

**Talbot County, Maryland
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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GLOSSARY

Adaptive Re-use: Use of an old structure for a different purpose than originally intended, e.g. a house used as a restaurant. The purpose is to preserve the structure by finding an alternate use.

Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance: An ordinance that has an effect on the development process by conditioning development approval on a showing or finding that sufficient infrastructure and services are present or will be provided at the time they are required.

Affordable Housing: Non-subsidized housing (sale or rental) for people whose income is below a locally established income limit. Subsidized housing units (owned or rented) for individuals with incomes that are below a federally established income limit. Qualifying individuals pay no more than 30% of their income for rent; or if owners, pay no more than 30% of their income for principal, interest, taxes and insurance. Numbers vary based on family size. Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Ancillary: Subordinate, subsidiary, auxiliary, supplementary. An ancillary use complements a primary use such as a deli in an industrial park.

Anaerobic: Living or active in the absence of free oxygen.

Aquifer: A geological formation or structure that transmits underground water in sufficient quantity to supply pumping wells or springs.

Aquifer Recharge Area: Undeveloped or sparsely developed area where groundwater can be replenished by rainfall.

Arterial Road: A publicly owned and maintained road generally designed with restricted access and primarily intended to carry “through” traffic at 45 to 55 miles per hour.

Buffer: An undeveloped or relatively undeveloped land area, which lies between two areas which contain or may contain conflicting land uses. Intended for the purpose of reducing or eliminating harmful conflicts and screening one use from another. The buffer may include trees, plants or other devices to further shield one use from the other.

Building Excise Tax: A tax levied on different types of building construction throughout the County and Municipalities and used for the capital costs of additional or expanded public works, improvements, and facilities required to accommodate new construction or development including bridges, streets and roads, parks and recreation facilities, schools and storm drainage facilities (Source: HB 701)

Canopy: The upper branches of a stand of trees; the tallest trees in a forested area.

Capital Improvements Program: The County’s plan for future capital improvement expenditures. This plan spells out the capital facilities which the County plans to finance, including schools, libraries, parks, roads, etc.

GLOSSARY

Cluster Development: A residential development in which dwelling units are grouped on small lots in a selected area or areas of the parent tract leaving the remaining land in natural habitat or other open space uses, including agriculture and forestry.

Commercial Use: A type of activity where goods or services are sold or traded with the expectation of profit or gain.

Critical Area: All lands and waters defined in Section 8-1807 of the Natural Resource Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. They include:

1. All water of and lands under the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries to the head of tide as indicated on the State Wetland Maps, and all State and private wetlands designated under Title 9 of the Natural Resources Article, Annotated Code of Maryland;
2. All land and water areas within 1,000 feet beyond the landward boundaries of State or private wetlands and the heads of tide designated under Title 9 of the Natural Resources Article, Annotated Code of Maryland; and
3. Modification to the areas through inclusions or exclusions proposed by local jurisdictions and approved by the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Commission as specified in section 8-1807 of the Natural Resource Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.

Diabase: A fine to medium-grained dark colored igneous rock that is a good source for crushed stone for road and building construction.

Easement: An interest in land owned by another that entitles its holder to a specific and limited use or enjoyment.

Agricultural Easement: An easement designed specifically to protect farmland. Landowners who sell easements retain the right to use their land for farming, ranching and other purposes that do not interfere with or reduce agricultural viability. They continue to hold title to their properties and may restrict public access, sell, give or transfer their property, as they desire.

Conservation Easement. An easement designed to limit land to specific uses and thus protect it from development.

Environmental Impact Assessment: A systematic comprehensive review process designed to identify and evaluate potential environmental impacts of a project.

Erosion: The wearing away and removal of materials of the earth's crust by natural means such as wind or water.

Fiscal: Of or relating to public revenues, public expenditures and public debt; public financial matters.

GLOSSARY

Floodplain, 100 year: Land adjoining a water course or other water body that will be inundated to a defined height by water from a flood which has a 1% chance of occurring in any year.

Groundwater: Water beneath the ground surface in a saturated zone.

Growth Allocation: An act of the County Council, approved by the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Commission, that provides for conversion of a property or properties located in Resource Conservation Areas (RCAs) and/or Limited Development Areas (LDAs) in the Critical Area to another land management classification that may allow an increase in the permitted intensity of use.

Habitat: Place or site where animals or plants naturally live and thrive.

Impact Fee (also known as development impact fees): Assessments levied on new development to help pay for the construction of off-site capital improvements that benefit the contributing development. The standards set by court cases generally require that an impact fee meet a three part test:

1. The need for new facilities must be created by new development.
2. The amount of fee charged must not exceed a proportionate share of the cost to serve new development.
3. All fee revenues must be spent within a reasonable period of time and in proximity to the fee-paying development.

Infill: Development of unused land surrounded by already developed land.

Land Trust: A public and/or private organization with the authority to buy, accept donations, hold and/or sell interests in real property for the purpose of land and/or building preservation.

Local Historic District: A district, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in local and American history, architecture, archaeology and/or culture. A local historic district is created by a local historic overlay zoning district. Controls are created and administered by local citizens and local government.

Mitigation: Planting of new vegetation to replace those that have been removed; creation of new wetlands to replace those destroyed by development. Mitigation is often done in a different area than that previously occupied by the replacing forest, wetland, etc.

Mixed Use Development: Development characterized by a mix of residential uses, commercial uses or public facility uses in appropriate locations where the combination of uses are complementary and contribute to establishing neighborhood centers of community activity and commerce.

National Historic Landmark: District, site or structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places and considered to be of unusual importance to American history, architecture, archaeology and/or culture. Under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior. Designation does not imply local control over the listed properties.

GLOSSARY

National Register of Historic Places: A register of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and/or culture. The Register is maintained by the Secretary of the Interior and administered by the Keeper of the National Register. Local nominations to the Register are made by the Maryland Historical Trust, a unit of the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs. Designation does not imply local control over the properties.

Open Space: Land that is in largely natural state with few if any buildings or other structures. Examples include passive parks, farmland and vacant land.

Performance Standards: Regulations of land use based on certain standards for such things as noise, vibrations, environmental conditions, etc.

Perk Site (percolation site): An area where the soil may be used as a medium to effectively dispose of sewage by means of the sewage effluent percolating or filtering downward through the soil. Located by a “perk test” which measures time required for water to sink through the soil.

Perpetuity: A limitation on property that is not destructible by the persons who hold an interest in the property.

Perpetual Easement: An interest in land owned by another that entitles its holder to a specific and limited use or enjoyment, which is unlimited with respect to time so long as the right is not extinguished.

Public Facilities: Public works supplied generally by a government organization. Examples include: public roads, schools, water and sewer facilities, fire stations and libraries.

Purchase of Development Rights: PDR programs utilize public funds to purchase the development potential from privately held land. Typically, the landowner voluntarily sells the development rights and receives compensation for the development restrictions placed on the land in the form of a conservation easement. Title remains with the land and can be transferred although use of the land may be limited to farming or open space.

Recreation: Passive recreation facilities include mostly undeveloped land, natural areas for hiking, camping, hunting and fishing. Active recreation facilities include developed areas such as ball-fields, boat-ramps, equestrian facilities, golf courses, tennis courses and swimming pools.

Reservation of Development Rights: A legal agreement describing the minimum open space requirement. The agreement restricts future development of any residential commercial or industrial buildings, structures, or uses, excluding agricultural buildings or structures.

Right-to-farm Act: A State or local act that offers protection to farmers against nuisance suits. Localities are prevented from enforcing nuisance ordinances that would disrupt normal farm practices.

Roads: An open, generally public way for the passage of persons, vehicles and animals.

GLOSSARY

Septic System: Subsurface sewage disposal system that uses the natural absorption of soil to treat wastewater. The common use is to serve one dwelling, but could be designed to serve several dwellings. Drainfield refers to the soil absorption fed by pipes from the dwelling.

Setback: The distance from a property line to a structure or use such as parking. Governed by the Zoning Ordinance or by covenants and/or easements or conditions at the time of rezoning.

Site Plan: A plan, to scale, showing proposed uses and structures for a parcel of land. It includes such information as location of lot lines, streets, buildings, parking areas, landscaping, utility lines, reserved open space, topographic information and environmental features.

State Priority Funding Area (PFA): Existing communities and other locally designated areas, consistent with the 1992 State Visions, where the State and local governments want to encourage and support economic development and new growth.

Street: A public thoroughfare in a city or town, usually including the sidewalk lining one or both sides.

Strip Development: A development pattern characterized by a string of houses and/or businesses, each with access to the highway. Strip commercial refers to the practice of lining major streets with commercial development rather than grouping commercial development in clusters.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): Transfer of Development Rights programs are used to transfer the development potential from certain types of land, such as resource lands, targeted greenways, or agriculture lands to areas designated for growth.

Transportation Level of Service (LOS): A measure describing the operational conditions within a traffic stream. A level-of-service definition generally describes these conditions in terms of such factors as speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort and convenience, and safety.

Wetlands: Areas inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater sufficient to support vegetation adapted for life in saturated conditions. Includes but is not limited to swamps and marshes. Many wetlands do not appear wet at all times.

Working Lands: Working land is privately owned cropland, rangeland, pasture, and forest.

Zoning District: A classification of land that designates and limits allowed uses, lot sizes, building setbacks and other land development regulations.

Zoning Ordinance: A local ordinance that defines and implements land use and design standards such as permitted uses, lot sizes, setbacks, etc.

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Vision Statement for Talbot County Comprehensive Plan

This Vision and the sub-vision statements that introduce each chapter reflect the intended focus of Talbot County land use decision-making.

The primary goal of Talbot County's Comprehensive Plan is to preserve the **Quality of Life** and **Rural Character** while protecting the health, safety and well-being of its citizens. Recognizing that the overall environment is an economic asset of the County, protection of our agricultural lands and waterways, and their harvests, is a high priority. Our six hundred miles of shoreline, the rivers and creeks they surround, and the many fragile ecosystems within them are protected with zeal and vigilance. The high quality of the County's infrastructure (including schools, roads, and sewer and water) is maintained as the County's needs change and grow. The livability and economic vitality of our towns, along with our historical treasures and cultural amenities, are highly valued.

Talbot County affords those who live here an unusually high Quality of Life. Our comprehensive planning, our land use decisions, and our growth management strategies are all completely oriented to sustaining and enhancing this remarkable place "where land and water intertwine." To handle the development pressure in Talbot County we blend state-of-the-art planning tools, strong coordination with and support of our municipalities, and effective legislation to ensure that the Quality of Life associated with our Rural Character is maintained. We cooperate fully with other counties in the midshore area in dealing with common concerns that cross county lines.

Measurably positive results are required as Talbot County's progress toward achieving the Vision is monitored. A monitoring program compares baseline data and the goals and objectives of the plan, against actual and proposed land use changes.

Definitions

Quality of Life is a condition of one's existence that can be improved or degraded by the land use decisions based on this Comprehensive Plan. For the purpose of this document, Quality of Life includes: abundant fields and forests; wildlife; clean water in the Bay and its tributaries; clean air; sufficient, potable water in our aquifers; a low level of crime; good employment opportunities, the relative absence of traffic congestion and excessive noise; access to diverse cultural, employment, recreational, educational and entertainment activities, convenient access to goods and services; and an ethic of personal involvement.

Rural Character is a predominance of farm fields and woodlands; the visible presence of wildlife; an abundance of thriving rivers, streams and wetlands; large, open spaces separating functional towns and villages; low speed roadways which are uncongested and access farms and other private properties; and a minimum of light clutter in the night skies; and the absence of strip malls, retail outlets bearing large and prominent names or logos on their exteriors, or large commercial or residential development.

Vision Statement. A statement that communicates a compelling vision of the future, is critical to implementing strategy, and that answers the question "What will success look like in the effective implementation of the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan?"

Chapter 1 Introduction and Summary

The Comprehensive Plan is the result of thoughtful discussions and effort by many citizens to focus on the County's long-range future, balancing many desires with what is in the best interest of the community. The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for public officials and citizens who will guide the County's growth and development over the next twenty years. The Plan presents a future vision for Talbot County in 2024 and beyond, and outlines a framework for consistent decision making to bring that vision to fruition. The Plan presents recommendations that are well reasoned and feasible. It gives citizens an active role in planning, encourages greater cooperation between the County and Towns and provides strong recommendations for the protection of the county's key assets, its sensitive environmental resources and rural lands.

I. Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The Talbot County Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted by the County Council. The Plan is a long-range guide for growth, land use and development decisions in the County. It is also a guide for other decisions that are related to growth and development and will help the County determine when and where new public facilities and improvements are needed.

The Plan is comprehensive because it covers a broad range of elements that are related to growth and development. The Plan is general because the recommendations are broad, rather than narrowly defining specific land use decisions. The Plan is long-range because it outlines a vision of what the County should be like in twenty or more years and sets out a framework for how that vision can be implemented.

The majority of the Plan policies focus on the next twenty years and provide guidance for investment and development decisions. These policies can be amended as new information is available, or to address a specific change in circumstances without straying from the basic goals of the Plan. The plan is not a static document and should be updated on a regular basis.

Although the Comprehensive Plan is adopted as an official public document, it is not a development ordinance. The Plan sets the framework and basis for the County's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and other development regulations. The Plan will also serve as the basis for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance to ensure that the County's goals are implemented through the regulatory process.

II. Legal Basis for Planning

Talbot County is a Charter County and as such derives its authority for planning from Article 25A of the Annotated Code of Maryland and the County Charter of 1974. In addition, certain provisions of Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland (Zoning and Planning) also apply to the County. Portions of Article 66B set forth the minimum requirements for a Comprehensive Plan which shall include, among other things:

- A statement of goals and objectives, principles, policies, and standards;

-
- A land use plan element;
 - A transportation plan element;
 - A community facilities plan element;
 - A mineral resources plan element, if current geologic information is available;
 - An element which shall contain the Planning Commission's recommendations for land development regulations to implement the Plan; and
 - Other elements, such as community renewal, housing, conservation, and natural resources, at the discretion of the Commission.

The context for planning for future development in Talbot County must also take into consideration the role that the County will play in implementing the overall growth management policies established by the State of Maryland in the State's Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992. These policies, stated as "Visions" for the future, are:

- Development is concentrated in suitable areas;
- Sensitive areas are protected;
- In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected;
- Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic;
- Conservation of resources, including reduction in resource consumption, is practiced;
- To insure the achievement of 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined;
- Funding mechanisms are in place to achieve all other visions; and

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992 requires inclusion of a Sensitive Areas Element describing how the County will protect the following sensitive areas:

- Streams and stream buffers;
- 100-year floodplains;
- Endangered species habitats;
- Steep slopes; and
- Other sensitive areas the County wants to protect from the adverse impacts of development.

Under the Talbot County Charter, the Planning Commission makes advisory recommendations to the Planning Officer and the Council relating to the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Officer also has the continuing responsibility and duty of making recommendations to the Council for the revision of the Comprehensive Plan. The Council has the ultimate authority to determine the content of the Comprehensive Plan, taking the Planning Commission's advisory recommendations and the Planning Officer's recommendations into account.

III. Relationship to Other County Planning Documents

Talbot County's first major Comprehensive Plan was prepared in 1973 and was updated in 1990 and again in 1997. The 2004 Comprehensive Plan replaces the County's 1997 Comprehensive Plan as the guiding document for the County's planning effort.

The Comprehensive Plan serves as the framework for other plans and ordinances relating to the management of growth and development in Talbot County. It is not a stand-alone document, but is supported by (and, in turn supports) related Planning Program documents such as the ones listed below.

- Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Plan
- Comprehensive Sewer and Water Plan
- Land Preservation and Recreation Plan
- Floodplain Ordinance
- Zoning Ordinance
- Land Subdivision Regulations
- Roads Ordinance
- Forest Conservation Ordinance
- Building Code
- Livability Code
- Stormwater Management Ordinance

These and other plans and ordinances should be in general conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. However, as with any update or revision of a major planning document, conflicts may arise between previously adopted policies and newly proposed policies. The policies and guidelines contained within the 2004 Comprehensive Plan supersede any conflicting policies and/or guidelines contained in any of the above mentioned plans.

In addition, the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan takes into consideration the comprehensive development plans and ordinances of the incorporated municipalities within the County. The Plan also refers to applicable State plans and ordinances which affect the growth and development of Talbot County. It is recommended that the Comprehensive Plan be reviewed and, if necessary, revised as needed at least once every five to ten years.

IV. Talbot County 2004

Talbot County is a predominantly rural county located in the west-central portion of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Surrounding counties include: Queen Anne's County to the north; Caroline County to the east; and Dorchester County to the south (see Map 1-1). The area of Talbot County is approximately 171,000 acres, of which approximately 110,000 acres are farmland, 40,633 acres are forested land, and 4,637 acres are wetlands. The underlying geology is typical of coastal plains and the topography is flat to gently rolling.

Talbot County has approximately 600 miles of shoreline and is almost entirely surrounded by the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The County is principally bordered by the Chesapeake Bay to the west, the Choptank River to the south and east, and the Tuckahoe River to the east. On its western edge, the County is defined by numerous peninsulas or “necks”. Major tributary and tidal waterway systems which border these necks include Wye River, Miles River, Harris Creek, Broad Creek, Tred Avon River and the Choptank River.

The County is divided into five election districts — Easton, St. Michaels, Trappe, Chapel and Bay Hundred (see Map 1-2). There are five incorporated towns within Talbot County. The Town of Easton is the County seat and is centrally located along U.S. Route 50 which serves as a major east-west highway for the Eastern Shore. Easton is the major residential, commercial, and employment center of the County. St. Michaels is located along Route 33 on the shores of the Miles River. Oxford is located at the end of Route 333 along the Tred Avon River. The Town of Trappe is located in the south-central portion of the County along U.S. Route 50. The Town of Queen Anne straddles the Talbot County and Queen Anne’s County border along Route 404.

Over time numerous waterfront and crossroads settlements have evolved into rural villages of various characters and sizes. County villages include: Wye Mills, Longwoods, Skipton, Cordova, Unionville, Copperville, Tunis Mills, Bellevue, Williamsburg, Royal Oak, Newcomb, Bruceville, Ivytown, Bozman, Neavitt, Claiborne, McDaniel, Wittman, Sherwood, Tilghman, Fairbanks and Bar Neck.

Talbot County’s land and waterways are intertwined in a unique mosaic of tidal waters, streams, farmlands and forests. The historic settlement patterns of this rural landscape have created a scattered patchwork of farms, estates, subdivisions, villages and towns. The natural and built environments of Talbot County blend together to form a pleasant rural character where residents enjoy a generally high quality of life.

Over the years Talbot County has grown from an isolated rural community with a population of 20,342 in 1900 to a growing and diverse community of 33,812 in 2000. In the early 1900s Talbot County saw a loss of population, as families moved to more urban areas such as Baltimore, Dover and Philadelphia. The opening of the first Chesapeake Bay Bridge in the early 1950s marked the beginning of change for Talbot County and many of the other Upper Eastern Shore counties.

The second half of the 20th century also saw a change in County’s economy as it shifted from agriculture and seafood, to a more diversified economy, particularly in the areas of construction, real estate, light manufacturing, trade, tourism and service industries.

Talbot County remains rural in character despite subtle changes in development patterns. The County is still known for its open rural landscape, woodlands, rivers, streams and wetlands and abundance of wildlife. Agriculture and tourism account for a significant portion of the County’s business economy.

The County has successfully encouraged residential and commercial growth to locate in the incorporated town or villages. In keeping with the County’s historic settlement patterns, most residents live in villages, waterfront subdivisions and in scattered locations in rural and waterfront

areas. Easton, Trappe and St. Michaels are expected to grow more rapidly in the future as planned sewer and water expansions are completed.

The County is at an important decision point. Population projections predict that Talbot will continue to attract more residents at a less than 1% annual rate of growth. Many of the new residents will be retirees and empty nesters. In fact the long range population projections indicate that by the year 2030 nearly one-third of the total County population will be over 65 years of age.

Never before in the County's history has citizen concern about growth, environmental protection and future development patterns been so great. Increased traffic from a growing tourism industry and summer beach traffic on US 50 frustrate permanent residents. Rural roadways have become congested and cross county travel becomes nearly impossible. As the demographics have changed, the County has captured the attention of national retailers. An older, wealthier population represents new market opportunities for retailers, restaurants, home improvement, automobile sales and other consumer services. The County is experiencing increasing pressure for both residential and commercial development targeted to this growing market segment.

The Comprehensive Plan addresses these complex issues and concerns, striving to balance the values of preservation of the quality of life and rural character of the County while accommodating and guiding future growth. The Plan seeks to meet the challenges of protecting and preserving the fragile environmental resources of the County's tidal waters, streams, shorelines, forests and open space; continue the support and encouragement of the active and economically vital agricultural and maritime industries; and provides guidelines for residential and commercial development at a scale and location that benefits all County residents.

V. A Vision of Talbot County 2024

If the goals and policies of the Plan are upheld and implemented, the following description might apply to the County in 2024:

In 2024, Talbot County's sensitive environmental areas are protected from encroachment and damage. The shoreline, rivers and creeks and the many fragile ecosystems are protected from upland impacts. Very sensitive areas are in public ownership or protected through permanent easements. The wetlands, rivers, bays, creeks and tributaries are protected by vegetated buffers creating a series of corridors that connect to large forested areas and allow for enhanced water quality, ecological balance, and biological diversity. Safe and adequate water supplies are available from protected groundwater and surface water sources.

Resource industries such as agriculture and quarrying are protected from encroachment by incompatible uses. These industries are important parts of the local economy. Protection of farmland and mineral resources through effective land use controls, reasonable incentives and innovative funding mechanisms ensure a lasting, diverse economy.

Transfer of development rights from one land parcel to another that is better suited for development is a common practice and has proved to be an effective growth and resource management tool. There has been an increase in the number of acres of agricultural lands and wildlife habitat that has

been protected by the purchase or donation of development rights. Funding for the purchase of development rights program has been significantly increased.

Growth in rural areas takes place in compact nodes. Towns are defined by Countryside Preservation Areas, and land is available within these areas for an appropriate mix of land uses. Large tracts of undeveloped land are being placed into conservancy, preserving the County's open spaces for future generations. Residential development in the western rural conservation area is limited to retain economic, ecological and scenic value.

The County enjoys a strong and diversified economy, successfully retaining existing businesses and attracting new environmentally oriented businesses and industries. The well trained and appropriately educated workforce is fully employed, and many of the people who work here also live in the County.

The County's tourism industry captures a year-round market, drawn by the ambiance of the small towns, rural character, diverse recreational opportunities and rich cultural life. Through careful planning and cooperation between the State and the County, many of the traffic bottlenecks on US 50 and MD 33 have been resolved. Highway beautification projects and entrance corridor projects are underway to ensure views from the road are attractive for both residents and visitors.

Thriving towns and villages accommodate the diverse needs of residents. Growing areas have existing or planned facilities. Prudent public and private investments keep the towns prosperous. Infrastructure supports public transportation, van pooling, or other forms of ride sharing to reduce traffic. County residents enjoy the active and passive recreation opportunities provided by the county parks, greenways network for walking and biking, and at the waterfront parks and public landings. Affordable housing is available so those who work in the County are able to own or rent a home here. Higher density developments within our incorporated towns provide a range of housing choices that are close to employment centers.

The County has enjoyed a resurgence of interest in the many historic and culturally significant buildings in the towns, villages and rural areas. Every year several properties are added to the National Register of Historic Places, and newly discovered archaeological resources have been protected by private preservation easements.

Talbot County continues to project the image of a rural but sophisticated region – proud of its legacy and committed to protecting its future. Attention to community design and appearance has enhanced the image of the County. New residential and commercial developments, blend into the landscape at a scale and density that is appropriate to their location. New more urban communities are located in the towns, while infill development in the villages has been maintained at an intimate, domestic scale consistent with the village character.

Talbot County residents continue to be actively involved in planning and decision making for the future of the County. Land use policies and decisions, based on full participation of residents, support preserving and enhancing the rural character and natural resources. Stewardship of the land and water is practiced daily by ordinary citizens aware of how their actions affect these resources.

VI. Comprehensive Plan Process

The Comprehensive Plan was developed during 2001- 2004. The Plan is the product of citizens, the Planning Commission, County Council, county staff and consultants. The Plan evolved through a series of citizen committees, Planning Commission work sessions and public hearings.

Citizen Participation Process

The citizen participation process for preparation of the Plan began in September, 2001 with appointment by the County Council of some 84 County residents to 7 regional committees and a central Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. Regional committees ranging in size from 8 to 21 members each represented the following geographic regions within the County: Easton, St. Michaels, Trappe, Oxford, Tunis Mills, Bay Hundred, and Chapel District.

During this public process, citizens identified major planning issues, goals and possible implementation concepts. Each regional committee reviewed and commented on each element of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan and offered recommendations for deletions, additions, or changes to each element. The draft plan recommendations were developed by the Steering Committee which reviewed and evaluated regional committee recommendations.

More than 100 citizens participated in the extensive review and comment process, a reflection of the growing county-wide concern of citizens about the rate of growth and change that is occurring. The committees reaffirmed the County's long term commitment to protection of the natural environment and critical areas. In addition, they articulated the desire to retain the rural character of the community by managing the location of growth to prevent sprawl and to protect agriculture as a primary resource industry. Several important themes emerged from the public process:

- Conservation and protection of natural resources and open land is of the highest priority;
- Residential and non-residential development should occur primarily in the towns or as infill in village centers; and
- Community appearance and design should reflect the rural character of the County.

Several new concepts emerged from the citizen process to implement the preferred development pattern of compact towns and villages surround by open space and farm land. The citizen process recommended the concept of establishing "Countryside Preservation Areas," permanent protected areas around the towns. The Countryside Preservation Areas would establish an outer growth boundary for the towns and would physically and visually define the limits of urban growth, preventing sprawl into the rural areas. The Countryside Preservation Area concept encourages greater inter-jurisdictional cooperation between the County and towns to permit the transfer of development rights from this outer ring into appropriately serviced land within the Towns or their designated growth areas.

The committees recommended the creation of a new planning district that would include the non-critical area portions of western Talbot County. The new Western Rural Conservation planning district includes the non-critical area portions of the narrow necks of western Talbot County. The Western Rural Conservation district would be targeted for development controls and natural

resource enhancement programs designed to protect natural resources while providing for limited low-density residential development.

Citizen concerns over the cost of growth resulted in recommendation to strengthen the County's ability to more fairly distribute the cost for new or upgraded infrastructure and services between the county and the developer. Tools that were suggested included adoption of an Adequate Public Facility Regulations; and levying development impact fees for various community services and facilities.

The committees called for greater cooperation and joint planning between the towns, villages and County. To fully realize the vision and goals of the plan it will become increasingly important to pay careful attention to the form, density and character of development that occurs within the designated growth areas, along entrance corridors and at the outer edges of the Countryside Preservation Areas. The committees recognized that implementation of the plan will take the concerted effort of both the County Council and the Town Councils.

A. Public Review and Adoption

The Steering Committee draft of proposal for the Comprehensive Plan was delivered to the Planning Commission in August, 2003. The Planning Commission held a series of discussions with the Town Planning Commissions, agencies, civic organizations, and County departments to hear comments on the draft proposals for the Plan. The Planning Commission held a series of work sessions between November 2003 and May 2004 to consider the comments and review the draft document. Prior to the public hearing, informal meetings were held with the Steering Committee and County Council. In July 2004, the Planning Commission scheduled public hearings on the revised proposals. Following the public hearings, the Planning Commission made additional revisions before forwarding their advisory recommendations to County Council on August 4, 2004. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan was adopted on February 15.

VII. Comprehensive Plan Goals

The Comprehensive Plan goals and polices are based on goals and policies developed by the citizens who participated in the regional committees and central Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The goals in combination with the policies are the foundation of the Plan.

The overriding goal of the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan is to:

Preserve the Quality of Life and Rural Character while protecting the health, safety and well being of its citizens. Recognizing that the overall environment is an economic asset of the County, protection of our agricultural lands and waterways, and their harvests, is a high priority.

Under the umbrella of this theme, the citizen committees developed more specific goals to manage growth and development.

Land Use

Promote and maintain a well-planned pattern of compatible and efficient utilization of land and water resources which concentrates development only in areas where environmental impacts will be minimized.

Transportation

Insure the safe and efficient movement of goods and people.

Community Facilities and Services

Provide an equitable system of public facilities and services that effectively meets community needs and is consistent with planned land use patterns.

Rural and Agricultural Conservation

Conserve the agricultural land base of the County and preserve rural character in predominantly rural areas of the County by directing growth to existing population centers.

Natural Resource Conservation and Sensitive Areas Protection

Conserve and protect Talbot County's most valuable and attractive assets, its natural resources and Critical Areas. Establish and enforce mandatory programs and regulations, and provide tax, financial, and any other incentives to insure their preservation, while allowing for moderate planned growth and development.

Mineral Resources

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.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Provide an improved system of parks and recreation facilities based on surveys of residents.

Housing

Develop policies, initiate programs and acquire funding to help alleviate substandard housing conditions and provide, in appropriate locations, residential areas which can accommodate a variety of housing densities, types, sizes and costs to meet existing and future needs.

Economic Development

Diversify and expand the County's economic base to provide a broad range of employment opportunities resulting in a strong tax base

Historic and Cultural Preservation

Preserve and enhance the County's rich cultural and historic heritage.

Community Appearance and Design

Design development to preserve and enhance the appearance and Rural Character of Talbot County.

VIII. Organization of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into thirteen chapters. Chapters One and Two provide the context and background information for the Plan. Chapters Three through Thirteen contain the plan elements and include the goals, policies and implementation recommendations.

Chapter 1.	Introduction
Chapter 2.	Plan Assumptions and Background Data
Chapter 3.	Land Use
Chapter 4.	Transportation
Chapter 5.	Community Services and Facilities
Chapter 6.	Rural and Agricultural Conservation
Chapter 7.	Natural Resource Conservation and Sensitive Areas Protection
Chapter 8.	Mineral Resources
Chapter 9.	Parks and Recreation
Chapter 10.	Housing
Chapter 11.	Economic Development
Chapter 12.	Historic and Cultural Preservation
Chapter 13.	Community Appearance and Design

IX. Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document guiding public and private land use decisions over the next twenty years. The plan will be implemented through a variety of regulatory and financial tools.

