



## Maryland DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

July 7, 2021

Tony Doerr, Garrett County Planning Commission Chairman  
Garrett County Department of Planning & Land Management  
203 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 208  
Oakland, MD 21550

Dear Mr. Doerr:

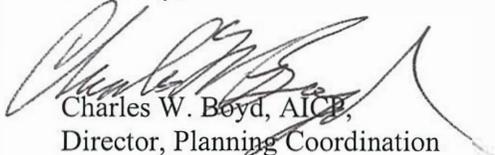
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2021 Garrett County Comprehensive Plan draft plan for the county. The Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) believes that good planning is important for efficient and responsible development that adequately addresses resource protection, adequate public facilities, housing, community character, and economic development. Please keep in mind that Planning's attached review comments reflect the agency's thoughts on ways to strengthen the Draft Plan, as well as satisfy the requirements of Maryland's Land Use Article.

The Department forwarded a copy of the Draft Plan to several State agencies for review, including: the Maryland Historical Trust and the Departments of Transportation, Environment, Natural Resources, Commerce, and Housing and Community Development. To date, we have received comments from the Maryland Historical Trust and the Departments of Environment and Transportation, and these comments have been included with this letter. Any plan review comments received after the date of this letter will be forwarded upon receipt.

Planning respectfully requests that this letter and accompanying review comments be made part of the county's public hearing record. Furthermore, Planning also asks that the county consider State agency comments as revisions are made to the Draft Plan, and to any future plans, ordinances, and policy documents that are developed.

Please feel free to contact me at (410) 767-4500 or Joe Rogers, Regional Planner, Western Maryland Regional Office at (301) 777-2161.

Sincerely,



Charles W. Boyd, AICP,  
Director, Planning Coordination

Enclosures: Comments on the 2021 Draft Garrett County Comprehensive Plan.

cc: Chad E. Fike, Assistant Director, Department of Planning and Land Management  
Kevin Null, County Administrator  
Joseph Griffiths, Manager - Planning, Local Assistance and Training  
Joe Rogers, Regional Planner, Western MD Regional Office

**Maryland Department of Planning Review Comments**  
**June 30, 2021**  
**Garrett County Comprehensive Plan 2021**  
**Draft February 2021**

The Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) has reviewed the Draft 2021 Garrett County Comprehensive Plan (Plan) and offers the following comments for your consideration. These comments are offered as suggestions to improve the draft comprehensive plan and better address the statutory requirements of the Land Use Article. Other state agencies as noted have contributed comments. Still others may have comments submitted under separate cover. If comments from other agencies are subsequently received by Planning, they will be forwarded to the County in a timely manner.

**Summary of the Draft Comprehensive Plan**

This is a complete update to the 2008 Garrett County Comprehensive Plan. Garrett County encompasses approximately 655 square miles of land located in the western most part of the state adjacent to Allegany County to the east. The rest of the county borders Pennsylvania to the north, and to the west and south West Virginia.

The Plan ties together a variety of other planning documents that exist currently within the region. The Plan follows laws and guidance set forth by the state and shares a direct relationship with the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, the Water and Sewer Master Plan for Garrett County, the Garrett County Heritage Plan, and the Deep Creek Watershed Management Plan. The Plan provides a much-needed update to the previous plan as significant development and other changes have occurred around the region and in Garrett County specifically.

Many legislative changes have occurred since the 2008 plan was adopted. The Plan addresses the expanded 12 Planning Visions of the state as well as the other required elements, including a housing element as required by the passage of HB 1045 in 2019, as well as the addition of a water resource element that took effect as a result of HB 1141 in October of 2009. The Plan also recognizes the required coordination of the county's land use element with the municipal growth elements of comprehensive plans for the county's incorporated towns, also mandated with HB 1141. These elements and visions are expanded upon and in the corresponding sections of the Plan.

The Plan follows a similar structure as the previous plan with the addition of the required elements and 12 Visions of the state intertwined. The breakdown of the requirements and supporting text give a well-deserved update to the existing plan and project a manageable and realistic outlook on development in and around the county.

## Minimum State Law Requirements

Maryland's Land Use Article sets forth the required components of a local comprehensive plan but does not mandate a specific format. As such, local governments have addressed these required elements in a manner that fits the needs of their community and the resources available to respond to the issues explored during the planning process. The following checklist summarizes an assessment as to whether each required local plan element is addressed in the Plan.

TABLE 1

<b>Checklist of Maryland Code (Land Use Article) requirements for local comprehensive plans in Maryland</b>			
<b>State Comprehensive Plan Requirements</b>	<b>MD Code Reference</b>	<b>Additional MD Code Reference</b>	<b>Feb. 2021 Garrett County Comprehensive Plan Plan page references</b>
(1) A comprehensive plan for a non-charter County or municipality <b>MUST</b> include:	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)</a>		
(a) a community facilities element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(i)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-108 -- Community Facilities Element</a>	4-11 to 4-18
(b) an area of critical State concern element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(ii)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-109 --Area of Critical State Concern Element</a>	Not included
(c) a goals and objectives element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(iii)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-110 --Goals and Objectives Element</a>	2-2 to 4-18
(d) a housing element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(iv)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-114 --Housing Element</a>	4-1 to 4-10
(d) a land use element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(v)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-111 -- Land Use Element</a>	2-2 to 2-30
(e) a development regulations element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(vi)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-103 -- Development Regulations</a>	5-3
(f) a sensitive areas element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(vii)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-104 -- Sensitive Areas Element</a>	2-2 to 2-57
(g) a transportation element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(viii)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-105 -- Transportation Element</a>	3-17 to 3-31
(h) a water resources element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(ix)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-106 -- Water Resources Element</a>	2-42 to 2-53
(i) a mineral resources element, IF current geological information is available	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(2)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-107 -- Mineral Resources Element</a>	2-54 to 2-57
(j) for municipalities only, a municipal growth element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(3)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-112 -- Municipal Growth Element</a>	N/A
(k) for counties only if located on tidal waters, a fisheries element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)(4)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-113 -- Fisheries Element</a>	2-53
Optional: (2) A comprehensive plan for a non-charter county or municipality <b>MAY</b> include: (a) a community renewal element; (b) a conservation element; (c) a flood control element (d) a natural resources element; (e) a pollution control element; (f) information concerning the general location and extent of public utilities; and (g) a priority preservation area (PPA) element	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(b)</a>		(d) 4-1 to 4-10
(3) Visions -- A local jurisdiction SHALL through the comprehensive plan implement the 12 planning visions established in L.U. § 1-201	<a href="#">L.U. § 3-102(a)</a>	<a href="#">Land Use § 3-108 -- Community Facilities Element</a>	1-3, 1-11
Optional: (4) Growth Tiers -- If the local jurisdictions has adopted growth tiers in accordance with L.U. § 1-502, the growth tiers must be incorporated into the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-509</a>		2-21

As shown in the above checklist, the Plan includes the required elements, other than the Areas of Critical State Concern, as identified in §3-102 of the Land Use Article of the Maryland Annotated Code.

The Plan does not have an areas critical areas of state concern section, but it does include a breakdown of the protected lands in the sensitive areas section of the plan. This section delineates the different types of sensitive areas and explains which parts of the county are protected from development. On page 2-35 the plan describes how nearly 28,000 acres of land in the county are protected from development by various agencies like the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other municipalities. Planning encourages the county to review the list of spatially designated areas, plans and studies, and programs found [in the State Development Plan: A Better Maryland](#) to see if in the future any of these areas may need even more protection. The Plan notes that technological advances may create the ability to mine resources, and if that becomes available more protective measures or areas or state concerns could be planned for. Planning encourages the county to consider referencing the current “Areas of Critical State Concern” list as discussed within the A Better Maryland plan. Here is a link to the website:

<https://abetter.maryland.gov/plan/pages/areas-of-critical-state-concern.aspx>

Through A Better Maryland, state agencies, in partnership with Maryland jurisdictions and community members, deemed these as important areas for collaboration between the state and its jurisdictions.

