



*Maryland Department of Planning*

*Martin O'Malley*  
Governor

*Anthony G. Brown*  
Lt. Governor

*Richard Eberhart Hall*  
Secretary

*Matthew J. Power*  
Deputy Secretary

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CONTACTS: Andrew Ratner – (410) 767-4544, (410) 340-7230, cell  
John Coleman – (410) 767-4614, (410) 292-9580, cell

## **MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING GOES LIVE WITH REDESIGNED WEBSITE**

### *New Tools and Fresh Look Provides a Robust Visitor Experience*

BALTIMORE, MD (October 5, 2009) – The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) today launched its redesigned and re-imagined website, [www.Planning.Maryland.gov](http://www.Planning.Maryland.gov). This new site sports a fresh new layout and many enhancements that make the user experience engaging, enjoyable and rewarding. MDP has kept all of the information that visitors have come to expect while adding interactive features.

“I believe that the challenge of growing sustainable, vibrant communities while preserving our treasured agricultural, recreational and water resources is a worthy and achievable endeavor and one in which solutions can and must be found,” said Richard E. Hall, Secretary of Planning for Maryland. “Planning.Maryland.gov continues to be that portal to MDP’s analysis and information about smart growth and planning in Maryland. It will now be the public’s window to becoming involved in the process. It is our hope that this new website will inform and inspire Marylanders to take part in this effort.”

With the launch of the new site, the department is using social technology tools, the so-called “new media,” to inform and involve Maryland residents into the smart growth dialogue. “Social networking tools are reaching an audience that receives news and information solely through electronic media, such as Twitter® and facebook®. MDP and all State agencies must be able to reach these younger and information savvy people,” said Andrew Ratner, MDP’s Director of Communications and Education. “The department has already deployed two Twitters® ([SmartGrowthMD](#) and [mdcensus](#)) and a [Wikipedia article](#). Our plans are to make our message available to all Marylanders, whether through the traditional or the new media.”

Visitors will navigate Planning.Maryland.gov using six main tabs: Home, Our Work, Our Products, Your Part, MHT and SDC.

The Home tab is the “dashboard” to the website. Hot topics, new publications, planning news and press releases and upcoming events are featured in this area. Access to online services and job postings are also found here.

“Our Work” presents the programmatic work that MDP is involved in. MDP’s work can be followed through three tracks: Smart Growth; Analysis & Growth; and State Clearinghouse. Each track leads to functional work and provides links to publications, reports, interactive maps and other resources.

Direct access to MDP’s maps, publications and reports and to the Maryland State Data Center is provided under the “Our Products” tab. If it is an information resource, you will find it here.

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One of the most exciting additions to Planning.Maryland.gov is the “Your Part” tab – a portal to interactive public involvement tools. “Inform Us” and “Be Informed” are the main themes in this tab. Visitors will be able to take part in monthly surveys, see upcoming events in the MDP calendar, post planning events and meetings to the calendar, read their local comprehensive plans and learn about their local planning department. Visit “Your Part” often – we will be adding new tools as time goes on.

The two remaining tabs, MHT and SDC, are quick links to the redesigned Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland State Data Center websites, which each have their own rich program, data and information resources.

MDP promotes growth that fosters vibrant, livable communities, preserves and protects the environment, safeguards historical and cultural resources and makes efficient use of State resources. The department also provides data, trend analysis, research assistance, and policy development and implementation support for local governments, communities, businesses, and organizations.

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