale densities and design. In addition, the Town Growth District is designated for the purpose of promoting efficient and orderly development at the periphery of incorporated towns whether proposed for annexation or not. As reflected in the Public Facilities Element of this Plan, urban services are planned for extension into these areas. Annexation can occur in these areas.

Urban Corridor - The purpose of the Urban Corridor District is to provide an opportunity for mixed use centers containing residential, commercial, recreation, open space, retail, warehouse and light industrial uses. Zoning for the Urban Corridor District should provide a framework for development to occur while allowing maximum flexibility to accommodate economic changes in the marketplace.

Like town growth, the Urban Corridor is planned for future infrastructure expansion and includes area both within and outside municipal boundaries.

Suburban - The purpose of the Suburban District is to recognize existing development patterns, to conserve neighborhoods, to provide an appropriate development area for medium density residential development and to act as a transitional zone between rural and development areas. This District is intended to reduce development pressure on rural areas.

Rural Village - The purpose of the Rural Village District zone is to recognize existing developments and settlements in the rural and waterfront areas of the County that are not currently planned for community sewer and water but which should remain eligible for other State and local funding in support of their communities. Other rural villages may be designated as allowed by State legislation.

The Rural Village District provides protection for existing villages in the County by allowing limited development consistent with the character of these villages. The essential historic and aesthetic character of villages should be reflected in the development within this district. It is recognized that residential subdivisions could have a negative impact on the essential land-use characteristics of the existing villages in the County. Therefore; proposed subdivisions in the Rural Village District should be required to demonstrate that the proposed development is consistent with the existing land-use character of the village.

Recommended Residential Densities

A primary consideration in the County's growth management scheme is the location and intensity of permitted residential development. The most intense residential development is planned for "designated growth areas." Carefully designed residential development is planned for the Rural Village Districts. Low intensity and clustered residential development is planned for the Agriculture/Rural District, as well as throughout the designated sensitive areas. Table 1 outlines recommended maximum permitted densities (dwelling units per acre) that should be incorporated into the County zoning ordinance to implement the purpose and objectives of each of the recommended plan districts.

Table 1

**Recommended Residential Densities, Bonus Densities,
Open Space and Development Design**

Plan District	Base Density ¹	Bonus Density ¹	Open Space Percentage	Preferred Design
Designated Growth Area (includes suburban, town center , and urban corridor)	1:1	6:1 ²	10-25%	Conventional, cluster, Planned, TND ⁴
Rural Village	1:1	4:1 ²	10-25%	Conventional, cluster, Planned, TND ⁴
Agriculture/Rural	1: 15	1:3 ⁵		Conventional, cluster
Agriculture/Environment Overlay District	1:40	None	70-90%	Conventional
- Agriculture focus	1:40	None	70-80%	
- Environment focus	1:40	None	80-90%	

¹Density = Maximum Permitted Dwelling Units per Acre.

²Maximum permitted dwelling units per acre with public or community sewer facilities.

³Density calculated using developable land only.

⁴Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is a form of planned development that reflects the characteristics of small, older communities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Emphasis is placed on the layout of the streets, the building of a variety of housing types with smaller front yards, the more judicious use of open spaces to serve as community focal points, and the appearance of clearly defined streetscapes.

⁵Maximum density permitted when electing to use Rural Cluster Subdivision Option. See rules applying to Rural Cluster Subdivision on page 165.

DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

Development design can be defined as the management of the visual and physical development of the built environment. The growing public concern about transformation of the County's traditional rural landscape to sprawling suburban residential and strip commercial development can be responsibly addressed with the judicious use of design standards. Managing development design to maintain and enhance the character and aesthetics of the County is an important component of the Comprehensive Plan. Application of development design standards is appropriate anywhere human features are present, and where the physical and visual properties of development can significantly influence the character of the area. Development design guidance, can significantly enhance real estate values, community pride, pride for privately owned property, personal enjoyment and satisfaction, and the overall investment climate in the community.

The city and village centers have traditionally served as focal points for the surrounding rural community, providing some range of services and convenience to residents. They provide housing, limited neighborhood-oriented commercial services and businesses, and civic buildings such as churches, post offices, fire stations, etc.

County “Designated Growth” areas have a unique character and “sense of place” with which local residents easily identify. Development design standards for these areas will help to preserve and enhance their image while still accommodating limited future growth in a responsible manner. It is ironic that the traditionally tightly-knit development pattern so typical in traditional villages in America is illegal to produce or emulate in many, if not most, communities today. Developers are required to rigorously separate different land uses and set each house on suburban size lots. Such regulations inadvertently destroy the character of villages and towns at a rapid pace and prohibit the development of new villages that foster as sense of place.

The following are recommended development design guidelines for existing and future development in the “Designated Growth” areas:

- Permit residential, small-scale commercial and public/semipublic uses to coexist adjacent to one another as was done in traditional villages.
- Where existing buildings express a traditionally modest (pre-zoning) front setback, creating a characteristically close relationship with the street, retain this pattern in order to preserve the communities' character.
- Place off-street parking lots only to the rear or side of buildings. Reduce the visual impacts of parking areas upon community character through landscaping and buffering requirements.
- Visually screen open storage areas, exposed machinery, and outdoor areas used for the storage and collection of rubbish, from roads and surrounding land uses.
- Because roadside trees are extremely important to the character of any community, minimize removal of trees over five inches in diameter, especially along roadways. Removal of existing trees can usually be lessened by shifting the site of the building, parking lot, or entrance/exit drives. In addition, encourage planting new trees along roads to reinforce rural character.
- Control lighting in both height and intensity. Shield luminaries to prevent excessive lighting and glare beyond lot lines onto neighboring properties or public ways.
- Design and build new construction to blend with its surroundings. Make new construction in neighborhood centers compatible with surrounding buildings in terms of formal characteristics such as height, massing, roof shapes, and door and window proportions. Where new construction is surrounded by existing traditional buildings, make building height and exterior materials consistent with those of adjacent properties.
- One of the most readily apparent aspects of village character is signage. Since signs are intended to be highly visible and attract attention, they often produce a lasting impression on locals and visitors. Create signage standards for the County “Designated Growth” areas that enhance character. Signs in these areas should relate to pedestrians and to people in slow moving vehicles and should be designed to be readable to these people, thereby encouraging

shoppers and passerbys to stop and linger. Large automobile-oriented signs are a modern addition in these areas and are inconsistent with both the scale of buildings and rural village character. The size, materials, color, lettering, placement, and illumination of signs in the “Designated Growth” areas should respect the character of existing buildings and foster a sense of place that is an important component of village character.