Since this is a county plan, it does not address the municipal growth element. However, the Plan notes that municipalities have included this element in their plans, and they also use population statistics from the 2015-2019 ACS census data that is linked on Planning’s website for their projections and future trends. Trends in the Plan’s land use, housing, and goals sections inform projected growth and development patterns that the county feels will arise over the next decade. Planning recommends that the county use the 2020 Census data in any future updates for this plan.

### **General Comments**

The Plan’s components are very well interrelated, and it is organized into five main sections, along with subsections, maps, and appendices. These five sections (Introduction, Sustainable Environment, Vibrant Economy, Thriving Population, Action Plan) address the elements as required by state law and the 12 Planning Visions. The organization of the Plan makes it easy for a reader to reference their specific needs or areas of interest.

Discussion during a May 18, 2018 visioning session concluded that vision statement 5 (of 5) was most important to include and implement within the plan, Vision 5 states “Garrett County will enhance the quality of life enjoyed by its residents by preserving the County’s rural character and natural beauty and by guiding growth and development”. This vision became the vision statement of the Plan. Other public meetings were held at Garrett County Community College throughout 2018 and focused on the sensitive areas element, housing element, and the final public meeting on the future and economy of the county. At each one of these meetings,

comments were recorded, the group reviewed the 2008 plan, and then made recommendations, and finally, prioritized areas on which the new plan should focus.

### **Technical/Editing Comments**

- Page 1-9 (Re: “1.2.4 Population and Housing”): In the third paragraph, should the sentence state, “.....(compared to the population **decrease**)......?”
- Page 1-10 (Re: 1.3.1 (ii) Employment and Non-Residential Projections-Countywide): It seems the information and discussion on housing projections here should be moved to the section 1.3.1 (i) above instead.
- Page 2-3 (Re: Map 2.1. Existing Land Use): It will be helpful to make the watershed boundary lines legible on the map.
- Page 2-2 (Re: “2.1.1 Goals”): It seems the Goal 4 statement repeats the contents in Goal 3. Goal 3 and 4 should be consolidated as one goal statement. In addition, it appears that “inappropriate” is a typo in the Goal 4 statement.
- Page 2-21 (Re: “2.1.7 Garrett County Tier Map”): Please provide the County Tier Map in the Plan.
- Page 2-23 (Re: Map2.3b): Replace “Grantsville” in the middle of the map with “Jennings.
- Page 3-21: Please clarify “Section XX” in the “MD 495” section.
- Page 3-22 (Re: Figure 3.11- Garrett Trails Map): The map is illegible. Does the map include all major existing and planned trails in the county? What is the purpose of including the map in the Plan? Does the county endorse the planned trails on the map? Please clarify these questions.
- Page 33 (Re: Table 3.4 - Infrastructure Needs): Delete the contents on page 35 which repeat those on page 33.

### **Maryland State Visions Section 3-201(c) of the Land Use Article:**

Maryland’s Planning Act of 1992, and subsequent legislation in 2000 and 2009, require that the Twelve Visions (12 Visions) of the State of Maryland be included and implemented through the comprehensive plan. Those visions are found throughout the document and even helped shape the main vision statement of the Plan. Maryland law requires all local comprehensive plans be consistent with the 12 Visions. Planning believes these Visions could be better integrated into the Plan through notation and by specifically referencing each vision when it is advanced in the document.

The Plan is centered around themes, which could also be described as visions/projections for the county. Those themes are Sustainable Environment, Vibrant Economy, and Thriving Population. These themes are carried over in the final Action Plan section of the document, which describes the agencies and actions that will implement the goals of each of these themes.

The following is an analysis of each of the 12 Visions and comments relating to the Plan’s relationship to each vision.

**(1) Quality of life and sustainability: a high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment;**

The Plan contains many references for maintaining quality of life for all residents. Protection of the county's rural features and character are listed in the detailed sensitive areas breakdown. The Plan also focuses on other state agencies' protection of lands and lists how the county works in coordination with local municipalities to ensure that their lands are also protected and preserved within the county.

**(2) Public participation: citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals;**

Appendix 2 lists the outreach materials, and each of the topics are broken down by area. Specific stakeholders and persons of interest were interviewed for comments on the Plan. Their comments, and the organizations represented, are also listed within this appendix. Public hearings and visioning sessions were also held, and public input was taken and used to help craft the Plan. Planning notes that the county's public outreach was very well organized and recognizes the great effort the county exerted to get input from as many persons and interest groups as possible throughout the planning process.

**(3) Growth areas: growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers;**

A municipal growth element is not required for a non-charter county comprehensive plan. The Plan does list its vision statement to "preserve the existing rural characteristics" of the county. The details of how they intend to do this are described in the housing section. The Plan notes that since 84 percent of the county is classified as Tier IV in the Growth Tiers Map, growth must be well executed and planned for. Smart growth strategies, including incentivizing developments with planned infrastructure in place already, allowing high density in some developments, and continuing to put an emphasis on rehabilitation of the existing housing stock will help meet the needs of the county and of the state's vision for growth areas (Pgs. 4-8 to 4-10).

**(4) Community design: compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archaeological resources;**

The Plan recommends implementing a trail master plan that will lead to connectivity throughout the county (Pg. 5-5). This master interconnected trail will help showcase the natural beauty of the area but will also help with general connectivity. This trail can be used for a wide variety of recreation activities including walking, hiking, biking, snow skiing, and others. This type of a trail will serve as a dual-purpose feature, as it will link connectivity and recreation into one major project.

**(5) Infrastructure: growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner;**

The county references different land use and watershed areas around the region when analyzing growth plans and infrastructure needs. Watersheds that are referenced directly and highlighted in more detail are those for Bear Creek, Casselman River, Deep Creek, Georges Creek, Little Youghiogheny, North Branch Potomac River, Savage River, Southern Youghiogheny, and Youghiogheny. The county also notes that it operates the water and wastewater systems for the entire county except in Accident, Grantsville, and Oakland. Drinking water assessments are also included for each water provider's service areas. By taking a watershed approach when considering land use and infrastructure, the Plan successfully frames the discussion of sustainable growth around capacity and anticipated system and facility enhancements.

**(6) Transportation: a well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers;**

The Plan covers different transportation strategies for the county. The two main traffic thoroughways that are counted and monitored by SHA are US 219 and I-68. Capital improvement projects in and around these main thoroughfares are discussed in the Plan and note the need to develop the areas adjacent to the newly upgraded transit areas. The importance of these routes for recreation and the flow of goods and services, as well as any supportive improvements, is also highlighted. Planned road improvements show that development is geared toward what is currently existing, and the county plans to expand on its current transportation assets to grow in the future, especially along these two main routes.

**(7) Housing: a range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes;**

The Plan highlights several policies that adequately address the county's current housing market trends. The housing section also details future needs to address both workforce and affordable housing. Different housing providers, lenders, and state agencies that help assist with affordable housing in the county, their specific programs, and developments are referenced in the housing section. The major agencies discussed in the plan are the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Garrett County Community Action Committee, and USDA Rural Development.

**(8) Economic development: economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged;**

The Vibrant Economy chapter of the Plan discusses economic development. The county plans to improve on their nature-based tourism industry going forward. The county indicated the need to use the natural beauty of the area to attract new businesses to the region because once there, the

county feels they can offer a lot to new and potential businesses looking to expand or relocate to the region. Another goal was to become a “proving ground” for manufacturing and outdoor equipment because of the availability and lower cost of land in Garrett County.

**(9) Environmental protection: land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources;**

The Sustainable Environment chapter of the Plan discusses environmental protection and conservation of the natural environment, which is noted as the backing vision of this plan. The county addresses watershed plans and the best practices in each are discussed. Each area plan is detailed within this chapter. These plans each address specific environmental protective measures, which are incorporated in this Plan and used to advance its own vision of preserving the county’s environmental resources.

**(10) Resource conservation: waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved;**

The Plan discusses issues related to environmental sustainability in the Sustainable Environment chapter, addressing the visions of “protection of the environment” and “resource conservation”. Stressing the protection of the county’s natural environment is clear and decisive in this section, as it highlights the county’s many environment resources and specifically mentions the goals and future plans for each. The county’s main goal is to preserve the resources they already have in place. Protecting the environment for the future is integral to sustaining future generations in the county, since it will be tied to all aspects of sustainability, including both the economy and environment of the region.