Typically, comprehensive plans are implemented primarily through the Zoning Ordinance, and other county planning and regulatory documents, the Capital Improvement Program, State and Federal regulations and funding, and non-regulatory programs, such as easement donation and acquisition programs, and transferable development rights programs.

Over the past fifteen years, the County has implemented a number of progressive growth management strategies that have begun to change the pace and location of development. The Plan recommends a number of implementation strategies to better manage the density and location of growth, improve environmental quality, and ensure the provision of public facilities that meet the changing needs of residents and to reduce the burden of expanding public infrastructure on existing residents. To monitor progress in achieving the Plan's goals and strategies, the Planning Commission should establish a process to review the effectiveness of regulatory and non-regulatory tools, and make recommendations to the County Council when appropriate which the Council may, or may not, approve as it sees fit.

The Planning Commission and Planning Officer should establish a schedule to review and update indicators of change. As information becomes available, the data should be updated. On an annual basis, the Planning Commission and Planning Officer should assess changes to growth projections, location and rate of growth both in the County and towns.

With the adoption of growth boundaries in the form of the Countryside Preservation Area, the Planning Commission should maintain a dynamic relationship with the incorporated towns to review proposed developments in the designated growth areas. Managing the density and design of growth in the incorporated areas is critical to the success of the Plan's overarching goal to protect the rural character of the County by directing growth into areas that can provide the services and facilities needed by a growing population.

As with any document, amendments may be needed over time depending on new initiatives, more detailed planning, changes in growth projections, or changes in government policies. While annual review will provide indicators of short term changes, significant changes in development trends frequently take ten or more years to become apparent. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be long-range, establishing goals, policies and implementation strategies that will be accomplished in five to twenty years. Review and analysis of short term changes is an important step in evaluating and predicting potential shifts in the Plan's assumptions.

Chapter 2 Background Data and Planning Assumptions

Introduction

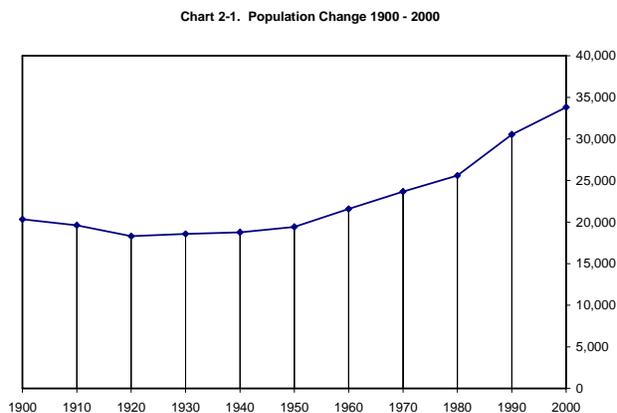
Trends, projections, and assumptions provide a numerical benchmark to help determine if the plan is realistic and reasonable. A variety of information, in combination with citizen input, was used as a basis for the policies in the Plan.

It is important to develop quality baseline data in an effort to benchmark and monitor progress. This data should be updated on a regular basis as new information becomes available.

Important trends, projections, and planning assumptions are discussed in this Chapter. Unless otherwise noted, the U. S. Census Bureau and Maryland Department of Planning are the sources for information contained in this Chapter. Projections prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, Planning Data Services are as of October 2002. Historical jobs, total personal income and per capita personal income data through 2000 are from the U. S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Historical school enrollment is from the Maryland State Department of Education.

Population

As shown in Chart 2-1, between 1900 and 1950, Talbot County's population remained relatively unchanged. The opening of the first Chesapeake Bay Bridge in the early 1950s marked the beginning of an increased rate of growth in both Talbot County and the Upper Eastern Shore Region.



Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning

Between 1950 and 2000, the population increased by 74%, going from 19,328 in 1950 to a population of 33,812 in 2000. The County population increases considerably during the weekends, particularly during the summer months. Much of this periodic increase is attributable to a growth in tourism and in second homes. While few indicators are available to quantify these periodic increases in population, the County should identify ways to quantify these trends to improve its ability to monitor this trend and its impacts to infrastructure and public service delivery demand in future years.

Talbot County Population Distribution

The population growth in Talbot County has not been evenly distributed throughout the county. The Easton Election District is by far the County's most populous and contains slightly more than 52% of

the County's total population. The remaining population is generally dispersed among the County's other four election districts. Between 1990 and 2000, 2,161 or 66% of new residents located in the Easton Election District.

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Easton	47.2%	47.5%	50.6%	52.1%
St. Michael's	18.6%	18.2%	17.3%	16.7%
Trappe	14.2%	13.7%	13.3%	13.2%
Chapel	11.7%	13.1%	12.3%	12.2%
Bay Hundred	8.3%	7.5%	6.4%	5.8%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning.

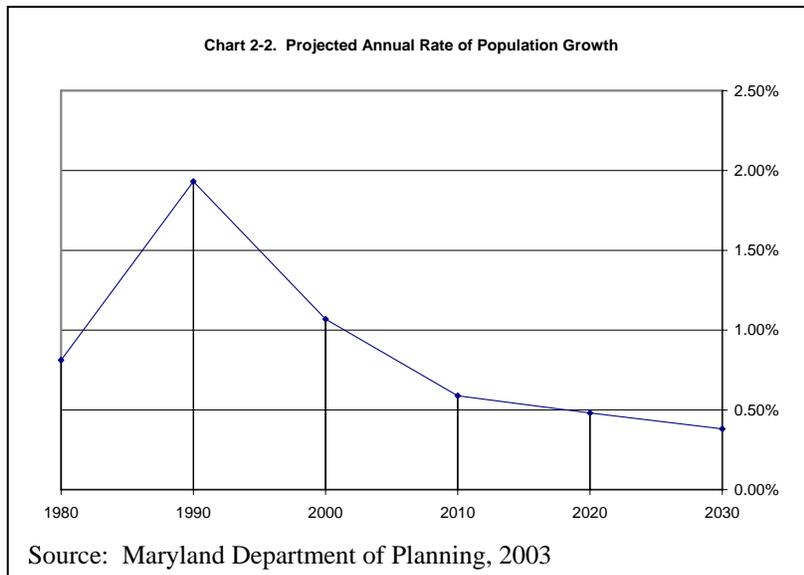
In 1970, approximately 40% of all Talbot County residents lived within the County's five incorporated towns. By 2000, the combined population of all towns grew to represent just over 44% of the total County population. Easton is the largest town in Talbot County. Easton's population represented 28.8% of the total County population in 1970. By 2000, Easton's population has grown to represent 34.6% of the County. The Town of Trappe is the only other town to sustain significant growth during the 1970-2000 time periods. Trappe's population more than doubled over the 30-year period growing from 426 residents in 1970 to 1,146 in 2000.

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Unincorporated Area of County	59.5%	59.2%	59.2%	55.9%
Town of Easton	28.8%	29.4%	30.7%	34.6%
Town of St. Michaels	6.1%	5.1%	4.3%	3.5%
Town of Oxford	3.2%	2.9%	2.3%	2.3%
Town of Trappe	1.8%	2.9%	3.2%	3.4%
Town of Queen Anne (pt)	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	0.2%
Total Incorporated Towns	40.5%	40.8%	40.8%	44.1%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning.

A. Talbot County Population Projections

Current and projected population and household data for 2000 to 2030 prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning show that by 2030 the County's population would grow to 38,950. The population projections reflect a growth rate in the range of 0.5% per year. The population growth rate between 1990 and 2000 averaged 1.02% per year. It should be noted that the State's projections may be low when considering the current rate of residential construction in the county and towns.



In 2000, the median age in Talbot County was 43.3 years compared to the statewide average of 36 years. Talbot County’s relatively high median age is a function of a population that is aging in place, and in-migration of wealthy retirees locating to high-end waterfront housing.¹

B. Current and Projected Households

The number of households in Talbot County has significantly increased over the last thirty years. As indicated in the table below, household growth has occurred at a substantially higher rate than population growth due to decreasing average household size. Between 1970 and 2000, the rate of increase in the number of households is 80.8%, nearly double the rate of increase in population (42.8%) over the same period.

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Households	7,914	9,934	12,677	14,307	15,500	16,675	17,450
Average Household Size (persons per household)	2.94	2.55	2.39	2.32	2.26	2.20	2.18

Source: U. S. Bureau of Census and Maryland Office of Planning

The trend has clear implications for future housing demand in the County as more housing units will be needed to accommodate projected population growth and smaller average household size. Since fewer people will be living in each household, more housing units will be needed to accommodate population growth than were required in the past.

C. Age Distribution

The following table shows the age distribution of Talbot County’s population in 1990, 2000 and projections for 2020 and 2030 and compares these to the Upper Eastern Shore and the State of Maryland.

¹ Data Source: Maryland Department of Planning, Planning Data Services, from the U. S. Census, May, 2001. Prepared by Mark Goldstein, 2003.

Cohort	Talbot				Upper Eastern Shore				Maryland			
	1990	2000	2020	2030	1990	2000	2020	2030	1990	2000	2020	2030
0-4	6.5	5.2	4.9	4.6	7.4	6.2	6.0	5.6	7.6	6.4	6.4	6.1
5-19	16.8	18.3	14.9	14.8	20.5	21.6	18.6	18.5	19.7	21.4	19.0	19.1
20-44	34.4	29.0	23.9	24.1	37.8	33.8	28.3	28.3	42.8	34.6	31.8	31.7
45-64	22.4	27.2	28.4	23.1	20.6	24.6	28.2	23.9	19.1	25.8	26.1	22.2
65+	19.9	20.4	27.9	33.4	13.6	13.8	18.9	23.7	10.8	11.7	16.7	20.9

Age Distribution, as a percent of total population. Year 2000

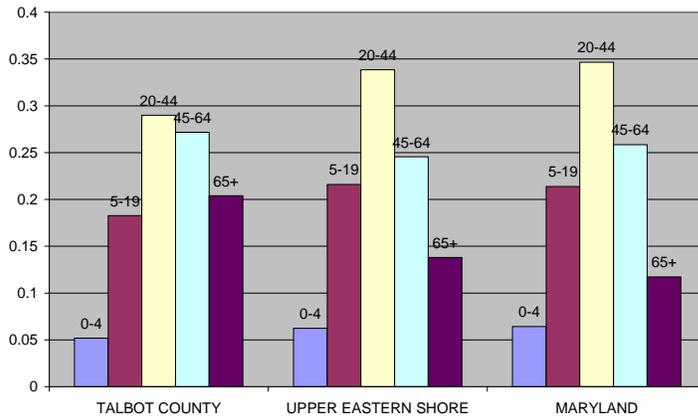


Chart 2-3. Age Distribution Year 2000. Talbot County, Upper Eastern Shore, Maryland. Source. U. S. Bureau of Census and Maryland Office of Planning

In 2000, as compared to the Upper Eastern Shore and the State of Maryland, the County had a lower proportion of population in all categories except in the 65+ category.

The County is expected to see a decline in the school age population over the next 10-year period. The overall student population is projected to decline from 4,338 students in 2002, to 3,820 students in 2012. This translates into a 10.5% decrease in elementary school enrollment; a 16.4% decrease in middle school enrollment and a 10.3% decrease in high school enrollment.

Housing

In 2000, there were 16,500 housing units. Of these 14,307 (86%) were occupied, 13.3% were vacant, a high percentage of these may be for seasonal or recreational use. Between 1980 and 2000, the total number of housing units increased by 5,270. In 2000, of the total number of occupied units, 71.6% were owner occupied, and 28.4% were rental units. Between 1970 and 2000, percentage of owner occupied units has increased by 4%. The ownership rate is slightly higher than the State at 67.7% but lower than the 75.4% for the Upper Eastern Shore.

	Total Units	Total Occupied Units	Owner Occupied Rate	Renter Occupied Rate
Talbot County	16,500	14,307	71.6%	28.4%
Upper Eastern Shore	89,073	79,608	75.4%	24.6%
Maryland	2,145,283	1,980,859	67.1%	32.3%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning

Between 1990 and 2001 a total of 3,592 housing units were constructed in the County. Of these 3,258 were single family homes. In the ten-year period between 1981 and 1990, only 37% of the growth in housing units occurred in the towns. From 1991 through 2000, 53% of the growth in housing units occurred in the towns.

Year	Unincorporated Area of County	Easton	St. Michaels	Oxford	Trappe	Total Incorporated Areas	Total County
1980	156	41	16	1	4	62	218
1981	91	43	7	2	1	53	144
1982	109	30	1	6	0	37	146
1983	146	123	4	3	4	134	280
1984	143	129	53	2	1	185	328
1985	249	66	6	3	2	77	326
1986	209	152	2	3	8	165	374
1987	250	108	0	15	6	129	379
1988	216	85	0	4	50	139	355
1989	225	44	1	9	26	80	305
1990	152	68	5	3	19	95	247
1991	130	28	3	5	9	45	175
1992	122	124	3	5	4	136	258
1993	150	93	6	8	7	114	264
1994	220	80	1	1	7	89	309
1995	133	91	5	6	6	108	241
1996	153	165	4	11	8	188	341
1997	152	178	6	8	7	199	351
1998	172	162	4	7	2	175	347
1999	174	201	2	7	4	214	388
2000	153	124	3	6	8	141	294
2001	154	155	0	4	2	161	315
2002	169	172	1	4	5	182	351

Source: Talbot County Public Works Department, Building Inspection and Town Clerks, March 2003.

Recent trends indicate a significant shift in the distribution of growth in the County. In the years

2000 –2002, 50.42% of all new units built in the County were built in the incorporated towns. The Town of Easton issued more building permits in 2001 and 2002 for new residential units than the County. This trend is in part due to County planning policies that encourage growth to locate in the incorporated Towns.

Employment

Several state agencies track economic indicators and provide annual updates and long-range projections. The information in Table 2-7 and 2-7a is taken from data provided by the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. Table 2-8 reports on the number of Talbot County residents reported to be in the labor force and the unemployment rate.

The actual size of the resident labor force in Talbot County varies from month to month and year to year. As shown in Table 2-7, the resident civilian labor force increased between 1980 and 2000. This trend is projected to continue through 2030. The percent of the population in the labor force is projected to decrease over the next 30 years. While this is a statewide trend, it is more pronounced in Talbot County. In 2030, only 54.7% of the total population over 16 is projected to be in the labor force, this is a significantly lower percentage than in either the Upper Eastern Shore or the State.

TABLE 2-7. CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE AND PARTICIPATION RATES						
1980 – 2030						
Talbot County	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Total Population 16+	20,510	24,690	27,200	29,830	31,450	32,780
In Labor Force	12,760	16,220	16,790	18,240	18,280	17,930
% in Labor Force	62.2	65.7	61.7	61.1	58.1	54.7
Upper Eastern Shore	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Total Population 16+	114,830	140,110	161,730	184,610	201,000	212,600
In Labor Force	69,430	94,470	108,290	123,130	128,860	130,000
% in Labor Force	60.5	67.4	67.0	66.7	64.1	61.1
MARYLAND	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Total Population 16+	3,213,990	3,731,820	4,085,980	4,550,920	4,880,740	5,088,130
In Labor Force	2,108,300	2,639,920	2,769,560	3,064,140	3,174,140	3,159,710
% in Labor Force	65.6	70.7	67.8	67.3	65.0	62.1

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning, 2003

Table 2-7a shows growth in the resident civilian labor force and unemployment trends between 1980 and 2000. From 1990 to 2000 the labor force grew by just over 2,379; from 16,483 to 18,862 by 2000.

TABLE 2-7a TALBOT COUNTY CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE AND

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS (1980-2000)				
YEAR	TALBOT COUNTY		STATE	
	Civilian Labor Force	Unemployment Rate	Civilian Labor Force	Unemployment Rate
1980	10,160	5.4%	2,158,000	6.5%
1985	15,119	3.6%	2,260,000	4.6%
1990	16,483	3.1%	2,609,439	4.7%
1995	17,923	3.6%	2,715,094	5.1%
1996	18,472	4.0%	2,787,788	4.9%
1997	18,721	4.3%	2,782,198	5.1%
1998	18,944	3.9%	2,753,258	4.6%
1999	18,877	2.8%	2,774,718	3.5%
2000	18,862	3.1%	2,789,282	3.8%

As indicated in Table 2-8, the total number of jobs in Talbot County increased by over 2,506; from 23,239 in 1996 to 25,745 in 2000. The growth in the actual number of jobs has outpaced growth of the resident County labor force, providing a clear indication of the County's role as a regional employment center.

TABLE 2-8: RATIO JOBS TO WORKFORCE 1996-2000							
Title	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Change 1996/2000	% Change 1996/2000
*Total Jobs	23,239	24,227	24,416	25,066	25,745	2,506	9.37%
Civilian Workforce	18,472	18,721	18,944	18,877	18,862	390	2.07%
Jobs to Workforce	1.26	1.29	1.29	1.33	1.36	--	--

* include both full-time and part-time jobs

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning, 2003

In 2000, there were 1.36 jobs for every person in the labor force in Talbot County. This compares to less than 1 job for every person in the labor force in the Upper Eastern Shore during the same time period. As fewer County residents participate in the labor force, the number of jobs per person is projected to increase, which may include individuals holding down more than one job and/or part time or seasonal positions.

TABLE 2-9. UPPER EASTERN SHORE RATIO JOBS TO LABOR FORCE 1980 - 2030						
UPPER EASTERN SHORE	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Population in Labor Force	69,430	94,470	108,290	123,130	128,860	130,000
Ratio of Jobs to Labor Force	0.87	0.86	0.93	0.92	0.92	0.93

Source: U. S. Census Department, Maryland Department of Planning, 2003

TABLE 2-10. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES		
MARYLAND		TALBOT COUNTY
4.7%	1990	3.1%
6.0%	1991	4.6%
6.7%	1992	5.2%
6.2%	1993	4.2%
5.1%	1994	3.4%
5.1%	1995	3.6%
4.9%	1996	4.0%
5.1%	1997	4.3%
4.6%	1998	3.9%
3.5%	1999	2.8%
3.0%	2000	3.1%
4.0%	2001	3.0%
4.4%	2002	3.2%
4.5%	2003	4.2%

Source: Maryland Department of Planning, 2003

Talbot County has enjoyed a low unemployment rate relative to the Eastern Shore and the State of Maryland as a whole. The combination of a declining labor pool, an increasing number of jobs will continue to make Talbot County a regional employment center.

In 2000, 76.1% of employed residents worked in the County. However, the percentage of the total number of county jobs held by residents was 62%, with non-residents holding 38% of the jobs.

The statistics relating to Labor Force and Jobs presented in this section are based on information available from the Census Bureau and the Maryland Department of Planning (CB/MDP). It should be noted that these statistics vary considerably from statistics on the same subjects published by the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development (MDED). An example of the disparity is that the CB/MDP statistics for the year 2000 indicate a labor force of 16,760 and a number of jobs of 25,900; while the MDED statistics for 2000 are a labor force of 18,862 and a number of jobs of 18,227. This disparity is even more evident when a Ratio of Jobs to Labor Force is calculated using those year 2000 statistics: for CB/MDP the ratio is 1.54, compared to a ratio of 0.97 for MDED.

Statistics and personal observations regarding employees commuting into vs. out of the County would lead to an impression of there being more jobs in the County than there are members in our labor force; but the MDED data would cause one to wonder if the CB/MDP Ratio overstates that relationship. The Jobs to Labor Force Ratio is important because the CB/MDP Ratio could negatively influence consideration of economic development actions to bring employment opportunities to our citizens; or conversely, the MDED Ratio could mislead prospective new employers as to availability within the County's labor force. The County needs to have meaningful measures of the size and nature of its labor force and the type and number of its jobs, to be able to appropriately consider actions related to employment.

A. Major Economic Sectors

The major economic sectors in the County in terms of jobs include services, retail trade, and manufacturing. As shown in Table 2-11, these economic sectors, with the exception of manufacturing, have increased their share of total employment. The greatest rate of growth in jobs

is in transportation, communications and utilities as well as the retail and service industries. The agriculture, fisheries, forestry, government, transportation, communication and public utilities sectors have decreased their share of total employment over the last three decades. The percentage share of persons employed in the construction industry reflected modest overall growth through the period.

As indicated in Table 2-11, farm employment in Talbot County dropped by approximately 24%, from 493 in 1990 to 373 by 2000. Despite employment losses, the agricultural industry has remained relatively strong in Talbot County during the last decade.

Table 2-11 TALBOT COUNTY FULL AND PART-TIME JOBS (by place of work) BY TYPE OF INDUSTRY (1990-2000)				
TITLE	1990	2000	Change (1990-2000)	% Change (1990-2000)
TOTAL JOBS	21,437	25,745	4,308	20%
BY TYPE				
Wage & Salary	16,920	20,198	3,278	19%
Proprietors	4,517	5,547	1,030	23%
Farm Proprietors	299	266	-33	-11%
*Nonfarm Proprietors	4,218	5,281	1,063	25%
BY MAJOR INDUSTRY				
Farm	493	373	-120	-24%
Nonfarm	20,944	25,372	4,428	21%
PRIVATE	19,516	23,463	3,947	20%
**Agservice, forestry, fishing, and other	811	(D)	(N)	(N)
Mining	40	(D)	(N)	(N)
Construction	2,003	1,980	-23	-1%
Manufacturing	2,876	2,959	83	3%
Transportation & public utilities	436	664	228	54%
Wholesale trade	539	768	229	42%
Retail trade	4,084	4,852	768	19%
Finance, insurance, & real estate	1,445	2,126	681	47%
Services	7,282	9,212	1,930	27%
GOVERNMENT & GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES	1,428	1,909	481	34%
Federal, civilian	181	299	118	65%
Military	159	115	-44	-28%
State and local	1,088	1,495	407	37%
State	82	203	121	148%
Local	1,006	1,292	286	28%

* Excludes limited partners

** "Other" consists of the number of jobs held by U.S. residents employed by international organizations & foreign embassies & consultants in the U.S.

"(D)" Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information

“(N)” Data not available for this year

Source: Extracts prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, Planning Data Services, from U.S. BEA Table CA-25, May, 2003

The number of people commuting into Talbot County to work has increased steadily over the last ten years. In 1990, 6,076 people commuted into Talbot County workplaces from other jurisdictions. This number increased to 7,461 in 2000. In the same time period, the number of people commuting out of Talbot County to workplaces in other jurisdictions increased from 3,083 in 1990 to 3,836 in 2000.

B. Income

Since 1988, Talbot County has ranked number 3 in per capita income in the State. In 2000, the per capita income was \$37,809. At the same time, the per capita income for the Upper Eastern Shore was \$28,774 and \$34,060 for the State. Talbot County median household income is lower than the state or Upper Eastern Shore Region median household income.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 1999, 2,771 individuals or 8.3% of the total population were below the poverty level. Of the total, 520 individuals were 65+ years of age, and 755 were children under 18 years of age.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Census 1989	Census 1999	Estimated 2002
UPPER EASTERN SHORE REGION	\$33,785	\$47,700	\$53,350
TALBOT COUNTY	\$31,885	\$43,550	\$46,150
MARYLAND	\$39,386	\$52,850	\$58,600

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning, 2003

C. Existing Land Use

Based on the Maryland Department of Planning's analysis of Satellite imagery in 1997, approximately 20,506 acres in Talbot County were developed at that time and approximately 150,917 acres remained undeveloped. The vast majority of this undeveloped land was in agricultural use. In 1997 total land in agricultural use accounted for 104,045 acres while forest lands represented 41,749 acres in undeveloped lands.

Residential development accounted for about 15,905 acres of the developed area of the County in

1997. From 1997 to 2000, residential developed land increased by approximately 7 percent or 1,108 acres and grew to 17,013.

In earlier years land use tracking with satellite imagery used by the State could only measure change through the use of 90-acre cells. In 1997, imagery and methodology permitted a finer grain picture of land use patterns down to a 5-acre cell size as the basis for measurement. Since data in years prior to 1997 is not comparable to more recent land use analysis, longer-term trend analysis would not be accurate.

It is estimated that over 80% of all residential development in the County is single-family detached homes. The estimated 20% of housing units that are multi-family are almost exclusively located in the County's incorporated towns. The majority of the residential development in the unincorporated areas of the County is lower density, single-family detached housing, located in waterfront subdivisions and in scattered locations in rural and waterfront areas. There are also concentrations of older homes located in the County's numerous unincorporated villages.

Commercial and industrial development in 2000 accounted for about 2,271 acres of the developed area of the County. Most of the commercial and industrial development in Talbot County is located in the incorporated towns with some strip development in unincorporated areas along Routes 50 and 33. Limited amounts of commercial development are also found within various village centers. Map 2-1 shows the existing land use pattern in Talbot County in 2001.

TABLE 2-13. TALBOT COUNTY LAND USE CHANGE				
1997 - 2000				
Land Use	Year 1997	Year 2000	Land Use Change	
			Acres	Percent
Low Density Residential	13,189	14,182	993	7.5%
Medium/ High Density Residential	2,716	2,831	115	4.2%
Commercial/ Industrial	2,157	2,271	114	5.3%
Institutional / Open Space	2,444	2,269	-175	-7.2%
Total Development	20,506	21,553	1,047	5.1%
Agriculture	104,045	103,532	-513	-0.5%
Forest	41,749	40,633	-1,116	-2.7%
Extractive/ Barren	207	207	0	0.0%
Wetland	4,916	4,637	-279	-5.7%
Total Resources	150,917	149,009	-1,908	-1.3%
Total Land	171,423	170,562	-861	-0.5%
Water	129,796	129,798	2	0.0%
Total Area	301,219	300,360	-859	-0.3%
Figures prior to 1997 have been excluded since they are not comparable to years shown due to changes in methodology used to measure land use cells and satellite imagery. Source: Maryland Department of State Planning.				

D. Agriculture and Resource Lands

Currently 64% (109,572 acres) of the county land area is classified as lands in farms. Of these 92,953 acres (85%) are cropland. Crops represent the primary type of farm production.

<i>Farm Number and Size</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1987</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1997</i>
Number of Farms	350	280	250	240
Average size (acres)	342	389	423	457
Land in Farms (acres)	119,684	109,032	109,108	109,572

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Census U.S. Department of Commerce, 1997.

According to the 1997 U. S. Census of Agriculture, while the average farm size has increased from 342 acres in 1982 to 457 acres in 1997, approximately 10,000 acres of farmland has been lost since 1982.

Agricultural Preservation Districts

As of December 2002, approximately 14,523 acres of land located in 95 districts in Talbot County have been placed in agricultural preservation districts. Development rights easements have been purchased on forty-nine (49) of the 95 districts, which permanently protects 8,100 acres of farmland.

Maryland Environmental Trust Lands

Land trust organizations do not typically purchase development rights from a property owner, but rather accept conservation easements as donations and in return, the property owner receives significant tax benefits. As of December 2002, approximately 14,804 acres of land within the County have entered into conservation agreements with various land trust organizations.

DNR Lands

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages publicly owned lands and protected open space in the State. In Talbot County, DNR manages 238 acres of public lands and protected open space, including Black Walnut Point Natural Resource Management Area, Choptank Fishing Pier State Park, Wye Oak State Park, and Seth Demonstration State Forest.

Agriculture Industry

Talbot County's agricultural industry is still a major component of the County's economic base, occupying 63% (109,572 acres) of its land area and provides \$48.7M in gross annual sales revenue. While the gross sales of agricultural industries is one measurement of the impact of agriculture on the economy, industries that are linked to agriculture must also be considered to better estimate the total economic impact. "Backward-linked" industries are all of those that the agriculture industry supports through purchases. These industries include fuel, fertilizer, machinery repair, feed, and many others. Due to the large purchasing power of agriculture on the Delmarva, backward-linked industries rely on purchases made by agriculture to support their employees and economic prosperity. "Forward-linked" industries also rely on agriculture. These industries purchase agricultural commodities and in some way, add value to them through packaging and/or processing. Backward and forward linked industries contribute more than \$165M to the local economy.

Chapter 3

Land Use Plan

I. Vision

Land use decisions, based on full participation of our citizens, preserve and enhance the rural character and natural resources of Talbot County and accommodate the diverse needs of our villages.

Business and residential development is located primarily within the planned urban growth areas consistent with the principles of Smart Growth, with Countryside Preservation Areas surrounding towns and villages. Agricultural land is protected to preserve our farms.

On the borders of towns and County, where two comprehensive plans may be in conflict, each respects the values of the other and strives for harmonious land use and growth management decisions. County and town planners work together to achieve these goals ensuring that we remain a rural community.

The desirable size of Talbot County and the growth rate that maintains or improves the quality of life and rural character are identified in a growth policy. Sustainable growth is related to the adequacy of aquifers, sewage disposal, and roads. Growth management in the County recognizes the fragility of our unique geography, which is bounded by the Chesapeake Bay, the Choptank River, and the Eastern Bay/Wye East River. In particular, the western portion of the County, consisting of a series of narrow peninsulas with single road access in and out, is environmentally sensitive to the impact of growth.

Goal

Promote and maintain a well-planned pattern of compatible and efficient utilization of land and water resources which concentrates development only in areas where environmental impacts will be minimized.

II. Introduction

Talbot County's classic rural landscape is shaped by the county's rich history as a farming and maritime community. The landscape is dotted with traditional towns and villages that developed at crossroads, maritime ports, and mill sites to serve the seafood, boat building, and farming communities.

This plan seeks to continue that pattern of development by guiding new development to locations where public infrastructure is available and discouraging development in rural and agricultural areas.