To encourage innovative development designs that achieve land use, community character and environmental protection objectives, the following recommendations are made for each of the Districts:

County Designated Growth - Development design in the “Designated Growth” district envisions two possible development scenarios: 1) development with community sewer and/or water; and 2) development without community sewer and/or water.

In the first scenario, it is recommended that the Zoning Ordinance provide incentives for clustering development and permit “open space areas” to be held as reserved land that can be further developed (in-fill development) when community sewer is provided. In the second scenario, it is recommended that the Zoning Ordinance include incentives to encourage development design that emulates and builds off the existing traditional neighborhood development form present in the rural village.

Suburban - Conventional subdivision, cluster subdivision, planned unit development including traditional neighborhood development forms are recommended for this district. Open space required in cluster and planned developments should provide for connections, to existing and planned open space within and adjoining the district, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, adequate parkland, recreation facilities, and greenways.

Rural Village - Conventional, cluster and planned development (including traditional neighborhood development form) forms may be appropriate in the Rural Village District. The Zoning Ordinance should include flexible lot, yard, open space and setback requirements so as to encourage innovative and creative design that meets the purpose of this district. At appropriate locations within the District, the Zoning may provide for limited small commercial retail, personal or professional uses serving the day-to-day needs of the local community. These uses should not be permitted to intrude on the general character of the village and surrounding area. Landscape plans for the proposed development should be required and provide a visually harmonious and compatible setting for structures on the same lot and on adjoining or nearby lots and should blend with the surrounding landscape. Natural appearing landscape forms are strongly encouraged; formal plans and the appearance of straight hedges are discouraged. The scale of the proposed landscaping should be in proportion to buildings. Afforestation or reforestation required under the terms of the Wicomico County Forest Conservation Regulations for proposed regulated activities within or adjacent to the Rural Village District should give priority to the establishment of a greenbelt around the perimeter of the Rural Village District.

Other development design standards should be similar to those proposed in the Agriculture/Rural District including road buffers, rural scenic corridor provisions, minimum road standards, strict signage requirements and prohibition of strip development. The purpose of these design standards should be to mitigate and/or prevent further adverse impacts to the environment and scenic rural character.

Rural Village Plans

It is recommended that the County undertake the preparation of detailed area plans for each of the designated rural villages. The purpose of these plans is to provide specific recommendations and guidance on how development should occur in order to maintain the character of the existing village centers and protect these areas from encroachment of incompatible uses and intensive development. The Rural Village Plans would supplement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan by providing more detailed recommendations for land use, development design, historic preservation, sensitive area protection and other aspects of community character preservation.

The Rural Village planning process should identify the qualities that give each village its own unique character, including land use mix, historic structures and places, prevailing architecture, open space, natural features, community facilities, and natural features. The planning process may benefit from techniques such as community opinion and visual preference surveys.

The Rural Village Plans should be detailed site development plans that provide specific recommendations and guidance concerning land use (including appropriate areas for small commercial uses), development design, community facilities, natural features protection, street layout, landscaping, buffers and screening, and sensitive area protection.

The Rural Village planning process should be guided by an appointed village center planning committee made-up of community stake-holders including interested area residents and owners of larger tracts of undeveloped land in the district. Representatives of the Salisbury-Wicomico County Planning Commission should also be on the planning committee.

Appropriate specific recommendations of the Rural Village Plans should be recommended to the County Council for consideration and possible inclusion in the County Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. These recommendations should include incentives to encourage development that is consistent with the Rural Village Plan. Development design guidance recommendations should be incorporated into a Development Design Guidance Manual.

Implementation recommendations may include formation of a standing Rural Village Planning committee. The role of this committee would be to assist the Planning Commission in determining if a proposed development is consistent with the recommendations of the Rural Village Plan.

Rural/Agriculture - Because retaining and/or enhancing rural character is a primary design consideration in these areas it is recommended that the Zoning Ordinance strongly encourage cluster development in the rural district. As an incentive for “clustering” development to retain areas of open space, it is recommended that a bonus or incentive density be established. Strip development should be strictly limited. All new lots in major subdivisions should be served by an internal access road. This provision should apply to minor subdivisions as well, however, techniques such as private lanes or shared drives may be permitted by the Planning Commission where circumstances warrant. Design standards, including cluster and open space requirements, road buffers, rural scenic corridor provisions, road standards, and signage, should be directed at mitigating and/or preventing further adverse impacts to the environment and scenic rural character. Buffers between these districts and agriculture uses should also be required.

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)

Traditional neighborhood development is a development pattern that reflects the characteristics of small, older communities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries such as exist in Wicomico County. Emphasis is placed on the layout of the streets, the building of a variety of housing types with smaller front yards, the more judicious use of open spaces to serve as community focal points, and the appearance of clearly defined streetscapes. TND communities are characterized by:

- mixed land uses;
- grid street patterns;
- pedestrian circulation;
- intensively-used open spaces;
- architectural character; and
- a sense of community.

It is recommended that the County revise existing regulations to establish a TND overlay zoning district for the Town Growth and Suburban “Designated Growth” Districts. Traditional neighborhood development concepts are particularly relevant to vacant areas immediately adjacent to the towns and villages. In the overlay zone, design standards should be created that encourage compatible new construction and additions in traditional neighborhoods. New TND districts created under these provisions should establish specifications for building bulk, building setback, yard requirements, building height and scale, and/or parking requirements. The overlay zone should provide that exceptions to existing development standards can be made where appropriate.

Design Guidance Manual

The Wicomico County Zoning Ordinances already contains design standards for the various zoning districts and specific uses. Where appropriate, these design standards should be retained. Additional design standards for residential and non-residential development that should be included in the County Zoning Ordinance and are recommended to accomplish the objectives set forth in this Plan.

The development community and other interested groups should assist in developing these standards. To assist the use of new design standards, the County should prepare a Design Guidance Manual. The Design Guidance Manual should include alternative typical residential and non-residential development projects that illustrate new design standards and how they apply. Topics can be keyed to Plan and/or Zoning District and should illustrate subjects such as the following:

- Cluster Development
- Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)
- Rural Village Development
- Commercial and Industrial (rural and urban scale)
- Mixed Use, Urban Corridor Development
- Sensitive Areas Protection
- Open Space Design
- Rural and Scenic Road Buffers and View Corridors
- Zoning District Bufferyards
- Landscaping and Street Tree Requirements (residential and commercial)
- Access and Street Layout Design (residential and Commercial)
- Greenways and Pedestrian Amenities
- Neighborhood Parks
- Signage
- Subdivision Entrance Design

NON-RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

The Plan provides a number of commercial districts, differentiated by function and intensity. Where extant, commercial land uses should be allowed to continue with the appropriate commercial designation.