**(11) Stewardship: government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection; and**

The Plan discusses issues related to environmental sustainability and protecting the current resources of the area in the Sustainable Environment chapter, addressing the Visions of “protection of the environment” and “resource conservation”.

**(12) Implementation: strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, State, and interstate levels to achieve these visions.**

The Action Plan chapter provides guidance and implementation strategies for each respective goal of the Plan. The Action Plan chapter makes recommendations and clearly defines ways that the county can achieve its desired goals within the next 10-year cycle. Planning commends the county for outlining specific implementation strategies for each chapter’s goals.

Planning finds that all 12 State Visions have been integrated into the Plan, making it clear that the county has considered each. However, Planning recommends highlighting each of the 12 Visions throughout the Plan where they are advanced.

### **Introduction:**

Planning commends the county on a well-developed introduction and plan process section to the Plan. The history of the Plan and previous plans is explained and the relationship with other municipal plans is laid out and detailed in the opening chapter. Planning commends the use of these plans when considering the future planning and interjurisdictional coordination needs of the region. The use of hazard mitigation plans, waste management plans, capital improvement plans, local comprehensive plans, and others helps make this Plan more complete. The county held stakeholder interviews with different organizations, conducted open houses on the plan, discussed the plan at multiple planning commission meetings, and held visioning workshops as part of the public outreach process. The introduction section describes the processes for ensuring a transparent planning process.

- **Past to Present Pg. 1-8-** An historical narrative and county profile are explained in this section, which tie in well with the regional setting and background on the area that is also described in this opening chapter.
- **Population and Housing Pg. 1-9-** *“As of 2017 Garrett County’s population was estimated at 29,516, a small decrease from the population at the time of the 2000 census. See Table 1.1 in Appendix 1. The County had approximately 19,211 housing units in 2017.”* The 2017 figure is based on the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. Planning recommends using the most recent version of the Census Population and Housing Estimates. The Census Estimates program serves as a base for the ACS population figures. The 2020 population estimates are the most recent version available at the Maryland State Data Center website.
- **Projected Growth Pg. 1-10-** *“Per MDP Population Projections, the County, including the towns, is projected to experience modest population growth through 2040, from 29,516 in 2017 to 31,450 in 2040, which is an increase of approximately 1,934 persons.”* Planning’s current set of projections (updated in 2017 and revised in 2020) are from 2015 to 2045. Projections are at five-year intervals. Garrett County’s population is projected to increase from 29,600 in 2015 to 31,000 in 2045—an increase of 1,400 (4.7 percent). Please update this section with the best available data that is now available.
- **Employment and Non-Residential Development Pg. 1-9-** *“As of January 2015, the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) estimated that there were 21,400 part-time and full-time jobs in Garrett County. However, the County typically relies on data on full-time jobs from the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR), which reported 15,486 jobs in Garrett County as of January 2015.”* Planning recommends using either [Planning’s jobs estimate](#) or [Labor’s jobs estimate](#) Maryland to ensure consistence. Planning relies on data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) when developing the base for its employment projections. BEA counts all categories of jobs: full-time, part-time, private sector, public sector, proprietorships, and military among other job types. In its most recent revision of jobs data, the BEA reports that, in 2015, Garrett County had 17,166 full-time and part-time jobs.

- **Vision Statement Pg. 1-11-** Planning commends the clear vision statement that was selected by the county to help guide their planning needs for the future. The statement reads: “Garrett County will enhance the quality of life enjoyed by its residents by preserving the County’s rural character and natural beauty and by guiding growth and development. Garrett County will achieve this vision by: – Conserving farmland – Providing a framework for diverse housing needs – Planning for infrastructure that meets the future needs of residents and businesses – Supporting the business community – Encouraging tourism – Creating employment opportunities for its citizens – Providing quality schools – Continuing to support quality outdoor recreational areas and conservation of natural resources – Providing a safe, welcoming, involved community for everyone”
- **Population and Housing Projections – By Watershed Pg. 1-10 and Pg. 2-13-** These sections talk about watershed boundaries, population, and housing projections. It would be helpful to include a map with the watersheds and areas listed for reference.

## **Sustainable Environment**

### *Land Use*

Planning notes that the land use section is well written and maintains the key vision statement of the plan, which in part is to utilize the existing resources and preserve them for future generations to enjoy as well. There is a thorough breakdown of the existing land use, including 67 percent forested area and 21 percent agricultural land accounting for a huge percentage of the county’s overall land area. This explains the importance of the planning process for the county, as well as assuring that development supports the preservation of existing forested area and agricultural lands. Because of this, the Plan concentrates development in specific areas of the county. The main area for development and tourism is around Deep Creek Lake. This is the only area in the county with zoning, and development in and around the lake is vital for the long-term success of the county because of the direct financial impact vacation and tourist dollars bring to the county and all businesses in the region not just around the lake.

- **2008 and 2010 Land Use Plans Pg. 2-9-** The county notes that the 2008 land use plan is still valid and therefore the geographic extent of the Rural Resource and Agricultural Resource areas remain the same. The “existing land use map” used in this update was not the 2008 map, but rather Planning’s 2010 Land Use Land Cover Map. Planning suggests that the county compare the 2008 county land use map with Planning’s 2010 map for consistency with the growth areas and land use areas around municipalities. Maps, tables, and figures referenced from previous plans should be checked for consistency with the best and most recent versions that are used in this Plan.
- **Growth Areas Pg. 2-7-** Planning notes that boundary areas around specific growth areas extend out further than the growth boundaries seen on map 2.3.b on Pg. 2-23. Planning recommends checking growth area boundaries for consistency and notes specifically that the growth area around Grantsville should be examined and adjusted to match accordingly.
- **Lake Residential Zoning Pg. 2-16-** The Lake Residential 2 (LR2) zone around the Deep Creek Watershed has an envisioned residential density of 1 dwelling unit per two acres

with no sewer planned. Section 2.1.6 on page 2-20 then suggests considering reducing the minimum lot area to 1 acre. This zone also mentions that these areas are planned for sewer on Pg. 2-10, yet on Pg. 2-16 it states “the LR2 is not planned for public sewer service. The Plan should clearly state the intended sewer service for this and other areas in the county. Planning suggests concentrating growth in sewerred areas or areas that are planned for sewer in the near future to allow for greater density allotments that will help preserve natural resources, meet future housing needs, and provide sufficient customer base to maintain the sewer infrastructure.

- Page 2-20 (Re: “2.1.6 – Land Use Policies and Actions”): Planning recommends the county consider the following new or modified land use policies and actions:
  - Include a policy/action calling for prioritizing investment in growth areas’ infrastructure such as water/sewer facilities, broadband, and sidewalks/landscaping to facilitate development and revitalization in designated growth areas.
  - Include the county’s water and sewer policies for the areas designated as Rural Resource, Agricultural Resource, and Rural identified on page 2-8, 2-9, and 2-10 in 2.1.6 – Land Use Policies and Actions (page 2-20).
  - Suggest the county consider developing “design guidelines” for non-residential developments as part of Policy 8.
  - Include a policy/action calling for discouraging strip commercial developments along highway as discussed on page 2-11.
  - Include a policy/action calling for conducting a comprehensive review of subdivisions in the RR and AR Areas occurred under the 2010 Subdivision Ordinance and the 2010 Deep Creek Lake Zoning Ordinance, as indicated in the section of “New Residential Development” on page 2-9.
- Garrett County Tier Map Pg. 2-21- Planning acknowledges that the county's Tier Map, adopted in 2016, constitutes a component of the Plan based on the statement "The official Garrett County Tier Map was incorporated into the 2008 Comprehensive Plan by the County on May 2, 2016 and is hereby incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan Update". As the Tier Map is referenced, the county should include it in the Plan so that it is available to the reader. Once the Plan is adopted, Planning may complete a detailed review of the Tier Map under Section 1-505 of the Land Use Article in light of any changes to planned land uses, sewer service areas, or other criteria detailed in the law and Planning’s [Septics Law Implementation Guidance](#) since the 2016 Tier Map was adopted. If requested, Planning can also complete a detailed review before the Plan is adopted.
- Sensitive Areas Pg. 2-37 and 5-3- Staff notes a discrepancy in the land preservation numbers listed on these two pages. Page 2-37 lists the land preservation goal as 15,000 acres of farmland and Pg. 5-3 lists the preservation goal as 20,000 acres. Planning recommends checking these numbers for consistency so that one number can be listed within the entire plan.