Growth management is not a new idea for Talbot County. The 1973 Comprehensive Plan contained the objective to "Encourage new development to locate in and around existing population centers." However, efforts to accomplish the objective did not predict a growing demand for two-acre lots, which were permitted in the rural areas. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, two important actions

occurred that significantly strengthened the policy to maintain the rural character of the County. In 1989, the County passed the Talbot County Critical Area ordinance in compliance with State requirements. The Critical Area ordinance effectively downzoned 57,498 acres from 2 and 5-acre residential lots to a 20-acre density. This zone is called the Resource Conservation District (RC). In 1991, following the 1990 update of the Plan which reaffirmed the core goal of concentrating development in and around existing population centers, the County adopted a new zoning district, the Resource Agricultural Conservation District (RAC). The new district replaced the old A-2 district, which permitted 2-acre lots and created a conservation district (RAC) permitting a residential density of 1 lot per 20 acres. The two changes, Critical Areas (RC) and Agricultural (RAC) encompassing more than 87% of the County effectively changed the permitted density from 1 lot per 2 acres, to 1 lot per 20 acres. The 1990 Comprehensive Plan made significant changes to the County development ordinances and policies. The 1997 Plan update affirmed the 1990 Plan.

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan builds on the goals and policies of the 1990 Plan and strengthens the growth management policies that guide development in and around existing population centers and limit the outward expansion of those centers into the rural lands of the County. By establishing a Countryside Preservation Area around the Towns, the Plan creates an urban growth boundary defining the edge between town and countryside.

The County is divided into three primary groups: incorporated towns and surrounding growth areas, land within the Critical Area and land outside of the Critical Area. The Plan incorporates the concept of maintaining rural character as an organizing framework for land use management in the County. The pattern, scale, and mix of land uses define each character type. Community character types are categorized as land use policy areas. The County's land use policy areas are: agricultural, resource conservation, western rural conservation, moderate density residential, village centers, business and industrial, countryside preservation area, and towns and growth areas.

Talbot County's land use management strategies have been focused on limiting development in environmentally sensitive and rural areas, and encouraging growth in the Incorporated Towns and their adjacent designated growth areas. This strategy creates a system of urban growth boundaries that are the dividing line between areas planned for urban development and areas planned for resource based uses, such as agriculture, forestry, and/or rural residential uses.

In Talbot County, the areas for planned growth are designated as Priority Funding Areas (PFAs). The PFAs are locally designated areas, consistent with the 1992 Visions in Article 66B, where the State and local governments agree they want to encourage and support economic development and new growth. Within these designated growth areas, the character of future development should be compatible with the pattern, scale and mix of land uses that is proposed in the adjacent jurisdictions' long-range land use plans.

III. General Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan graphically represents the desired pattern of land use for the County and serves as the basis for delineating zoning districts and establishing development standards. This pattern is based in large part on an interest in maintaining traditional or historic settlement patterns and the character of established communities. Future growth and development in the County should

generally be in conformance with the Official Land Use Plan Map (Map 3-1) and planning area policies.

The strategy for keeping the County's rural character depends on preserving rural lands and open space. Today, the County's farmland accounts for most of its open space and scenic character. To help agriculture continue as a long-term use in the rural areas, the County will encourage voluntary participation in programs that provide assistance and reduce tax burdens to the farm community. Encouraging the continuation of agriculture is one way the County will seek to maintain open space. The County's primary method of preserving open space in rural areas will be to encourage future residential, commercial, and industrial growth to occur in the incorporated towns. In the rural areas, development will be limited to low density residential and low intensity uses that preserve open space and provides opportunities for farming to continue.

The County's planning areas include:

- A. Incorporated Towns
- B. Designated Growth Areas
- C. Easton Primary and Secondary Growth Areas
- D. Easton Future Growth Area
- E. Business and Industrial Areas
- F. Village Center
- G. Moderate Density Residential Planning Area
- H. Countryside Preservation Areas
- I. Western Rural Conservation
- J. Resource Conservation
- K. Agriculture

Countywide Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 1. The County should preserve its unique rural landscape through conservation of farmland, forestlands, and environmentally sensitive lands by application of land use regulations and easement programs that conserve open space in rural areas.
- C03.P. 2. The County should continue a restrictive approach toward the use of land over which it has zoning authority, and new development should be of a controlled nature and channeled into the most appropriate areas and discouraged in others.
- C03.P. 3. Most new residential, institutional, commercial, business and industrial development should be located in the designated growth areas and incorporated towns.
- C03.P. 4. The County shall prohibit strip development along County and State roadways.
- C03.P. 5. Sensitive environmental areas shall be protected where they occur to the greatest extent possible.

IV. Planning Areas

A. Incorporated Towns

The five incorporated towns of Easton, St. Michaels, Oxford, Trappe and Queen Anne are the County's principal residential, commercial and industrial centers. Traditionally, about 40% of all County residents have resided within the incorporated towns. Within the past ten years, the percentage of residents living in the incorporated towns has risen to 44%. During the same time-period, about 46 % of all new houses built in the County were within the towns. The majority of all County businesses and jobs also are located within the towns.

The incorporated towns are the best locations for future residential, commercial and industrial growth and development. Growth in the incorporated towns will reduce the outward sprawl of development and keep new growth within existing centers where adequate public facilities and services such as sewer, water, schools, government offices, police and fire protection, etc. can be efficiently provided. In addition, the impact upon the County road system will be minimized insofar as residents will be located physically close to the jobs, businesses and services they require.

Residential, commercial and industrial growth in existing towns should relieve development pressure in the County's rural and agricultural areas. The compact development form and investments in infrastructure in the County's towns offer opportunities for maximum use of facilities to support growth through new development, infill development, and creative redevelopment in appropriate locations.

The incorporated towns within the County have their own independent planning and zoning authority. Each town has its own limitations and potential to support growth consistent with the visions established in the 1992 Maryland State Planning Act based on available and planned investments in infrastructure. Given the emphasis in the Land Use Plan on directing growth to existing population centers, the County will need to continue to support the collective efforts of the towns in their land use plans and provide the necessary infrastructure required to support residential and business growth.

B. Designated Growth Areas

An area around each of the incorporated Towns of Easton, St. Michaels, Oxford and Trappe is designated as a "growth area" (See Maps 3-2, 3-3, 3-4 and 3-5). These Designated Growth Areas encompass existing urban and suburban development and areas that will serve as the primary locations for new compact, mixed-use neighborhoods seamlessly integrated with the adjacent towns. The Designated Growth Areas have been established with the adjacent incorporated towns and represent the physical limits of continuous urban form.

It is anticipated that urban development in the Designated Growth Area will occur only after annexation into the adjacent incorporated town and that the development regulations of the towns will be designed to achieve the preferred type of development, i.e., compact mixed-use neighborhoods ("Smart Neighborhoods"). County regulations and growth management programs

will be coordinated with those of the towns to insure that adequate public facilities and services are in place when development is proposed, that quality community design is required, and that environmental safeguards are in place.

Annexation and development within the Designated Growth Area should occur on an incremental basis with those properties closest to the towns receiving the higher priority for annexation and development. “Leapfrog development” of properties on the outer perimeter of the Designated Growth Area at low “septic system” densities shall be avoided so as not to produce isolated County enclaves within town borders. The Designated Growth Area in the Easton vicinity is further delineated into Primary and Secondary Growth Areas (See Map 3-2). The “Primary” and “Secondary Growth Area” classifications correspond to Easton’s short-term annexation plans and include properties that are expected to be annexed within the next five to ten years. County development regulations for the Designated Growth Area will support the orderly expansion of the towns by discouraging premature urban or suburban development in these areas.

Future commercial uses will be encouraged to locate within the towns and as infill and redevelopment of existing unincorporated commercial areas. Large-scale commercial uses, including shopping centers and big box retail will not be permitted in the County identified Designated Growth Areas. These uses may only be developed at appropriate locations within the incorporated towns. Business and industrial uses will be encouraged to locate within the incorporated towns as well but may also be located in designated business and industrial development areas.

Towns and Designated Growth Areas Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 6. The County should coordinate with the towns in the review and approval of development projects adjacent to the towns and in matters of town annexations. The current practice of regularly scheduled meetings among Councils and Planners should continue.
- C03.P. 7. The County and Towns should explore implementation of an inter-jurisdictional transfer of development rights program to encourage development in the Towns and designated growth areas, and encourage implementation of the Countryside Preservation Area.
- C03.P. 8. County development regulations for the Designated Growth Areas will support the orderly expansion of the towns by discouraging premature urban or suburban development in these areas.

C. Easton Primary and Secondary Designated Growth Areas

The Town of Easton’s 2004 Comprehensive Plan establishes an Urban Growth Boundary that corresponds to the County’s Countryside Preservation Area. The land located between the existing Town boundary and the inner edge of the Countryside Preservation Area is defined in the County’s Comprehensive Plan as the Easton Primary and Secondary Growth Areas; and the Easton Future Growth Area. (See Map 3-2).

The “Primary” and “Secondary Growth Area” classifications correspond to Easton’s short-term annexation plans and include properties that are expected to be annexed within the next ten to twenty years.

During the upcoming six years, the Town does not plan to annex any additional land, except those areas identified as Priority 1 Areas on the Town Land Use plan. These areas may be annexed for the purpose of “cleaning up” the Town boundary or for health and safety reasons.

To further slow demand for more land, the Town will increase the density of future residential areas. At a minimum, new development in the “Smart Growth” Priority Funding Area will be required to achieve a net density of 3.5 dwelling units per acre.

The Town’s proposed land use patterns in the Designated Growth Areas include well-defined connected neighborhoods with an integrated mix of residential, neighborhood-scale commercial, civic, and open space uses. It is the intention of the Town to encourage true neighborhoods rather than single-use suburban style subdivisions.

Easton Designated Growth Areas Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 9. County development regulations for the Designated Growth Areas will support the orderly expansion of the towns by discouraging premature urban or suburban development in these areas.
- C03.P. 10. Future residential subdivision development around the Easton Airport should be prohibited.

D. Easton Future Growth Area

The Land Use Plan identifies a Future Growth Area in the vicinity of Easton (See Map 3-2). The Future Growth Area encompasses land between the outer limits of Easton’s Primary and Secondary Growth Areas and the Countryside Preservation Area. The Town of Easton Future Growth Area is not currently part of the Designated Growth Area but is included in the Town of Easton’s long-range plan for urban expansion. County development regulations in the Future Growth Area should prohibit premature urban or suburban development until such time as these areas are annexed into the Town of Easton.

Easton Future Growth Areas Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 11. County development regulations in the Easton Future Growth Area should prohibit premature urban or suburban development until such time as these areas are annexed into the Town of Easton.

E. Trappe Future Growth Area

The Land Use Plan identifies a Future Growth Area in the vicinity of Trappe (See Map 3-5). The Future Growth Area encompasses land between the town boundaries and the Countryside Preservation Area. During the upcoming six years, the Town of Trappe does not intend to annex this area. This area is included in Trappe's Comprehensive Plan as an area for planned urban expansion.

County development regulations in the Future Growth Area should prohibit premature urban or suburban development until such time as these areas are annexed into the Town of Trappe.

Trappe Future Growth Area Land Use Policy

C03.P. 12. County development regulations in the Trappe Future Growth Area should prohibit premature urban or suburban development until such time as these areas are annexed into the Town of Trappe.

F. Commercial and Industrial Area

The Commercial and Industrial Area planning area (See Map 2-1 and 2-1a) primarily encompasses areas zoned for commercial and industrial sites, as well as some new areas deemed appropriate for development of commercial and industrial uses. The purpose of the Commercial and Industrial Area is to insure appropriate and adequate areas for employment development are provided for in these areas. Commercial and Industrial areas are not appropriate locations for large-scale retail uses.

Commercial and Industrial Areas Land Use Policies

C03.P. 13. Large-scale commercial uses, including shopping centers/districts and big box retail shall be limited to appropriate locations within the incorporated towns.

C03.P. 14. Industrial uses in village centers should be limited to those that support agriculture, forestry and commercial maritime uses. Commercial agriculture related uses should not be limited to village centers.

C03.P. 15. Concentrations of commercial and industrial uses should be located in well-planned centers or parks within the towns, or as infill and redevelopment of existing commercial/ industrial areas.

G. Village Center

The Village Center planning area is included in the Land Use Plan in recognition of the special needs of the County's unincorporated population centers. The 22 village centers are low or moderate intensity residential communities many with limited neighborhood commercial and service uses. The villages are scattered throughout the County and vary in character and size. Some are highly water oriented and some are inland and farm oriented. Still others are small crossroad settlements consisting of only a few houses.

The village centers do however share much in common, and collectively they play an important role in Talbot County life. Each is an important part of the County culture and character that has evolved based on settlement patterns over time. In this respect, the villages perform a role that is complementary to that of the incorporated towns. Visually, they are an important component of Rural Character, providing a pleasing and appropriately scaled and textured contrast to the rural open character of the surrounding areas.

The village centers are residential in character, but also contain some limited convenience businesses and services as well as civic uses, e.g., a small public park or landing or a church. Some village centers contain businesses oriented towards tourism, such as antique shops and inns. Several of the larger villages have large agriculture related uses and serve as employment and agriculture service centers.

Villages should maintain their unique “sense of place” as identified by their existing architectural character, scale, mix of uses and density of development.

As infill and redevelopment occurs within the Village Centers, it should be required to maintain these attributes. For this reason, it is recommended that the County undertake master planning processes for each of the Village Centers to establish a basis for guiding future infill and redevelopment.

Many of the existing village centers have problems with failing septic systems because of the typically small size of village center lots, poor soil conditions and a high groundwater table. The County provides sewer service to the Tilghman, Newcomb, Royal Oak, Bellevue, Tunis Mills, Unionville, and Copperville village centers. Innovative community systems and shared facilities for sewer and water may represent the most practical approach for correcting existing problems and allowing limited additional development in the remaining village centers that are experiencing septic system problems.

Village Center Areas Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 16. The County will re-examine permitted land uses in the Village Center zoning district to insure that only those uses that are compatible with the existing village character are allowed. The County will prepare appropriate development standards that require new non-residential development be compatible with the scale and prevailing architecture found in the village center.
- C03.P. 17. Residential infill development and redevelopment should be compatible with existing character and density of the village.
- C03.P. 18. Existing rural villages should be a high priority for County efforts to promote housing rehabilitation and affordable housing initiatives.
- C03.P. 19. The County encourages the development of innovative and shared sewer and water facilities in villages with failing septic systems.

Village Center Areas Implementation Strategies

Village Planning

Action: Undertake master planning processes for each of the Village Centers to establish a basis for guiding future infill and redevelopment. Particular priority and attention should be afforded to the Village of Longwoods due to the inconsistency between the Priority Funding Area boundary and existing zoning.

H. Moderate Density Residential

The Moderate Density Residential Planning Area consists of residential communities areas that are designated as “Limited Development Areas” (LDA) in the County’s Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program. Although these areas are largely already developed, some infill and redevelopment is expected. Development in the County’s Chesapeake Bay Critical Area is regulated by standards to insure the impacts to water quality and habitat are minimized. The primary emphasis in the moderate density residential areas is to insure that infill and redevelopment is done in an environmentally sensitive manner. To accomplish this end, the County will encourage context-sensitive development that is located outside of habitat protection areas.

Moderate Density Residential Planning Area Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 20. Infill development and redevelopment of existing residential subdivisions, and existing neighborhoods in rural areas should be compatible with existing character and density.
- C03.P. 21. New buildings or redevelopment of existing buildings on existing lots should be located outside of the habitat protection area.

I. Countryside Preservation Area

The Countryside Preservation Area includes existing low-density rural residential, open space, resource conservation and agriculture uses that form an edge at the periphery of the Designated Growth Area. It is the County’s goal that these areas be permanently preserved as agriculture, forest, wetlands, countryside and other large open spaces. By physically and visually defining the limits of urban growth around the towns and disrupting the continuity and outward expansion of urban form, Countryside Preservation Areas insure that the towns will maintain their unique identity in the landscape and that urban sprawl is not permitted to erode the Rural Character of the County. In addition to the current Rural Agricultural Conservation or Critical Area zoning, the Countryside Preservation areas will be priority areas for the continued application of land preservation measures, such as conservation easements, agriculture preservation planning areas, etc. Additional implementation techniques, such as Inter-jurisdictional Transfer of Development Rights and Purchase of Development Rights programs will be considered for application in order to insure a permanent rural agricultural character at the edge of the towns.

Countryside Planning Area Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 22. A definitive countryside preservation area shall be established at the outer perimeter of the designated growth areas.

Countryside Preservation Planning Area Implementation Strategies

Establishing Countryside Preservation Areas

Action: Revise zoning ordinance to include Countryside Preservation Area.

Consider the following options:

- Limit residential to 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres. Encourage clustering to preserve open space.
- Designate the Countryside Preservation Area as a TDR sending areas, giving priority to Towns and Designated Growth Areas as receiving areas.
- Develop design guidelines that encourage appropriately sited development to preserve the view from the road.

J. Western Rural Conservation

The Western Rural Conservation planning area includes the non-critical area portions of the narrow necks of western Talbot County as shown on Map 3-1. Agriculture, low-density residential and natural resource areas characterize this planning area. This planning area contains a high percentage of sensitive natural areas. In addition, these areas have limited highway access, which raises concerns for evacuation in the case of natural, or man induced event that would sever or block evacuation from these peninsular areas.

Conserving the Rural Character of these areas, especially agriculture, forestry, public recreation and resource conservation uses is a high priority for the County. This area will be targeted for development controls and natural resource enhancement programs designed to protect natural resources while providing for limited low-density residential development with appropriate safeguards for water quality and natural resource protection.

Western Rural Conservation Planning Area Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 23. Open space, agriculture, forestry, and low density single-family detached residential uses are the preferred uses in the Western Rural Conservation Planning Area.
- C03.P. 24. Residential development in this area will be limited to 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres. Bonus density should be limited. Cluster development is encouraged to conserve open space.

Western Rural Conservation Planning Area Implementation Strategies

Conserve rural character

- Action: Revise Zoning Ordinance to include the Western Rural Conservation Area.
Include the following provisions:
- Limit residential density to 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres.
 - Review policy for awarding bonus density with a view towards limiting its use.
 - Cluster development is encouraged to conserve open space.
 - Residential density may not be increased in this area through use of TDRs.

K. Resource Conservation

The Resource Conservation planning area corresponds to areas designated as “Resource Conservation Area” (RCA) in the County’s Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program. These areas are characterized by natural environments, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. The intent of the County’s Critical Area Program and this plan is to retain these areas in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and conservation land uses. Only low-density residential development is permitted provided such development is located outside of habitat protection areas and can demonstrate that water quality and habitat have been maintained or improved.

Resource Conservation Planning Area Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 25. Future development of rural and agricultural lands in the Resource Conservation areas should result in areas primarily characterized by open space, agriculture, forestry, and low-density single-family detached homes.
- C03.P. 26. Within rural areas, both inside and outside the Critical Area, agriculture and forest cover should remain the dominant land uses. The County should provide incentives to cluster development and preserve open space to maintain or enhance the Rural Character of these areas.
- C03.P. 27. Developments utilizing Growth Allocations must be in compliance with the policies and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- C03.P. 28. Sensitive environmental areas shall be protected where they occur to the greatest extent possible. Discourage use of tradeoffs or incentives that increase overall density in or near sensitive areas.

Resource Conservation Planning Area Implementation Strategies

Growth Allocation. Growth allocation should be managed like a density bonus: it should be thought of as an incentive to recipients to fulfill some public purpose in exchange for the benefit (profit) bestowed by the granting of the growth allocation. For additional information on growth allocation in the Critical Areas, refer to the Implementation section in this chapter.

L. Agriculture

The Agriculture planning areas includes the majority of the inland rural and agricultural lands within the County. These areas are characterized by open space, agriculture, forestry, low-density single-family homes, and agriculturally related commercial and industrial land uses. Agricultural and forestry activities are the preferred land uses within these areas. Conservation of the open space character of these areas and maintenance of the land base necessary to support the County's agricultural industry is of primary importance.

Future residential development in the Agriculture planning area should be designed in such a way as to preserve productive agricultural lands, woodlands, open space, environmentally sensitive resources and Rural Character. In-filling of existing residential subdivisions shall be limited to the density allowed when the subdivision was approved.

Development standards applicable to the Agriculture planning area include incentives for rural and agricultural landowners to cluster building lots and retain land as open space. By grouping smaller residential building lots on a portion of the property and leaving the remainder of the property in open space, a developer is allowed to create more lots than if he subdivided the entire farm or parcel into large lots.

Additional incentives for the conservation of agricultural lands and open space include Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs). The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program (MALPF) in existence since 1977 is one of the most successful programs of its kind in the country. The program is comprised of two basic steps: the voluntary establishment of Agricultural Preservation Districts, and the purchase of perpetual development rights easements. The County and State administer the program in an equitable partnership. As of December 2002, 14,523 acres of land in Talbot County have been placed in agricultural preservation districts. Development rights easements have been purchased in 49 of the 95 districts, permanently protecting 8,100 acres of farmland. The County's TDR program allows property owners in rural and agricultural planning areas to transfer and/or sell residential development rights from one property to another. The TDR option allows landowners to maintain land in an undeveloped state and still be compensated for its development value. For more information on both PDRs and TDRs refer to the Implementation section in this chapter.

These approaches — lower residential densities, requiring subdivisions to be designed to conserve open space, providing density incentives for cluster subdivisions and the purchase or transfer of development rights (PDRs and TDRs) — should limit residential growth in rural and agricultural areas, conserve valuable open space, and still allow landowners to achieve a reasonable amount of development potential and equity. Most important, they afford protection of agricultural resource lands and direct growth to existing population centers in the County.

Agriculture Planning Area Land Use Policies

- C03.P. 29. The County encourages the preservation of the rural lands of Talbot County as a permanent rural landscape. Within the rural and agricultural planning areas, agriculture and forest cover should remain the dominant land uses.

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- C03.P. 30. The County will continue to encourage cluster development and preservation of open space to maintain or enhance the Rural Character.
- C03.P. 31. The County's preferred options for residential development in the Agricultural areas are: cluster development, large lot low-density subdivisions, and additions to existing rural villages. These options are preferred over conventional 20-acre lot subdivisions.
- a. Cluster residential development is the preferred rural development option. Cluster developments allow farmland owners to cluster lots in a traditional rural community pattern while retaining the majority of their land in agricultural use or open space.
 - b. Older subdivisions developed on two to five acres lots prior to 1990 were developed in a pattern that is no longer permitted in the Agricultural Planning Area. There are however, opportunities for infill development within some of these communities. Where such opportunities exist, the pre-1990 pattern may be used, but only for infill consistent with the existing character and density of the neighborhood.
- C03.P. 32. The County will continue to promote and encourage the Transfer of Development Rights as a means of preserving prime farmland and encouraging appropriate residential development patterns in rural areas.
- C03.P. 33. The County will continue and strengthen the current countywide farmland and resource land protection PDR programs. Additional public and private funding sources should be sought to expand the program.
- C03.P. 34. Agriculturally related commercial and industrial uses are permitted in the Agricultural Planning Area.

Agricultural Planning Area Implementation Strategies

Conserving agricultural land and open space.

Action: Review cluster development standards regarding lot size, open space requirements and density bonus.

Action: Consider mandatory clustering for some of the permitted lots.

V. The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Plan

The County has adopted a Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Plan pursuant to State requirements. This plan and corresponding zoning regulations affect all waterfront areas of the County within 1,000 feet landward from the shoreline or the inland edge of tidal wetlands.

Within the Critical Area, detailed regulations have been adopted which direct, manage and control residential, commercial and industrial development so that the adverse impacts of growth are minimized. The specific purposes of the Talbot County Critical Area Plan and the development standards that implement it are:

- The protection of water quality by reducing pollution and its effects, whatever the sources;
- The conservation of fish, wildlife and plant habitats;
- The establishment of land use policies that allow for limited growth while maintaining or improving environmental factors;
- The promotion of the most environmentally sensitive plans and practices where development is allowed in shoreline areas;
- The conservation of all types of wetlands so that they can continue to function in their natural capacities as marine nurseries, filters, and absorbers of flood and erosive impacts; and
- The restoration of both shellfish and finfish productivity through protection and cultivation of submerged aquatic vegetation beds.

Areas within the Talbot County Chesapeake Bay Critical Area have been placed in three general land use management categories (see Map 3-6). These categories are:

Resource Conservation Areas (RCA) - areas characterized by nature-dominated environments and resource-utilization activities. In addition, RCAs have at least one of the following features:

- Housing density less than one dwelling unit per five acres; or
- Dominant land use is in agriculture, wetland, forest, barren land, surface water or open space.

Limited Development Areas (LDA) - areas currently developed in low or moderate intensity uses that contain areas of natural plant and wildlife habitat and where the quality of run-off from such areas has not been substantially altered or degraded. In addition, LDAs have at least one of the following features:

- Housing density between one unit per five acres and four units per acre;
- Areas not dominated by agriculture, wetland, forest, barren land, surface water or open space;
- Areas having the characteristics of Intensely Developed Areas, but less than 20 acres; or
- Areas having public water or sewer or both.

Intensely Developed Areas (IDA) - areas of 20 or more contiguous acres, or the entire upland portion of a municipality within the Critical Area (whichever is less) where residential, commercial,

institutional and/or industrial development is predominant and relatively little natural habitat occurs. In addition, IDA's have at least one of the following features:

- Housing density equal to or greater than four dwelling units per acres;
- Industrial, institutional or commercial uses are concentrated in the area; or
- Public sewer and water collection and distribution systems are currently serving the area and housing density is greater than 3 dwelling units per acre.

In addition to these three general classifications, the first 100 feet landward of the head of tide and/or State or private tidal wetlands is designated as a Shoreline Buffer. Within the Buffer, new development activities are generally not permitted. The Buffer is intended to be retained as a naturally vegetated or planted area. Clearing of the Buffer is also restricted. The County has established zoning districts that correspond to the Critical Area classifications of RCA, LDA and IDA. Within each district, land uses, densities and development design are regulated. The majority of the County's Critical Area is currently classified as RCA.

VI. Implementation Recommendations

Realizing the vision of the Comprehensive Plan will require more than wishful thinking. The County's land use and other policies need to be implemented through specific regulations, ordinance, and programs that insure progress toward the plan goals. The following outlines various land use management tools that may be considered for application in Talbot County to achieve land use planning objectives. It identifies the implementation option or tool, provides a brief description of the purpose or traditional application of the particular technique or tool, followed by a recommendation for how and where it might be best applied. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but only the most obvious strategies for consideration.

Tools described represent both regulatory (e.g., zoning provisions, subdivision regulation reforms, etc.) and non-regulatory (easement donation and acquisition programs, capital improvements strategies, Purchase of Development Rights, and Transferable Development Rights programs, etc) approaches to achieving plan objectives. Many of the tools identified are already in use but their application, in some cases, may be broadened or re-focused to improve their effectiveness. Others represent new tools that should be considered for application to achieve policies and objectives identified in this Comprehensive Plan.

A. Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs), or Development Districts

UGBs provide guidance for future growth by establishing a dividing line between areas planned for urban development and areas planned for resource based uses, e.g., agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and/or rural residential uses. UGBs are typically set for a 20 year time period and should allow for adequate development opportunities within the boundary to maintain the market's confidence in the UGBs effectiveness. Establishing UGBs provides local governments with the knowledge needed to judiciously budget for capital improvements and infrastructure investment. UGBs are both a land use and community facilities management tool.

Talbot currently utilizes a form of UGB, the Priority Funding Areas (PFAs). Priority Funding Areas are locally designated areas, consistent with the 1992 Visions in Article 66B, where the State and local governments agree they want to encourage and support economic development and new growth. The County should reevaluate the existing PFA boundaries. Within the Designated Growth Area, the PFA boundary should be revised to correspond to the desired limits of urban expansion within the five to ten year planning time horizon and be consistent with other potential growth management tools that may be adopted.

B. Density/Intensity Regulations

Density and intensity regulations control growth by regulating the number of units that may be built on a particular site, but usually provide some flexibility in development form rather than prescribing a lot size. Intensity regulations are typically applied to commercial or industrial development in the form of limiting the floor area or bulk of a building to a percentage of the site, commonly expressed as a floor area ratio (FAR). Other intensity standards may include impervious surface ratios, limiting amounts of exterior storage, hours of operation, or total trips per acre per 24 hours. Both density and intensity regulations have been used in Talbot County.

Current density limits established in the Talbot County Zoning Ordinance were developed with the particular desired character of the planning area in mind. For example, the Rural Agriculture Conservation (RAC) zoning district limits the allowable base density in the agriculture areas to one dwelling unit per twenty acres. The RAC density regulations aid the stated purpose of preserving the rural agriculture character of this planning area.

The Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Maps should be revised to reflect the Plan's policies for the Designated Growth Area. Density standards, consistent with the objective of discouraging premature suburban residential development until these areas are annexed, should be implemented.

C. Open Space Development; Cluster Development; Density Averaging; or Conservation Development

Each of these tools is designed to cluster or concentrate the volume of development permitted on a given tract into a smaller area in order to preserve the remainder as open space or farmland. The development is clustered on a smaller portion of the site using smaller lot sizes, preserving land and reducing development costs. Grouping residential units into one area requires less investment to support infrastructure. Open Space or cluster development programs can be mandatory, (requiring all development on sites to be clustered) or voluntary (leaving the option to cluster or not to the landowners' discretion).

This technique has been applied in Talbot as a voluntary tool or option for development in the Rural Agriculture Conservation (RAC) Zoning District. Its use is voluntary and incentive for use is provided in that permitted density increases from 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres to 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres when cluster provisions are utilized. Further density increases are permitted with the use of Transfer of Development Rights to a maximum of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres. These provisions have been used to secure density increases and have protected over 3,800 acres of land through "Reservation of Development Rights agreements" to date.

D. Critical Area Growth Allocation

Critical Area Growth Allocation is provided for in the Critical Area Law as a means of re-designating land for more intense development in the Critical Area. For example, Growth Allocation may be used to modify the one dwelling unit per 20-acre limitation on development in Critical Area Resource Conservation Areas and allow more intensive development in coastal areas. The total amount of land that may be re-designated is limited to 5% of Talbot's Resource Conservation Lands (approximately 2,554 acres).