The Industrial land use classification shown on the Land Use Plan broadly covers two types of industrial districts, heavy and light industrial. Heavy industrial activities are those which have the greatest external impact due to noise, odor, smoke, etc. Light industrial activities are less objectionable, usually involving the processing or manufacturing of a commodity within the confines of a building. Industrial developments should be reviewed by the Planning Commission and evaluated as to their design characteristics and impact on the community. The current industrial zoning scheme should be maintained.

When considering commercial and other non-residential land uses, people very often complain about the ugliness of shopping centers and other commercial uses, primarily prompted by the lack of vegetation. Paved vehicle parking areas should be either placed to the rear of buildings, obscuring them from view, or be shaded by deciduous trees (either retained or planted by the developer) that have or will have when fully mature a trunk at least 12 inches in diameter. There should be at least

one tree for every five parking spaces in parking lots. Minimum parking lot landscape standards should apply to all commercial (and industrial) development. In addition, commercial developers should be required to retain all existing trees 18 inches in diameter or more unless the retention of such trees would unreasonably burden the development.

Non-residential Development Design in Designated Growth Areas

Corporate Industrial Overlay Zone (CIOZ) – Due to Wicomico County’s unique central location as a regional economic hub, location of large regional corporate centers may be suitable in locations that provide excellent transportation access, proximity to skilled workers, or other unique resources. Large scale corporate industrial facilities may be permitted in any district provided all necessary infrastructure can be provided in a manner which minimizes its effect on surrounding areas and the environment, and no other economic alternative exists. Such determinations should be made at the council level, based on a recommendation of the Planning Commission and the Salisbury-Wicomico Economic Development Commission (SWED). Site plan standards will require the highest quality design and enhanced value for the community.

Rural Village- Commercial uses Rural Village should be limited to small commercial, neighborhood convenience types of uses, personal and professional uses serving the local community. All such use should be developed in a manner consistent with the existing character of the village and surrounding area. Employment uses, including institutional and light industrial and manufacturing development may be permitted within the Rural Village District. Emphasis should be placed on uses that do not negatively impact community character.

Suburban - In planned developments and at appropriate locations within the District, the County may provide for a limited variety of small commercial retail, personal and professional uses and other appropriate related commercial uses, activities and combinations thereof serving the day-to-day needs of the adjacent local communities without intruding on the general character of the surrounding area. Institutional uses, e.g., community college, retirement community, etc., that are compatible with a suburban character may also be located in the District.

Urban Corridor - The purpose of the Urban Corridor District is to provide an opportunity for mixed use centers containing residential, commercial, recreation, open space, retail, warehouse and light industrial uses. Zoning for the Urban Corridor District should provide a framework for development to occur while allowing maximum flexibility to accommodate economic changes in the marketplace. The Wicomico County Zoning Ordinance should be amended to include a new Urban Corridor District. This district should provide for mixed-use development in accordance with an approved master plan. The primary thrust of the district should be for employment uses, including light industrial, commercial and office uses. Development standards and design guidelines for Urban Corridor District should provide clear direction for the desired development, including illustrations of key concepts and design features.

District provisions should permit flexibility in lot and yard requirements, to encourage a creative design without endangering the health, safety and welfare of residents and employees in and near the area. Strip development should be prohibited and access to uses should be from internal access streets only.

A minimum of twenty (20) percent of the development envelope in the Urban Corridor District should be landscaped. All landscaping should follow an overall harmonious theme throughout the district. Landscaping berms should be used as a buffer between incompatible uses within and adjacent to the District. Open space should provide for connections, wherever possible, to existing and planned open space within and adjoining the district, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, adequate usable land in appropriate locations for parks, recreation facilities, greenways and a transition, wherever possible, between different uses within and adjacent to the district.

Agriculture/Rural - Commercial development should not be permitted in the Rural District. Industrial uses, with the possible exception of agri-industries, should not be permitted.

Agriculture/Environment Overly District - Commercial and employment development in the A/EOD should be limited to tourism commercial and agri-industry and businesses that require locations outside of the Metro Core area, e.g., saw mills, sand and gravel operations, grain storage and handling facilities.

SENSITIVE AREAS IMPLEMENTATION

The following environmental standards and requirements for subdivision or site plan approval should be incorporated into the Wicomico County Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations.

Stream Buffers

Perennial and intermitten streams, as described on the U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute quadrangle maps, Wicomico County Soil Survey, or other source, should be protected by vegetated buffers, preferably forested buffers. The ideal minimum buffer is a one-hundred (100) foot natural buffer wherein land disturbance is minimized. A 100 foot buffer of natural vegetation and no disturbance is the County's policy in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.

Specific variable stream buffer requirements should be established that take into consideration factors such as lot depth, stream type (perennial or intermittent), slope, soils and other factors. The County should seek advice from various sources, including the Wicomico County Soil Conservation Service, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and environmental organizations in determining optimum buffer requirements.

It is recommended that minimum stream buffer requirements for all new development be included in the Wicomico County Zoning Ordinance. Stream buffer requirements should not apply to agriculture

and forestry activities as protection for sensitive areas, including streams, is addressed in farm and timber management plans. Drainage associations shall also be exempted from the stream buffer requirements incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance.

Where appropriate, stream buffers should be incorporated as part of proposed open space areas. The Planning Commission may require that the stream buffer be dedicated to public use if it is part of a designated Greenway on the Wicomico County Greenways Plan.

Non-tidal Wetland Buffer

A twenty-five (25) foot setback from all non-tidal wetlands is required for all development around the extent of the delineated nontidal wetland except as permitted by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the State of Maryland, Department of the Environment, Non-tidal Wetland Division. Where appropriate, nontidal wetland buffers should be incorporated as part of proposed open space areas.

Steep Slopes

There should be no structures or impervious surfaces placed on slopes greater than 25 percent nor should grading or clearing be permitted on steep slopes. On slopes between 15 and 25 percent good engineering practices should be used for sediment and erosion control during construction, and slopes should be stabilized as soon after disturbance as possible.

Habitats of Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

Current information on habitats of threatened endangered species is available through the Maryland Department of Natural Resource's, Heritage and Biodiversity Conservation Programs (HBCP). Copies of the mapping system that HBCP has developed, called Sensitive Species Project Review Areas, is available through the County Department of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development. These maps can be used to identify sites where construction projects could adversely impact rare, threatened and endangered species habitats. The developer can locate his project site on the map and immediately determine whether his site falls within a project review polygon.

When a project is within a Wildlife Habitat (Project Review Area) polygon, the developer is required to contact the Maryland Department of Natural Resource's Heritage and Biodiversity Conservation Program (HBCP). HBCP will work with the developer to determine whether the project will adversely impact the habitat of a threatened or endangered species. HBCP will then work with the developer and the County to eliminate or minimize the impacts.