### ***Water Resources (WRE)***

This element is located within Chapter 2 “Sustainable Environment”. Garrett County includes eight municipalities, three of which own and operate their own water and wastewater systems, including the Towns of Accident, Grantsville, and Oakland. Two other towns, Mountain Lake Park and Loch Lynn Heights, own the wastewater collection lines within their boundaries, which

convey the wastewater to the county's Trout Run Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The Plan WRE updates the 2008 comprehensive plan WRE, removing several sections and adding a new goal and a Stormwater Assessment section. The 2008 WRE sections that have been removed are as follows: Private Water Systems (note that this may have inadvertently been left out of the Plan WRE [it would fall under Section 2.3.3 ii]); Commercial and Agricultural Use, Potential New Groundwater Supplies, Potential New Surface Water Supplies, Source Water Protection, Alternative Wastewater Disposal Options, Programmatic Assessment of Nonpoint Source Policies, Total Nutrient Loads and Assimilative Capacity, and Policies and Actions. Staff notes that the policy and actions section was moved to the Draft Plan Chapter 5 Action Plan, 5.2 Sustainable Environment.

### ***Drinking Water***

The county's public water system (including both county- and municipal-owned/operated systems) sources from six watersheds, including the Youghiogheny River Watershed, Bear Creek Watershed, Little Youghiogheny River Watershed, Casselman River Watershed, North Branch Potomac River Watershed, and Deep Creek Watershed, within 15 town/area systems (Crellin, Friendsville, Keyser's Ridge, Accident, Deer Park, Mountain Lake Park/Loch Lynn Heights, Oakland, Grantsville, Bloomington, Gorman, Kitzmiller/Shallmar, Deep Creek Lake Service Area, McHenry Water System, Thayerville Water System, and the Combined McHenry and Thayerville Water System).

#### ***Potential drinking water capacity issues identified in the WRE***

- Crellin's water system was recommended for capacity monitoring in the 2014 Water and Sewer Plan (WSP) due to plans to expand the water system to four different areas by 2017. However, according to the Department of Public Works, no recent expansions of the water system have occurred.
- Friendsville's projected demand through 2033 will slightly exceed its current appropriation, according to the WSP, requiring additional appropriation from the Youghiogheny River or from additional groundwater sources.
- Keyser's Ridge area receives its water from Grantsville's green water system, and the county is seeking to "re-allocate 50,000 gallons per day (gpd) of annual water appropriation from the Grantsville system to develop a new public water supply using wells on DNR-owned land near Puzzley Run" (page 2-43).
- The Town of Deer Park water system is planned for expansion to serve additional areas, including a Municipal Growth Area within the town.
- The county plans to replace the Mountain Lake Park/Loch Lynn Heights distribution system over the next 10-12 years.
- The Town of Oakland system is adequate to meet projected demand through 2033; however, the town plans to monitor withdrawal to ensure the current appropriation limit does not need to be increased to accommodate new growth.
- The Grantsville system requires an expanded water treatment plant and/or withdrawal permit to meet project demand through 2033.
- Demand within the Gorman system beyond 2023 is projected to exceed Gorman's current water appropriation.

- The Deep Creek Lake system comprises the McHenry and Thayerville water systems, and the county is in the process of designing and permitting the interconnection of the two systems via a water main traversing Deep Creek Lake.
- The county plans to utilize the 2014 County Water and Sewer Plan (WSP) to identify future need relative to existing or planned capacities of the various water systems.

## ***Wastewater***

The county's wastewater system (including both county- and municipal-owned/operated systems) includes 11 wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) and conveyance systems within 11 towns/areas (Crellin, Friendsville, Keyser's Ridge, Oakland, Accident, Trout Run, Grantsville, Bloomington, Gorman, Kitzmiller, and Deep Creek Lake).

### ***Potential wastewater system capacity issues***

- The Crellin WWTP may exceed its current permitted effluent limit.
- The Keyser's Ridge WWTP is under construction as of 2019, and it will meet Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR) standards.
- The Town of Oakland WWTP is being replaced with a new 1,800,000 gpd WWTP, combined flows from the existing Oakland WWTP and the Trout Run WWTP; construction is slated for 2022–2026.
- The Accident WWTP regularly exceeds its permitted flow due to infiltration/inflow issues.
- The Grantsville system also has infiltration/inflow issues and the WWTP requires upgrades or replacement due to aging and compliance issues.
- The Gorman WWTP requires upgrades to the filter system.
- Upgrades are required at the Kitzmiller WWTP.
- The Deep Creek Lake WWTP requires upgrades to address high levels of nitrate emanating from the County landfill leachate system, which is connected to the sewer system.
- The county plans to utilize the 2014 WSP to identify future need relative to existing or planned capacities of the various wastewater systems.
- The wastewater "Identification of Issues" section Pg. 2-50 also recommends that the community of Finzel may require a public sewer system to protect water quality and sensitive habitats.

### ***Point Source Discharge Limits***

- Three County WWTPs (Bloomington, Gorman, and Kitzmiller) discharge to Chesapeake Bay basin and are the only county WWTPs subject to point source caps. While treatment capacity expansion is possible at these plants, improved treatment technology would be required due to nutrient caps.
- Several County waterbodies are impaired with nutrients and other contaminants and may be subject to multiple Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).
- Antidegradation: Most of the county's Tier II waters are within areas with limited development due to state land ownership or agricultural land preservation. However, Tier

II Puzzley Run is the receiving body for the proposed Keyzers Ridge WWTP, but the plant meets ENR standards.

### ***Stormwater Assessment***

- The WRE does not include an evaluation of various future land use scenarios and stormwater impacts to receiving waters since 91% of the county is Rural Reserve, Agricultural Resource, or Rural, which all envision very low-density development that will not significantly impact stormwater runoff from additional impervious surfaces.
- The county references the Center for Watershed Protection's Impervious Cover Model, in that impervious cover exceeding 10% results in declining stream quality indicators. However, no analysis has been conducted that shows the amount of impervious surface cover in the county. The county states that Deep Creek Watershed would be the only one in the county that may approach the 10% impervious cover threshold, and the county recommends completion of a GIS analysis to calculate existing impervious coverage in the watershed.

### ***Mineral Resources***

Planning notes the detailed insight on the mineral resources in the county at the end of the "Sustainable Environment" section on Pg. 2-54. The goals and direction of this section are well laid out and explain the county's direction moving forward. The main goal notes that with advances in technology, the natural resources in the area can be mined in the future more safely. Planning appreciates the county's dedication to safety, as the issues surrounding safe production of natural resources have been a significant planning topic in recent years. The existing land uses in place and the future production methods will test how minerals and other resources are mined in the county. This plan details what actions the county plans to take to ensure they meet their main vision of "preserving the existing land" in the county.

The Plan notes the usage of surface and subsurface mining to safely remove resources from the land, which lines up with their goal of "preserving the existing land" (Pg. 2-54). This section also describes natural gas mining activities, and how the ability to mine could expand with greater advances in production and harvesting techniques. Planning recommends that the county monitor legislative changes to see what techniques and advances will be allowed in Maryland in the upcoming years. Title 15. Mines and Mining, of the Environment Article of the Code of Maryland outlines the requirements for mining in the state.

As either part of the mineral resources element or in another section of the Plan, Planning recommends looking into the addition of wind energy systems and solar farms in the county, which have become more prevalent in counties with larger tracks of underdeveloped land. Planning for these types of farms and systems will be a way to not only regulate the uses, through zoning or other means, but will also help attract these types of uses as people within the industry are looking to invest in area where regulations are established and clear instead of investing in areas where regulations are uncertain, which can lead to wasting a lot of time and resources.

This can also be said about wind energy systems (WES). The county has previously permitted these types of uses and has firsthand knowledge of how contentious these issues can be for persons that are either for or against these systems. With history noted, the county should plan accordingly and with care when looking into alternative energy sources. Regulation is necessary and technological advances may force the county to shift its energy planning needs, so taking all factors into account will help determine the best plan for directing the location and proliferation of these uses in the future.