Growth allocation should be managed like a density bonus; that is, it should be thought of as an incentive to recipients to fulfill some public purpose in exchange for the benefit (profit) bestowed by the granting of the growth allocation. At a minimum, Growth Allocation should only be permitted where it advances the land use policies and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

E. Transferable Development Rights (TDR) or Density Exchange

TDR programs are used to transfer the development potential from certain types of land, such as resource lands, targeted greenways, or agriculture lands to areas designated for growth. TDR is typically a market-driven, incentive-based mechanism, by which it becomes possible to sell development rights without actually buying or selling the land. Some programs use a TDR Bank, to jumpstart the program or connect willing buyers and sellers.

One technique that the County and towns should mutually explore is the concept of an inter-jurisdictional transferable development rights program as one means of implementing the County's objectives for Countryside Preservation Areas. Development rights originating in the Countryside Preservation Areas could be transferred to designated receiving areas within the adjacent incorporated town. The financial feasibility of transfers should also be assessed to determine program potential. If demonstrated to be feasible, such a program could provide an effective and equitable means of directing growth to appropriate locations and supporting agricultural conservation objectives.

F. Limitations on bonus density

The County recommends that there be no density trade-offs or incentives in or near sensitive areas.

G. Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)

PDR programs utilize public funds to purchase the development potential from privately held land. Typically, the landowner voluntarily sells the development rights and receives compensation for the development restrictions placed on the land in the form of a conservation easement. Title remains with the land and can be transferred although use of the land may be limited to farming or open space.

PDR programs may be targeted to protect farmland (e.g. the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation) or to protect resource lands, sometimes in connection with easement

donations (e.g. Maryland Environmental Trust, Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, etc.). Develop a targeted PDR program for the purchase of development rights in the designated Countryside Preservation Area.

PDR is being successfully used in Talbot as part of the County's Agricultural Preservation Program. The current countywide farmland and resource land protection PDR programs should be continued and strengthened.

PDRs have also been used by conservancy organizations to acquire a number of easements in other locations. Since easement lands are protected from development in perpetuity, such programs provide permanence and greater assurance of protection than can be provided by zoning.

H. Greenway

Greenways are corridors of various widths, linked together in a network. Greenways may include recreational Greenways that feature paths and trails of various kinds, often of relatively long distances, based on natural corridors as well as shorelines, abandoned rail beds, and other public rights-of-ways. Trails and routes often have scenic quality as they pass through diverse and visually significant landscapes. A Greenway may emphasize cultural and historic resources and include places or trails with historic heritage and cultural values to attract tourists and to provide educational, scenic, recreational, and economic benefit. Ecological Greenways are significant natural corridors and open spaces - usually along rivers and streams, to provide for wildlife migration and biodiversity, and appropriate nature studies. Talbot County's current "Green Infrastructure" planning effort is an example of an ecological Greenway.

I. Highway Corridor Overlay Zones

An overlay zone is a mapped zone that imposes a set of requirements in addition to those of the underlying zoning district. Such zones are typically applied when there is a special public interest in a geographic area (e.g. the location of sensitive natural features areas, notable scenic qualities, i.e., scenic highway) that does not coincide with the underlying zone boundaries. Highway corridor zoning is an adaptation of the overlay zoning technique. Hilton Head, South Carolina uses this technique to "encourage and better articulate positive visual experiences along the island's major existing and proposed highways."

Highway corridor zones that establish appropriate design standards for new development and redevelopment should be considered for commercial areas along the MD 33 corridor, and at the entrances or gateways to incorporated towns, in and near the villages. In developing design standards, the County should identify key gateway locations to communities and establish specific design standards and guidelines for that location that will insure a positive visual image that reflects well on the community that lies beyond.

J. Performance Standards: Environmental Protection

Performance standards are frequently used to protect environmentally sensitive areas by establishing specific levels or percentages of various site resources to be protected. For example, the County

limits the amount of impervious surface in most of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area to no more than 15 percent of the gross site area. In fact, nearly all performance standards that have been adopted as a result the Critical Area Law and Criteria are for the purpose of environmental protection for the Chesapeake Bay.

The County should continue to implement appropriate environmental performance standards relating to stormwater and flood plain management, forest conservation and sediment and erosion control.

Given the sensitive nature of land located in the Western Rural Conservation planning area, the County should consider additional environmental protection standards. The County should adopt development standards for the Western Rural Conservation planning area that include limiting total impervious surfaces to no more than 15 % of the gross site area, limiting total density to no more than 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres and eliminating the 3-up front lot subdivision and bonus density cluster options currently permitted under the existing zoning scheme.

K. Infill/and Community Redevelopment

Community redevelopment is a planning tool to revitalize or improve existing neighborhoods by redeveloping existing buildings and properties that are blighted and/or underutilized. Infill and redevelopment can revitalize existing communities or neighborhoods, promote businesses revitalization, increase the supply of affordable housing on existing infrastructure, and reduce the consumption of resource lands to support growth.

This tool has not been extensively used in the County since most re-development opportunities are within the corporate limits of towns. The County should encourage cooperative use of this technique by the incorporated towns to better utilize existing infrastructure and reduce demand for development in new undeveloped locations in the County. Some of the unincorporated villages in the County should also be targeted for infill/redevelopment to enhance their character or improve village functions.

VII. Additional Planning Tools

In addition to the Implementation recommendations, the following planning tools are options that may be considered.

Population Cap

A population cap or total population establishes limits on permissible population by setting a numerical limit either on population itself or on the number of housing units in the County.

No explicit statutory authority allows regulation for the purpose of limiting absolutely the population within a jurisdiction. Conceivably authority might derive from a broad interpretation of the general basis for regulation: that which is related to the public health, safety and welfare. To be legally defensible absolute growth limits must show persuasive public purposes for their application.

Population Growth Rate Controls

Population rate control is generally accomplished by setting a quota on the number of building permits that a jurisdiction issues in a given period of time, for example an annual building permit allocation. While not directly protecting specific environments, such a quota reduces the overall pressure for new development. To be defensible, annual limits on new construction should be based on a clear and direct link between the real impacts of rapid growth and threats to the public health, safety or welfare. Population growth rate controls may be more applicable to the incorporated towns where population growth is most substantial and impacts more pronounced.

Bonus or Incentive Zoning

Zoning traditionally places restrictions and limitations on the individual use of property. A departure from this tradition, bonus or incentive zoning permits greater or more intensive use of property and hence the opportunity for greater economic return. Essentially, incentive zoning is a trade between the community and the property owner. In exchange for the developer's providing something that the community feels is in its interest (affordable housing, parkland, public parking facilities, or higher quality development), the developer is given a bonus, usually in the form of higher density or permission to build in a bulk envelope slightly larger than that normally permitted.

The most common use of bonuses is found in PUD ordinances. In many such ordinances, developers are permitted to build more housing units in exchange for clustering the units, providing larger expanses of common open space, or providing other design features or community amenities. The cluster option available in the RAC zoning district is another example of incentive zoning.

In Talbot County, bonus or incentive zoning holds potential value in increasing the supply of low and moderate-income housing. For example, development projects could be permitted additional density, if a specified percentage of the housing units meet affordability criteria. In this example, the best chances for success are in larger scale, higher density development projects that will be limited to the designated growth areas adjacent to the incorporated towns for the most part.

Small Area Plan

Small Area Master Plans are used to consider options and add details that are not normally addressed in a large area or comprehensive plan. Taking into account general planning and design policies contained in the comprehensive plan as well as specific site constraints, the Master planning process explores alternative development scenarios. The master planning process can be used to consider the aspects of development that may impact on community character and the environment. The process also may be used as a means of engaging stakeholders in critical pre-development planning.

Outcomes should include specific recommendations concerning such things as waste disposal, vehicle and pedestrian circulation, parking, resource protection, architectural design features, including scale of building and structures and mix and intensity of uses. The County should consider village development standards in conjunction with the review of zoning ordinance standards.

Performance Standards and Development Guidelines: Quality of Site Design

Performance standards focus more on how development is carried out rather than concentrating on what development takes place. Uses are permitted provided pre-set performance standards are met. Examples include standards to control site access (entrance may not be located within 500 feet of a

major intersection), to maintain the capacity of a road system (highway level of service may not fall below LOS D in the peak hour) or requirements that limit the scale of structure (individual shops may not exceed 2,500 square feet of floor area in the first floor).

Talbot County currently uses a number of performance standards that must be met as conditions of development approval. Most of these standards are environmental protection performance standards, fewer performance standards relate to the quality of development. Appropriate site design performance standards and design guidelines should be prepared for all planning areas. Such standards and guidelines should not stifle design creativity or overly strict adherence to any particular architectural style but should require site and building design that is sensitive and appropriate to the context in which it is proposed. Performance standards and development guidelines could be developed to improve the quality of site design in the Designated Growth Areas.

Chapter 4 Transportation Plan

I. Vision

The automobile continues to be the principal mode of transportation in Talbot County. The state and county roads reflect the County's rural character, but beach traffic on US 50 continues to be a bottleneck.

Traffic lights and road improvements are in progress on roads throughout the County to alleviate the increased traffic loads created by growth. Highway beautification projects are underway along major highways, enabling the goal of maintaining the rural character of the region. The County continues to explore alternatives to the automobile as the principal means of transportation.

The airport is a regional hub for aviation and aviation related businesses.

Goal

Insure the safe and efficient movement of goods and people.

II. Introduction

The efficient movement of people and goods is important to the quality of life and economic vitality of the community. The County recognizes the direct relationship between land use policies and transportation. Typically, land that is the most accessible is more highly valued. The historic development patterns in Talbot County traditionally follow land and water transportation corridors.

The County's transportation system includes roads, trails, public transit, port services, and air transportation services. Roads are the primary transportation facility in the County.

The County's roadway system is a combination of Federal, State, County, Town and Private roadways. Planning for State and Federal roadways in Talbot County is done by the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration (MSHA) and is detailed in the Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). The CTP describes ongoing and new capital programs to be implemented over a six-year period. The CTP projects are categorized by travel category such as highways, transit, aviation, rail and pedestrian projects.

The most extensive part of the roadway network consists of local roads and streets. Planning for local County roads is done by the Department of Public Works. The Transportation Engineer is actively involved in planning for improvements for local and state roads as well as coordinating facility improvements with the local jurisdictions.

The County is committed to improving transportation facilities to accommodate local development and regional travel demands. For construction of this system the County relies on funding and construction participation from both the public and private sectors. The County is exploring options for funding needed roadway improvements.

The Comprehensive Plan's transportation goal, policies and strategies are intended to be a framework for decision making at the State and local level. The Transportation element places a strong emphasis on managing existing transportation resources, especially roads serving the villages, towns and rural areas. Measures taken to conserve the existing capacity of State and County roads should not only improve safety and traffic operations, but also should have the added benefit of enhancing the visual character of the County when viewed from its highways and roads.

The County's Thoroughfare Plan, being developed as a component of the Comprehensive Plan, will establish a long range vision to meet the needs of the County, while at the same time it lays out more immediate policies and implementation measures to achieve coordinated transportation planning and service delivery.

III. Regional and Local Roads

A. State Roadway System

The State Highway Administration uses the Federal Highway Classification System for roadway classification. The classification of roadways into different functional classes is an important planning tool. It demonstrates the relative importance of any given road, and assigns an appropriate geometric design standard based on the intended function. The classification system and design standards are used to measure individual roadways against the standards and prioritize needed improvements. When new roads are built by the public or private sector, they should be constructed with an appropriate design for the road's intended function.

Using the Federal Highway Functional Classification System¹ the following State roadways shown on Map 4-1 are described as:

- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local Road

Principal and Minor Arterials

The County is dependent on state roadways to provide immediate regional access. In Talbot County, US Route 50, MD 322 and MD 404 are classified as principal arterials. The County does not wish MD 322 (Easton Parkway) to serve as a viable alternative to US Route 50 through Easton, and recommends that MD 322 should be reclassified as a minor arterial. Minor arterials include MD 331, MD 328, MD 333, and MD 33.

¹ Definitions: Federal Highway Function Classification System

Major and Minor Collectors

The primary function of major and minor collector roads is to expedite movement within localized areas. They provide moderate levels of service within, rather than between, regions in the County. Major collectors connect areas of relatively dense settlement with each other and with other major traffic routes. Minor collectors are roads which, in addition to serving abutting properties, intercept minor roads, connect community facilities and are intended to serve neighborhood traffic.

The Traffic Safety Division of Maryland State Highway Administration monitors and reports on traffic volumes, accidents and highway safety. This information is used in planning for needed state funded highway improvements.

The reports on traffic counts are only one measure of traffic volume in the County. While measuring average daily traffic volumes indicate overall trends, they do not report on the significant increase in traffic volumes during the summer months. Vacationers traveling to and from the beach on US Route 50 create bottlenecks in Easton and Trappe. Traffic congestion, especially during peak commuting hours, continues to be an issue identified by residents. As indicated in Table 5-1, the number of jobs in the County has increased, while the number of County residents commuting to local workplaces has decreased. As shown in Table 5-1, an increasing percentage of the total workforce includes people commuting into the County from other jurisdictions. This trend is expected to continue and grow over the next 10 to 20 years as a greater percentage of the population will be retired. Service industries will rely more and more on attracting workers from other jurisdictions.

	Total Commuters	Talbot County Residents	Upper Shore	Lower Shore	Delaware	Baltimore	Other
2000	19655	12194	4214	2280	507	304	156
1990	18600	12524	4108	1404	269	170	295
	* Upper Shore= Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's Counties						
	* Lower Shore= Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester Counties						
	* Baltimore= Includes Baltimore and surrounding region						

Planned State Roadway Improvements

The Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) describes ongoing and new capital improvements programs to be implemented over a six year period. Projects are categorized by mode of travel and each project proceeds through four funding phases: planning, engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction. Six projects in Talbot County are listed in the FY 2003 – 2008 CTP. In addition to projects that are listed in the CTP, the State Highway Administration maintains a long-range Highway Needs Inventory (HNI) for all State roadways. Map 4-2, located at the end of this Chapter, shows the location of planned improvements.

Of particular concern to the County is the indication in the long-range highway needs inventory to upgrade MD 33 and MD 322 from a two-lane to a four-lane route.

Identifying ways to improve seasonal traffic flow in the US Route 50 corridor through the Town of Easton and the Town of Trappe is an important issue that will require the cooperation of the County, Towns and State. To facilitate traffic flow in these areas, the County encourages the continuation of the established access management program used on the segment of US 50 from the Bay Bridge to the US 50/301 split near Queenstown. Techniques such as the development of service roads for businesses and overpasses at key intersections will improve traffic flow and reduce the need to divert traffic onto other roadways.

The State should emphasize system conservation and enhancement measures designed to improve operations on MD 33 from the Easton Bypass to St. Michaels. Strict access controls should apply, with each property of record limited to one access drive, unless safety considerations dictate otherwise. Appropriate traffic controls, traffic calming measures, and access consolidation should be required in the vicinity of St. Michaels. Existing strip developments should be retrofitted with service drives and/or connected parking lots in order to limit curb cuts, minimize turning movements, increase customer convenience, improve pedestrian safety and enhance the visual character of community gateways.

B. Local Roads

The most extensive part of the highway network consists of local roads. Local roads are intended to provide access to abutting residential property and to discourage through traffic.

The County has established a local road classification system (separate and distinct from the Federal Highway Functional Classification System) for the purpose of planning for County road improvements and assigning appropriate design standards. This classification system, included in the Talbot County Code, establishes the following road hierarchy:

Major Road	Major Collector
Major Village Arterial	Minor Collector
Minor Village Arterial	Private Road

The primary objective of the County's Thoroughfare Plan is to establish goals, policies and strategies to plan and manage the county's current and new road facilities. The Plan will include policies concerning roadway design and construction, access management, and pedestrian facilities. The Plan will inventory existing roadway conditions and provide a methodology for evaluating the transportation impact of new developments. The Plan should establish acceptable standards for road classifications and identify mitigation measures to improve or reduce traffic impacts.

Access management is the process of limiting and/or removing the number of points at which a vehicle may enter or leave a roadway. The County should evaluate current local access control standards to county roadways to reduce the number of conflict points and facilitate traffic flow. To further reduce congestion, the County's Thoroughfare Plan should establish a proposed network of roadway facilities and connections that reduce reliance on the State's collector road network by providing interconnections between neighborhoods and nearby neighborhood service centers.

C. Transportation Facility Planning

The County's overall transportation strategy is integrally linked to the land use strategy. The transportation policies in this Plan are intended to support the County's proposed land use to ensure adequate transportation facilities exist to serve the mobility needs of residents and industry. The County realizes that increasing road capacity alone will not fully address the transportation needs of the community. However, at this time, roads are the primary transportation facility in the County.

The County's Smart Growth strategy encourages compact, pedestrian-friendly development in the Towns and Village Centers. Outside of these growth centers, the goal of the plan is to preserve the rural character of the road system.

Existing standards for road construction and design should be scaled to the particular function of the road. Excessive standards can require roads to be over designed and costly, while inadequate standards contribute to future traffic and maintenance problems. The County should work with the State Highway Administration in the design of roadway improvements to support the rural economy, including tourism, and to ensure that rural character features such as fences, hedgerows, historic and agricultural structures are protected. Traffic calming projects should be implemented in the Designated Growth Areas to help reduce the impacts of increasing traffic.

Many County residents commute to work outside the County, and an increasing number of workers commute into the County. It is appropriate for the County to consider travel demand management alternatives to single occupancy vehicle commuting. The County should promote ridesharing and vanpool activities to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. Park-and-ride lots need to be developed to serve commuters. The County should continue to cooperate with other jurisdictions and regional agencies in a coordinated, systematic approach to travel demand management.

Regional and Local Road Policies

State Roadway System

- C04.P. 1. The State should emphasize system conservation and enhancement measures designed to improve operations on MD 33 from the Easton Bypass to St. Michaels.
- C04.P. 2. Improvements to existing US 50 through Easton would be the most appropriate short-term means to facilitate regional traffic flow through the central portion of the County. These improvements could include the development of service roads for businesses and overpasses at key intersections. Similar improvements have recently been made to US 50 in Cambridge. It is strongly felt that improvements to existing US 50, would be in the best interest of both the County and the Town of Easton and Trappe.
- C04.P. 3. The County should address ways to evacuate people located in "one road in, one road out" areas that must be evacuated in case of emergencies, especially MD 33 and MD 333.
- C04.P. 4. The County does not desire to have MD 322 viewed as an alternative to US 50 through traffic.

Road Network

- C04.P. 5. The County Thoroughfare Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan, will guide future road development decisions.
- C04.P. 6. The County will encourage the continued improvement of the entire County road network and will insure that all improvements further the land use, environmental and transportation goals of the Comprehensive Plan.
- C04.P. 7. The road network will consist of a coordinated hierarchy of arterial, collector and local roads. Access to the arterial network should be primarily from collector roads. Local roads should access the collector system and not the arterial network.
- C04.P. 8. New road construction and road improvements will promote traffic safety, provide for improved vehicular capacity consistent with area land uses and regional demands and resource protection policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Road Design and Construction

- C04.P. 9. New road construction will be sensitive to the County's goal of preserving the environment and rural character. Road improvements shall be context sensitive.
- C04.P. 10. The County may require that proposed roads in new developments provide appropriate connections to adjacent properties in order to insure adequate connectivity in the overall road system.
- C04.P. 11. New roads serving residential neighborhoods should be designed to insure safety and convenience for all users including motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and emergency vehicles.
- C04.P. 12. Setback and other development lines should recognize the ultimate traffic loads of the adjacent road and should allow for ultimate road size. A Highway Corridor Overlay or an Entrance Corridor Overlay Zone should apply where the desired setback or access restriction differs from the requirements of the conventional zoning districts.

Access Management

- C04.P. 13. Roadway capacity on County and State roads should be conserved by, among other things, limiting and controlling future access points. Strip forms of development will be prohibited and existing access onto major public roads reduced where appropriate. New developments may be required to provide access or service roads where appropriate to conserve road capacity.

Travel Demand Management

- C04.P. 14. The County should promote alternatives to driving alone and encourage the State to inform citizens of the monetary and environmental costs of continued dependence on autos.

C04.P. 15. The County will work with the State and adjacent jurisdictions to coordinate the land use and transportation elements of the Comprehensive Plan in order to achieve a reduction in drive alone rates.

C04.P. 16. The County encourages the use of alternative fuels (ethanol, re-refined oil) and hybrid vehicles and compressed natural gas powered cars to save energy resources.

Transportation Planning for Rural and Agricultural Areas

C04.P. 17. Agricultural transportation requirements should be recognized in the management of the County road system.

Transportation Planning in Designated Growth Areas

C04.P. 18. The County and towns should coordinate planning for transportation improvements in or near a town or within the designated growth area.

Countywide Transportation Planning Implementation Strategies

Action: Establish a formal system to update the County's Thoroughfare Plan based on future residential and non-residential growth. The Thoroughfare Plan should recommend future requirements for adequate rights-of-way, taking into account existing and future development and proposed alternative transportation support facilities and programs.

Action: Impacts to State, County and Town roadways facilities will be considered during the development review process.

Action: Coordinate State and county road planning initiatives with emergency management agencies. An emergency evacuation plan, for use in the event of severe weather or a catastrophic event, should be developed and maintained by the County.

Design and Construction Standards Implementation Strategies

Ensure that roadway design and capacity standards are appropriately related to roadway function and classification.

Action: Develop design and capacity standards to ensure an appropriate relationship for function and classification and update the Roads Ordinance and Thoroughfare Plan appropriately.

Action: Design paving widths for appropriate speeds on local streets to encourage pedestrian safety and ambiance and to reduce impervious surface. All developments should have adequate access and circulation for public safety vehicles, but actual paved street sections should be as narrow as possible to maintain human scale.

Action: Reduce traffic speeds in residential areas via roadway design methods including traffic controls, roadway design and layout.

Action: Review County's access management controls to appropriately space curb cuts based on roadway type.

Action: Ensure that road improvements in rural areas minimize disturbance and adverse impacts on rural landscape and environmentally sensitive areas. Review rural road standards for new development in rural area to see if revisions to required right-of-way are needed. Revised standard road profiles accordingly.

Action: Review design and material standards for County roadway projects. Encourage the use of nontoxic recycled materials (recycled/crushed concrete, bricks and blocks) whenever possible in making right-of-way improvements.

Road Funding Implementation Strategies

Action: New roadway construction and major improvement projects for existing County roads should be scheduled as part of the overall County Capital Improvements Program. Maintain an aggressive but financially responsible capital budget to pay for future roadway improvements.

Action: Establish a formal system to define how developers participate in financing of transportation costs. Cost should be based on traffic impact studies acceptable to the County and State Highway Administration, even if acceptable County standards are higher than State requirements. Require the quantification of impacts, based on assessment of projected traffic operations on the road network.

Action: Require traffic impact studies for all developments that will significantly increase the peak hour traffic on the adjacent roadway system and create operational conflicts. The traffic impact analysis would determine the magnitude of off-site roadway improvements required to accommodate the traffic generated by the proposed development while maintaining service standards. Develop guidelines for the impact studies including standards that establish a threshold for the size of the development that will trigger the need for a traffic impact study. The guidelines should define the requirements and procedures to be used as well as the content of the submitted report.

IV. Transit Service

Transit service for the general public is not feasible at this time without substantial subsidy and would not be cost effective given the existing low density rural settlement patterns. In the immediate future, the County can be most effective by encouraging new developments in the Designated Growth Areas to provide pedestrian facilities linking residential developments to nearby neighborhood services. Larger development located near major commuter routes should be encouraged to identify locations for future ride-sharing and commuting facilities.

Rural and town residents are able to access an on demand transportation service provided by the Upper Shore Aging, a nonprofit corporation. The Upper Shore Take-A-Ride (USTAR) program includes various trip destinations, including shopping centers, employment centers, educational facilities, medical facilities, adult day care centers and senior centers. Fares (donations) range from one to five dollars for general ridership to between fifty cents and two dollars for elderly and disabled riders. Hours of operation are from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Forty percent of the funding for the USTAR service is derived from fare box receipts and other donations and the remainder comes from a combination of local and State funding. Current annual ridership is on the order of 15,000 passengers and 68,000 trips.

Transit Policies

C04.P. 19. At the appropriate time, the County should explore the feasibility of improved transit service for County residents and encourage such services when needed and economically feasible.

Transit Implementation Strategies

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,

Action: Encourage business and industry to provide reserved parking spaces for carpools and vanpools at office and industrial sites to accommodate and encourage ride sharing.

V. Non-motorized Transportation

Non-motorized transportation includes sidewalks and pedestrian and bicycle trails. Although there are no County “designated” bicycle routes in Talbot County, the MD 33 to Bellevue Ferry to MD 333 route (the “loop”) is a very popular and heavily-traveled bike route. This route is along two-lane public roads including MD 33, a high traffic volume segment. In addition to the popular “loop,” other routes on the west side of the County are frequently used by bicyclists (see Map 4-3). They include the road to Bozman and Neavitt (MD 579) and the Tilghman Road (MD 33).

There are a number of potential alternative bike routes on the east side of the County. These routes traverse scenic rural areas, are long enough to appeal to bikers and form a loop with Easton as the hub. They also intersect with existing popular routes.

The County has not required new development to include sidewalks or pedestrian connections within the community. As the County’s growth strategy has shifted to encouraging a more urban development pattern in the Towns and Designated Growth Areas, several of the Towns have encouraged the County to require easements for these future pedestrian facilities to permit development of an integrated and connected pedestrian network once these areas are annexed into the town.

Non-motorized Transportation Policies

C04.P. 20. The County should support development of safe, convenient and inviting bike routes and walkways.

Non-motorized Transportation Implementation Strategies

Action: Review the recommendations regarding sidewalks in the County's designated growth areas and establish a policy for sidewalk easements and installation.

Action: Amend the Talbot County Zoning Ordinance to require space be provided for parking of bicycles in the appropriate service retail developments.

Action: Work with the State Highway Administration to prepare a Talbot County Scenic Byway Management Plan. A Scenic Byway Management Plan will provide a blueprint for state, county, and town actions to improve vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle travel on selected State roadways in the County.

VI. Air Travel

The Easton Airport is a County-owned facility located at the north end of the Town of Easton. Primary access to the airport is from US 50. The Easton Airport Manager and County Council manage and operate the airport assisted by a five-member Airport Advisory Board appointed by the County Council.

Easton Airport is a general aviation airport that services corporate jets and privately owned and military aircraft. Charter service to destinations throughout the United States and the world is provided by East Coast Flight Services, Easton Jet Services and Easton Aviation, LLC. Easton Aviation, LLC also provides flight training. The airport presently averages between 240 and 250 operations per day (takeoffs and landings), with some peak days reaching 350 operations per day. Several air service related businesses and industries are located at the airport.

According to the information contained in the Easton Airport master plan, management expects to have a total of 190 aircraft based at the facility. This number is likely to increase due to the flight restrictions around Washington, DC. Annual operations, which were estimated to be 92,000 in 2003, are expected to increase to approximately 121,000 by 2016. Total peak hour operations are expected to climb from 42 landings in 2003 to 54 in 2016.

County policies should encourage the continued vitality of the Easton Airport, by protecting the airport from encroachment from residential, retail or commercial uses. Compatible uses, such as airport related businesses and light industry should be encouraged in appropriate areas near the airport. Current zoning regulations prohibit residential uses adjacent to the airport and control the height of structures within the clear zones of the runways.

Air Travel Policies

- C04.P. 21. The County should continue to improve air transportation services at the Easton airport.
- C04.P. 22. Private air strips and helipads are discouraged within the County as these uses often cause nuisances to the surrounding community.

Air Travel Implementation Strategies

Action: As the opportunities arise, the County should acquire avigation easements on properties surrounding the airport.

VII. Port Services

Although use of the port facilities at Easton Point has been declining in recent years, some materials are still delivered by barge to terminals on the Point. The draft Easton Comprehensive Plan states, “the future role of Easton’s port facilities is clouded. A great many people have suggested that this area has tremendous redevelopment potential, although no one has come forth with a proposal to annex and redevelop it. If this ever comes to be, the future of the port is most likely more towards recreational uses such as an expanded marina, boat ramp, and associated uses with less emphasis on truly industrial uses.”

Historically the County has recommended that the northern and western edges of Easton Point should continue to be used and reserved for port-related and marine transportation activities, including regular dredging of the Tred Avon River approach channel.

Port Services Policies

- C04.P. 23. The County should continue to insure that adequate access is provided to County waters for marine transportation.

VIII. Rail Service

Rail service in Talbot County has been discontinued for some years. Future service through the planning period may include the revival of limited light rail service on rail rights-of-way owned by the Mass Transit Administration. Many of the rail rights-of-ways in Talbot County have reverted to private property owners. The Town of Easton has constructed a pedestrian/bike trail along a portion of the old rail right-of-way. The Easton rail-trail runs from Idlewild Avenue to US 50. The trail connects two local parks, Idlewild Park and North Easton Park. The historic railroad station has been restored and currently is being used as private offices. The County encourages the retention of rail rights-of-way for future use. Pedestrian/ bike trails are appropriate interim uses for these corridors.

Rail Service Policies

C04.P. 24. The County should work with the Mass Transit Administration to preserve existing rail service rights-of-way in the Talbot County and the Upper Eastern Shore for future rail service.

Rail Service Implementation Strategies

Action: Initiate a review process to evaluate surplus rail lines so that the County has a position on whether the right-of-way should remain in place for future rail use, or alternative transportation and recreation.

Chapter 5 Community Services and Facilities

I. Vision Statement

Sustaining and enhancing high quality community services and facilities strongly contributes to the overall quality of life in Talbot County. Land use decisions throughout the County are made based on the actual or planned location and availability of services and facilities including: drinking water; sewerage; waste management; emergency services; police protection; educational, healthcare and social services; roadways; libraries; and government services.

The County has programs in place that require adequate facilities and services are maintained and not jeopardized by development. To ensure the adequacy of the infrastructure prior to any development (an individual home, a residential development or a commercial property), the County employs methods that guarantee the cost of development is borne by the developer.