Forest Conservation

Due to the multiple positive benefits of forestland toward achieving the objectives of the Land Use and Natural Resource Protection and Sensitive Area Plan elements, large contiguous forest tracts should be protected from development activities that would result in a change of land use. Residential and other non-resource utilization should be restricted in these areas. Where development is to be permitted in existing forested areas, “regulated activities,” defined by the Wicomico County Forest Conservation Regulations, shall meet all requirements as prescribed therein.

Tidal Wetlands

County policies and regulations regarding wetlands shall be in conformance with and implement appropriate State and federal legislation.

Chesapeake Bay Critical Area

The provisions of the County’s Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program are currently implemented through the Wicomico County Natural Resource Protection Ordinance and Critical Area Maps. The requirements of the County’s Natural Resource Protection Ordinance have been certified by the State as complying with State law affecting the Critical Area.

HISTORIC AREAS

Historic districts are used to protect community character in localities which exhibit architecture or community design from a particular time period that reflects a valued cultural history. Historic districts are administered as areas within larger communities, and are subject to distinct and specifically-tailored design guidelines. Typically, an Historic District Commission is established to review both development proposals and property-improvements that will alter the exterior appearance of a building or its grounds. Generally, building materials, colors, and styles are subject to approval by the Commission. Historic district regulations can be applied as an overlay district, that is, the historic regulations are applied in addition to the underlying zoning and building regulations.

Historic districts are a logical approach to preserving an area’s integrity where many historic buildings are present. In Wicomico County there are more than 600 identified historic structures. Many are individual farmsteads. The problems presented in preserving these isolated structures is daunting. These rural buildings are set in a environment that is part of their character. While it is probably better to save the historic building than lose it entirely, a program that provides such structures with sufficient land to preserve the character of their setting is warranted. One strategy for protecting scattered historic sites is to allow enough flexibility in the land use regulation to permit adaptive reuse of historic structures.

The County should adopt historic area zoning provisions to protect the County's important historic sites and structures. A special historic district overlay that would supplement the regular zoning classification and would be administered by an Historic District Commission is recommended. This Commission, comprised of interested County residents, would review and approve or reject exterior alterations, demolitions, new construction, or other modifications within the historic districts. Review boards of this nature work best when a number of the members are practicing professionals who not only know architectural history, but can provide the developers with sound advice on how to correct a problem.

In addition, the Zoning Ordinance should be amended to permit the Board of Appeals to grant a special exception, adaptive reuse of an historic structure subject to the conditions such as the following:

1. The structure proposed for an adaptive reuse is located in the Historic Overlay Zone and approved as an historically significant structure by the Historic District Commission;
2. The proposed use of the structure is recommended for approval by the Planning Commission and the Historic District Commission;
3. Exterior changes to the site structure will be minimized and appropriate;
4. Landscaping is in keeping with character of the building;
5. The site has access to a public road;
6. The use is complementary to the character of the structure; and
7. The number of dwellings shall not exceed the density permitted in the district in which the structure is located.

MAINTAINING RURAL CHARACTER

In addition to the agriculture, forest and natural area land resources (rivers, streams, and wetlands), Wicomico County's rural legacy includes its town centers, village centers, and scattered small settlements. The County's rural legacy is revealed through preserved historic and cultural resources. Rural legacy is also the connecting path systems, scenic rural roads, lanes, river channels, and corridors that provide for the movement of people, wildlife, and vehicles throughout the countryside and to the urban centers while at the same time imparting a positive visual impression. Collectively these features define the overall rural character of the County.

A recurring design issue raised in many public meetings is the existence of scattered strip development (meaning a series of houses along a road each taking access from that road) in the rural

areas of the County. Strip development presents a jarring visual intrusion into the County's flat and open landscape. Improved design and performance standards for subdivisions and site development in rural areas is needed if the County wants to preserve its rural character.

The large-scale permanent loss of scenic views, characteristic landscapes, and open space is perhaps the most devastating impact of strip residential development and conventional commercial highway development in suburban and rural areas. Inadvertantly, traditional zoning forms have encouraged development to line both sides of roadways, eventually obscuring fields, pastures, or woodlands behind commercial frontage lots or a row of uninteresting residential units. This kind of homogenous development contributes greatly to the loss of rural character and community identity.

The County should develop zoning ordinance amendments and design guidelines to directly address this issue. Access and aesthetics should be controlled in order to either avoid unappealing forms of commercial strip-development and resultant traffic congestion; as well as to preserve scenic rural views. Attaining both of these objectives will improve Wicomico County's rural character. Minimum landscape requirements are recommended for all development, including street trees and bufferyards, and access controls along all County roads.

When new development is proposed, the Zoning Ordinance should require a bufferyard be established along rural roads to maintain and enhance visual character area. Public perception of rural character is most commonly experienced moving along public roads and from boats on water. Rural character along roads can be protected by requiring setbacks and vegetative screens to mitigate the harsh contrast of houses in the middle of open fields and the natural landscape. It is this public perception of rural character that establishes significantly higher property values.

The transportation (and visual) impacts of strip development can be limited by requiring that all lots be served by an internal access road. The Wicomico County Subdivision Regulations should be amended to permit no more than one driveway connection from any site or lot to any street or road, except where separate entrances and exit driveways may be necessary to safeguard against hazards and to avoid congestion.

These provisions should apply to all development, including major and minor residential subdivisions. However, techniques such as private lanes or shared drives may be permitted by the Planning Commission in minor subdivisions where circumstances warrant.

LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

In designated growth areas, the County should adopt landscape provisions in the zoning ordinances that require all major subdivisions, planned unit developments (PUD), and commercial and industrial development to file site plans which include landscaping. Landscape provisions should, at a minimum require the following:

1. **Street Trees.** Along both sides of all newly created streets, constructed in accordance with County street standards, the developer should be required to either plant or retain trees at a minimum density of 1 mature (12" dbh at maturity) deciduous tree for every 50 feet of street frontage. Street trees should be included in a Landscape Plan and guaranteed by bond or other means.
2. **Bufferyards.** One of zoning's most important functions is the division of land uses into districts which have similar character and contain compatible uses. All uses permitted in any district have generally similar nuisance characteristics. Bufferyards help to minimize the negative impact of any future use on neighboring uses.

A bufferyard is a combination of setback (yard) distances together with a minimum amount of required plantings. Both the amount of land and the type and amount of planting for each bufferyard are specified in the zoning ordinance and are designed to ameliorate nuisances between adjacent zoning districts and, at the same time, ensure a desired character along public streets. Bufferyards are located on the outer perimeter of a parcel, extending to the lot or parcel boundary line.