## **Vibrant Economy**

### ***Economic Development***

This section is well organized and lays out the economic goals and objectives of the county. Planning notes the specific goals on Pg. 3-2, which focus on making flexible sites for different types of businesses and uses as well as the desire to become a “proving ground” to companies that are looking to expand and use the resources that Garrett County has to offer. Companies that come to the area and look to take advantage of existing conditions in the county will be afforded some direct economic benefit by being able to “cut/save costs” by using existing features in the county.

Planning suggests that the county consider the possibility of providing accommodations to account for teleworking and “flex” style office usage in the area. These types of uses are becoming more popular after the pandemic and should be planned for so that people with this type of work schedule may have some additional incentive to move to and live in the area. These incentives could include carpool parking areas, shared office spaces, increased internet speed, or possible financial incentives for those who work remotely and wish to live in Garrett County.

- Planning recommends that the data and tables referenced on Pg. 3-3 be checked and compared to the best available data, as the projections are from 2013 and 2018.
- The Plan discusses the county’s high unemployment rate and how the county intends to work with Garrett College to help reduce the rate (Pg. 3-3). To produce and maintain a workforce for the county, Planning recommends continuing and expanding the relationship with the college to offer specialized programs that could help decrease the employment rate in targeted industry sectors of the county.

### ***Key Industry Sectors***

This section highlights the main sectors that are vital to economic development in the region. The main sectors the county highlights are real estate, tourism, forestry, resource-based industries, and mining. All have deep roots in the county and have been the main source of economic development for decades. The real estate industry specifically around Deep Creek Lake is a main revenue producer in the county. The economic impacts result because visitors from other areas have more disposable income and are more willing to use this income on the local businesses in and around the lake.

- Planning recommends the expansion of specialized schools that will target industry specific jobs in the region in the sectors described above.
- Pg. 3-5 notes the tourism and agriculture sectors. New agriculture-based tourism is something that helps attract visitors to the area and offers local business the opportunity to host tours on the side while also maintaining normal business operations.
- Planning commends the county’s focus on expanding rural broadband to underserved areas (Pgs. 3-11-3-13). Funding is available and has previously been provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Future funding to underserved areas and overall increased internet speeds should be examined and planned for in the future (Pgs. 3-11-3-14).
- Planning recommends that the plan, or future supportive plans, analyze the impact that the US 219 Oakland Bypass will have on the economic development of the surrounding areas.

### ***Transportation and Infrastructure***

The main vision of the transportation section in the draft plan is noted on Pg. 3-17.” ...to link municipal revitalization to pedestrian and biking opportunities through an enhanced transportation system thereby stimulating economic development, increasing alternative transportation options, encouraging healthy lifestyles, decreasing traffic pollution and highlighting the region's natural resources.” This vision sets a clear direction for the county to work towards. This element explains how to accomplish the county’s future transportation needs and examines the current state and condition of roads and other facilities.

Planning applauds the county for its desire to expand the trail network to enhance connectivity. The connectivity can be achieved by developing a master trail plan that can use the current trails and assets in the area, along with new connections to help with overall connectivity. Planning also appreciates that the Plan included the detailed information on the existing conditions and issues of all currently applicable modes of transportation and addressed relevant policies and actions to achieve the transportation goal and objectives.

- Planning recommends that the county develop a master trail list and map either for this Plan or in a follow up trails functional plan within the next ten-year cycle.
- The county should continue to develop relationships with organizations related to trails and continuing its outstanding relationship with Garrett Trails. These relationships provide great guidance on current issues surrounding trails and can highlight other transportation issues around the region.
- The county should continue to promote multipurpose trail use. Use by pedestrians, cyclist, skiing, or other means should be promoted to maximize the usage and benefit of the trails/facilities.

- With a low population spread over a large area, the accessibility of public transportation will continue to be a planning issue for the county. Additional public transportation and routes should be examined and planned for in areas with higher population densities.
- To enhance Policy 8, Planning suggests the county explore micro-transit strategies to address transit needs and gaps identified in Policy 8. Communities have used micro-transit to address rural transit needs. For reference, here are some website links to the information on micro-transit and its practices: (1) [the APTA’s Micro-transit resources](#); (2) the [FTA’s How Can Micro-transit Help Rural Mobility](#) presentation; and (3) [How Do We Move Older Citizens in Rural Areas Using New Technologies?](#)
- Planning recommends that the county include a policy/action calling for transit-supportive land use designs and development patterns as much as possible for growth areas, particularly for the areas designated as Town Residential, Town Center, Suburban Residential (with public water/sewer), Commercials, Employment Centers, and Incorporated Town. The policy should also call for encouraging transit-supportive affordable, workforce, and senior housing developments in growth areas. Transit-supportive language should also be included in Policy 1 under “4.1.6-Policies and Actions” on page 4-10.
- Include a policy/action to support retention of the freight rail lines in the county. In addition, if there are rail-line operation safety issues in the county, the Plan should include an action to address the problem.
- Page 3-17 (Re: “3.2.1- Goals and Objectives”): Planning encourages the county to consider including an objective to address the potential need to accommodate electric vehicles (EV) for residents and visitors by supporting EV charging facilities and encouraging EV charging ready for new residential and commercial developments, especially those in the Deep Creek Lake area. [Maryland EV](#), a Maryland State EV website, provides various EV and EV infrastructure topics and resources.
- Planning strongly encourages the county to develop a countywide bicycle and pedestrian master plan in addition to the trails master plan called for in Policy 2. A trails master plan may not address on-route bike-lanes and focus on pedestrian facilities other than trails such as sidewalks, wide-shoulders, crosswalks, landscaping, signages, etc. Having a pedestrian and bicycle master plan is proven to be instrumental to build and improve walkability and bicycle-friendliness in communities. Such a plan will help facilitate agency collaboration and address bicycling and walkability issues, needs, and improvements that Policy 7 calls for. For reference on how to address pedestrian and bicycle network enhancement in small towns and rural communities, please review [this link](#) for the Federal Highway Administration’s report on “Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks.”
- Page 3-21 (Re: “3.2.2 (v) Identification of issues – Road Network”): The Plan may include truck traffic and roadway information to support the discussion on the proposed truck corridor feasibility and roadway functional improvement studies for MD 495, MD

135, and other local roads. Please refer to the following links for the truck volume and roadway information: the [county truck volume maps](#) and [the highway location reference](#).

- Pg. 3-28 “Continue to support plans to upgrade US 219 north of I-68, as a supplemental improvement to the region’s highway network. However, the County opposes the use of US 219 south of I-68 as the primary link to Corridor H.” Planning notes that the areas around this and other transportation projects should be considered for Priority Funding Area (PFA) designation. With zoning located around the lake, the PFA status should be considered for future growth-related infrastructure needs.

### ***Deep Creek Lake Area***

This section focuses directly on planning and issues directly around the lake. The zoning is referenced in both this plan and is pulled from the 2008 Comprehensive Plan also. Some zoning modifications appear to have been made to the Deep Creek Lake Area between the 2008 plan and this 2021 plan, and the county should reexamine for accuracy (Pg. 3-36).

- Planning notes that the zones and density related to each be checked for consistency to ensure accuracy.
- Planning recommends that the Plan describe areas that are planned for water and sewer in the Deep Creek Lake Area, as well as the timeframe for construction.
- Planning notes that this section references previous land use plans and studies, such as the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and the 2014 Watershed Management Plan (Pgs. 3-37 – 3-39) and that the plans remain valid for the Deep Creek Area. Planning has identified a couple areas where Map 2.3 (Proposed Land Uses) on page 2-7 of the Plan differs from Map 3.4 on page 3-10 of the (Proposed Land Use Plan) of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. For example, the draft 2021 plan proposes additional "Lake Residential 2" land southeast of US 219 and Deep Creek Lake and at the intersection of Glendale Road and MD 495 where the 2008 comprehensive plan proposed "Agricultural Resource" and/or "Rural Resource" land. Garrett County may wish to clarify where proposed land uses have been updated since the 2008 plan and if those updates necessitate any changes to the Deep Creek objectives and strategies (Pgs. 3-40 – 3-41).