The need for community services and facilities is determined by the size, composition and geographic distribution of the County's population, recognizing that sizing of sewerage, potable water and roadways are based on peak rather than average load requirements. Sizing of the services in this manner accommodates swings in population between summer and winter months, weekends and weekdays. Talbot County provides services that effectively meet the County's changing needs and is consistent with planned and agreed land use patterns.

Goal

Provide an equitable system of public facilities and services that effectively meets community needs and is consistent with planned land use patterns.

II. Introduction

Community services and facilities are provided to Talbot County residents by local and state government, public/private ventures, and the private sector. The community services and facilities discussed in this Plan element include: public utilities, solid waste management, public safety, education, libraries, health care and government offices. Parks and Recreation facilities are discussed separately in Chapter Nine.

The availability, affordability and quality of community services are important indicators of the County's overall quality of life. If the demographics of the County's population continues to change, with increasing numbers of older, retired citizens settling in the County, especially in the peninsular and western areas, demand for services will change. The demand for schools and outdoor recreation would decrease, while the need for easily accessible services such as libraries, health care and emergency services would increase. At the same time, the Towns of Easton and Trappe propose to grow significantly over the next ten to fifteen years.

Planning for community facilities and services takes into account the current community needs, as well as projected changes in both the needs of the community and proposed growth. County owned facilities are funded through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Public schools are funded from local, state, federal and private revenue sources. In FY 02/03, more than 50% of County revenue was used to fund public education.

Talbot County's ability to raise revenue to meet the increasing demands for publicly funded services is hampered by a revenue cap that has been in place since the 1970s. Talbot County limits real property tax revenue growth to the lesser of 2% on growth for the preceding calendar year or the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U). While the recorded value of sales of existing homes has risen dramatically in the past five years, the County has not benefited from this upturn. Though the cap excludes new construction, as noted in Chapter Two, more than 50% of new homes are being constructed in the incorporated areas. The ability of the County to meet the rising demands for services will continue to be an issue if the current trend of an increasingly elderly population, aging in place, continues.

In response to projected trends, the County has explored a range of options to distribute costs associated with growth fairly among existing and future residents. The Comprehensive Plan provides policies for directing growth in the County so that public services can be maintained at an acceptable level. In 2003, the County engaged the services of Tischler & Associates to evaluate implementation of impact fees or an excise tax on new development to generate revenue for public facilities. Both options have the potential to generate new revenue. A final decision has not been reached on the costs vs. benefits of either option.

The County has also considered adoption of an adequate public facilities ordinance (APFO). An APFO establishes standards that allow the approval of new development only when there is adequate infrastructure capacity to serve it. The County should have in place a capital improvement plan for the maintenance and expansion of these services to meet the planned future growth. Developers wishing to proceed before the planned improvement or expansion may construct or pay for additional facilities needed beyond those which exist or scheduled as part of the CIP. As an example, in Talbot County, the provision of central water and sewage disposal is a primary factor which influences the location and intensity of future development. It is recommended that level of service standards be developed for County facilities.

Countywide Community Facilities and Services Policies

- C05.P.1. Public facilities and services, which are intended to meet countywide needs, should be centrally located. Likewise, those facilities and services intended to serve local community needs should be located within the community.

- C05.P.2. All planned major County public facilities shall be prioritized and scheduled as part of a Comprehensive Five Year Capital Improvements Program.

- C05.P.3. Public facilities and service improvements designed to correct existing system inadequacies should be completed prior to beginning County-funded improvements designed to accommodate new growth.

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- C05.P.4. Wherever possible, the existing public facilities and services of the County and its towns should be efficiently expanded rather than creating new services and facilities.
- C05.P.5. Public facility and service improvements should be efficiently coordinated with the County's land use plan, Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, Master Plan for Education and other County plans related to capital improvements programming.
- C05.P.6. Public facilities and services should be scaled to the needs of the area they are designed to serve. Rural areas of the County should be provided facilities and services which match rural needs. Planned growth areas around towns should be provided a level of facilities and services matched to needs that are more intensive.
- C05.P.7. New development projects should not be approved or built in areas of the County where infrastructure and services such as roads, schools, sewer service, water supply, and fire and police protection are not adequate to accommodate the needs of the development. Exemptions to this policy might be considered provided the developer contributes the money needed to improve the facility.
- C05.P.8. The costs of new or expanded community facilities and services should be equitably and proportionally shared by all those who will benefit from the improvements.
- C05.P.9. The County should seek regional solutions to providing community services or facilities when demonstrated to be cost effective.
- C05.P.10. The County should seek State coordination to assist the County and towns to establish effective public facilities available for development.

III. Public Utilities

A. Water

The Talbot County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan (CWSP) provides detailed information on County water supply sources, existing and proposed water facilities, and schedules for improvements. The County has adopted a Groundwater Protection Plan to protect and conserve groundwater resources. When updating the Groundwater Protection Plan, the County monitors changes in federal water quality standards.

Groundwater quality in the County is generally good with some localized problems of high nitrate levels, high sodium and chlorine levels and lowering groundwater levels. Since growth and development is ultimately constrained by groundwater quantity and quality, the County should continue to study groundwater resources and establish follow-up mechanisms to monitor changes that occur over time.

There are central water systems in Easton, Oxford, St. Michaels, and Trappe, and private community water systems in Claiborne, Martingham, and Hyde Park. The Talbot County Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan (CWSP) outlines planned improvements for each of these systems.

B. Sewer

Wastewater systems in Talbot County are quite varied, ranging from individual systems with sub-surface disposal (septic systems), to innovative community systems, to municipal systems utilizing mechanical equipment. Detailed information on sewage treatment and disposal can be found in the Talbot County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan (CWSP).

The CWSP outlines the characteristics and capacities of the central and community wastewater treatment collection and disposal systems within the County. The CWSP also details plans for expansions and improvements at each of these existing facilities. County owned and operated facilities are located in Tilghman and St. Michaels, serving Tilghman Village, St. Michaels, Rio Vista-Bentley Hay, Newcomb, Royal Oak, Bellevue, Unionville, Tunis Mills, and Copperville. Municipal systems are located in Easton, Oxford and Trappe. Community systems are located at Hyde Park, MEBA Engineering School and Martingham. As these facilities are modified or upgraded over time, peak and seasonal loads should be considered in the design and operation of these facilities. Environmental impact statements should be prepared in the design phase and include stormwater and wastewater load calculations. Growth and related increased demand for sewer treatment should be limited to the capacity of the plant at peak periods at the new State standards. The St. Michaels treatment facilities are currently being upgraded to improve system treatment quality and capacity.

The County has adopted a Shared-Facilities Ordinance which allows for the expanded development of community-owned and operated wastewater disposal systems and the creation of new types of systems serving more than one household.

Soil and water table conditions generally determine the suitability of sub-surface disposal systems. The County Groundwater Protection Plan has designated soils in the area generally to the east of U.S. Route 50 as suitable for sub-surface discharge of wastewater, except in areas with a high water table. The Groundwater Protection Plan has designated areas generally to the west of U.S. Route 50 as susceptible to sub-surface system failures because of high water tables, low elevations, and silty or clay soils with low permeability.

The majority of residential properties in the County are served by individual septic systems. Permits for these systems are reviewed and approved by the County Health Department as an agent of the Maryland Department of Environment. Certain areas of the County have problems with failing septic systems, high groundwater tables or concentrations of small lots on poorly drained soils. These areas include: Wittman, Neavitt, Fairbanks, Queen Anne, and Claiborne. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that on-site septic systems should be inspected and monitored to insure they are functioning properly.

Public Utility Policies

C05.P.11. The County should insure that privately owned and operated water and sewer

facilities are adequately maintained by requiring comprehensive and legally binding maintenance agreements between system owners and users.

- C05.P.12. In Designated Growth Areas, new development may be required to install “dry” water and sewer lines so that a development can be connected to public water and sewer when services are available.
- C05.P.13. The County should coordinate the technical review of large-scale development projects with various County and/or town development review agencies and private utility companies in order to insure that utilities and easements are provided in a planned and efficient manner.

IV. Solid Waste Management

Talbot County, along with Caroline, Kent, and Queen Anne’s counties, currently utilizes a regional landfill adjacent to the existing Easton Wastewater Treatment Facility on Barkers Landing Road to meet disposal needs. The landfill is operated by the Maryland Environmental Service (MES), a non-profit, quasi-public agency of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources under the general direction of representatives of the four counties.

The Midshore Regional Landfill is an integrated solid waste management facility featuring brush and landscape mulching, sludge utilization, materials recycling, bald tire processing, waste oil and lubricants collection, refrigerant removal, and scrap metal and appliance recycling, in addition to providing solid waste disposal operations. The facility will be closed on December 31, 2010. The new landfill, Midshore II Regional Landfill will open on January 1, 2011 in Caroline County. The County is exploring options for the reuse of the current landfill as a transfer station and recycling center. As part of the waste transfer option, the County will explore maintaining the homeowner drop-off facility and establishing waste coupons for the disposal of trash at the transfer facility.

A Solid Waste Hauling Study prepared for Talbot County in the late 1980s concluded that house-to-house garbage pick-up and/or an expanded system of transfer stations would not be cost-effective since the existing landfill is centrally located within the County and features a residential drop-off facility. When the regional landfill is moved to Caroline County, it will become necessary for Talbot County to review additional solid waste handling requirements.

The Maryland Recycling Act of 1988 requires that each County recycle at least 15 percent of its solid waste. The Talbot County Recycling Plan, completed and implemented in 1990, has enabled the County to meet recycling targets.

Solid Waste Management Policy

- C05.P.14. The County should explore the feasibility of improving the existing solid waste collection system.
- C05.P.15. The County should continue to encourage and increase the ease of recycling of solid waste resources to prolong landfill life and conserve natural resources.

Solid Waste Management Implementation Strategy

Action: In anticipation of the re-location of the regional landfill, a plan should be established soon to identify and resolve future solid waste transfer, handling and disposal requirements.

V. Public Safety

A. Emergency Services

The Talbot County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) coordinates all local emergency services within the County through its 911 system. In recent years, the County has developed a comprehensive road naming and property numbering program to assist in implementing 911 services. The Emergency Management Agency is also responsible for development of the Talbot County Emergency Management Plan. This Plan delineates the roles and responsibilities of local government and private agencies for the response and recovery phases of emergency activities.

Fire, rescue, ambulance and emergency medical services are provided by the seven volunteer fire companies within the County. Volunteer fire companies are located in Queen Anne, Cordova, Easton, Oxford, Trappe, St. Michaels and Tilghman. The volunteer companies receive funding support from the State, County and towns. However, the majority of funds needed to provide services and to purchase and maintain equipment are derived through private donations and fund raising activities sponsored by the various volunteer companies.

Although the need for fire, rescue, ambulance and emergency medical services has been increasing in the County, many of the fire companies are having difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers. Being a fire company volunteer requires a large commitment of time for continuous training, responding to calls and assisting with fund raising activities. Many of the local volunteer companies are having difficulty raising funds to update and improve equipment which is needed to respond to an ever growing number of calls.

Advanced Life Support (ALS) services have recently been established in Talbot County. ALS provides 24 hour emergency response by trained paramedics and cardiac rescue technicians. ALS services are provided by volunteer and paid staff. Funding for ALS is derived from the County, fund raising activities and private donations. ALS service has also been experiencing difficulty in securing funds for equipment needs related to an increasing number of calls.

Responsibility for law enforcement in the County is shared by the Talbot County Sheriff's Department, Easton Police Department, St. Michaels Police Department, Oxford Police Department and the Maryland State Police.

Talbot County constructed a Detention Center in 1992 that permitted conversion of the former jail facility at the rear of the Courthouse to house government office uses. The maximum capacity of the Detention center is 132 inmates. The center was designed to meet the needs of the County through the year 2018, at which time expansion or an additional facility may be required.

Emergency Services Policies

C05.P.16. The County should provide effective and efficient emergency services through a unified emergency services system using national and state regulations, standards, and guidelines to evaluate system performance and make system improvements.

VI. Education

The Talbot County Public School System consists of five elementary schools, one middle school, one middle / high school and one high school. The schools are located in nine buildings, which include two buildings for the Easton Elementary School. The schools are operated by the Talbot County Board of Education.

Current population projections indicate a steady decline in the school population. In 2003, there were 4,310 school age children in Talbot County. By 2010, that number is projected to decrease to 3,810. The Talbot County public school system has adequate existing capacity on a County-wide basis to accommodate projected enrollment for the next ten years. However, there will be capacity problems at Chapel Elementary, White Marsh Elementary, Easton Middle, and Easton High. Other schools, including Tilghman Elementary, St. Michaels Elementary, St. Michaels Middle/High School and Easton Elementary at Dobson and Moton Buildings currently have excess capacity.

In addition to the public school system there are three private schools located in Easton. The Country School accommodates grades kindergarten through eight. St. Peter and Paul's School facilities accommodate grades kindergarten through twelve. The Chesapeake Christian School accommodates grades kindergarten through twelve.

Chesapeake College is a two year community college offering a two-year program of study in liberal arts and sciences and career programs. Salisbury University and Washington College are each located within an hour of the County and offers undergraduate and graduate degrees.

VII. Health Care

Memorial Hospital at Easton is the primary provider of medical and health care in Talbot County and the surrounding Mid-Shore region. The Memorial Hospital at Easton offers a full range of inpatient and outpatient care. The 137 bed acute facility, plus its 33 bed Skilled Nursing Unit, provides general hospital, emergency, and specialized services. Its convenient outpatient centers for primary care, diagnostics, treatment, education, and rehabilitation are located throughout the Mid-Shore. There are approximately 150 physicians practicing within the Hospital's service area.

The Talbot County Health Department offers all County residents services related to communicable disease control, environmental health and family health. Communicable disease control services

include offering immunizations, monitoring the spread of diseases, and testing and treatment for tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. The Environmental Health section services include: sampling and inspecting well water, tidal waters, swimming pools and well sites; inspection of septic systems and soil evaluations; monitoring of sludge applications; inspection of restaurants, seafood operations and other food processing facilities; and inspection of housing conditions in trailer parks, foster homes, labor camps and day care facilities.

The Talbot County Health Department also provides a wide array of family health programs. The County should encourage the State, as well as private, non-profit corporations and for-profit companies to expand mental health care services and facilities within the County commensurate with the needs of County residents.

VIII. Social Services

The Talbot County Department of Social Services provides a wide variety of assistance to residents of the County. These services include financial and emergency assistance, child support enforcement services, adoption, adult protective services, child day care, child protective services, family planning services, foster care for children, in-home aid services and legal services.

IX. Library Services

The Talbot County Free Library provides comprehensive library services to anyone who lives, works, goes to school or owns property in Maryland.

The main library is located in Easton and there are plans to build a new library in Easton, replacing this existing facility with a larger facility at a new location. The St. Michaels branch library has recently been updated as a full service facility. An additional branch at Tilghman Elementary School opened in the fall of 2003 to serve the Bay Hundred community. Currently about 25,901 Talbot County residents have library cards. Approximately 197,000 items are borrowed from the library each year. 21,194 residents participated in library sponsored programs during 2002.

X. Government Facilities and Offices

The Town of Easton is the County seat for Talbot County. Most County offices and State agency offices which serve Talbot County are located in Easton. As the needs of County and State government have grown over the years, offices and facilities have become spread out within the Town. The result is that residents who have business to conduct with the County or State government must go to several locations to get things done. The fact that various government offices are separated from one another also hinders coordination between agencies and departments. The South Wing of County Courthouse, which housed many of the County offices, is currently undergoing renovation. During the renovation, the County has moved offices to temporary space.

Government Facilities Policies

C05.P.17. The County should provide adequate space for various County offices and facilities.

Chapter 6 Rural and Agricultural Conservation

I. Vision

Talbot County's undeveloped and working agricultural lands are precious resources that are critical to the Rural Character and Quality of Life that this comprehensive plan seeks to preserve. Residential and commercial development pressures continue to threaten our rural landscape. Therefore, innovative land use policies direct growth toward designated growth areas and otherwise preserve agricultural and forest lands. Large tracts of undeveloped land are being placed into conservancy thereby preserving the County's open spaces for future generations. Comprehensive planning that designates growth areas, combined with rigorously enforced zoning ordinances controls suburban type sprawl.

Goal

Conserve the agricultural land base of the County and preserve Rural Character in predominately rural areas of the County by directing growth to existing population centers.

II. Introduction

Agriculture is a significant part of Talbot County life, both as a major industry and as the most important contributor to the County's unique Rural Character. Working farmland is a very valuable and limited natural resource in Talbot County. Once farmland has been developed, it can not generally be reclaimed for agricultural use. Conservation of working lands is an important component of conservation of the agricultural industry in Talbot County. In spite of increasing development pressures being placed on agricultural and open space lands, most County residents continue to see clear benefits in conserving agricultural lands and Rural Character.

In 1991, to preserve agricultural land and open space located outside of the Critical Areas, Talbot County adopted a comprehensive rezoning of rural and agricultural lands reducing the density permitted in agricultural areas to 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres, in certain circumstances requiring development to be clustered to maintain farmland and encouraging the use of transfer of development rights. To further protect agriculture as a land use activity, zoning regulations¹ are designed to help protect farmers from unwarranted nuisance suits by residential neighbors.

¹ Right to Farm. County Code.....

Statistics suggest that the 1991 rezoning has reduced the rate and pace of farmland conversion in Talbot. Agricultural statistics from the U. S. Bureau of the Census report an increase in both the size and number of acres in farms. The 2002 Farm Census will provide a better snapshot of the impacts of the rezoning.

<i>Farm Number and Size</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1987</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1997</i>
Number of Farms	350	280	250	240
Average size (acres)	342	389	423	457
Land in Farms (acres)	119,684	109,032	109,108	109,572

Currently 64% (109,572 acres) of the county land area is classified as lands in farms. Of these 92,953 acres (85%) are cropland. Crops represent the primary type of farm production.²

III. Existing Rural and Agricultural Land Preservation Programs

As of December, 2002 more than 24,000 acres of land have been placed in an easement program. The six categories of land conservation/agricultural easements shown on Map 7-1 are described below.

Maryland Agricultural Preservation Districts and Agricultural Easements.

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), in existence since 1977, is one of the most successful programs of its kind in the United States. Its primary purpose is to preserve sufficient agricultural land to maintain a viable local base in food and fiber production for the present and future citizens of Maryland.

The program is comprised of two basic steps: the voluntary establishment of **Agricultural Preservation Districts**, and the purchase of perpetual development rights easements (**Agricultural Easements**). The program is administered by the County and State in an equitable partnership. By placing a farm in an Agricultural Preservation District, the farmer agrees to keep the land in agriculture for at least five years. The agreement forbids the subdivision and development of the land for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. Once a farm is placed in an Agricultural Preservation District, the farmer may then voluntarily sell his development rights to the State. When the State of Maryland purchases a farm's development rights, the landowner voluntarily sells his rights in perpetuity to develop the farm for residential, commercial or industrial use. The value of the easement on the farm is determined as the difference between the fair market value (that which a developer might pay) and the value at which agricultural production will pay for the land.

As of December, 2002, approximately 14,523 acres of land located in 95 districts in Talbot County have been placed in agricultural preservation districts. Development rights easements have been purchased on forty-nine (49) of the 95 districts which permanently protects 8,100 acres of farmland.

Private Lands

Another available option for property owners who wish to voluntarily conserve lands is to enter into

² United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Census U.S. Department of Commerce, 1997.

conservation easement agreements with a local, regional, state or national non-profit land trust organization such as the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, the Maryland Environmental Trust, Chesapeake Bay Foundation or Nature Conservancy.

Maryland Environmental Trust Lands

Land trust organizations do not typically purchase development rights from a property owner, but rather accept conservation easements as donations and in return the property owner receives significant tax benefits. As of December, 2002 approximately 14,804 acres of land within the County have entered into conservation agreements with various land trust organizations.

DNR Lands

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages publicly owned lands and protected open space in the State. In Talbot County, DNR manages 238 acres of public lands and protected open space, including Black Walnut Point Natural Resource Management Area, Choptank Fishing Pier State Park, Wye Oak State Park and Seth Demonstration State Forest.

TDR Lands

Transfer of Development Rights Lands (TDR Lands) are properties that have participated in the County managed TDR program. These properties have sold/transferred development rights to other parcels in the same election district, or to highly eroding shorelines, thereby preserving land as open space or agricultural lands.

IV. Talbot County Green Infrastructure Plan

The County working with The Conservation Fund has developed a geographic information system (GIS) model, to identify and evaluate areas of high natural resource and agricultural value. This system offers a holistic approach to preserving the county's important ecological, open space, agricultural and forestry resources. Using GIS modeling, the Green Infrastructure Plan will identify areas of high natural resource and agricultural value that can be protected to form a linked network of conservation lands. By providing such a prioritization framework, the Plan can be used as a decision-making tool to inform future planning efforts, focus conservation to insure maximum benefit and guide compatible ecologically sound development efforts. The Plan will also recommend implementation strategies for achieving natural resource preservation and restoration goals.

Rural and Agricultural Conservation Land Use Policies

- C06.P. 1. Agricultural and forestry activities should be the primary and preferred land use activity in rural areas of the County.
- C06.P. 2. Agriculturally-related commercial and industrial uses should be allowed in the Non-Critical areas of the County, provided these uses can be compatible with surrounding land uses and do not adversely impact environmentally sensitive areas.
- C06.P. 3. Low-density single-family detached residential homes should be allowed in rural and

agricultural areas. Incentives should be provided to encourage cluster development and preservation of open space.

- C06.P. 4. Development design standards for rural residential development should insure the conservation of agricultural lands, open space, woodlands, environmentally sensitive areas and Rural Character.
- C06.P. 5. Rural landowners should be provided the opportunity to transfer development rights from a property in order to maintain development equity and conserve agricultural lands and open space. The County should re-examine opportunities for use of development rights transfer and identify market opportunities or incentives to broaden use.
- C06.P. 6. The County should work with local farmers and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation to encourage greater participation in the Maryland State agricultural easement program. This could be achieved by the commitment of additional funds towards easement purchases by the County.
- C06.P. 7. The County should encourage rural property owners to participate in other land preservation easement programs offered by national, state, regional and local land trust organizations.
- C06.P. 8. Agricultural and forestry activities should be conducted in accordance with best management practices for soil and water conservation which are approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- C06.P. 9. The County should examine opportunities to create additional tax incentives to preserve farmland.
- C06.P. 10. The County should monitor the effectiveness of current incentives designed to preserve working farmland and open space by reviewing land use changes in the Agricultural, Western Rural Conservation, and Resource Conservation areas.

Rural and Agricultural Conservation Implementation Strategies

Conserve working farmland.

Action: Monitor rural residential development patterns to determine if lower densities have reduced the number of acres converted from working farmland.

Agricultural related uses.

Action: Implement regulations to permit the location of agricultural related industrial and commercial uses in areas easily accessible to farm operators.

Low Density Residential Development

Action: Re-examine opportunities for property owners to transfer development rights.

Rural landowners should be provided the opportunity to transfer development rights from a property in order to maintain development equity and conserve agricultural lands and open space. The County should re-examine opportunities for use of development rights transfer and identify market opportunities or incentives to broaden use.

The County should evaluate the effectiveness of current incentives provided to developers who cluster single-family house lots onto a smaller portion of farms and agree to leave the remaining larger portions as open space. By using a cluster development pattern, the farmer who views his land as a pension no longer has to cut up the entire farm in order to receive development equity. In return for allowing residential density increases, the County is guaranteed that a significant portion of the site will be retained as open space.

The County should continue its TDR Program and encourage its broader use. TDR purchasers within Rural and Agricultural Conservation Areas should continue to be allowed to use these additional development rights, but only in conjunction with the development of a cluster subdivision as earlier described.

Development Design Standards

Action: Adopt and apply development design standards for residential development in rural and agricultural areas.

Agricultural and Rural Conservation design standards would include guidelines for lot and building location and internal access roads to protect and conserve environmentally-sensitive areas, habitat and working lands.

New residential lots should be required to have “right to farm” deed covenants. These covenants would notify the person purchasing the lot and all subsequent owners that they are located in a primarily agricultural area.

Conservation Programs

Action: The County should monitor the effectiveness of current incentives designed to preserve working farmland and open space by reviewing land use changes in the Agricultural, Countryside Preservation Areas, Western Rural Conservation, and Resource Conservation areas.

Action: Examine opportunities to create additional financial and tax incentives to preserve farmland.

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program is intended to provide farmers with financial incentives to voluntarily sell development rights easements. Changes to the program in recent years have allowed counties to play a greater role in promoting the program at the local level. Talbot County should continue to work with the State to actively

encourage more farmers to participate and should encourage greater program funding by the State than has been available in recent years. The County should continue to support the certified Agricultural Land Preservation Program approved by MALPF and the Maryland Department of Planning in March 1999. Certification has increased dollar resources available for purchase of agricultural easements in the County. The County should pursue additional sources of funding both public and private to acquire conservation easements.

The County should assist local property owners who are interested in participating in various local, regional, state and national land trust conservation programs. Private land trust organizations will complement County efforts to conserve valuable open space, farmlands and environmentally sensitive areas.

The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy's "Regional Vision 2010" establishes several visions for the region which are consistent with Talbot's Agricultural preservation objectives. The County should continue to support the ESLC in its efforts to acquire easements on farmland.

The County should also support recent initiatives to establish a Delmarva "Conservation Corridor" which could hold promise to increase funding to support agricultural easement acquisition or provide support to farm support industries and services.

Rural Legacy Program

Action: Continue support of the Tuckahoe Rural Legacy Plan.

The Tuckahoe Rural Legacy Plan was developed in cooperation with Caroline County in order to preserve the viewshed of the Tuckahoe River from the Town of Hillsboro to the confluence of the Tuckahoe and Choptank Rivers. Future rural legacy plan areas may provide for additional protection of farmland paralleling MD Route 404 in cooperation with Queen Anne's County in an effort to maintain the corridor's Rural Character in spite of planned transportation system improvements.

Chapter 7 Natural Resource Conservation And Sensitive Areas Protection

I. Vision

The restoration and protection of our natural resources and sensitive areas is critical to preservation of the Quality of Life enjoyed by those who live in Talbot County. Significant components of our local economy depend upon clean and abundant groundwater, and healthy and sustainable wetlands, rivers and bays.

Therefore, Talbot County takes the necessary steps to reduce runoff and other introductions of pollutants into our waters. The means of enforcing these provisions are adequately funded, and we have measurable, objective criteria for monitoring the success of our efforts.

In addition to our wetlands, rivers and bays, our groundwater and aquifers are aggressively protected for the future. The County has objective and measurable standards to determine whether development, either residential or commercial, threatens to deteriorate our groundwater or reduce our aquifers to levels, which will deny us a sustainable long-term water supply.

Goal

Conserve and protect Talbot County's most valuable and attractive assets, its natural resources, which include Critical Areas. Establish and enforce mandatory programs and regulations, and provide tax, financial, and any other incentives to insure preservation of these resources, while allowing for moderate planned growth and development.

II. Introduction

Talbot County's most notable feature is its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay and its extensive, irregular shoreline formed by numerous rivers, creeks and coves. The County has approximately 600 miles of shoreline and is principally bordered by the Chesapeake Bay to the west, the Choptank River to the south and east, and the Tuckahoe River to the east. On its western edge, the County is defined by numerous peninsulas or necks.

Talbot's land and waterways are intertwined in a unique mosaic of tidal waters, streams, farmlands and forests. Historic settlement patterns dating back to pre-Colonial and Colonial time have created a scattered patchwork of farms, estates, villages and towns. The traditional lifestyle of Talbot County has long centered on farming, seafood and maritime industries. The County's history is reflected not only in architecture but also in historic landscapes.

The Comprehensive Plan is one of many tools that the County employs to protect and conserve fragile natural resources. Approximately 38 percent of the County's total land area is designated as Critical Area. The County's adopted Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Plan and regulations contain strict environmental protection for shoreline areas of the County. The County's floodplains regulations, a Chapter of the County Code, provide safeguards for properties located within the 100-year floodplains.

The conservation and protection of the sensitive natural resources in Talbot transcends arbitrary boundaries. Issues of significance countywide include loss of forest land, sedimentation, excessive nutrient loads, hydrocarbons, and other toxins from storm-water runoff as well as loss of agricultural land, and development of land along rivers and creeks within the Critical Area and non-critical area tributary streams.

Certain areas of Talbot County are much more susceptible to environmental degradation than others due to the presence or proximity of sensitive natural features. Future development should be directed away from sensitive areas and guided towards areas of the County where environmental impacts would be less severe. Regardless of location, all future development should be subject to minimum performance standards for environmental protection and natural resource conservation.

The costs of resource reclamation are far greater than that of resource conservation and protection. If environmentally damaging activities are left uncontrolled, the loss of natural resources must be accepted, or payment must be made collectively by taxpayers to address the problem. As an example, collective Federal, State, and local tax dollars are currently being spent to correct environmental damage to the Chesapeake Bay that has resulted from decades of neglect and abuse.

Current efforts to conserve and protect natural resources can yield long-term benefits for the environment. The quality of Talbot County's environment is one of the factors that make the County such a desirable place to live and work. The intent of County environmental protection measures is not to stop growth and development, but rather to insure the compatibility of development with the continued productivity and value of environmentally sensitive areas.

III. Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas

The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Protection Program (Natural Resources Article 8-1801-8- 1806) was passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 1984 because of concern about the decline of certain natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay. As a result of this legislation, each Maryland county and municipality fronting on the Bay or its tributaries was required to adopt a local Critical Area Plan and corresponding development ordinances designed to implement the Plan.. The local plans are required to meet criteria, established by the Maryland Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Commission, that minimize impacts on the Bay's water quality and plant, fish and wildlife habitat. Talbot County adopted its local Critical Area Program which is contained in the County Zoning Ordinance on August 13, 1989. The Talbot County Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Plan is herein referenced as an important component of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The Talbot County Critical Area includes all lands and waters defined in Section 8-1807 of the Natural Resources Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. The Critical Area includes all waterfront

areas of the County within 1,000 feet beyond the landward boundary of State or tidal wetlands and the heads of tides designated under Title 9 of the Natural Resources Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. Map 3-6 (Land Use Plan) identifies the general location of lands located in the Talbot County Critical Area.