Bufferyards should be required to separate different zoning districts from each other in order to eliminate or minimize potential nuisances such as dirt, litter, noise, glare of lights, signs, and unsightly buildings or parking areas, or to provide spacing to reduce adverse impacts of noise, odor, or danger from fires or explosions. Mature woodlands are considered the best buffers and should be used whenever possible. Bufferyard requirement should include screening of service structures in attached housing projects and in business or industrial zones, including propane tanks, dumpsters, air conditioning units and condensers, electrical transformers and other equipment or elements providing service to a building or a site.

3. **Landscaping of Parking Facilities.** To reduce the visual and environmental impacts of large expanses of parking areas landscaping of parking facilities should be required. Landscaping in parking lots breaks up parking areas with plantings and provides improved aesthetics and micro-climatic benefits by reducing heat and glare. These provisions should apply to new sites and parking areas that are to be expanded, moved, or removed and/or reconstructed. Property line landscape buffers between adjacent land uses and buffers along adjacent roads or public rights-of-way should be required as well.

For any parking lot containing more than 6,000 square feet of area or 15 or more spaces, interior landscaping should also be provided in addition to required perimeter landscaping. Interior landscaping should be contained in peninsulas or planting islands.

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Subdivision regulations govern the division of a lot, tract, or parcel of land into two or more lots, plats, sites, or other divisions of land for the purpose, whether immediate or future, of sale or building development. Such regulations provide for the proper arrangement of streets in relation to other existing or planned streets and to the Comprehensive Plan, for adequate and convenient open spaces, for traffic, utilities, access for fire fighting apparatus, recreation, light and air, and for the avoidance of congestion. This is accomplished by regulating the dimensions of lots. Subdivision regulations may also include provisions regarding the extent to which streets should be graded and improved and which utilities should be provided.

Wicomico County has had subdivision regulations in effect in the urban area since 1957. Only since 1968 have the regulations covered the entire County. As is the case with the zoning ordinance, the County subdivision regulations were designed to serve a rural area. They should be revised to reflect the changing needs of a growing county, focusing not only on the internal design of a subdivision, but also on the effect of a subdivision on surrounding areas and the County as a whole. Only in this way can the subdivision regulations serve as an effective tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

To this end, the following recommendations are made to improve Wicomico County's subdivision regulations.

1. Mandatory Dedication or Fees in Lieu of - All residential developers should be required to provide adequate on-site neighborhood parks and open space areas to serve their developments. This should be achieved through mandatory dedication of suitable land to the County or through developers "rights and responsibility" agreements authorized by the Maryland Legislature in 1995. Zoning provisions for dedications should be similar to the Model Mandatory Dedication Ordinance contained in the Wicomico County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan. Land for open space should be dedicated by the developer for neighborhood parks or a fee in lieu of dedication of land provided by the developer to the County. The fees would be used to purchase neighborhood serving parkland.
2. Time expiration - Approved subdivisions which do not install required facilities within two years should expire. This policy is necessary to prevent a proliferation of premature, speculative subdivisions in the County; it will also assure that conditions do not change drastically between approval and development of a subdivision.
3. Energy conservation - Subdivisions should be encouraged to utilize any energy conservation measures available, such as orientation of building sites to take advantage of passive solar energy, landscaping and vegetation to block cold winter winds and shield the heat from the summer sun, energy conserving building practices, energy efficient street alignment and vehicle circulation patterns, and location in growth areas near urban areas and public transportation.

4. Stormwater drainage - The Stormwater Drainage section of the Community Facilities element recommends several policies concerning the proper removal of stormwater from both agricultural and developed land. The subdivision regulations should impose effective stormwater management standards based on the results of the upcoming study of the Wicomico River watershed.
5. Manufactured Housing - Manufactured home park and subdivision design standards should be established in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. Manufactured home parks should only be included as special exceptions in residential districts. Definitions should be as follows:
 - Manufactured homes - a transportable structure which is built on a permanent chassis and is designed for use with or without a permanent foundation when connected to the required utilities.
 - Manufactured Home, Single-wide - A manufactured home constructed after July 1, 1976, that meets or exceeds the construction standards promulgated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that were in effect at the time of construction but does not satisfy the criteria necessary to qualify the house as a double-wide manufactured home.
 - Manufactured Home, Double-wide - A manufactured home constructed after July 1, 1976, that meets or exceeds the construction standards promulgated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that were in effect at the time of construction.

Design standards for manufactured home parks should at a minimum include:

- Minimum individual pad dimension including setbacks, site size and density
 - Permitted accessory structures
 - Minimum tract size and dimensions
 - Minimum common open space
 - Installation requirements
 - Access for requirements including access for fire protection services
 - Recreation area requirements
 - Bufferyard and screening requirements and landscaping
 - Off-street parking
 - Pitched roof and siding standards.
7. Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances - Adequate public facilities ordinances control the development process by conditioning development approval upon showing that sufficient

infrastructure and services are present or will be provided when needed. These provisions can ensure that land development coincides with the location and timing of capital facilities. Standards for water, waste treatment, transportation, and educational facilities guide the development review process. The ordinance can make approval contingent on the local government's ability to provide services or may require assurances that adequate infrastructure will serve the development.

Counties are enabled under Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland to enact ordinances requiring the planning, staging, and provision of adequate public facilities. Maryland courts have sustained ordinances requiring adequate educational, roads, and water and sewer facilities. (See further adequate public facilities ordinance discussion under the “FINANCING GROWTH” section).

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

An access management program, prepared in conjunction with the Department of Public Works as part of the County’s Thoroughfare Plan, should be initiated and supported by appropriate ordinances to ensure that access is not unnecessarily violated along key road links or near major intersections in the Transportation Plan.

Service roads, reverse frontage and commercial/employment park concepts should be applied by the County as part of all future development. These techniques will help prevent the proliferation of driveways and individual access points which would intensify traffic hazards and adversely affect the function of arterial highways.

In the case of new commercial and other nonresidential developments, the County should protect the capacity of the intersections of major roads (arterials and collectors) by requiring a minimum setback for access drives. In general the County should encourage major commercial and industrial developments to locate in planned parks of large enough size to be served with a minimum of curb cuts and where traffic management can be internalized. This approach will help minimize strip commercial development.

New development should be subject to the overall transportation plan for the area and the Thoroughfare Plan, with each new subdivision required to lay out its major circulation in accord with the circulation plan for that area. The same sort of practice should be extended to commercial development. The careful design of traffic circulation, to afford adequate access and yet maintain smooth traffic flows, is one of the few things that can positively address the conflict between access and traffic flow.