## **Thriving Population**

### ***Housing***

The housing section focuses on housing statistics, trends, and goals of the county. Planning notes the use of creative housing strategies, such as offering incentives and mortgage assistance to first time or qualified residents in the county, to help accommodate for housing needs. Since this is a new element recently added to the planning requirements, Planning is pleased to see an innovative chapter focused on housing strategies. Planning notes that the data used in this section is older and should be updated with the best available data. Planning is encouraged to see the list of funding sources for various housing projects listed directly in the Plan. The connection

between the cost of housing, cost of land, and cost of development portrays an accurate picture of the needs and issues the county will have to plan for.

- On Pg. 4-3 the Plan lists specific income limits and discusses the average median income of the county. HB 1045, passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2019, requires housing elements to use the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Area Median Income (AMI) to determine housing needs for low income (less than 60%) and workforce (60-120%) households. The Plan uses American Community Survey data to highlight median income for the county, which is a great supplement to AMI data. However, Planning recommends that the Plan also include AMI income limit data to analyze the housing affordability needs of its population. Planning developed a [Housing Element Models & Guidelines](#) website to assist jurisdictions with gathering this data, specifically a dashboard available at:

<https://apps.planning.maryland.gov/hb1045/index.html>

The dashboard includes the most recent 2021 AMI for Garrett County, as well as low income and workforce income ranges and affordable monthly payments based on the AMI.

- Consider updating the statistics to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, which are also available on the housing dashboard described above.
- Continue to explore opportunities through third party developers, funding agencies, and other private/public partnerships to expand and improve on workforce and affordable housing.

### ***Community Facilities***

Planning commends the county's effort compiling information related to all the facilities in the Plan. The objectives and goals of the county appear to ensure that all residents will have adequate public facilities for their use and enjoyment.

- Planning commends the county on including a discussion of the 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan in the Plan, as well as incorporating strategies and implementation actions from that plan into Chapter 4. Planning reminds the county that to maintain eligibility for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mitigation grant funding, it must "review and revise an existing plan to reflect changes in development, progress in local mitigation efforts, and changes in priorities and resubmit it for approval within 5 years." ([FEMA Local Mitigation Planning Handbook, Pg. I-3](#)) The county should consider adding an update to its Hazard Mitigation Plan to the Policies and Actions listed in section 4.2.10. For more information about FEMA's resources, please visit its [Local Resources Webpage](#).
- Pg. 4-16 discusses the recycling goals and needs of the county. Planning notes that this effort and encourages the county to improve on recycling by expanding current recycling programs to residents in the more rural regions of the county.

## **Action Plan**

The action plan chapter of this Plan revisits all the previous sections and highlights how the county will meet its planning goals. The policies and goals listed in this format offer good insight and can be used by other jurisdictions and Garrett County municipalities as a creative way to organize their actions plans. Accuracy within the Plan was mentioned above and should be considered when looking at growth areas and boundaries around municipalities. Older versions of plans, incorporated by reference or cited for applicability, should be checked for accuracy so that the most recent plans and amendments are correctly portrayed in the Plan.

Planning also recommends that the county consider adding benchmarks or timelines to the actions listed in this section, which can then be used during plan implementation to measure progress. Without clear timelines, it can be tough to measure progress and at times different issues arise and delay specific planning actions. Timelines would also better inform Garrett County stakeholders about the anticipated progress of plan implementation and when and how they might get involved. As stated in the Chapter 5 Introduction on Pg. 5-2, “the final responsibility for implementing the Comprehensive Plan lies with the County citizenry and their elected officials.” Planning understands that a specific timeline can be hard to measure, but a general one could help provide clearer guidance for this section of the document.

## **Appendix Sections**

As noted previously, the data and tables in this section should be updated with the best and most accurate data. Links in previous sections have been provided to direct the county to the most recent data and figures. Please follow up with Planning if you require additional information or datasets as we would be glad to assist you with this if needed.

The public outreach process detailed in this section is greatly appreciated and informative. The stakeholder meetings engaged key stakeholder groups, and ensured that both regional and local voices contributed to the planning process. Planning notes that at times community engagement can be tough, as comprehensive plans are not always at the top of citizens’ priority lists. Getting more and more people involved invites them to see the opportunities a great plan can provide for their area. These meetings can also help citizen planners get involved by allowing them to discover some of the great resources that are already in place at the county level.

The various outreach techniques used indicate tremendous effort from the county, which hosted open houses, stakeholder events, and vision sessions to discuss certain goals and elements of the Plan. These meetings gave the plan direction and offered stakeholders the opportunity to provide direct input, which, along with the insight of the county staff and the consultant, helped shape the Plan into its final form. Planning commends the overall effort put into the Plan and looks forward to seeing what direction the final form takes.

END MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING COMMENTS

**Maryland Department of Planning Review Comments July 7, 2021**  
**Draft Garrett County Comprehensive Plan 2021**  
**STATE AGENCY COMMENTS**

The following pages contain comments from other State agencies in support of the Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) review of the Draft Vision 2030 Sykesville Comprehensive Plan as part of the standard 60-day review period for municipalities. Comments not included here may be submitted under separate cover, or via the State Clearinghouse. If comments from other agencies are received by Planning, they will be forwarded to the County in a timely manner.

**Attachments**

Page 22	Maryland Historical Trust
Page 24	Maryland Department of Transportation
Page 30	Maryland Department of the Environment



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**Maryland**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**  
**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST**

June 4, 2021

Mr. David V. Cotton  
ARC Program Manager  
Director, Western Maryland Regional Office  
Maryland Department of Planning  
113 Baltimore St., Suite 302  
Cumberland, MD 21502

Dear Mr. Cotton:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft Garrett County Comprehensive Plan 2021 and submit comments on behalf of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Although Garrett County has many historically significant properties and cultural resources, and the public identified “historic” as a small but important strength in the Vision Word Cloud outreach exercise (Figure 1.1 of the Introduction), we note that historic preservation is barely mentioned in the plan. A cursory check of Medusa, Maryland’s Cultural Resource Information System, reveals 1,515 records, including 108 historic properties that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as well as 26 National Register-listed sites throughout Garrett County. (Many of the designated sites are located in incorporated towns and therefore not part of this plan, but the properties and their histories do connect to the broader cultural context of Garrett County.) We recommend adding a section describing the County’s historic and cultural resources, which could include references to heritage tourism (discussed below) as well as incentives for preservation and rehabilitation, including grants, state and federal historic tax credits. To learn more about financial incentives for historic preservation, please visit <https://mht.maryland.gov/Financial.shtml>.

The County does incorporate, by reference, the Garrett County Heritage Area Management Plan, 2011 (Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area). Given multiple references within the comprehensive plan, we recommend that a link to it be included in the text on page 1-8 (<https://www.garrettheritage.com/management-plan>). We appreciated the map on page 3-25 that illustrates the relationship of National Register-listed sites in the Heritage Area to designated Scenic Byways. In addition to a section on Garrett County’s historic and cultural resources, we recommend using these assets to integrate the importance of historic preservation and heritage tourism into the “Vibrant Economy” chapter.

In Chapter 4, the discussion of condition and age of existing housing stock suggests that old homes are less desirable by the statement on page 4.7 that says, “The median year housing structures are built is another indicator of the condition and livability of housing stock in a place”, followed by an assertion that much of the county’s older housing is small, energy inefficient with older plumbing, electric and heating service whose cost of renovation often exceeds the total value of the structure. We recommend including reference to the financial incentives – particularly the state historic tax credit - available for rehabilitating qualifying historic properties, including residences. Many older homes, while not necessarily historic, can be preserved, renovated and restored as community assets rather than liabilities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the plan. If you have any questions, please contact me at (410) 697-9561 or by email at [steven.allan@maryland.gov](mailto:steven.allan@maryland.gov)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven H. Allan".