The Talbot County Chesapeake Bay Critical Area encompasses 65,689 acres, or about 38 percent of the County's total land area. The Talbot County Critical Area Program contains goals and policies relating to:

- Development in the Critical Area;
- Water Quality Protection;
- Habitat Protection;
- Shoreline Buffer Protection;
- Agriculture in the Critical Area;
- Forests and Developed Woodlands Protection;
- Natural Parks;
- Surface Mining/Solid Waste/Sanitary Landfills; and
- Marinas and Water Dependent Facilities

The County Zoning Ordinance has been revised to include regulations, which implement the policies of the County Critical Area Program. For more information relating to development and natural resource protection within the Critical Area, the reader should reference the Talbot County Critical Area Program.

Critical Area Policies

- C07.P. 1. The County will continue to enforce regulations to implement the goals and policies adopted as part of the local Talbot County Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program.
- C07.P. 2. Marina facilities should be required to comply with Maryland's Clean Marina initiative.

IV. Sensitive Area Protection

As noted in Chapter One, the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992 added provisions to Article 66 B 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 Areas Policies

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- C07.P. 3. The County should maintain and review 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.
- C07.P. 4. The County should develop coordinated natural resource conservation and sensitive area protection policies in cooperation with the County's incorporated towns for areas adjacent to towns.
- C07.P. 5. New development shall be restricted in sensitive areas and environmental protection standards must insure that environmental resources are protected and enhanced.

V. Countywide Natural Resource Conservation

Talbot County's natural resources are its most valuable and attractive resource asset. The plan provides guidelines and policies to encourage the protection, conservation and rehabilitation of these resources. The County's policies are broad and apply beyond the mandated requirements for critical areas, and consider all county land to be a valued natural resource that should be protected and conserved.

The 62 % of the County that is not under the jurisdiction of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area regulations should also be subject to environmental resource conservation and protection requirements. The County should insure that environmentally-sensitive resources such as forests/woodlands and habitat areas for rare, threatened and endangered species, which are located outside of the Critical Areas are protected as development occurs. The level of protection required for each resource should be appropriately scaled to the significance of the resource.

Natural Resource Conservation Policies

- C07.P. 6. The County should maintain countywide policies for conservation and protection of natural and cultural resources.
- C07.P. 7. The County should encourage property owners to place environmentally sensitive lands under conservation easements through national, regional, state, and local land trust organizations.
- C07.P. 8. Develop and enforce mandatory programs and regulations, as well as financial incentives to insure preservation of natural resources.
- C07.P. 9. The County should encourage cluster development to conserve open space and protect fragile environmental and natural resources.
- C07.P. 10. The County shall require evidence of Federal and State environmental permits as a condition of local development approval.

Natural Resource Conservation Implementation Strategies

Action: Implement a countywide Geographic Information System (GIS) to inventory and map natural resources, such as habitats, wetlands, stream corridors, tree stands, and vegetative cover for natural resource preservation management.

Action: Develop comprehensive baseline studies that provide measurable baseline data as a basis for monitoring for pollution and pollution sources. Such studies and data should be based on sound science. Baseline data for air and water quality should be regularly updated with the objective of insuring the same or, where applicable, improved environmental impact.

Action: Require all new large scale development projects to submit an environmental impact assessment prepared by a qualified environmental engineer or planner as part of the development application. The assessment must include all environmentally sensitive features on and adjacent to the site.

Action: Establish cooperative partnerships with state, federal and town government agencies to address major environmental problems as needed.

A. Surface Water Quality

Much of the water that flows through Talbot County is located within the Choptank River Watershed. The Choptank Watershed includes portions of Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester and Queen Anne's counties and Delaware. Water flows into the Choptank and Tred Avon Rivers, Harris, Broad and Tuckahoe Creeks, and numerous smaller streams.

Remaining lands in Talbot (approximately 30 percent of County land area) are located within the Upper Eastern Shore Watershed. This watershed includes parts of Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's and Talbot counties. Water bodies and their tributaries in Talbot which are a part of the Upper Eastern Shore Watershed include the Miles River, Wye River, and Eastern Bay. Both watersheds contain streams that are spawning ground for anadromous species, for example herring, shad, white perch and yellow perch. The freshwater streams in each of these two watersheds support over 30 species of fish and some 40 or more species of fish can be found in the brackish, saltier, lower reaches of rivers within each watershed. Both watersheds show signs of moderate to severe stress from nutrient overenrichment.

In 1994, the State of Maryland, with the cooperation of the County governments, prepared "Tributary Strategies" for each of these two watersheds (Map 7-2). These strategies were prompted by the recognition that nutrient pollution loads to the Chesapeake Bay's tributaries must be reduced to achieve Bay restoration targets. Tributary Teams are currently working to prioritize and implement actions to reduce nutrient loads to Bay tributary rivers and streams in the County's two watersheds.

Surface Water Quality Policies

C07.P. 11. The County should increase efforts to monitor the condition of County surface waters including streams, rivers, and submerged aquatic plant resources.

Surface Water Quality Implementation Strategies

Monitoring Water Quality

Action: Enhance baseline-monitoring efforts to better establish and monitor the condition of County surface waters including streams, rivers and submerged aquatic vegetation.

Action: To enhance efforts to monitor water quality, the County should work with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to encourage volunteers to participate as “Creek Watchers”.

B. Groundwater Quality

Groundwater supplied through wells and springs is the primary source of drinking water for most County residents. Groundwater quality in the County is generally good with some localized problems of high nitrate levels, high sodium and chlorine levels and lower groundwater levels. New standards for arsenic are proposed and should be used to evaluate and treat potable water supplies.

Factors such as poorly sited drainfields, high water tables, lack of septic tank maintenance, drainfield saturation, agricultural wastes, improper disposal of household hazardous waste and leaking or abandoned underground storage tanks threaten groundwater quality. To reduce the threat to the county’s groundwater quality, the County adopted a County Groundwater Protection Plan and Shared Facilities Ordinance which allows for expanded development of community owned and operated wastewater disposal systems and the creation of new types of systems serving more than one household.

Ground Water Quality Policies

C07.P. 12. The County will continue to study groundwater resources and establish follow-up mechanisms to monitor changes to occur over time.

C07.P. 13. The County will require failing septic systems to meet high standards of treatment.

C07.P. 14. The County will encourage policies and programs that support reasonable water use.

Ground Water Quality Implementation Strategies

Action: Develop comprehensive baseline studies that characterize the current condition of aquifers that provide potable water supplies. This would include establishment of scientific test wells, to permit testing and monitoring for salt-water intrusion and other contaminants in County aquifers. Particular attention should be given to the Aquia aquifer.

Action: Adopt a septic plan that includes requirements that all new septic systems and repairs meet high standards of treatment. Require routine inspections and pump-out.

Action: Establish a system for inspection and monitoring septic systems. Phase in program by beginning in the Critical Areas.

Action: Establish a financial assistance program to aid low income homeowners to repair or replace failing systems.

Action: In Critical Areas, require installation of de-nitrification systems at the time of an arms-length-sale of real property.

C. Rivers, Streams and Stream Buffers

County streams and their buffers are important resources. Streams support recreational fishing and serve as spawning areas for commercial fish stock. Streams and their adjacent buffers are home to countless species of animals and plants and transport valuable nutrients, minerals and vitamins to County rivers and creeks and, in turn, the Chesapeake Bay. The floodplains, wetlands, and wooded slopes along streams are important parts of the stream ecosystem.

Stream buffers serve as protection zones and reduce sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other runoff pollutants by acting as a filter, thus minimizing stream damage. The effectiveness of buffers to protect stream water quality is influenced by their width (which should take into account such factors as contiguous or nearby slopes, soil erodibility, and adjacent wetlands or floodplains), the type of vegetation within the buffer (some plants are more effective at nutrient uptake than others), and maintenance of the buffer. Buffers also provide habitat for wetland and upland plants which form the basis of healthy biological communities. A wide variety of animals use the natural vegetation as a corridor for food and cover. A natural buffer system provides connections between remaining patches of forest in the County to support wildlife movement.

Development activities near rivers and streams are required to provide a natural buffer. Through the County Critical Area Program, tributary stream buffers located within the Critical Area must be at least 100 feet wide, and may be expanded beyond that distance to include contiguous sensitive areas, such as steep slopes, hydric soils or highly erodible soils whose development or disturbance may impact streams, wetlands or other aquatic environments. In non-critical area, the County requires a 100 foot natural buffer for perennial streams and a 50 foot natural buffer for intermittent streams.

Rivers, Streams, and Stream Corridors Policies

C07.P. 15. The County should continue to enforce buffer requirements for all tributary and intermittent streams in the County.

C07.P. 16. The County recognizes the importance of stream corridors as water quality buffers, and wildlife habitat; and encourages protection of these buffers in their undisturbed state.

C07.P. 17. The County should adopt legislation authorizing serious fines and penalties for clearing trees and forests in shoreline buffers. Any trees cut should be replaced per County mitigation regulation.

C07.P. 18. Forests and vegetation should be preserved in stream corridors to preserve the integrity of these waterways.

Rivers, Streams and Stream Corridor Implementation Strategies

Buffer regulations

Action: Explore options to increase penalties for illegal clearing of trees, and require replacement consistent with mitigation requirements.

D. Wetlands

Wetland areas are a valuable natural resource. Their primary value is the wetland plants and bottom sediments are sinks or collectors of excess nutrients. They reduce floodwater peaks by storing floodwater and reducing floodwater velocity, serve as groundwater discharge and recharge areas, improve water quality and provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife. In addition, wetlands are recreational and aesthetic resources. Wetland activities are 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 natural buffer and non-tidal wetlands are protected by a 25 foot natural buffer. No development activities are allowed within the wetlands or buffer areas. Exceptions are allowed for certain water-dependent activities.

Wetland Policies

C07.P. 19. In accordance with Federal and State Policy and goal of “no net loss” of wetlands, the County will coordinate with Federal and State agencies to preserve existing wetlands where possible and to mitigate their destruction when necessary.

E. Shoreline Protection

The County’s 600 miles of shoreline is an important environmental, recreational and scenic resource. Portions of Talbot County, because of its relationship to the Chesapeake Bay, are subject to severe soil erosion caused by wind and wave action. The Bay Hundred area, which is the western-most part of the County, is subject to the direct wave action of the Bay and some shoreline reaches sustain losses of up to 16 to 18 feet of land per year. The County should continue to work with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to monitor and preserve this fragile resource.

Shoreline Protection Policies

C07.P. 20. The County should continue to monitor shoreline erosion conditions and recommend appropriate standards for stabilization and protection.

C07.P. 21. Adopt legislation improving the effectiveness of all shoreline buffers for all land uses when research and science indicate such actions can improve buffer functions.

F. Floodplains

Floodplains moderate and store floodwaters, absorb wave energies, and reduce erosion and sedimentation. Wetlands found within floodplains help maintain water quality, recharge groundwater supplies, protect fisheries, and provide habitat and natural corridors for wildlife.

Certain areas of Talbot 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.

Within the County two types of flooding occur, riverine and coastal or tidal flooding. The areas of County subject to riverine flooding are outside of the Critical Areas. In these areas recommendations for buffers along non-critical area streams will provide substantial protection to co-located floodplain resources.

The County has adopted appropriate regulations¹ restricting development within the 100 year flood plain.

Floodplain Policies

- C07.P. 22. The County will continue to enforce its floodplain regulations.
- C07.P. 23. The County will recognize the interdependence of floodplains and preservation of open space, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and stream corridors.
- C07.P. 24. Development within the 100-year floodplain will be limited to minimize disturbance and protect life and property.
- C07.P. 25. When sites subject to development contain land located both within and outside of the floodplain, development should be located in the area outside of the floodplain where practical.

Floodplain Implementation Strategies

Action: The County should explore acquisition of new digital elevation models (DEM) to more accurately determine location of floodplains.

G. Soils

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has classified the County soils into six major soil associations that are described in considerable detail in the Soil Survey, Talbot County, Maryland,

¹ Floodplain Ordinance.

dated December 1970. Map 7-1 shows the location of the soil associations. General characteristics of these soil associations can be summarized as follows:

Sassafras-Woodstown Association - Level to moderately sloping, well drained and moderately well drained soils that have a subsoil of sandy loam or sandy clay loam. This association is found mostly in the Eastern parts of the County and comprises 28% of the County's area. Groundwater is normally below a depth of five feet and these soils are normally suitable to support community development.

Mattapex-Matapeake Association - Level to moderately sloping, moderately well drained, and well-drained soils with a subsoil of loam to silty clay loam. These soils are found throughout the County and comprise 23% of the land area. With some exceptions, these soils are generally suitable to support community development.

Keyport-Mattapex Association - Level to gently sloping, moderately well drained soils that have a subsoil of silty loam or silt loam. This association makes up about 11% of the County and occurs mainly in the western part of the County in areas along the shoreline. The water table is generally high, particularly in the winter months. These soils are generally not suited for use of septic tank drain fields.

Elkton-Othello-Barclay Association - Level to nearly level, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soils that have a subsoil of silty clay to silt loam. This association occupies roughly 30% of the County land area and is typically located in the western half of the County in areas just inland from the waterfront. These soils have a fluctuating high water table and ditches are needed for successful farming. These soils are generally not suited for use of septic tank drain fields.

Fallsington-Pocomoke Association - Level to depressional, poorly drained and very poorly drained soils that have a subsoil of sandy loam or sandy clay loam. This association makes up about 5% of the County and is scattered throughout the County. These soils have a fluctuating high water table and are severely limited for development.

Tidal Marsh Association - Tidal marshes make up about 3% of the County and are low lying, level areas subject to periodic tidal flooding.

Generally, the soils of the eastern half of the County tend to be the best soils, both for agricultural purposes and for development. Many of the areas in the western part of the County contain soils that are poorly drained and have a high water table. These soils have severe limitations for development. The use of septic tank systems for sewage disposal is difficult or impossible in many of these areas.

Portions of Talbot County, because of its relationship to the Chesapeake Bay, are subject to severe soil erosion caused by wind and wave action. The Bay Hundred area, which is the western-most part of the County, is subject to the direct wave action of the Bay and some shoreline reaches sustain losses of up to 16 to 18 feet of land per year.

Soil Policies

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- C07.P. 26. All new development and redevelopment shall result in minimized pollutant loadings and runoff from the site through the implementation of sediment, stormwater and erosion control plans with the objective of insuring the same or improved environmental impacts and where applicable, enhancing environmental features.

H. Prime Agricultural Soils

Prime agricultural soils are soils that are best suited for continuous agricultural use. These soils (as defined by the U. S. Department of Agriculture) account for approximately 51% of the County's soils. These soils are usually found in areas that are nearly level and well drained and watered. Talbot's best agricultural soils are generally located in the eastern half of the County, although notable pockets are located on the western peninsula between St. Michaels and Tilghman Island.

Prime farmland is the foundation of the County's agricultural industry, one of Talbot's largest and most valuable economic sectors. Like other natural resources, prime agricultural land is threatened by development. Prime agricultural lands are well suited for development because they are well drained, generally found on mildly sloping terrain and have good potential for drainfields.

Talbot's emphasis on agriculture as an important part of the County's economy and lifestyle makes prime farmland especially important. Once the resource is lost, it cannot be reclaimed.

The policies addressing this resource are intended to correlate with this Plan's agriculture policies.

Prime Agricultural Soils Policies

- C07.P. 27. The County will encourage the preservation of prime agricultural soil resources for agricultural, horticultural and forestry use.
- C07.P. 28. Agricultural and forestry activities should be conducted in accordance with approved Best Management Practices for Soil and Water Conservation and management of nutrients.

I. 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. This is particularly true in Talbot County where steep slopes generally occur in proximity to County streams and are generally rare in other locations.

Steep Slopes Policies

- C07.P. 29. The County should continue to enforce policies to protect steep slopes adjacent to streams and tidal waters.

Steep Slopes Implementation Strategies

Action: The County should revise the site plan requirements to require site topography and slope, and submission of a stream buffer protection plan when appropriate.

J. Forest and Vegetation

Approximately 25% of the County is in forest cover. Forest cover is the ideal land use for maintaining water quality because it generates low levels of pollutants and filters pollutants from both surface and subsurface flows. Trees serve as natural habitat for wildlife, and are important to the carbon and oxygen cycle. Forest areas also provide a cooling effect and visual buffer in both developed and undeveloped areas.

The Forest Conservation Act of 1991 was enacted to protect the forests of Maryland by making forest conditions and character an integral part of the site planning process. The Act is regulated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, but implemented and administered by local governments.

Regulations require that any person making an application for subdivision of a tract of land 40,000 sq. ft. or greater or disturbing more than 40,000 sq. ft. of forest in conjunction with a project plan, building permit or sediment and erosion control plan, must submit a Forest Stand Delineation and Forest Conservation Plan to the Planning Office for review and approval.

Forest and Vegetation Protection Policies

- C07.P. 30. Forest and woodland resources should be conserved and, wherever possible, replenished through tree conservation measures, replanting programs, and through compliance with the Maryland Forest Conservation Act. Creative alternatives should be developed to prevent tree planting on prime agricultural soils.
- C07.P. 31. The County should encourage property owners to preserve forested areas through the use of Agricultural Easements, and conservation easements, through national, regional, state and local land trust organizations.
- C07.P. 32. Local regulations should be developed which insure that the landscape be preserved in its natural state, insofar as practical, by minimizing tree and soil removal. The development of a site should maintain maximum natural topography and cover.
- C07.P. 33. Maintaining natural topography, drainage ways, and tree cover should be a priority when determining the location of roads, placement of structures and site improvements in development plans.

K. Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species

Materials and chemicals produced by plants and animals are a largely unresearched storehouse for products beneficial to people. More than half of all medicines in use today can be traced to wild organisms. Plant chemicals are the sole or major ingredient in 25 percent of all prescriptions written in the United States each year. Likewise, agriculture depends on the development of new varieties

of crops, often created by cross-breeding strains with wild relatives of crop species, in efforts to develop pest, disease, or drought resistant crops. 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. The Maryland Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act provide definitions of threatened and endangered species. Plant and animal species in Talbot that are currently considered rare, threatened, or endangered are shown in Table 7-1. Eight animal and 40 plant species are considered to be rare, threatened, or endangered in Talbot County.

Maryland law and regulations do not currently provide a definition of habitat. As a basis for establishing habitat 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.”

Wildlife Habitat and Protection of Endangered Species Policies

- C07.P. 34. The County shall coordinate with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the U. S. Department of Interior in the protection of rare, threatened, and endangered species habitat within Talbot County, and shall take direct action when necessary to insure habitat protection.
- C07.P. 35. Utilize County zoning to direct intense growth and development away from threatened and endangered species habitat as part of the comprehensive planning process.
- C07.P. 36. Maintain low-density resource conservation and rural/agricultural conservation zoning in areas where threatened and endangered species habitat have been identified.
- C07.P. 37. When development is proposed on a parcel containing listed species habitat, encourage use of cluster development options to restrict development disturbances to portions of the site which minimize potential impacts to threatened and endangered species.
- C07.P. 38. Incorporate threatened and endangered species habitat in required open spaces established through “Reservation of Development Rights Agreements” when required to satisfy the minimum open space requirement of cluster subdivisions or cluster subdivisions utilizing transferable development rights (TDRs).
- C07.P. 39. Support the efforts of local land trusts and conservancies to protect threatened and endangered species habitat.

C07.P. 40. Utilize local open space and recreation planning efforts to investigate acquisition and protection opportunities.

TABLE 7-1. RARE, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES
Talbot County, Maryland

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Federal Status
Animals			
<i>Alasmidonta heterodon</i>	Dwarf wedge mussel	Endangered	Endangered
<i>Alasmidonta undulata</i>	Triangle floater	Endangered	
<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	American bittern	In need of conservation	
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Moorhen	In need of conservation	
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald eagle	Threatened	Threatened
<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	Least bittern	In need of conservation	
<i>Laterallus jamaicensis</i>	Black rail	In need of conservation	
<i>Rana virgatipes</i>	Carpenter frog	In need of conservation	
<i>Sciurus niger cinereus</i>	Delmarva fox squirrel	Endangered	Endangered
<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	Least tern	Threatened	
Plants			
<i>Agalinis setacea</i>	Thread-leaved gerardia	Endangered	
<i>Amelanchier obovalis</i>	Coastal juneberry	Endangered	
<i>Antennaria solitaria</i>	Single-headed pussytoes	Threatened	
<i>Boltonia asteroides</i>	Aster-like boltonia	Endangered	
<i>Carex lacustris</i>	Lake-bank sedge	Threatened	
<i>Carex silicea</i>	Sea-bank sedge	Endangered	
<i>Carex tenera</i>	Slender sedge	x	
<i>Cuscuta coryli</i>	Hazel dodder	x	
<i>Desmodium odhroleucum</i>	Cream-flowered tick-trefoil	Endangered	
<i>Desmodium pauciflorum</i>	Few-flowered tick-trefoil	Endangered	
<i>Dryopteris celsa</i>	Log fern	Threatened	
<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>	Spotted Joe-pye-weed	x	

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Federal Status
Geranium robertianum	Herb-robert	Endangered	
Gymnocarpium dryopteris	Oak fern	Endangered	
Hottonia inflata	Featherfoil	Endangered	
Hypericum drummondii	Drummond's St. Johns-wort	x	
Linum intercursum	Sandplain flax	Threatened	
Matalea carolinensis	Anglepod	Endangered	
Myrica heterophylla	Evergreen bayberry	Endangered	
Paspalum dissectum	Water's paspalum	Threatened	
Pedicularis lanceolata	Swamp lousewort	Endangered	
Pluchea camphorata	Marsh fleabane	Endangered	
Salix bebbiana	Bebb's willow	x	

Source: Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Service, May 29, 2002

Note: x indicates Endangered Extirpated meaning a species that was once a viable component of the flora or fauna of the State, no naturally occurring populations are now known to exist in the State.

Chapter 8 Mineral Resources

I. Vision

Sand and gravel are the only significant mineral deposits in Talbot County. They are principally located east of US 50 and are generally found on major stream corridors in areas where conservation of forests and farmlands are a key issue. Due to adequate safeguards, extraction and closure of the sites does not create environmental damage. The use of abandoned sites as dumping grounds for waste materials is prohibited. Site recovery and conversion to ponds and wooded areas controls runoff, helps maintain ground water tables, beautifies the landscape and creates the opportunity for parks and recreational areas.

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.

II. Introduction

The sand and gravel extraction industry in Talbot 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.

III. Background Information

The major mineral resources of Talbot County consist primarily of sand and to a lesser extent, gravel. There are no known deposits of coal, building stone, precious ores, or base metals.

Sand and gravel deposits in Talbot are confined principally to two stratigraphic units: the Beaverdam Sand, and the Pensauken. These sand and gravel-bearing units, depending on their locations, can be in excess of 25 feet thick. Map 8-1 shows the general location of these sand and gravel deposits in Talbot. It should be noted that sand and gravel deposits commonly change in thickness and composition over short distances. Therefore, specific site investigations are typically required to estimate reserves on a specific site.

Based on estimates provided by the Minerals, Oil and Gas Division of the Water Management Administration, Maryland Department of the Environment and information provided by various sand and gravel operators, production has been in the range of 200,000 annually for the past several years.

The contribution of the industry to the local economy is evident in the estimated wholesale value of production which has grown from just over \$500,000 annually during the early 1990's to an average of over \$700,000 annually over the past five years. The value of the local mineral extraction industry cannot be measured in tonnage alone. To be economical, sand and gravel must be mined close to where they will be used. According to industry and regulatory agency sources, transportation costs quickly exceed the on-site cost of these resources, with the price of sand and gravel roughly doubling every 25 to 40 additional miles the material is transported.

A. 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 Management Administration, Department of the Environment.

In recent years, the County has enacted policies prohibiting mining activities in the Critical Area Buffer and designated habitat protection areas. Proposals for new mining operations are subject to site plan review for compliance with environmental protection regulations.

To insure mining sites are restored to a usable state, appropriate action must be taken. Currently, the licensing process for an extraction permit requires reclamation plans for any site mined. In addition, bonds are posted to insure the availability of funds for reclamation should an operator abandon the site. The restorative guidelines and regulations have been successful in ensuring the restoration of sites where extraction has taken place since the licensing process was established. Reclamation of abandoned extraction sites is also a concern for old mining sites that have not been restored. An initial step toward addressing the reclamation of these sites would require an inventory and evaluation of the site to determine reclamation needs and their potential for other land uses.

Surface mining activities are permitted, by special exception, in the Rural Agricultural Conservation District and Rural Conservation District.

Mineral Resource Policies

- C08.P. 1. The County should insure that all available measures are taken to protect the natural environment from all sources of pollution resulting from mineral extraction activities.
- C08.P. 2. The County will maintain land use policies and regulations that discourage the pre-emption of mineral extraction from other uses.
- C08.P. 3. The County will require that post-excavation uses for mined sites be consistent with county plans and regulations.
- C08.P. 4. The County will require that any post excavation use as a rubblefill is limited to County generated rubble.
- C08.P. 5. The County will utilize appropriate methods for protecting existing neighborhoods from the impacts of adjacent extraction operations and the transportation of extracted resources.

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- C08.P. 6. The County will provide adequate regulation and monitoring of mineral extraction operations to insure compliance with applicable permitting requirements including those established for reclamation or restoration of mineral sites.
- C08.P. 7. The County will identify and utilize any programs that can support reclamation or reforestation of older or abandoned borrow pits or mined sites not subject to reclamation requirements.
- C08.P. 8. The County will provide opportunities for construction of rubble recycling facilities in conjunction with mineral extraction facilities.

Mineral Resource Implementation Strategies

The County should monitor the effectiveness of current zoning provisions which permit mineral resource extraction activities by special exception in the RAC and RC districts.

Action: The County should monitor mineral resource extraction projects to ensure compliance with the zoning ordinance.

Current ordinance provisions should be monitored to insure they accomplish two purposes.

- Maintain low permitted densities and encourage cluster development on the majority of the land area where recoverable sand and gravel deposits may be located to insure access to these resources is available in future years.
- Do not create a cumbersome permitting process that denies reasonable access by sand and gravel operators to lands with economically recoverable deposits.

The County should protect the natural environment from all sources of pollution resulting from mineral extraction activities.

All new mineral extraction sites should provide a 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.

The County should require reclamation and post excavation use be identified as part of the application process.

To insure 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. 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 County recommends the following post-extraction uses:

- Recreational land uses: parks and lakes
- Forestry
- Aquaculture
- Residential Development

-
- Disposal of non-toxic solid fill material, clean fill material (such as rubble) and disposal of inorganic solid fill material (fly ash). Fill material must be from Talbot County.

The County should inventory abandoned extraction sites.

Action: The County should seek the assistance of the Maryland Department of the Environment in conducting such an inventory as a cooperative effort.

Reclamation of abandoned extraction sites is a concern for old (i.e. pre-Natural Resources Law) mining sites that have not been restored and for which no closure bond was required. An initial step toward addressing the reclamation of these abandoned sites would require an inventory and evaluation of all abandoned sites to determine reclamation needs and their potential for other land uses.

Such an inventory could provide a basis for future targeting of reclamation priorities, evaluating funding needs, and assessing opportunities to secure funding assistance for reclamation of priority sites. Options for funding reclamation of abandoned sites include imposing a tax on mineral products, much as the Federal Superfund Program is funded by a tax on certain chemical feedstock. As an alternative, a tax exemption, reduction or rebate, in some amount, could be established for landowners who reclaim sites, thereby providing some incentive for accelerating the reclamation of abandoned sites.

The County should reduce impacts to infrastructure.

Action: Identify impact cost to county infrastructure if mining activity increases.

Mining operations in Talbot 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 by haulers' trucks, and disturbance to neighbors or travelers who utilize the same routes. The County should continue to monitor levels of extraction activity and be prepared at some future point, (should the need arise), to seek legislation to allow 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 from a road tax on haulers, or a tax on sales of mineral products. These funds could be directed specifically to roads frequently used to haul mineral products, or pro-actively, to areas where the County wishes to facilitate recovery of mineral deposits.

Chapter 9 Parks and Recreation

I. Vision

All County residents are able to find opportunities for recreation and relaxation in our park system. It provides facilities and programs for a variety of active sports and also provides pleasant green spaces for passive recreation. Partnerships exist between the County and municipalities which effectively utilize limited resources.

Each population center has a conveniently located neighborhood park with picnic tables and other equipment for family-oriented activities. Larger community parks are connected by a greenways network including walking and biking trails. Several waterfront parks and many public landings provide access to our many miles of Bay and river shoreline.

Frequent surveys determine the ever-changing needs of County residents. The Department of Parks and Recreation offers a wide variety of programs and well-maintained facilities to meet these needs, including those of special groups such as persons with special needs, preschoolers and senior citizens.

GOAL:

Provide an improved system of parks and recreation facilities based on residents needs.

II. Introduction

Talbot County currently provides its residents with many opportunities to pursue recreational and leisure activities. Some of these opportunities are available through a variety of recreation programs offered by the County's Department of Parks and Recreation. Other opportunities exist in a variety of parks ranging from large County-wide park facilities to small neighborhood play areas.

The continued development of parks and recreation facilities is necessary to accommodate a changing and growing population in the County.

In recent years, increased leisure time, a rise in the standard of living and a growing and increasingly elderly population has contributed to changes in the demand for recreational sites and activities. These changes in individual and community recreation needs should be considered in the planning for parks, recreational facilities and programs.

The Land Preservation and Recreation Plan (LPRP) contains a description of the State's recreation and open space classification and standards, an inventory of existing parks, open space and recreational facilities, a demand analysis of park, recreation and open space needs, and plan and implementation recommendations for meeting those needs.

III. County Park Facilities

Seven major types of recreation areas exist within Talbot County. They include Federal parks, State parks, County-wide parks, community parks, neighborhood recreation areas, special parks and private recreational facilities. See Appendix 9-1 for listing of parks.