The following techniques should be considered to manage principal corridor roadway access.

- Limit the number of conflict points, by installing physical barriers, modifying driveways, and installing signals at driveways.

- Separate conflict areas, by regulating the minimum spacing of driveways or optimizing driveway spacing in the permit authorization stage, consolidating access for adjacent properties, buying abutting properties, denying access to small frontage parcels, or requiring access via collector streets and service roads.
- Remove turning volumes or queues from sections of through lanes, by pavement marking alterations, geometric design modifications and right-of-way acquisition to include such techniques as constructing a service road or bypass road or require adequate internal site circulation.
- Adopt guidelines for access type and minimum spacing of intersections, such as those shown in Table 2.
- Zoning and Subdivision provisions should require development project design to minimize left turn movements or conflicts on the site and in the street. Driveways should be designed to achieve clear sight lines based on design speeds as outlined in Table 3. Site access and circulation should conform to the following standards:
 - Where reasonable access is available, the vehicular access to the site should be arranged to avoid traffic use of local residential streets situated in or bordered by residential districts.
 - The road giving access to the site should have sufficient traffic carrying capacity and be suitably improved to accommodate the amount and type of traffic generated by the proposed development.
 - Where necessary to safeguard against hazards to traffic and pedestrians and/or to avoid traffic congestion, the County should require that provisions are made for turning lanes, traffic directional islands, frontage/service roads, driveways and traffic controls within the road.
 - Access driveways should be designed to sufficient capacity to avoid queuing of entering vehicles on any road or street.

Table 2

Recommended Minimum Intersection Spacing

Streets Intersection With (Streets Classification)	Minimum Intersection Spacing (Centerline to Centerline)
Principal Arterial	In accordance with Maryland State Highway Administration Standards and Specifications
Intermediate Arterial, Divided and Undivided	750 feet
Minor Arterial, Divided and Undivided	750 feet
Major Collector	750 feet
Minor Collector	500 feet
Minor Road	450 feet
Local Road	150 feet

Table 3

Recommended Stopping Sight Distance

DESIGN SPEED (MPH)	DISTANCE (FEET)
30	200
40	275
50	400
55	450
60	525

- Driveways into sites should have proper grades and alignments, as well as transition grades and sight distances, for safe, convenient and efficient access and should meet the road right-of-way and travelways of the road in such a manner as to conform to the standard cross section for the road or street.
- Where topographic and other conditions are reasonably usable, provision should be made for circulation driveway connections to adjoining lots of similar existing or potential use when such driveway connection will facilitate fire protection services or when such driveways will enable the public to travel between two existing or potential uses, open to the public generally, without need to travel upon a road.
- There should be no more than one driveway connection from any site or lot to any street or road, except where separate entrances and exit driveways may be necessary to safeguard against hazards and to avoid congestion. Additional driveways should also be considered for large tracts and uses of extensive scope, if traffic flow on adjacent roads will be facilitated by the additional connections.

- In order to provide for suitable access or for extension or construction of planned highway system improvements, provisions should be made for appropriate continuation of such streets and roads terminating on a site.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Wicomico County is governed by nine units of local government - the governing bodies of six incorporated towns, two cities, and the County government. While most of the County's land area is unincorporated, about 36 percent of the County's population resides in incorporated areas.

In order to be sure that policies and programs complement each other and further the objectives of the County and incorporated areas, the local governments should communicate and coordinate with each other to the greatest extent possible. The following recommendations are made to facilitate this coordination:

1. County land use regulations in the vicinity of incorporated areas should balance County-wide policy with local objectives.
2. All municipal comprehensive plans and land use regulations should be submitted to the Wicomico County Council for review and comment prior to final adoption.
3. Technical, planning, and administrative staff from the County should be available to provide technical assistance to incorporated areas.
4. A local council of governments consisting of representatives from each incorporated area and the County should be formed and meet regularly to discuss mutual concerns.

FINANCING GROWTH

Capital Improvements Programming

The Planning Act of 1992 provides that State and local funding decisions must be consistent with the local Comprehensive Plan. This means that local government construction projects in the County Capital Improvements Program that include State and local funds must be consistent with the Plan.

Wicomico County maintains a five year Capital Improvements Program that is updated annually. Proposed projects, submitted by the various County departments are reviewed by the Planning Commission to insure that they are consistent with the Metro Core or Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan.

The new consistency requirements contained in the Planning Act of 1992 could mean that State funds could be withheld if capital projects are not found to be consistent with the plans for the Metro Core and the County as determined by Wicomico County. Only the County has authority to

determine consistency with its plans. Planning authority is fully delegated to the local government and the State has reserved no approval or oversight authority for the local comprehensive plan unto itself. In fact, through the Planning Act, the State has subordinated State capital project funding decisions to the local comprehensive plan, having recognized the importance and necessity for a single primary local authority for planning.

For this reason, it is important that all county departments are fully coordinated with the comprehensive planning process. When appropriate, comprehensive plans may need to be amended to recognize valid, proposed new capital projects. Where a proposed capital project is considered a priority and the plan must be amended, consideration must be given to the lead time required for plan amendments.

Capital programming may also benefit from or be disadvantaged by the provisions of the recently passed “Smart Growth” legislation (Senate Bill 389 and House Bill 508). Among other things, this legislation requires state agencies to grant funding priority to projects in locally “designated growth areas” and rural villages, to make the most efficient use of State funds and preserve existing neighborhoods, farms, forests and open space. The County should insure that the designated growth areas in the Metro Core and Wicomico County Comprehensive Plans are duly recognized under the terms of this legislation.

Adequate Public Facilities

Growth management is an attempt to influence one or more of the following characteristics or aspects of growth:

1. The quantity of development - that is, the amount of development.
2. The type of development, both major types (such as residential, commercial, industrial, and open space) and subtypes (such as single or multifamily residential).
3. The cost of growth, including economic costs, the manner in which these costs are distributed (distribution of costs), and the environmental costs.
4. The location of development, both the geographic direction of growth and the types of development that can take place on a particular parcel of land.
5. The timing or rate of growth.
6. The density of development.

The need to control growth is due to the community’s responsibility to provide facilities, such as sewers, schools and highways, necessary to meet projected demand. Land use decisions must be coordinated to efficiently plan for the extension, expansion and/or construction of community facilities as well as for the expansion of public services. Coordinating land use planning with planning for community facilities and services is a primary objective of growth management.

Adequate public facilities ordinances require that sufficient infrastructure and services be provided when needed. These provisions ensure that land development coincides with the location and timing of capital facilities. Standards for water, waste treatment, transportation, and educational facilities guide the development review process. The ordinance can make approval contingent on the local government's ability to provide services or may require assurances that adequate infrastructure will be privately provided to serve development.