Steven H. Allan, AICP  
Local Assistance and Training Planner  
Office of Planning, Education and Outreach

Cc Nell Ziehl, Chief, Office of Planning, Education and Outreach  
Joseph Griffiths, MDP  
Rita Pritchett, MDP

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June 3, 2021

Mr. Dave Cotton  
c/o Ms. Rita Pritchard  
Maryland Department of Planning  
301 West Preston Street, Suite 1101  
Baltimore MD 21201

Dear Mr. Cotton:

Thank you for coordinating the State of Maryland's comments on the 2021 Garrett County Comprehensive Plan (hereafter referred to as the "Plan"). The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following comments on the Plan for consistency with MDOT's goals and objectives:

### **General Comments**

- Please refer to the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) as the "Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA)" and as "MDOT SHA" for all uses. Please use the same format for all applicable MDOT Transportation Business Units (TBU) such as the Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA), etc.

### **Specific Comments**

#### **Chapter 3 – Vibrant Economy**

- Page 3-17 – 3.2 Transportation – The draft plan "recommends improvements that will also accommodate bicycle and pedestrian circulation." Please consider replacing "accommodate" with "promote" or "encourage."
- Page 3-17 – 3.2.1 Goals and Objectives – MDOT SHA supports Garrett County's draft objective #8 to "provide accommodation for bicycling and walking as a means of local travel and for recreational purposes."
- Page 3-17 – 3.2.2(i) Existing Conditions – As of May 2021, following the opening of the new segment of US 219 between I-68 and Old Salisbury Road, MDOT SHA owns and maintains 198 miles of roadway in Garrett County.

- Page 3-17 – 3.2.2(i) Existing Conditions: State – For federal functional classification purposes and as coordinated with the County, MDOT SHA classifies various roadways in Garrett County as 1) interstates, 2) principal arterials (other freeways and expressways), 3) other principal arterials, 4) minor arterials, 5) major collectors, 6) minor collectors, and 7) local roadways. Please consider updating accordingly concerning roadways listed in this plan:

- I-68 (West Virginia - Allegany County) – interstate
- US 219 (West Virginia - Pennsylvania) – principal arterial
- US 40 (Pennsylvania - US 40AL/US 219 (south)) – principal arterial
- US 40AL (US 40/US 219 (south) - Allegany County) – major collector
- MD 42 (US 219 - Pennsylvania) – major collector
- MD 495 (MD 135 - I-68) – minor arterial
- MD 135 (US 219 - Allegany County) – minor arterial
- MD 39 (West Virginia - US 219) – minor arterial
- US 50 (West Virginia (west border) - West Virginia (east border)) – minor arterial

Additionally, please ensure all text and mapping, including Map 3.2 (Page 3-29), are updated to reflect current classifications, which can be obtained from MDOT SHA's website at <https://maryland.Maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=83797b4feb2c48f190606e9c2a440170> as well as in MDOT SHA's Highway Location Reference at [https://www.roads.maryland.gov/OPPEN/CO11\\_HLR.pdf](https://www.roads.maryland.gov/OPPEN/CO11_HLR.pdf).

- Page 3-17-3-18 – 3.2.2(i) Existing Conditions: State – The Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) is a document combining programmed expenditures for all MDOT transportation business units, one of which is MDOT SHA. Please reference the CTP as such. In addition, please note the CTP is a six-year program.
- Page 3-17-3-18 – 3.2.2(i) Existing Conditions: State – Please rephrase to describe MDOT SHA's Highway Needs Inventory (HNI) as “a technical reference and planning document that identifies highway improvements to serve existing and projected population and economic activity in the State as well as address safety and structural problems that warrant major construction or reconstruction.” The HNI does not specifically note “deficiencies.”
- Page 3-19-3-20 – 3.2.2(iii) Planned Road Improvements: State Roads – Please consider an update to note that the current MDOT CTP is FY 2021-2026. MDOT publishes a draft CTP each year in September and a final version, reflecting program updates and coordination with local jurisdictions and elected officials, the following January. MDOT published the final version of the FY 2021-2026 CTP in January 2021. MDOT will publish the draft FY 2022-2027 CTP in September 2021.

- Page 3-19 – 3.2.2(iii) Planned Road Improvements: State Roads: US 219 North Study – Please update text to note that PennDOT currently is in the procurement phase to select a consultant team to advance planning and preliminary engineering for the lone remaining unimproved segment of US 219 between Old Salisbury Road in Maryland and Meyersdale, Pennsylvania. While this contract was advertised and is being managed by PennDOT, both MDOT SHA and PennDOT will contribute to and participate in the planning and preliminary engineering project. PennDOT anticipates issuing notice to proceed to the selected consultant team in the Summer of 2021.
- Page 3-19 – 3.2.2(iii) Planned Road Improvements: State Roads: US 219 Oakland Bypass – Please update text to note that planning for this project is complete and design is *partially complete*.
- Page 3-19 – 3.2.2(iii) Planned Road Improvements: State Roads: US 219 Chestnut Ridge Road – Please update text to note that MDOT SHA opened the new four-lane access-controlled divided highway, between I-68 and Old Salisbury Road, and I-68 access improvements to traffic in May 2021.
- Page 3-19 – 3.2.2(iii) Planned Road Improvements: State Roads: MD 39, Hutton Road – Please update text to note that MDOT SHA is advancing a multi-stage project to replace the MD 39 Youghiogheny River bridge. Stage 1, which MDOT initiated in 2018 and completed in 2020, relocated an existing sewer line and constructed drainage structures and stormwater management facilities. Stage 2, the actual bridge replacement, is underway as of the Spring of 2020 and will be completed in 2022.
- Page 3-20 – 3.2.2(iv) County Priorities – The draft plan text references Garrett County’s transportation priorities letter submitted to MDOT on March 1, 2018. The County submitted updated letters on February 19, 2019 and May 1, 2020. MDOT SHA recommends referencing the most recently submitted letter.
- Page 3-20 – 3.2.2(iv) County Priorities: Major Transportation Project (over \$5 million): Development and Evaluation Phase: Oakland Alternative Truck Route – At the County’s request, MDOT SHA completed the US 219 Truck Corridor Study - Alternative Route Assessment for Oakland, Maryland in the Fall of 2020. The study, which evaluated four potential alternative truck routes outside central Oakland, identified two alternative routes requiring significant investment to bring roadway geometry up to appropriate standards: 1) MD 135 and MD 495 between Oakland and I-68 and 2) MD 135 and County-owned Sand Flat Road between US 219 south of Oakland and US 219 north of Oakland. The MDOT SHA met with County staff to share the results of this study in the February 2021.

- Page 3-21 – 3.2.2(iv) County Priorities: Minor Transportation Project (less than \$5 million): Planning Priorities: Truck Corridor Feasibility Study – Please update text to note that at the County’s request, MDOT SHA completed the US 219 Truck Corridor Study - Alternative Route Assessment for Oakland, Maryland in the Fall of 2020. The study, which evaluated potential alternative truck routes outside central Oakland, identified two alternative routes requiring significant investment to bring roadway geometry up to appropriate standards: 1) MD 135 and MD 495 between Oakland and I-68 and 2) MD 135 and County-owned Sand Flat Road between US 219 south of Oakland and US 219 north of Oakland. The MDOT SHA met with County staff to share the results of this study in the Winter of 2020-2021.
- Page 3-21 – 3.2.2(iv) County Priorities: Minor Transportation Project (less than \$5 million): Planning Priorities: MD 495 & Durst Road – MDOT SHA is aware of ongoing concerns about future traffic emanating from the Casselman Mine and potential changing traffic types and patterns. MDOT SHA regularly communicates with mine ownership concerning safe ingress and egress at MD 495 and is awaiting more clarity about the future status of the mine as it coordinates with Garrett County on potential improvements along MD 495 at Durst and Fire Clay roads.
- Page 3-22 – 3.2.3(i) Bicycle Facilities: Existing Conditions – The 2040 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan was completed by the Maryland Department of Transportation Secretary’s Office, with input from MDOT SHA. At the beginning of paragraph 3 of this section, please refer to the plan as the “Maryland 2040 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The MDOT is ready to assist Garrett County with strategic planning resources to enhance the county’s bicycle conditions. The referenced projects in the MDOT 2040 Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan 2019 Update in other Western Maryland counties were products of competitive state and federal grants. These projects and subsequent grants were initiated by county and city officials. Garrett County has a successful record of utilizing other state and federal grants to enhance bicycle, pedestrian and trails connections. The Recreational Trails Program has provided funds to improve trail access at Deep Creek Lake State Park and other trails. While the MDOT Bike Spine is aimed at regional connectivity, additional bicycle facilities can be targeted toward short-distance trips in higher-density developed areas. The forthcoming statewide level of traffic stress (LTS) analysis will assist with network analysis and network connectivity to prioritize future investments.
- Page 3-24 – Regarding the Garrett Transit Service (GTS). – Please clarify that the Wisp Resort Shuttle services are not operated by Garrett Transit Service.”
- Page 3-24 – Please consider recommending the last sentence of the section read that GTS currently provides a number of services geared towards older adults, such as visits to hospitals in places as far away as Baltimore, but there are barriers to finding and using the service for older adults as well as funding barriers for GTS itself.