A. Federal and State Parks

The United States Naval Research Lab is the only Federally-owned property in Talbot County. The 2 acre site north of Black Walnut Point was previously used as a Coast Guard facility.

The State owns approximately 485 acres of recreation lands. The State Parks are: Black Walnut State Park, Choptank River Park and Fishing Pier, Wye Oak State Park, Seth Demonstration Forest, and Route 333 and 33 Bike Paths. The mapped location of each of these park facilities is identified on Map 9-1.

B. County Owned Facilities

County-wide Parks

Two county-wide park facilities, shown on Map 9-1, are the largest public park facilities in the County and serve a regional population including all residents of Talbot County. The Hog Neck Golf Course (265 acres) and the Talbot County Community Center (51 acres) are located adjacent to Route 50 north of the Town of Easton. The public Golf Course facility includes a 27-hole golf course, driving range, clubhouse, and picnic area. The County Community Center provides indoor facilities for ice skating and ice hockey. Grounds adjacent to the Community Center are improved with lighted outdoor fields to support baseball, lacrosse and soccer.

Community Parks

The County has 264 acres of land committed to community parks in 18 locations. The parks range in size from ten to 25 acres and are designed to serve residents within five miles of their location. These recreation areas are generally larger than neighborhood parks and include facilities to support field games, court games, and playground apparatus. Community parks often serve residents of the towns in the County and/or are located adjacent to or near school facilities. Five of the community park sites are located at public schools providing for multiple use and efficient maintenance of these facilities. Map 9-1 shows the approximate location of all community parks throughout the County.

Neighborhood Parks

The County has 88 acres of land committed to neighborhood parks in 16 locations. The parks range in size from one to five acres and are designed to serve residents within a one or two miles of their location. Neighborhood parks are intended to provide areas which support active recreational activities such as playgrounds, playing fields and organized games, as well as passive recreational pursuits. Map 9-1 shows the location of neighborhood park facilities in Talbot.

C. Public / Private Parks

Special parks in Talbot include existing natural areas, quasi-public facilities and historic and cultural areas. Although special park facilities do not fall within standard park classification systems, these areas are considered a very important part of Talbot's inventory of preservation and recreation lands. There are special park natural areas within the County totaling approximately 2,197 acres which are devoted solely to land preservation and conservation, such as the Knapp Foundation and the McManus Institute Nature Preserves.

Quasi-public areas provide additional parks and open space acreage. These special parks/recreation areas and facilities are identified in the Talbot LPRP and include the Izaak Walton League property with an archery range and picnic facilities, the Easton Club Golf Course, the Martingham Golf Course which includes pool and tennis courts, Kronesburg Park picnic area, Pickering Creek Environmental Center, the Jean Ellen DuPont Audubon Center and Sanctuary, and the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.

D. Private Recreational Facilities

The public and quasi-public parks of Talbot County are supplemented by 1,264 acres of private parks and recreation areas. These private parks contain a full range of passive and active recreational facilities and range in size from small community clubs to large country clubs and golf courses.

E. Waterfront Access

Talbot offers numerous opportunities for water related recreational activities. Public landings in the County offer boat ramps, mooring facilities, fishing and crabbing piers, picnic areas and parking facilities. Although public landings provide waterfront access opportunity, most facilities are small in land area and limited in size. The County is working toward selective and targeted improvement of waterfront access facilities. Map 9-2 identifies the general location of public landing facilities in the County

IV. County Parks and Recreation Department

The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the administration and programming of recreational facilities and activities for Talbot County. The Department maintains and schedules activities at recreational facilities, participates in the preparation of a five year acquisition and development plan which is required by the State of Maryland as a basis for program open space funding, and oversees the State funded School Community Centers program. The Department is responsible for coordinating park, open space and recreational activities between the County and the incorporated towns. The Department provides technical assistance and encourages towns to participate in the local programming, acquisition, and development of recreation facilities.

The Talbot County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board provides recommendations to the County Council and the County Parks Department relating to plans and policies for public recreation, the organization of recreation councils, the establishment of recreational programs and plans for the

acquisition of land for public recreation and open space. This Board includes appointees from both the County and the incorporated towns.

The Talbot County Park Board is involved with the administration, long-range planning and policy direction for the Talbot County Community Center. The Board is appointed by the County Council and recommends policies and administrative guidelines, prepares annual reports and submits budget requests for these recreation facilities.

Parks and Recreation Policies

- C09. P. 1. Actively pursue the goals, objectives and implementation recommendations adopted as part of the Talbot County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.
- C09. P. 2. Periodically update the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan to keep the inventory of parks and recreational facilities current, reassess demand in light of projected population growth, and identify new or alternative implementation recommendations for site and project selection, land acquisition, facility development, and preservation and conservation programs.
- C09. P. 3. Continue to support the development, operation and funding of indoor and outdoor recreational programs for County residents.
- C09. P. 4. Acquire a shoreline park facility and continue to retain, maintain, and improve existing facilities that provide access to public waters for County recreational boaters, kayakers, outdoorsmen, picnickers and swimmers.
- C09. P. 5. Further develop the existing system of walking and bicycle trails in areas where this activity will not create automobile/bicycle traffic hazards. The development of bike and walking trails shall not occur without consideration of property rights, privacy issues and conflicts with agricultural use. (see Map 4-3 Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails)
- C09. P. 6. Explore the feasibility of developing public and private greenways and open space linear parks in areas of the County where this will not create conflicts with private property rights and privacy.
- C09. P. 7. Encourage developers to provide recreational space in residential development projects. Standards for provision of open space should be evaluated and updated as needed. Such standards shall not permit land area utilized for golf course facilities to satisfy recreational space requirements.
- C09. P. 8. Provide an information program to include maps and brochures that identify park locations and facilities to insure that as many citizens as possible are aware of the recreation and open space opportunities that exist in the County.

Parks and Recreation Strategies

Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

Action: Complete update of the Talbot County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.

The Talbot County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan is currently being updated. The Plan contains numerous recommendations for maintaining and improving the County's system of park sites and recreation facilities.

Although the County has a rather diverse array of recreational facilities and offerings, the recent update of the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan provides an indication that there are areas in need of improvement. Comparison of available recreation land for public use with State standards for provision of parkland suggest the County should target acquisition of additional land to serve the needs of present and future residents.

A survey conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department as part of the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan update indicated a demand for certain types of facilities, notably, soccer fields, facilities to support racket sports, and picnic areas, walking trails and bike trails to support passive recreation activities. Regular joint meetings between the County, its towns, and neighboring counties should be held to better coordinate park and recreation resources, facilities and services.

Waterfront Access

Action: Re-activate planning for the Claiborne Jetty Waterfront Park.

In cooperation with the Claiborne community and the U.S. Government, the County should initiate discussions to re-activate planning for the development of the Claiborne Jetty Waterfront Park as proposed in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. The site should be accorded special development treatment to recognize the historic significance of the jetty, which served as the transfer terminal for the Chesapeake Bay Steamboat Ferry Service and Steam Railroad Service to St. Michaels, Easton, Salisbury, Berlin and Ocean City (Circa 1898-1915).

Action: Redevelop Easton Point as a "working waterfront" area.

In cooperation with the Town of Easton, Easton Point should be redeveloped as a revitalized "working waterfront" area (see Easton's 1997 Comprehensive Plan), including a prominent public waterfront park. Special development treatment should be provided to recognize the historic significance of this site, which served as the site of the Chesapeake Bay Steamboat Ferry Service for 100 years (circa 1820-1920). The site should also be linked to a county-wide trail system as envisioned in the 1991 Talbot County Public Access Study.

Action: Acquire a larger waterfront park site that can support a broader range of water-related activities in one location.

APPENDIX 9-1. COUNTY PARK FACILITIES

Federal Park

United States Naval Research Lab

State Parks

Black Walnut State Park

Choptank River Park and Fishing Pier

Wye Oak State Park

Seth Demonstration Forest

Route 333 and Route 33 Bike Paths

Countywide Parks

Hog Neck Golf Course

Talbot County Community Center

Community Parks

Causeway Park in Oxford

Idlewild Park in Easton

Moton Park in Easton

Perry Cabin Park in St. Michaels

Back Creek Park in Tilghman.

Chapel District Elementary School

Easton Middle School

Easton Elementary School

Easton Senior High School

Bay Hundred Community Pool in St. Michaels

Mount Pleasant Park in Easton

North Easton Park

Oxford Community Center

Clint Bradley Park in St. Michaels

St. Michaels School Complex

Bay Hundred Community Pool in St. Michaels

Trappe Park

Home Run Baker Park in Trappe

George C. Murphy Community Pool in Easton

Neighborhood Parks

Bellevue Park

Cordova Park

Clifton Park in Easton

Lakeside Park in Trappe

Mill Street Park in St. Michaels

Mount Pleasant Playground in Easton

Muskrat Park in St. Michaels

Neavitt Park

Oxford Town Park

South Clifton Park in Easton

South Street Park in Easton

Stony Ridge Park in Easton

Thompson Park in Easton

Tilghman Elementary School

Whitemarsh Elementary School

Wittman Park

Chapter 10 Housing

I. Vision

The County, in cooperation with our incorporated towns and villages, provides a suitable inventory of affordable housing to either rent or buy. The housing mix is designed to satisfy the needs of all our people regardless of age or income level. Higher density development within our incorporated towns and an effective infrastructure growth plan contribute to keeping both initial and ongoing housing costs at the desired levels. Achieving the necessary number of units requires difficult planning decisions and the integration of related programs to reach the objectives.

Redevelopment of older neighborhoods within our incorporated towns and villages emphasizes restoration of historic houses. Infill construction of mixed residential types is encouraged. New housing development is directed toward designated growth centers.

Goal

Develop policies, initiate programs and acquire funding to help alleviate substandard housing conditions and provide, in appropriate locations, residential areas which can accommodate a variety of housing densities, types, sizes and costs to meet existing and future needs.

II. Introduction

Historically, the County has provided single-family housing at a lower cost compared to the larger metropolitan areas. Other housing types, such as apartments, townhouses and condominiums have traditionally been built either within or adjacent to the incorporated areas where public utilities are available. Between 1989 and 1992, the County, in response to State Critical Areas requirements and in an effort to conserve working farmland and open space, effectively down zoned over 87% of the County from what had been 1 house per 2 acres to on average 1 house per 20 acres. The intent of the down zoning was to permit less growth in the rural areas and concentrate growth in the incorporated towns and villages.

The effects of the down-zoning were not immediately apparent, as development continued to occur on already subdivided lots. Between 1997 and 2001, there has been an average of 47 lots per year receiving final subdivision approval. In 2001, more residential building permits were issued in the incorporated areas than in the County. This trend is expected to continue into the future as both the Town of Easton and the Town of Trappe develop.

In the County the primary form of housing is single-family homes on lot sizes of 2 acres or greater. There are some multi-family developments within the incorporated towns. In both the County and Towns, one issue that has been identified by the local building community is the lack of availability of single family lots for middle price range custom homes. The preponderance of development has been single developer subdivisions. This development pattern if it continues will have an impact on the architectural character of the County.

III. Housing Conditions

In 1987 and 2002 the County initiated studies of substandard housing. The 1987 study¹ included housing problems of the elderly and handicapped. The 2002 housing study found that between 1987 and 2002 Talbot County had significantly reduced its stock of substandard housing in the unincorporated areas of the County. The 2002 study² reported that only 148 housing units were substandard, of these only twenty four were occupied. Three factors were credited with reducing the number of substandard units by 50% between 1987 and 2002. First, a significant number of the substandard housing units had been abandoned. Secondly, in 1989 the County adopted a Minimum Livability Code to enhance enforcement of housing code violations. Third, volunteer and citizen groups had made many needed repairs to homes of the elderly and handicapped. Another factor in reducing the number of substandard units was a strong economy in the 1990s which provided the impetus for improvements to both tenant and owner occupied housing.

A. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

One of the issues directly related to housing condition is access to public sewer and water. The County received Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) between 1999 and 2000 for approximately \$220,000 to fund utility extension and rehabilitation work for low to moderate income households in the unincorporated community of Chester Park contiguous to the Town of St. Michaels. The Chester Park project was further supported by a federal grant from the USDA Office of Rural Development for approximately \$250,000 to extend sewer to the community. In addition, \$180,000 was awarded to the County in 2002 for the upgrade of public facilities for the West Kennedy neighborhood prior to their annexation into the Town of Easton. In 2003, the County received a CDBG grant in the amount of \$450,000 for extension of the Town of Easton's sewer and water and annexation into the Town, for the unincorporated community of W. Glenwood Avenue, which borders the Town of Easton.

B. Special Loan Programs

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Special Loan Program provides low or no interest loans to moderate and low income landowners and landlords for home rehabilitation and lead paint risk reduction activity. As of 2003, Talbot County has received approximately \$750,000 in Special Loans.

C. Building Code and Livability Code

Talbot County adopted the International Residential Code (IRC) and the International Building Code (IBC) in January 2002. The codes apply to all new residential, commercial and industrial construction in the unincorporated areas of the County. Enforcement of the codes insures that all new construction meets minimum standards for safety and occupancy.

1 Morton Hoffman and Company, Inc. 1987.

2 Marvin G. Tossey, Ph.D., 2002

In 1989, the Talbot County Minimum Livability Code was adopted by the County Council and rewritten in 1999 to enhance enforcement and to establish a due process for violations. The Talbot County Minimum Livability Code applies to all rental housing units in the unincorporated areas of the County. The Code is enforced by the County on a complaint only basis. Each of the incorporated towns in the County has also adopted similar minimum livability codes as required by State law.

This County Minimum Livability Code protects the public health, safety and welfare in residential structures and premises by establishing property maintenance standards for basic equipment and facilities, maintenance standards for residential structures and premises,

- Establishing minimum property maintenance standards for basic equipment and facilities used for light, ventilation, heating and sanitation for residential structures and premises, and for safe and sanitary maintenance of residential structures and premises;
- Establishing minimum requirements for residential structures and premises for means of egress, fire protection systems, and other equipment necessary for safety from fire;
- Fixing the responsibilities of property owners, operators and tenants of residential structures and premises; and
- Providing for administration, enforcement and penalties.

IV. Assisted Housing for Special Needs Populations

Special populations include low income residents, the elderly, disabled residents and the homeless. The provision of housing for these populations often requires heavy subsidies, which have historically been provided by the federal and state governments. In recent years, federally assisted housing programs have been curtailed or eliminated placing a greater burden on the states and local jurisdictions.

The Community Development Administration (CDA), created in 1970, is a division of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and serves the housing needs for people with limited incomes, the elderly and the handicapped. As the State's housing finance agency, CDA provides mortgage financing for single and multi-family housing, finances home and energy conservation improvements in existing housing and administers Federal rent subsidies. Since 1974, the State CDA has provided over \$16,000,000 in financing in Talbot County through its programs for home-ownership, rental housing, special loans and housing subsidies.

The USDA Office of Rural Development is a Federal agency that provides funding for housing for low and moderate-income families and the elderly under its Section 515 program, and loans and/or grants for repairs under Section 504 for the elderly. USDA Office of Rural Development operates only in rural areas or towns with less than 10,000 persons outside of Metropolitan Statistical Areas. This would cover all of Talbot County, excluding the Town of Easton. There are currently three FmHA housing developments in Talbot County — Mulberry Hill Apartments in Easton contains 112 units, while Parkway Apartments and St. Michaels Cottages are both located in St. Michaels and contain 40 and 30 units respectively.

At present there are 140 public housing units in Talbot County – 65 are in the Town of Easton and 75 in the Town of St. Michaels. These units are operated by a Housing Authority in each town. Although these units are available to households throughout the County, priority is given to town residents. There is an extensive waiting list for low-income families wishing to move into these units.

Hamilton Village in St. Michaels is a twenty-four (24) unit HUD Section 202 development owned and operated by the Upper Shore Aging Housing Corporation. Hamilton Village serves low-income elderly residents and currently has an eighteen month to two year waiting list. Asbury Place in Easton is a twenty six unit development owned by the Town of Easton. These units were constructed as part of the Maryland Partnership Housing Program and represent the first phase of development providing low-income housing for the elderly.

V. Affordable Housing

While the number of dwelling units in Talbot County continues to increase, many County residents still find it difficult or impossible to obtain housing to meet their needs. Causing the problem are two major shortages — a lack of variety of housing types and a lack of suitable housing for low and moderate income families. Practically all the housing units in Talbot County, excepting some multi-family developments within the incorporated towns, are single-family detached homes. Within unincorporated areas of the County, these single-family homes are predominantly located on lot sizes two acres or greater in size.

Providing affordable housing options for middle- and low-income families is important to the long term economic and social vitality of the County. The location of housing – its proximity to jobs, childcare, stores and services and whether or not these are accessible by car, transit, or walking – also have a significant impact on the cost of living and therefore affordability.

In Talbot County, the problem is further compounded by lack of availability of affordably priced rental or for-purchase housing. The demand for housing generated by families moving in from other areas has escalated the price of land and housing. Many of the families moving into the County are second or third time homeowners and are able to finance expensive homes. Low and moderate income families are being priced out of the market in many areas of the County.

The County cannot control the housing market but can develop tools and methods to encourage the development of affordable and special needs housing. The Comprehensive Plan policies direct new development to the areas within the incorporated town boundaries, where the availability of public services permits greater residential densities. The Town of Easton and Trappe have both adopted policies that will permit a mix of housing types and price ranges that will meet the needs of many of the families with incomes below the median income.

The County established a County-wide Housing Advisory Board to pay attention to housing problems throughout the unincorporated and incorporated areas of the County. The Board includes County elected officials, civic leaders, realtors, developers, bankers, business leaders, community representatives, and social service representatives. The Housing Advisory Boards assists in public

education and awareness of housing problems, and facilitate taking advantage of available State and Federal housing programs. The Housing Coordinator serves as staff to this Advisory Board.

Housing Policies

C10.P. 1. The County encourages the development of a variety of housing types, styles and designs.

Housing Condition

C10.P. 2. Existing housing stock should be maintained, conserved and improved to support social and economic diversity within the community.

C10.P. 3. The County should provide assistance through available State and Federal programs for rehabilitation or, in some cases where no other alternative exists, for removal and replacement of existing substandard rental and owner-occupied housing units in the unincorporated areas of the County.

Special Needs Housing

C10.P. 4. The County should examine needs for development of an emergency shelter for the homeless.

Affordable Housing

C10.P. 5. The County should seek means of providing affordable housing for low and middle income families including the potential establishment of a County Housing Authority for the purpose of increasing access to state and federal funding programs.

C10.P. 6. Incentives should be provided to encourage the development of new affordable housing as well as to encourage restoration and rehabilitation of existing housing in the County's towns and village centers.

C10.P. 7. The County should develop a wide range of tools and methods to insure an adequate supply of affordable housing in new developments.

C10.P. 8. The County should encourage the incorporated Towns to require construction of a minimum percentage of moderately priced housing units in larger developments, rehabilitate existing affordable housing, or investigate other alternative methods for achieving and protecting affordable housing.

Manufactured Housing

C10.P. 9. Manufactured housing parks and subdivisions should continue to be allowed as a solution to providing affordable housing, provided they are developed in accordance with strict regulations regarding minimum and maximum size, location, compatibility with surrounding land uses, density and development standards.

C10.P. 10. Individual manufactured housing is permitted as single family dwellings by the specific criteria outlined in the Talbot County Zoning Ordinance.

C10.P. 11. Manufactured homes should be permitted as an accessory use to agricultural operations.

Accessory Units

C10.P. 12. Single accessory apartments or cottages should be permitted in agricultural and rural residential districts in the County.

Housing Implementation Strategies

Housing Condition

Action: Based on the 2002 Housing Study, prepare an action plan to eliminate substandard housing by 2010.

Action: Increase enforcement of the Hazardous Structures Ordinance to insure reduction in the number of unsafe structures.

Action: Continue enforcement of the Minimum Livability Code. Consider developing a program for regularly scheduled inspections to insure that all rental housing in the County is adequately maintained and that existing substandard rental housing is rehabilitated.

Action: Apply for Community Development Block Grants to rehabilitate substandard housing conditions in targeted areas.

Action: Provide assistance through available State and Federal programs for rehabilitation or removal and replacement of existing substandard rental and owner-occupied housing units in the unincorporated areas of the County.

Special Needs Housing

Action: Continue to support grant applications by the Towns for State and Federal Housing Subsidies.

Affordable Housing

Definition: The generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. Reference: U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Action: Research methods of requiring or encouraging affordable housing that best meets the needs of Talbot County citizens.

Action: Coordinate with the towns, local business and civic groups, the local financial and banking community, non-profit housing organizations, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and the USDA Office of Rural Development to promote the development of affordable housing in Talbot County.

Action: Encourage the establishment of a joint commission of Talbot County, Talbot's towns and unincorporated Villages to initiate and implement a coordinated affordable housing program throughout the County, its towns, and its unincorporated villages.

Action: Initiate a study of the feasibility of establishing a "Housing Trust Fund".

Housing Coordinator

Action: The County should continue to support the Housing Office and the Housing Coordinator to oversee housing and community development programs, to focus on obtaining Federal and State financing and to give attention to the housing problems in the unincorporated areas of the County.

Chapter 11 Economic Development and Tourism

I. Vision

Talbot County Maryland is known as the center of the Environmental Peninsula, a premier location for natural resource based companies. Talbot County has clean, safe communities that boast strong, balanced economies. The County's strong agribusiness and seafood industries are the result of thriving working farms and viable fisheries. The agribusiness, seafood and food product-related industry clusters co-exist with environmentally friendly technology companies, light manufacturing, recreation, and service industries.

Family wage jobs are abundant, providing low to moderate income families with opportunities to improve their status, thereby sustaining a comfortable living standard. High quality job training and education for adults and young people enables them to find work and careers in our trade area. The average wage and wealth equivalent is at the same level with the rest of Maryland.

Growth is centered in existing towns and villages that have adequate water, sewer, transportation, technology and other necessary infrastructure to serve residential, commercial and industrial needs. A regional transportation authority unifies the region while minimizing traffic congestion.

The continuing unspoiled rural character, country viewscapes and sparkling shorelines support a healthy tourism industry. The County has captured the benefit from renewed interest in heritage and eco-tourism.

The arts based cottage industries have continued to prosper and enjoy support from the local residents and tourists.

Our towns have attractive historic districts and profitable merchants. There is an abundance of safe and affordable housing and a low crime rate. The elderly population has access to transportation, affordable, first-rate healthcare, and retirement accommodations necessary to maintain a positive quality of life.

The County's natural resources are well managed so future generations may enjoy the associated recreational activities, using them wisely and effectively. Water quality in our bays, rivers and streams is exceptional, providing a home for robust populations of crab, shellfish, and other wildlife.

The residents and elected officials actively engage in proactive, innovative efforts to maintain their quality of life and determine their future. Successful economic development creates more local job opportunities and sustains the quality of life in the County. A diversified and expanded tax base creates the funding necessary to provide public services and facilities for our residents.

Goal

Diversify and expand the County's economic base to provide a broad range of employment opportunities resulting in a strong tax base

II. Introduction

Talbot County's location and physical features, together with a number of other characteristics and qualities combine to form a framework of assets to support potential future economic growth and continued diversification. Talbot County offers a superior quality of life with abundant recreation, cultural and social opportunities.

The major commercial centers in the County are located in and around the incorporated Towns of Easton and St. Michaels. Most of the undeveloped commercially zoned land in Talbot County is located within the corporate limits of the Town of Easton. Very little undeveloped land is zoned for commercial growth outside of the County's incorporated areas or in the other municipalities.

Although the County has traditionally had lower unemployment than other areas of the State, many of the County's residents are under-employed. Many jobs in tourism, retail sales and non-professional services do not pay high wages. Many of the County's younger residents have had to leave the County to find higher paying jobs elsewhere.

One of the principal purposes of an economic development effort is to provide sufficient tax base for the continued prosperity of the County. The fiscal result of economic development is an increasingly diverse and sustainable community tax base. A stronger tax base enables a community to support a higher quality of life through reinvestment in a broader array of community services and amenities. However, the current revenue tax cap under which Talbot County currently operates, limits the financial benefits that a jurisdiction typically garners when commercial/industrial growth occurs and, therefore, restricts the benefits Talbot County residents receive.

A. Economic Sectors

Talbot County's economic base has transitioned from agriculture, seafood and boat building as the mainstays of the economy to a service economy. In 2000, the service industry was the largest industry in the County employing 37% of the labor force with 9,212 full or part-time jobs. Health care related activity accounts for approximately one-third of the service industry. The retail trade industry is the second largest sector employing 20% of the labor force with 4,852 full or part-time jobs, of that restaurant jobs accounted for 33%. Manufacturing is the third largest industry sector, employing 2,959 workers. Between 1990 and 2000, the service industry created the largest number of new jobs. (see Table 11. Chapter 2. Planning Assumptions for more information)

Talbot County's workforce is largely drawn from the Eastern Shore. In 1990, 12,524 County residents commuted to a local work destination, accounting for 67% of the workforce. In 2000, that number had dropped to 12,194, accounting for 62% of the workforce. Inbound commuters now account for 38% of the County workforce.

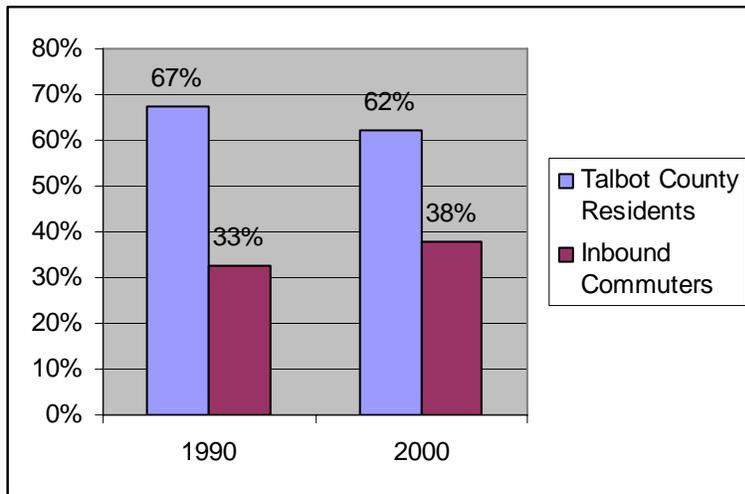


Figure 11-1. U. S. Census 1990, 2000 Journey to Work

Most of the inbound commuters are drawn from nearby counties, with the Upper Eastern shore accounting for 57% and the Lower Eastern Shore, 31% of inbound commuters.

Residents traveling out of the County for employment increased from 3083 in 1990 to 3,836 in 2000. In 2000 18% reported traveling to the Baltimore region, and 22% commuted to workplaces in the Lower Eastern Shore.

B. County Economic

Development Efforts

The Talbot County Office of Economic Development (OED) was established in 1994. Since then the OED has focused on the retention and expansion of existing businesses with additional efforts in assisting new business start-ups and a reactive stance toward the relocation of businesses from outside the County.

More recently the OED has positioned the County to become proactive in the recruitment of targeted businesses. The “Environmental Peninsula” (EP) is an effort spearheaded by Talbot County to create a cluster of environmental businesses on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The EP has been well received and has gained the support of counties throughout the region as well as from the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development (DBED); the Mid Shore Regional Council; the Chesapeake Bay Region Technical Center of Excellence; and from all of the government research and post-secondary educational institutions located on the Eastern Shore.

The Talbot County Chamber of Commerce offers assistance to local businesses trying to expand in the community through programs such as the Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE). The Town of Easton has recently established a new economic development position that is designed to focus on the Easton Town Center, but will also work with the OED on various initiatives.

Services offered by the OED include access to financial assistance programs; education and training programs; regulatory assistance; statistical and demographic information; an inventory of available sites and buildings; and, assistance with information on housing, finance, zoning, and licensing. Additionally, the OED has formed partnerships with local, regional, State and Federal governments, as well as with education and workforce development organizations.

The Talbot County Economic Development Commission, the Office of Economic Development, the Talbot County Housing Office, and various other entities are addressing the complex and important issue of affordable housing. Affordable housing impacts not only the residential community, but has serious implications for the business community.

A Bed Accommodation Tax is collected from hotel, motel, bed and breakfast, country inns, and vacation rentals throughout Talbot County. The collections are returned to the municipalities that collected the taxes less a minimal administrative fee. Taxes collected in non-chartered jurisdictions remain with the County government and are used to support the Talbot County Office of Tourism and Department of Economic Development.

III. Opportunities for Economic Growth

A. Agriculture and Tourism

Talbot County's agricultural industry is still a major component of the County's economic base, occupying 63% (109,572 acres) of its land area and provides \$48.7M in gross annual sales revenue. While the gross sales of agricultural industries is one measurement of the impact of agriculture on the economy, industries that are linked to agriculture must also be considered to better estimate the total economic impact. "Backward-linked" industries are all of those that the agriculture industry supports through purchases. These industries include fuel, fertilizer, machinery repair, feed and many others. Due to the large purchasing power of agriculture on the Delmarva, backward-linked industries rely on purchases made by agriculture to support their employees and economic prosperity. "Forward linked" industries also rely on agriculture. These industries purchase agricultural commodities and in some way, add value to them through packaging and/or processing. Backward and forward linked industries contribute more than \$165M to the local economy.

The farms, open space and shoreline are important to the County's image throughout Maryland and the nation as place to live and visit. Agriculture must remain viable to maintain significant acreage in open space and low density development. Agriculture serves a dual role, providing an economic benefit to the County and serving as a base for the preservation of the quality of life that is believed to be worth protecting.

Tourism, like agriculture, serves a dual purpose providing direct economic benefits and providing the economic rationale for preserving a high percentage of County land in farms and open space. The Tourism industry in Talbot County has grown substantially in recent years. While traditional industries like the restaurant or boating industry in the County have long benefited from the tourism economy, the focus in recent years has been on development and growth of the County's "Heritage" Tourism and "Nature-based" Tourism (eco-tourism) opportunities. The County's most unique characteristics including its abundant historic and cultural resources, its 600 plus miles of shoreline, its towns, villages and its largely rural character provide the qualities that create a premier destination for visitors seeking a heritage tourism or nature-tourism experience. We should continue to preserve and protect these valuable assets.