Counties are enabled under Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland to enact ordinances requiring the planning, staging, and provision of adequate public facilities. Maryland courts have sustained ordinances requiring adequate educational, road, water, and sewer facilities. In Prince George's County, a court found that even a small number of additional students (nine) in an overcrowded school situation could be sufficient to support the County's conclusion that there would be an adverse effect upon the school facilities.

Wicomico County should consider adopting adequate public facilities requirements, either in the County's Subdivision Regulations or as a separate ordinance. The adoption process should begin with definitions of what constitutes "adequate service levels." These service levels should be derived from an evaluation of the level of service provided by existing facilities plus committed improvements projects, i.e. projects contained the County's Five Year Capital Improvements Program.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Planning, in the form of comprehensive plans, area plans and special studies, establishes general development philosophy influencing the lives of the citizens of the County. Meaningful citizen participation in planning, as in all government processes, should be encouraged to insure that plans, programs, and policies reflect the attitudes and wishes of the general public. The County and its agencies should establish effective means for publicly disseminating information and generating public interest in County planning.

PLAN ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Consistent and equitable administration and enforcement is essential to achieve the goals and objectives of this Comprehensive Plan. The responsibility for administering and enforcing the Comprehensive Plan and its associated ordinances and regulations rests primarily with the County Council, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals and the City/County staff. Each group has a different role in administration and enforcement. Their roles must be clearly defined in the context of the new Plan

Definition of the Issues

A Comprehensive Plan and the zoning ordinance are intended to complement each other. A comprehensive plan establish principles for development, while a zoning ordinance is a set of regulatory standards that determine how and where development can occur. If the proposal is consistent to the Comprehensive Plan, then development can begin. If the zoning ordinance is utilized throughout the development review process, then officials need only determine whether proposed development meets or fails to meet the standards set forth. Otherwise, the developer is faced with one of two options: amend the proposal or forego development.

The purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to provide a basis for consistent, high quality enforcement. To accomplish this, the Plan and zoning ordinance must contain definitive and relevant policy statements that are readily achievable.

The quality of enforcement is not simply related to the quality of the Plan. It is also jeopardized when confronted with poor technical support. Accurate assessment of site development problems and an ability to assist the developers in meeting the community's goals are essential functions of staff. Inadequate staffing will also influence the quality of administration and regulation enforcement. Without proper staffing it becomes difficult, at best, to effectively administer and enforce zoning ordinances.

Inadequate funding often serves as a contributing factor to lack of proper enforcement. Adequate funding is essential for drawing high quality professionals with technical expertise. It is also necessary to keep staffing levels high enough to efficiently and effectively administer and enforce regulations.

Adequate funding is essential for proper enforcement of these documents. Increasing population and growth, and subsequent pressures for development, will directly affect costs relating to enforcement. New initiatives will require a high degree of administration and enforcement effort. The increased interagency coordination required for plan review and the additional review of environmental impact assessments or transportation impacts of projects are just two examples of the increased demands which will be placed on the County staff in the future.

One enforcement issue that deserves special treatment is the monitoring of compliance with the regulations on a day-to-day basis after the development has been completed. Often, it is violations of this nature that are the most visible way for County residents to measure the success of the planning program. The accumulation of junk cars, illegal trailers, illegal home occupations, and illegal signs are typically frequent indicators.

Another difficult type of infraction to monitor is the continued compliance with site plan requirements. For example, landscaping or screening may be required as a condition of an approval; however, even if it is installed as per the plans, it is difficult to ensure that the plantings live and thrive and continue to function.

The process for actually forcing compliance with a regulation, that is getting corrective action or stopping an action, can be a cumbersome one. Even with the most blatant violations such as closing an illegal business, the legal and judicial process can be lengthy. This can be a costly and time consuming drain on the resources of the County.

Realistic penalties are a common problem in zoning enforcement. Zoning violations under the current Ordinance are established as a misdemeanor, a criminal offense, punishable by a fine or imprisonment. Meeting the test for a successful criminal prosecution may add more delay time and cost to the proceeding. Frequently, judges are reluctant to give an offender a criminal record for most zoning violations. Civil penalties are a practical enforcement alternative that should be explored by the County as the zoning ordinance is revised.

Alternative Policies

Several measures can be taken to insure higher quality administration and enforcement. Some of these measures are administrative and budgetary. Others have to do with the structuring of the Plan and ordinances. Some of these policies are essential for effective zoning administration. The following policies will be discussed:

- Professional Staff
- Funding
- Performance Standards
- Staff Authority
- Periodic Review and Plan Amendment
- Uniformity in Administrative/Ministerial Functions
- Information Management

In general, the administrative policies of professional staff and funding should be viewed as essentials of any planning program. Without these elements, good ordinance administration is not possible.

Professional Staff -- Developing a highly professional planning staff, which possesses both planning and management skill, will greatly enhance the quality and level of administration and enforcement. First, and foremost, professional competence requires a commitment to seek and hire qualified personnel for all planning and administrative positions. Job descriptions should be prepared and only qualified people hired to fill the positions.

A second requirement is proper funding to ensure that qualified individuals are attracted to the County and retained long enough so that they can be effective. Adequate funding for all administrative tasks should also be provided. Inadequate funding for such tasks as zoning administration, regulating subdivisions, variance and conditional use processing, as well as issuing

building permits, will result in poor and inconsistent enforcement. If there are insufficient personnel to inspect for compliance of both plans and actual construction, the best plans and regulations will be inadequate. Cross training of personnel to be knowledgeable about other ordinances and programs should help to identify violations.

Funding -- Inadequate funding should never serve as an excuse for low quality administration and enforcement. Funding can be provided one of two ways: through a General Revenue Fund or through a fee structure. Long range planning functions are a County effort that benefit the entire community. It is therefore logical that long range planning should be supported out of the County's General Revenue Fund. The short range planning activities such as subdivision review, zoning administration and building permits should be supported by fees for permits, inspections, or processing of zoning applications. Fees should be adequate enough to cover support provided by County departments and any planning costs that are directly related to these activities. These costs can be identified in the budgets of respective departments and are easily calculated. Short range planning and administration should not cost the County money. This is in keeping with the widely held view that developments should be responsible for paying their own way. There are existing fee structures that can be modified to implement this goal.

Using General Revenue Funds to cover administrative costs is still an option. Limited resources in the General Revenue Fund, however, should not be used as an excuse for inadequate funding of administrative services, since other mechanisms for covering these costs are available.

