



SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION OF THE APPALACHIAN REGION (STAR) OVERVIEW

In September 2011, the National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG) partnered with University of Maryland Extension and The Greater Cumberland Committee to coordinate a region-wide effort in Western Maryland called the Sustainable Transformation of the Appalachian Region (STAR). Funded by a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, the purpose of STAR is to identify the economic goals and aspirations of Western Maryland residents and to ensure that these goals and aspirations are specifically incorporated in any economic development planning associated with PlanMaryland, Maryland's statewide development plan. The effort emphasizes that a state economic development plan cannot assume that "one size fits all." Whereas state planning efforts often focus on issues important to Baltimore and the Washington suburbs, the STAR project recognizes that growing jobs in a sustainable way in Western Maryland is different than in other parts of the State.

To that end, the STAR project involves four primary tasks:

- Task 1** Identifying Western Maryland's existing economic development plans and strategies and taking an inventory of the goals contained therein;
- Task 2** Documenting the region's population, demographic, housing, transportation, infrastructure and economic trends;
- Task 3** Meeting with Western Maryland residents to ascertain the region's current economic development priorities; and,
- Task 4** Reporting the project's findings to the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission.

Task 1 resulted in the creation of a report entitled, *An Inventory of Existing Economic Development Priorities in Western Maryland*. The report summarized the goals identified in the region's existing plans and provided a window to the unique issues facing Western Maryland, and the economic aspirations of its citizens. Links to the plans and documents reviewed for that initial report can be found on the [STAR Project website](#).

For Task 2, the NCSG produced four data briefs highlighting (primarily graphically) current conditions and trends:

- [Population and Demographics](#)
- [Income and Employment](#)
- [Transportation and Infrastructure](#)
- [Land Use and Natural Resources](#)

The NCSG conducted three workshops in Western Maryland as part of Task 3. Workshop participants included local planners, business owners, Chamber of Commerce leaders, elected officials, conservationists as well as unaffiliated residents of the region. Representatives from education, economic development, tourism, real estate, and healthcare also participated in the workshops. During the workshops, the NCSG received feedback on the four data briefs. Participants also discussed the region's economic development goals, obstacles to achieving those goals, and how the state and PlanMaryland could potentially assist or impede achievement of the goals.

As part of Task 4, the STAR final report, *A Primer for Economic Development in Western Maryland*, served as a summary of the project's research and the feedback the NCSG received from workshop participants in Allegany, Garrett, and Washington Counties. The NCSG believes the data in the [briefs](#) provide a useful overview of the social, economic, environmental, and infrastructure issues in Western Maryland and the final report presents useful information on how residents in the region feel those data should inform PlanMaryland. The report identifies the economic development priorities and concerns for Western Maryland (but is not intended to be an economic development strategy for the region). As the state moves forward with the implementation of PlanMaryland, state agencies must be fully aware of these priorities and concerns, which often distinguish Western Maryland from the remainder of the state.



Visit the STAR Project website for more project details: <http://smartgrowth.umd.edu/starproject.html>

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