According to the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, total travel expenditures have risen dramatically in Talbot County from 22.7 million dollars in 1980 to over 107 million in 2002; more than a four-fold increase during the 22 year period. Travel generated employment in the County more than doubled, and grew from an estimated 764 industry employees to 1,600 over the same period. Tourism generated \$4.8 million in County tax receipts in 2002 and represented 11.3% of the total county tax revenue. Accommodations or room tax collections for Talbot County over the past 10 years reflects similar growth trends. From 1990 to 2003, revenues increased from \$285,824 to \$643,508.

B. Industrial and Commercial

Very little undeveloped land is zoned for commercial growth outside of the County's incorporated areas. Industrial parks in the County range in size from one to 160 acres with sites available from one acre to thirty-five acres. Industrial parks include: Clifton Industrial Park; Airport Industrial Park; Easton Business Center; Glebe Business Park; Carlton Business Park; Easton Technology Center; and, the Talbot Commerce Park.

Many of the agriculture related industries are located in the Towns and villages easily accessible to farm operations. These industries are not expected to expand significantly over the next six years.

Economic Development Policies

- C11.P. 1. The County will continue to provide active support for existing Talbot County businesses
- C11.P. 2. Preservation and enhancement of agriculture and forest lands and open space is a key component of the cultural, social, economic and environmental well being of the County.
- C11.P. 3. The County should maintain and enhance current efforts to attract and recruit new businesses that are desirable for the region.
- C11.P. 4. The County should continue to encourage and promote actions by the tourism industry.

Economic Development Implementation Strategies

Action: The County will continue to support the Office of Economic Development in its efforts to retain and/or expand existing businesses within the County and to market the Mid-Shore Region as a premier location for a broad range of innovative businesses which will accentuate and capitalize upon the area's assets while at the same time preserving its rural character. The Office of Economic Development will focus its attention on the attraction of businesses offering better salary opportunities for a greater number of residents

Action: Encourage and promote actions by the tourism industry to promote Talbot County's history, culture, natural environment and scenic beauty. In

developing and promoting tourism in Talbot County, we must be mindful to protect what we promote.

The tourism industry should consider broadening the range of available interpretive and educational programs to enhance understanding and use of the County and its resources by residents and visitors. The County should encourage increased cooperation among public and private organizations that interpret resources and publicize and promote tourism and accomplish these goals via partnerships among local and regional leaders, non-profit organizations, businesses, and State agencies.

Chapter 12 Historic and Cultural Preservation

I. Vision

Talbot County recognizes the importance of its historic resources. There are numerous groups located in the region dedicated to the preservation of historic and cultural resources. Efforts to increase public awareness of the importance of preserving the County's past have been successful. The County has a successful program of local incentives to assist owners of historic properties to list and rehabilitate their properties. Easement programs have also been successful in protecting key historic resources throughout the County.

Goal

Preserve and enhance the County's rich cultural and historic heritage.

II. Introduction

It is possible to experience Talbot County's history in its historic resources and events. The early period of colonial settlement, as well as subsequent eras, is well represented in the County's historic architecture. These physical reminders of early history give depth and richness to the County, to past events and to people's lives. Many Talbot County residents can trace their roots directly back to the earliest colonial settlements of the County.

Historic resource preservation is about much more than the preservation of historic buildings and structures. County history is reflected not only in architecture but also in archeology, and cultural events and is present in districts, sites, waterways and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association. Historic resources can be defined as those properties, significant for their association or linkage to events, or persons important in the past. County history is reflected in events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history or are associated with the lives of significant persons in the County's history. Historic preservation allows the legacy of the past to be protected and remembered. It allows for the past to be integrated with the present and reminds us that the old has a useful place alongside the new.

Talbot County has had a longstanding interest in historic preservation. Private houses and public buildings are often carefully restored. New uses are found for historic buildings that no longer serve their original functions.

Many historic properties in the County are currently being preserved through private efforts, local historic district zoning and designation on the National Register of Historic Places. The many private historic preservation organizations play an important role in championing preservation efforts. In addition to preserving historic buildings and places, County residents also have a strong interest in preserving the cultural heritage of Talbot County by preserving traditional lifestyles, like

that of the working waterman, which are threatened by growth and change. The traditional lifestyle of Talbot County has long centered on farming, the seafood and maritime industries, and the many small rural villages in the County. It is important that these elements of the County's cultural heritage be preserved as growth occurs.

The Talbot County Agricultural Fair, the annual Tilghman Island Days Festival, the Easton Waterfowl Festival, Nace's Day Parade in Trappe and the annual Tuckahoe Steam and Gas Show are only a few of the many examples of annual events and venues which honor the County's heritage and signify the importance of traditional cultural lifestyles within the County.

A. Talbot County Council and Historic Preservation

The Talbot County Council has long recognized the importance of protecting historic resources within the County. In 1976, the Talbot County Council passed the Talbot County Historic District Ordinance to safeguard the heritage of the County by protecting historic properties and to create the Talbot County Historic Preservation Commission.

The County Zoning Ordinance provides protection for historic properties by a local designation known as "Historic Overlay District Overlay Zone. A local historic district is entirely the product of local initiative. Its controls are created and administered by local citizens and local government. An historic district can consist of an individual building and grounds or a grouping of buildings.

B. Talbot County Historic Preservation Commission

The Talbot County Historic Preservation Commission (TCHPC) is made up of seven County residents appointed by the Talbot County Council for three-year terms on the basis of qualifications in architecture, history or historic preservation according to standards established by State and Federal programs. The Commission reviews properties of historic and architectural significance, carefully selects historic properties for nomination as local Historic Districts and reviews applications for changes to exterior features within existing districts.

The Commission is also involved in the nomination of Talbot County properties to the National Register of Historic Places. As of 2002, the efforts of the Historic Preservation Commission have resulted in the designation of 20 historic districts within the County. In addition the Commission has undertaken several studies of historic properties and communities throughout the County. Map 12-1 shows the location of existing local historic districts in Talbot County.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is currently provided part-time administrative and technical staff assistance by the County Office of Planning and Zoning.

C. Certified Local Government (CLG)

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 establishes a nationwide program of financial and technical assistance to preserve historic properties — buildings, structures, sites, neighborhoods and other places of importance in the historical and cultural life of the nation. A local government can participate in this program when the State Historic Preservation Officer certifies that the local

government has established its own historic preservation commission and a program meeting Federal and State standards. A local government that receives such certification is known as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Talbot County was approved as a CLG in 1987.

Historic and Cultural Preservation Policies

- C12.P. 1. The County will recognize that open space and farmlands are an important component of the County's historic legacy.
- C12.P. 2. The County will expand efforts to protect and enhance the cultural heritage by sponsoring heritage events and activities.
- C12.P. 3. The County will encourage restoration and/or adaptive reuse of historic sites and structures.
- C12.P. 4. Encourage the preservation and vitality of County Villages.
- C12.P. 5. The County will encourage the historic settlement patterns of small villages and crossroad settlements interspersed between large landholdings characterized by an expanse of opens space, forests and farmlands.
- C12.P. 6. The County will continue to encourage and support the Talbot County Historic Preservation Commission.
- C12.P. 7. The County should take a leadership role in encouraging the many public and private heritage groups to work together to develop the Upper Eastern Shore Heritage Management Plan that is anticipated to include an historic properties inventory.

Historic and Cultural Preservation Implementation Strategies

- Action: The Historic Preservation Commission should be consulted by the County's "Subdivision/Site Plan review Technical Advisory Committee" when new development may impact historic resources.
- Action: New subdivisions of ten or more lots or non-residential development shall be required to conduct title searches to identify lands subject to historic or conservation easements prior to recordation.
- Action: Recruit and fund a full-time Historic Preservation Planner to support the efforts of the Historic Preservation Commission and to promote and support historic preservation programs.
- Action: Explore implementation of local incentives for adaptive reuse of historic properties.

Community Awareness and Education

Efforts should be made to increase local public awareness and education concerning the importance of historic preservation and the functions and role of the Historic Preservation Commission through use of print and electronic media. Community interest in preservation is directly related to an understanding of the importance and value of preserving our heritage. Greater community awareness of the importance of historic preservation in the County could be achieved in a number of ways. In conjunction with National Historic Preservation Week each May, the Historic Preservation Commission could sponsor local events geared towards recognition of Talbot County's commitment to preservation. The TCHPC has an annual awards program to recognize local excellence in restoration of historic properties. Community awareness of historic preservation could also be enhanced by providing all Historic District property owners with a plaque for their properties which distinguishes them as historic or architecturally significant places. More historical markers identifying and describing historic sites and events within the County would also serve to inform local residents and visitors of Talbot's rich heritage.

Cooperation and Collaboration Between Local Historic Preservation Groups

There are many public and private groups within the County which support historic preservation. These include the Historic Preservation Commissions of Talbot County, Easton, St. Michaels and Oxford, Historic St. Michaels — Bay Hundred, Inc., Historic Easton, Talbot County Historical Society and the Talbot County Historical Trust. It is recommended that these groups meet on a quarterly basis to discuss common problems, maintain planning cohesion among all entities with respects to inventories and actions and to share in each other's successes. The Maryland Heritage Authority is expected to grant certification to the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area in 2005, recognizing heritage sites in Talbot, Queen Anne's, Kent and Caroline Counties and offering a mechanism for coordinated and enhanced heritage tourism in the area. The Heritage Area Authority requires counties included in the Management Plan to reference the Plan within the County Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan, insofar as it is consistent with this Talbot County Comprehensive Plan, is recognized and referenced in order to further opportunities for heritage tourism and support economic development.

Cultural Events Promotion

The County should continue to actively support and encourage community events which focus on the cultural heritage of the County. Museums and cultural events provide residents and visitors an opportunity to learn about the traditional ways of life that are an important part of the County's heritage.

Chapter 13 Community Design and Appearance

I. Vision

Talbot County, through application of its design standards, continues to project the image of a rural but sophisticated region – proud of its legacy and anxious to protect its future with sound and decisive action. Higher density residential development, out of scale with the small town and rural surroundings, is directed toward designated growth areas. Traditional neighborhood development building patterns, more suitable in already built up areas, are not located outside of our towns and villages. Standards that guide community appearance and building design are in place protecting the integrity of our rural identity.

The visual pollution caused by earlier strip developments is being mitigated through buffering and intensive landscaping. Utility lines are being buried to enhance the pastoral rural views along our highways and byways; and signage design standards emphasize proper scale and appearance that is harmonious with the overall character of the area.

Land use policies that focus growth within the town boundaries and design standards that characterize the region significantly contribute to the objective of preserving open space. These standards make Talbot County a model of superior community appearance and design.

GOAL

Design development to preserve and enhance the appearance and Rural Character of Talbot County.

II. Introduction

Managing the design of new development to enhance community appearance is an important goal of the Comprehensive Plan for Talbot County. Development design guidelines significantly affect real estate values, community pride, a sense of obligation to private property, personal enjoyment and satisfaction, and the overall investment and development climate in Talbot County.

Chapter 3 (Land Use) describes the present and future land uses for each planning area, while this chapter (Chapter 13.) presents the policies, guidelines and general standards for development in the planning areas.

This chapter includes the specific policies and implementation strategies that encourage innovative building design and site planning, while ensuring that certain universal principles of good community design are reinforced. Some of the implementation strategies recommend changes to existing site development ordinances and standards, other strategies suggest ways to preserve the Rural Character of the County by controlling the form and pattern of future development in rural areas.

III. Community Design and Appearance Guidelines

Talbot County has development in a traditional pattern of farms interspersed with small settlements, villages, towns and waterfront oriented residential areas in the western portion of the county. Maintaining this traditional pattern is important to protecting land for agricultural and open space, and conserving the fragile environmental resources.

Countywide Community Design Policies

- C13.P. 1. The County should preserve its unique rural landscape through conservation of farmland, forestlands, and environmentally sensitive lands by application of land use regulations and easement programs that conserve open space in rural areas.
- C13.P. 2. Encourage site, signage, and landscape designs that complement the scale and character of existing and planned development.
- C13.P. 3. Require development for which site plan approval is required to address the policies and standards of the Community Design and Appearance guidelines.
- C13.P. 4. New development and redevelopment in village centers should be compatible with the existing character of the village in terms of land use, density, scale, setbacks, site layout and general design.
- C13.P. 5. Strip development along County and State roads shall be prohibited in order to preserve scenic rural views.
- C13.P. 6. Screening and/or setbacks should be used to buffer adjoining properties from incompatible land uses.
- C13.P. 7. Establish standards for new development requiring vegetative buffers and landscaping along highway corridors.
- C13.P. 8. Encourage vegetative buffers and landscaping for existing development, where such planting can be accommodated.
- C13.P. 9. Commercial and industrial development or redevelopment within the County should be subject to general guidelines which would result in enhancing the appearance of the built environment in Talbot County. These development appearance guidelines for non-residential structures should recommend treatments for such factors as:
1. Relationship of proposed building to the site;
 2. Relationship of proposed buildings to adjoining buildings and sites;
 3. Site landscaping;
 4. Building design;
 5. Signs; and
 6. Maintenance

C13.P. 10. New residential development and infill development should be designed to be compatible with and complement existing character and design reflected in the adjacent or surrounding community.

C13.P. 11. Encourage developers to solicit community input early in the development process.

Countywide Community Design Implementation Strategies

Design Manual. The County design manual prepared in 1991 identifies and illustrates design concepts and principles which achieve the images defined in this chapter of the Plan. The County should continue to utilize the manual to encourage desirable future development and to prescribe the design review process for future residential, commercial and industrial development and redevelopment. The design manual should be updated or replaced and should contain specific and enforceable design standards and should be based upon the general design guidelines outlined in this chapter. The manual should contain illustrations to help explain design guidelines. Measurable lighting standards should be developed as a component of the manual and should be established in appropriate ordinances.

Site Plan Review. Continue to require site plans for non-residential development to include building elevations, lighting, signage, parking area and landscaping details.

Community Input. Applicants for major subdivisions and commercial/industrial development are encouraged to actively seek community input in the planning and design process prior to submission of the development plan. Applicants may be required to advertise and conduct a community meeting within the vicinity of the proposed development site prior to submission of the final plan to the County Planning Office and Planning Commission.

Design Review Committee. The Planning Commission should consider having a Design Review Committee to assist in ensuring that new commercial and industrial development is in conformance with adopted design guidelines and zoning regulations. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) should consult a qualified design professional to advise on issues regarding building design or landscape design.

IV. Development Appearance Guidelines for Non-Residential Development

The following general guidelines should be the basis for development of appearance standards for future development in the County and are intended to supplement specific regulations contained in the County Zoning Ordinance.

Relationship of Proposed Building to Site

- The site should be planned to accomplish a desirable transition to the streetscape and to provide for adequate planting, safe pedestrian movement and screened parking.
- New buildings in village centers should be allowed to reduce front setbacks to enhance the traditional street/building relationships which exist with older adjacent structures.

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- Parking areas should be screened from public streets and paths.
 - The height and scale of each new building should be compatible with its site and existing adjacent buildings.
 - Utility and service connections should be placed underground wherever possible.

Relationship of Proposed Buildings and Site to Adjoining Buildings and Sites

- Adjacent buildings of different architectural styles should be made compatible by such means as screens, site breaks and materials.
- Attractive landscape transition to adjoining properties should be provided.
- Adjacent incompatible land uses should be screened from one another. The degree of screening should be directly related to the degree of incompatibility between the land uses.
- Required landscaping and/or screening should be located so that site lines are preserved for pedestrian and vehicular traffic, particularly when adjacent to points of ingress and egress.

Landscape and Site Treatment

- Where natural or existing topographic patterns contribute to the beauty and utility of a development site they should be preserved.
- Landscape treatment should be provided to enhance architectural features and site design.
- In locations where plants will be susceptible to injury by pedestrian or motor traffic, they should be protected by appropriate curbs, tree guards or other devices.
- Parking areas and traffic ways should be enhanced with landscaped spaces containing trees or tree groupings.
- Screening of service yards and other places that tend to be unsightly should be accomplished by use of walls, fencing and/or plantings. Screening should be effective in all seasons.
- In areas where general plantings will not prosper, other materials such as fences, walls, and pavings of wood, brick, stone, gravel and cobbles should be used. Carefully selected plants should be combined with such materials where possible.
- Exterior lighting should be of a design and size compatible with the building and adjacent areas. Lighting should be restrained in design and excessive brightness or glare avoided.
- Design of landscaping or buffers should reflect the use of native vegetation and plant materials over non-native vegetation.

Building Design

- Buildings should have good scale and be in harmonious conformance with neighboring development.
- Material should have good architectural character and should be selected for harmony of the building with adjoining buildings.
- Mechanical equipment or other utility hardware on roof, ground or buildings should be screened from public view with material harmonious with the building, or they should be located so as to not be visible from public ways.

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- Monotony of design in multiple building developments should be avoided. Variation of detail, form and siting should be used to provide visual interest.

Signs

- Every sign should have good scale and proportion in its design and in its visual relationship to buildings and surroundings.
- Every sign should be designed as an integral architectural element of the building and site to which it principally relates.
- The number of graphic elements on a sign should be held to the minimum needed to convey the sign's message and should be composed in proportion to the area of the sign face.
- The color materials and lighting of every sign should be restrained and harmonious with the building and site to which it relates.
- The County should establish increased penalties and stricter enforcement measures regarding illegal signs.

Maintenance - Planning and Design Factors

- Continued good appearance depends upon the extent and quality of maintenance. The choice of materials and their use, together with the types of finishes and other protective measures should be conducive to easy maintenance and upkeep.

V. Designated and Future Growth Areas

The Designated and Future Growth Areas are those areas adjacent to the incorporated towns where future development will occur. The growth areas are bounded by the town boundaries and the County's growth boundary, or Countryside Preservation Area. Incremental development in the growth areas at the edges of the towns has gradually eroded the boundary between "countryside" and "settled town". Implementation of a Countryside Preservation Area as a growth boundary is intended to create the hard edge separation of the designated growth areas and rural areas.

Until such time as the growth area is annexed into the adjacent town, county development regulations and design guidelines recognize the unique character of these areas. As building trends indicate, the growth areas are under increasing development pressure because of the limited availability of large parcels of land for large scale residential and commercial development in many of the incorporated towns. The challenge for the County's comprehensive plan is to encourage appropriate development patterns that can be seamlessly incorporated into the town when annexed.

Traditional residential communities, with a mix of housing types and densities, neighborhood retail and commercial centers and appropriate civic and community facilities are the preferred development form in the growth areas. Streets should be interconnected and equipped with street trees and lighting and designed to be shared by pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles. Plans for new residential neighborhoods should incorporate easements and rights-of-way that will be required when the neighborhood is annexed into the town.

Many of the County's existing commercial uses are located in the gateway entrances and scattered

sites throughout the growth area. Commercial, retail and service uses should be limited to planned commercial and industrial parks, expansion of existing developments, or neighborhood centers proposed in conjunctions with a residential community.

The gateway entrances to the Towns signal the transition between the rural and urban areas. These areas are the introduction to what lies beyond. They create the first impression of the character of the community and should be attractive and well designed. Design guidelines for new commercial development in the gateways should be compatible with the town's long-range vision for the corridors. As existing commercial buildings or shopping centers are redeveloped, property owners should be encouraged to gradually transform them into inter-connected mixed-use centers compatible with the design guidelines for the corridor.

Designated Growth Areas Design Guideline Policies

C13.P. 12. Development within the designated growth areas should apply design concepts that complement and enhance the development patterns of the towns.

Designated Growth Areas Design Guidelines

Mixed use development is encouraged in and around existing towns to reinforce the traditional growth patterns, reduce auto trips, minimize additional road improvements and encourage walking to employment and shopping.

Residential developments should be planned as mixed-use communities with a range of housing types and densities, should include appropriately scaled retail and commercial centers serving the neighborhood.

Neighborhood streets should be interconnected throughout the community.

Commercial, retail and service uses should be limited to gateway corridors, expansion of existing developments, or neighborhood centers proposed in conjunction with a residential community.

Non-residential development located in the major and minor arterial corridors should be compatible with the scale and character of the adjoining town. "Chain" commercial and retail architectural styles are discouraged in the gateway corridors.

Designated Growth Area Design Guidelines Implementation Strategies

Coordination with towns. The County should coordinate with the towns in the review and approval of development projects adjacent to the towns and in matters of town annexations.

Gateways and Entrance Corridors. Adopt gateway and entrance corridor regulations including site design standards.

Transportation Network. Adopt a master thoroughfare plan that includes future connections to town road networks. Transportation facilities in the Growth Areas should include sidewalks and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

VI. Villages

The Land Use Plan (Map3-1) identifies numerous Village Centers throughout the agricultural and rural areas of Talbot County. Villages are established residential and business communities which have traditionally served as focal points for the surrounding rural area. They play an important functional role in providing homes, neighborhood businesses and civic buildings such as post offices, firehouses, churches, etc. Many of the rural Villages throughout Talbot County contain historical and architecturally significant buildings and sites.

Villages range in size and character from small crossroad settlements and historic waterfront villages, to larger commercial and residential centers that have developed around major agribusinesses.

Many of the villages near the Bay and inlets reflect the charm of Talbot County's early history, with buildings from the 1800s and early 1900s. Several of these areas have been revitalized as tourism destinations with small B&B's and specialized retail.

The Village of Cordova is the largest village in the County. Cordova has grown over the years from a small rural settlement to a thriving village with a mix of residences, neighborhood serving commercial businesses and agri-businesses.

In general in the rural areas of the County, villages are the preferred location for single and multi-family residential development. Accessory apartments and small-multi family buildings provide opportunities for elderly and affordable housing accessible to community services and employment.

Villages should continue to be a mix of residential, small-scale commercial and public/semi-public uses. Infill development should be compatible with the existing building height, massing and front and side setbacks. Commercial and industrial development should be sensitive to community character and existing development patterns.

Village Design Guideline Policy

C13.P. 13. New development and redevelopment in village centers should be compatible with the existing character of the village in terms of land use, density, scale, setbacks, site layout and general design.

Village Non-Residential Use Design Guidelines.

Design characteristics. Village character can be described by types of uses, building heights, massing and setbacks, and community design characteristics such as landscaping and vegetation, signage, lighting, location of parking, and roadway character.

Recognizing the unique character of each of the County's villages, new development in the form of redevelopment of existing sites or infill should be compatible with the surrounding buildings. Where new construction is surrounded by existing historic buildings, building height and exterior materials should be harmonious with those of adjacent properties. Residential, small-scale

commercial and public/semi-public uses should be permitted to coexist adjacent to one another.

Building setbacks. New and infill buildings should be allowed to reduce front setbacks to enhance traditional street/ building relationships.

Landscaping and vegetation. Mature trees, located along roadways or on undeveloped sites should be preserved. New and replacement roadway trees should be chosen to diversify the tree species and prevent loss due to disease. All new non-residential development should be required to have both roadway trees and street front landscaping consisting of a mix of trees and shrubs.

Buffering and screening. Commercial and industrial uses adjacent to residential or lower intensity nonresidential uses should be buffered by landscaping or screening.

Parking. In villages, where on-street parking is permitted, infill retail and commercial development should be encouraged to locate parking facilities to the rear of the building. Parking facilities on the side of buildings should be screened by a mix of trees and shrubs.

Lighting. Lighting should be controlled in both height and intensity to maintain the rural character of the villages. Lighting should be shielded to prevent excessive lighting and glare beyond lot lines onto neighboring properties or public ways.

Signage. Signage is one of the most readily apparent aspects of community character in Village Centers. Since signs are intended to be highly visible and attract attention, they often produce a lasting impression on locals and visitors. Signs in Village Centers should relate to pedestrians and people in slow moving vehicles. The size, materials, color, lettering, placement and illumination of signs in Village Centers should respect the unique character of existing buildings. Signs should be designed as an integral architectural element of the building and site.

Outdoor storage. Open storage areas, exposed machinery and outdoor areas used for storage and collection of trash should be visually screened from roads and surrounding land uses.

Public facilities and utilities. Roadways through and in the village should be of the appropriate width and function.

The County should facilitate the location of utility easements within public right-of-way, and the collocation of utilities within easements. Utility and service connections should be placed underground wherever possible.

Village Design Guideline Implementation Strategy

Small area plans. Establish a process for undertaking a master planning process for each of the villages to establish guidelines for future infill and redevelopment.

VII. Agricultural and Rural Areas

In the Agricultural and Rural Planning Areas the traditional development pattern can be described as single family residences set back from roadways, frequently buffered by trees, hedgerows and vegetation. Agricultural outbuildings, barns, silos and other structures are frequently located in the vicinity of the primary residence. Large fields are broken by lines of trees and hedgerows. Creeks, streams and wetlands are usually left in their natural vegetative state buffering these areas from impacts from agricultural activities.

The majority of the County's agricultural and rural lands are designated as Agriculture, Resource Conservation, Western Rural Conservation and Countryside Preservation areas in the Land Use Plan. Within these areas, agriculture is the preferred use, however, low density, single-family housing is also permitted. To preserve agricultural land and open space, when land will be subdivided for a residential neighborhood, a cluster development pattern is encouraged. Cluster development locates residences on smaller individual lots, surrounded by permanently conserved open space or agricultural land. To encourage the preservation of agricultural lands and the rural landscape, land use regulations and easement programs encourage conservation of farmlands, forestlands and environmentally sensitive lands.

Agricultural and Rural Area Design Guideline Policies

C13.P. 14. The County should preserve its unique rural landscape through conservation of farmland, forestlands, and environmentally sensitive lands by application of land use regulations and easement programs that conserve open space in rural areas.

Design Guidelines for agricultural and rural areas

General guidelines.

Building lots should be located to conserve open space and farmlands and minimize potential conflicts between residents and farm operations.

Buildings should be set back and/ or buffered from public roads to preserve scenic rural views. On wooded lots, buildings should be located within the wooded fringes to preserve the tree cover.

Environmentally sensitive areas of the site should be protected as open space. Lots should be located on areas of the site which have the fewest environmental constraints.

Large lot residential development. When siting new buildings on large residential lots (20+ acres) efforts should be made to conserve natural features. When structures are sited along existing roadways, building setbacks should complement existing development patterns. New buildings are encouraged to emulate the character of the area in height, setbacks, and massing.

Moderate rural residential development. The moderate rural residential subdivisions are residential communities consisting of 2 to 10 acre lots. The greatest percentage of these communities are located in the County's Critical Areas. New buildings should be sited to protect the existing visual quality and natural resources values that make these areas distinctive. Development plans should recognize the importance of environmental features and the natural terrain. Buildings should be placed to minimize the need for excessive land disturbance.

Cluster development. Cluster development is characterized as two or more small lots located in close vicinity to each other, so as to preserve agricultural lands and open space. Individual properties should be accessed from a shared access road that connects to the main road. Access roads should be developed to provide adequate access for public safety vehicles, while maintaining a low speed rural residential character defined by narrow travel lanes with unpaved shoulders and drainage swales.

Natural features such as creeks, streams, and wetlands should be protected from disturbance. Where feasible, new structures should be screened from public roads and buffered by trees and hedgerows.

Lighting. In agricultural and rural areas lighting is traditionally low wattage residential and security lighting. Lighting fixtures should be directed downward. Wall packs and security lighting should be shielded to direct light downward.

Nonresidential Uses: Nonresidential development in the agricultural and rural areas includes agri-businesses or maritime businesses that provide services to the nearby farms and marine uses.

Commercial and industrial development in agricultural and rural areas should be located on appropriately sized roads. Buildings should be sited close to the roadway, while providing appropriately sized entrances and parking for large commercial and farm vehicles. Consideration should be given to providing deceleration or turning lanes to reduce conflicts between turning vehicles and through traffic. To preserve the rural character of these areas, lighting should be shielded and directed downward. Consideration should be given to reducing lighting between 10:00 pm and 5:00 am to the minimum required for safety and security.

Residential neighborhoods should not be located near agri-businesses that may be considered to be a nuisance because they generate noise, dust or odors. The agricultural and rural areas are the preferred location for these businesses.

Signage. The use of natural materials (wood, brick) for signs located in the agricultural and rural areas is encouraged.

VIII. Highway Corridor Development

The large-scale and permanent loss of scenic views, characteristic rural landscapes and open space is perhaps the most devastating visual result of strip development. If allowed, strip development along rural highways and roads will eventually obscure the open fields and woodlands that are so much a part of the County's rural character. This form of development contributes greatly to the loss of

Rural Character in the County. Strip development also requires numerous access points which contribute to a reduction in traffic safety and increased congestion on the roadway.

Highway Corridor Design Guideline Policies

C13.P. 15. Strip development along the County highways and roads is prohibited.

Highway Corridor Design Guidelines

A redesign program to gradually transform commercial strip development into mixed-use sub centers should achieve the following:

- Consolidate entrances along the road to a few main driveways with internal service streets based on a block system to connect businesses in between;
- A unified streetscape with continuous street trees, high quality landscaping, and where possible in light of agricultural traffic, planted medians to prevent unlimited left hand turns;
- Sidewalks and crosswalks throughout the area to create connections to shared parking, public transportation, walking between stores and nearby housing;
- Attractive architecture, wall signs and sidewalks featured along the frontage. Pole signs and signage for commercial centers should be minimized.
- Parking lots should be hidden and well landscaped,
- A mix of housing and other uses near the shopping that begins to build a walkable neighborhood rather than a strictly commercial driving district.

Highway Corridor Implementation Strategies

Highway Corridor Plans.

To begin to reclaim existing shopping strips outside of the town centers and village the County (and where appropriate the Towns) should prepare highway corridor plans that outline a cooperative long-term redesign program to gradually transform strips into mixed-use sub-centers.

Highway Corridor Overlay Zone

Adopt a highway corridor overlay zone with appropriate design standards and guidelines, working with the State Highway Administration on strategies to consolidate entrances, and initiating projects to retrofit service roads and other improvements that reduce access and traffic conflicts in existing strip locations.