- Page 3-28 – Page 3-28: 3.2.7 Policies and Actions, under #6, as part of the sustainable trail system, consider pursuit of an International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) destination designation. Garrett County is becoming a regional mountain biking destination and would draw additional economic resources to the area with an IMBA designation.
- Page 3-28 –Please consider adding that the exploration of the feasibility of one or more mobility hub locations to support shuttle service or seasonal fixed route service.
- Page 3-28 –Please consider introducing explicit language about seasonal regional bus service to support tourism activities as a topic of discussion for the Transportation Summit.
- Page 3-29 – Map 3.2 Functional Classification of Roads – Please ensure all text and mapping is updated to reflect current classifications, which can be obtained from MDOT SHA’s website at <https://maryland.Maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=83797b4feb2c48f190606e9c2a440170> as well as in MDOT SHA’s Highway Location Reference at [https://www.roads.maryland.gov/OPPEN/CO11\\_HLR.pdf](https://www.roads.maryland.gov/OPPEN/CO11_HLR.pdf).
- Page 3-33 – Table 3.4 Infrastructure Needs: MDOT SHA US 219 North Study – Please update table to note that planning and preliminary engineering activities for the remaining unimproved segment between Old Salisbury Road in Maryland and Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, will begin in the Summer of 2021, led by PennDOT in partnership with MDOT SHA.
- Page 3-33 – Table 3.4 Infrastructure Needs: US 219 Oakland Bypass – Please update text to note that planning for this project is complete and design is *partially complete*.
- Page 3-33 – Table 3.4 Infrastructure Needs: US 219 Chestnut Ridge Road – Please update the table to note that MDOT SHA opened the “breakout project,” the new four-lane access-controlled divided highway, between I-68 and Old Salisbury Road, and I-68 access improvements, to traffic in May 2021.
- Page 3-33 – Table 3.4 Infrastructure Needs: MD 39, Hutton Road – Please update table to note MDOT as the potential funding source. (It should be noted this project is funded for construction, which may explain why the cell currently is not filled.)
- Page 3-35 – Appears to be a duplicate of Page 3-33 and Table 3.4.

Mr. Dave Cotton  
Page Six

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Plan. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Ian Beam, Regional Planner, Office of Planning and Capital Programming (OPCP), MDOT at 410-865-1280, toll free at 888-713-1414, or via email at [ibeam@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:ibeam@mdot.maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Murphy  
Director, OPCS, MDOT

cc: Mr. Matt Baker, Chief, Regional and Intermodal Planning, MDOT SHA  
Mr. Ian Beam, Regional Planner, MDOT  
Mr. Travis Johnston, Director, Locally Operated Transit Systems, MDOT MTA  
Ms. Jamie McKay, Regional Planner, MDOT MTA  
Mr. Sean Varselona, Regional Planner, MDOT SHA  
Ms. Francine Waters, Transportation Planner, MDOT



# Maryland

## Department of the Environment

Larry Hogan, Governor  
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

Ben Grumbles, Secretary  
Horacio Tablada, Deputy Secretary

June 8, 2021

David Cotton  
Maryland Department of Planning  
301 West Preston Street  
Suite 1101  
Baltimore, MD 21201

RE: Local Plan Review: Garrett County Comprehensive Plan 2021 – Draft February 2021  
MD20210511-0365

Dear Mr. Cotton,

Below are the comments from the Maryland Department of the Environment regarding the above referenced project. Our response code is R1.

1. Any above ground or underground petroleum storage tanks, which may be utilized, must be installed and maintained in accordance with applicable State and federal laws and regulations. Underground storage tanks must be registered and the installation must be conducted and performed by a contractor certified to install underground storage tanks by the Land and Materials Administration in accordance with COMAR 26.10. Contact the Oil Control Program at (410) 537-3442 for additional information.
2. If the proposed project involves demolition – Any above ground or underground petroleum storage tanks that may be on site must have contents and tanks along with any contamination removed. Please contact the Oil Control Program at (410) 537-3442 for additional information.
3. Any solid waste including construction, demolition and land clearing debris, generated from the subject project, must be properly disposed of at a permitted solid waste acceptance facility, or recycled if possible. Contact the Solid Waste Program at (410) 537-3315 for additional information regarding solid waste activities and contact the Resource Management Program at (410) 537-3314 for additional information regarding recycling activities.
4. The Resource Management Program should be contacted directly at (410) 537-3314 by those facilities which generate or propose to generate or handle hazardous wastes to ensure these activities are being conducted in compliance with applicable State and federal laws and regulations. The Program should also be contacted prior to construction activities to ensure that the treatment, storage or disposal of hazardous wastes and low-level radioactive wastes at the facility will be conducted in compliance with applicable State and federal laws and regulations.
5. Any contract specifying “lead paint abatement” must comply with Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 26.16.01 - Accreditation and Training for Lead Paint Abatement Services. If a property was built before 1978 and will be used as rental housing, then compliance with COMAR 26.16.02 - Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing; and Environment Article Title 6, Subtitle 8, is required. Additional guidance regarding

projects where lead paint may be encountered can be obtained by contacting the Environmental Lead Division at (410) 537-3825.

6. The proposed project may involve rehabilitation, redevelopment, revitalization, or property acquisition of commercial, industrial property. Accordingly, MDE's Brownfields Site Assessment and Voluntary Cleanup Programs (VCP) may provide valuable assistance to you in this project. These programs involve environmental site assessment in accordance with accepted industry and financial institution standards for property transfer. For specific information about these programs and eligibility, please Land Restoration Program at (410) 537-3437.

7. Borrow areas used to provide clean earth back fill material may require a surface mine permit. Disposal of excess cut material at a surface mine may requires site approval. Contact the Mining Program at (410) 537-3557 for further details.

Additional comments from the Water and Science Administration are enclosed with this letter. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Amanda R. Redmiles*

Amanda R. Redmiles  
Clearinghouse Coordinator  
Maryland Department of the Environment

Enclosure

**Garrett County Comprehensive Plan 2021 - Draft February 2021**

**Maryland Department of the Environment – WSA/IWPP**

**REVIEW FINDING: R1 Consistent with Qualifying Comments  
(MD2021 0511-0365)**

**Anti-degradation of Water Quality:** Maryland requires special protections for waters of very high quality (Tier II waters).

The County is encouraged to explore MDE's website on Tier II High Quality Waters and Antidegradation of Tier II waters. The information includes new forms for permit applicants to assist with the no-discharge alternatives analysis, minimization analysis, temporary impacts, and social and economic justification.

The County could incorporate references to the website or reference forms in its Comprehensive Plan related to permits and requirements.

**Direct any questions regarding the Antidegradation Review to Angel Valdez via email at [angel.valdez@maryland.gov](mailto:angel.valdez@maryland.gov).**

**Water/Sewer**

On Page 2-43, the Plan indicates that the "Keyser's Ridge area will receive water through a re-allocation of 50,000 gpd of an annual water appropriation from the Grantsville system to develop a new public water supply using wells on DNR-owned land near Puzzley Run. The water treatment plant has been constructed. The water treatment, new wells and a water storage tank will be in operation by the end of 2020." The County should update the Water and Sewerage Master Plan to include the new agreements, with any additional information and updates and revise service area maps, as appropriate.

**Direct any questions regarding the Water and Sewer comments to Robin Pellicano via email at [robin.pellicano@maryland.gov](mailto:robin.pellicano@maryland.gov).**