Performance Standards -- The term performance standard implies the existence of a firm standard that can quantitatively be determined. Instead of seeking to protect the environment to the maximum extent possible, it sets a standard for protection (floodplains 100 percent, woodlands 70 percent). There is no room to debate the achievement of a standard. If 32 percent of a woodland is to be disturbed, then the standard has not been met. It is clear that this type of planning means more work in developing the ordinance. The standards have to be tested, and the equity issues over the impact of the standard have to be carefully weighed before the standards are adopted. Once in place, however, there is a much lower demand on staff, since each review is a question of checking to see if the Plan conforms to measurable standards. Time consuming debates, position papers, and reports that characterize *ad hoc* reviews can be eliminated. The major difficulty with adopting performance standards is that it requires solving problems up front rather than postponing them to a later date and not every potential issue can be anticipated and resolved with quantitative standards. However, a better effort to quantify standards than is presently in place is clearly possible.

Staff Authority -- Effective administration depends on the appropriate use of staff and an understanding of the different roles played by elected officials, appointed boards and commissions, and the professional staff. The primary job of elected officials and planning commissions is to make policy decisions. Once policy is made, the staff should be directed to implement the decisions. This is a critical distinction. Where possible, authority must be delegated to the staff and, where

delegation is not feasible, the role of elected officials and/or appointed Commissioners should be sharply defined.

Periodic Plan Review and Amendment -- A Comprehensive Plan or ordinance is based on a whole series of goals and objectives. Because the elected officials hold the public hearings and adopt the ordinances, they clearly understand all of the details at the time of adoption. However, as different officials are elected, the level of understanding diminishes. Thus, a series of standards and findings of fact required of the County Council before making amendments is a very useful structure for decision-making.

The Comprehensive Plan requires periodic review and updating to insure it serves the County's purposes. The Plan is required by State law to be reviewed every six years. The actual form and scheduling of Plan review and update will be heavily dependent on County staff and planning commissions capabilities and issues that arise as the Plan is implemented over time.

Uniformity in Administrative/Ministerial Functions -- Administrative decisions at first glance may not seem as weighty as a large rezoning matter; however, the cumulative effect of several plats of subdivisions invoking proposed lots represents incremental decisions which will most likely have a much more substantial impact on the community than a few larger legislative decisions may have. This is why it is important that all administrative decisions, regardless of how minor, need to be considered uniformly in light of the Comprehensive Plan and its associated ordinances and regulations.

In both permitting and rezoning decisions, consistency and equity are mandatory. Each applicant must be afforded the same due process in administration and enforcement. Different rules cannot be applied on a case by case basis just as policy cannot be determined case by case. Discretionary decision making must be minimized to the extent possible. The Comprehensive Plan, after all, is supposed to serve as a standard for regulation and should not be reinterpreted each time a specific development is proposed. It is often difficult to overcome the natural tendency to become involved in the plight of the landowner, losing site of the larger purpose and community objectives of the Plan.

Information Management -- The starting point for effective inspections and enforcement is a good set of records reflecting what regulations, plans, permits, and conditions affect a particular piece of property. Traditional zoning regulations were easy to administer and enforce because all that was necessary in the way of records for most situations were a zoning map, a copy of the zoning regulations, and a description of the property (to find it on the map).

Today, a particular property may be affected by not only the zoning map and applicable regulations, but by a PUD plan or site plan, conditions imposed on a rezoning, restrictions contained on a plat such as easements and high water lines, terms of an annexation agreement, special conditions applicable to a particular use, and one or more sign permits including special conditions.

If an owner applies for a building permit, a new business license, or a permit for an additional sign, it is essential that the zoning administrator or building official be able to determine accurately what conditions and restrictions apply to the property.

With a sophisticated, computerized "geographic information system" (GIS), it is possible to specify all of the conditions and restrictions applying to each part of a particular parcel. The only administrative requirement for record keeping on such a system is to ensure that every official action resulting in the imposition of restrictions are part of the record. All that is necessary is a file reference number or other piece of information to refer the user to the full site plan, conditional approval, or other documents containing the conditions or restrictions.

Most communities, however, do not have and will not soon have such sophisticated systems and must build records in another way. Making records of restrictions is essential to the entire administration of land-use regulations, not just to enforcement actions. Some communities have replaced a traditional zoning map with a map containing references to PUD and site plan approvals. While such a system is a satisfactory way to track large-scale approvals, it cannot realistically identify all individual site plans, conditional rezonings, sign permits, or similar matters.

The only effective way to track all conditions applicable to a particular parcel of ground is with a parcel-based filing system, whether it is on a computer or on paper.

Recommendations

Based on review of current County plans, ordinances, and processes for administration, as well as review of documented concerns regarding how well the system is working, the following administration and enforcement objectives are recommended to guide construction of plan implementation tools, particularly the zoning ordinance and related development regulations as well as operational features of future administrative structure:

1. Where possible, use clear measurable performance standards in ordinances to minimize interpretive confusion.
2. Where uses are subject to Board of Appeals approval, enumerate minimum standards by use and improve where possible the criteria or standards which the Board uses as a yardstick to determine the appropriateness of a given use in the respective zoning district.
3. Reduce the number of conditional uses where possible by establishing clear standards by which they may be permitted by right and subjected to established standards.
4. Maintain clear time frames for review of rezoning application, conditional uses, subdivisions, and uses subject to site plan review and approval.

5. Maintain clear administrative procedures documenting applicant, staff and approval authority responsibilities for processing rezonings, conditional uses, subdivisions, and uses subject to site plan review and approval.
6. Use standard forms and checklists for ministerial and administrative procedures which clarify for all parties various application submission requirements, improvement guarantees, and inspection procedures.
7. Review and refine rules of procedure for use by the County Council, Board of Appeals and Planning Commission for all zoning forms of action which require public hearings.
8. Provide adequate budget and staff as well as training and support for administrative procedures and inspection functions, and attempt to coordinate and/or integrate inspection and administrative functions to the maximum extent possible.
9. Recommend approval Boards and Commissions to visit sites within thirty (30) days of hearings conducted vis a vis rezoning and conditional exception uses.
10. Consider revision of the penalty section of the Zoning Ordinance if consistent with state statutes to allow civil penalties for less serious violations to simplify administrative process.
11. Require the annual revision to the County's Capital Improvements Program to be coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan and any recommended amendments resulting from the annual review of the Plan and planning process.
12. Over time establish a parcel based record-keeping or tracking system as part of a County "geographic information system" that can specify all the conditions or restrictions which may apply to a particular parcel.

As implementation options for the new Plan are continually sorted-out and decided upon, it becomes important to think ahead to administration and enforcement. Once the Plan is completed, the job of putting it into action begins. Long established development review processes and practices may clearly need to be altered.