2012
MASTER PLAN
and
LAND USE
ELEMENT PLAN

2012 MASTER PLAN and LAND USE ELEMENT PLAN

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MASTER PLAN

INTRODUCTION/HISTORY/OVERVIEW

"Harford County has always lain in the main stream of national life" - William S. James Foreword of "Our Harford Heritage"

Through the years, Harford County has maintained its rural character while also providing for a growing population. Looking ahead, the County faces new challenges as it continues to balance heritage and sense of community with future needs. The 2012 Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan will provide opportunities to accommodate and focus growth in a manner that maintains the rural areas and strengthens communities. It will serve as the policy guide and framework for future growth thus helping to ensure a coordinated and harmonious relationship between existing and anticipated land uses. It will also incorporate the 12 Visions of the State's 2009 Smart, Green and Growing initiative which is designed to guide growth in Maryland in a smart and sustainable manner.

Harford County Comprehensive Planning History

The Harford County Charter requires the Department of Planning and Zoning to "prepare and propose Master Plans". Furthermore, the Charter requires the inclusion of a series of elements or components in the Master Plan which "further advance the purposes" of the Master Plan. Each of these elements needs to "describe how it relates to the other elements" in achieving the overall goals of the Master Plan.

Several comprehensive plans have been prepared by Harford County. These plans have addressed land use and population growth. One of the first plans was prepared by the consulting firm Harland, Bartholomew and Associates for the Harford County Planning and Zoning Commission in 1969. This plan provided recommendations on land use, transportation, public schools, parks and open space, public buildings and facilities, and utilities and public services. The plan also identified areas of growth opportunities in the "General Land Use Plan" section and projected the County population at 204,500 for the year 1985.

The County prepared a second comprehensive plan in 1977, the first plan under charter government. "The Harford County Master Plan" of 1977 dealt with growth trends and development. This Plan created the Development Envelope concept, scaling back the amount of land available for development from the 1969 plan to reflect the availability and capacity of public facilities. This allowed the County to stage and direct more intense growth into a specific area, defined by the I-95/U.S. Route 40 and the MD Route 24 corridors. The new projected population numbers expected 200,000 by the year 1996. A Citizens' Review Committee approach encouraged public participation in 1977. Citizen involvement in developing this Plan was focused on local planning areas, and citizen groups were encouraged to provide input on important issues.

The 1988 Harford County Land Use Element Plan reinforced the Development Envelope concept implemented in 1977 by maintaining almost the same boundary as modified by the Comprehensive Zoning Review in 1982. The Plan determined that the County contained sufficient land zoned for development to accommodate projected growth. The 1988 Plan also introduced an alternative approach to a single Master Plan by utilizing the concept of individual element plans. The Land Use Element Plan became the "core" plan with the other element plans developed to support the Land Use Element Plan. Additionally the Adequate Public Facilities program was added to help manage growth more effectively in the Development Envelope.

In 1996, the Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan were combined to strengthen the "core" of the planning process. The 1996 Plan was largely based on a community planning process involving 10 Community Planning Councils. These Councils provided information on the uniqueness of Harford County's communities while their common issues provided guidance for the development of a County-wide vision on land use.

The 2004 Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan were based on community identification of issues that influenced the quality of life in Harford County, combined with the implementation of State programs. This included the State's eight planning visions identified in the 1997 Smart Growth Act, establishing a Priority Funding Area for capital investment, and the Rural Legacy Program for land preservation. The 2004 Plan also addressed the need for interjurisdictional coordination. Both the Maryland Planning Act and the Smart Growth legislation call for directing future growth toward existing population centers, thus requiring coordination between the County and the municipalities.

In the 2004 Plan, Harford County also established a mechanism for providing accountability as it relates to the Plan's implementation. Annual implementation reports were completed each year, beginning in 2006. The cumulative report, for the period 2004 through 2010, showed that 95% of the strategies identified in the Plan had been addressed. While this demonstrates that the strategies included in the Plan were relevant to County and community needs, it also indicated that there was a need for a new approach to address the challenges facing Harford County.

Overview of 2012 Plan

The 2012 Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan follow a slightly different format than previous plans. The Master Plan begins by presenting a profile of Harford County, ranging from the history of planning in the County to current demographic data. It then details the relationship between the Land Use Element Plan and the other element plans, and explains the relationship and influence that various State and regional planning initiatives have on local planning efforts. Building on these State and regional initiatives, the Plan identifies an overall plan, goal and series of Guiding Principles. These Guiding Principles form the foundation for the Land Use Element Plan, and in effect provide Harford County' s vision for sustainability through growth management and resource conservation.

Because the majority of the Element Plans were updated in 2009 and 2010, the Land Use section of this document focuses on four topical areas. These are: Land Use-how growth is managed inside and outside of the designated growth areas; Economic Prosperity-how to address a changing economy; Public Facilities, Services, and Safety-ensuring that needed facilities and services are provided in a timely and cost efficient manner that supports a healthy lifestyle; and Sustainability-ensuring that the County is working to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In order to monitor the progress of the Plan's implementation, the Department of Planning and Zoning will prepare a report every year identifying accomplishments, issues needing resolution, and recommendations for updating the Plan. A similar report will be prepared for each of the element plans under the purview of the Department of Planning and Zoning. These reports serve as the foundation for several other required reporting activities. These include Annual Growth Reports as required by the County's Adequate Public Facilities legislation, and the State's Smart, Green and Growing legislation. In addition, monitoring the implementation of the Plan is reflected in the County's recertification application to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Public participation is a critical element of planning in Harford County. The goal of the public participation process is to obtain input from citizens in order to fully understand the diverse interests, concerns, and needs of communities and to build a mutual consensus in balancing future growth, enhancing quality of life, maintaining community character and protecting the County's heritage in a sustainable manner.

To be effective, the public participation process must be adaptable to new ways of communicating ideas and comments. Educating the public on the Plans and process is the first step in a successful public participation program. While the internet is now a major source of information, it is important that it complement other opportunities for education and the communication of ideas. Media releases, public meetings - including group discussions, presentations to civic organizations, businesses, community groups, and other special interest groups are all means of outreach provided by the County to help educate the community and to seek public input.

At public presentations, meetings, and discussions participants have an opportunity to interact with planners and their fellow citizens. As part of the planning process, the information gathered at these events is transposed into a written format and then shared on the Harford County website. For those choosing to communicate directly via the internet, the Department's website provides information for citizens to share and discuss. Utilization of the web-based process provides a direct participation link for all interested parties.

For the development of the 2012 Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan, three public participation phases were conducted by the Department. All involved public interaction via meetings and an online community. The process began with a kickoff meeting in February, 2011. This meeting included a presentation addressing the Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan function, requirements, update process, and role of public input. An overview and instructions for the newest public input tool, the Planning and Zoning On-Line Community, was also addressed. All of this information was also available on-line.

Those attending the kickoff meeting were invited to participate in roundtable discussions which focused on the following four areas:

- Land Use
- Economic Prosperity
- Public Facilities, Services and Safety
- Sustainability

Attendees were asked a series of three questions relevant to each discussion area. The questions were designed to establish the concepts that the public would like to see addressed in the Land Use Element Plan:

- What do you think is the major issue facing the County today?
- What will be the major issue facing the County in the next 10 to 20 years?
- What do you think should be the major issue addressed in this update of the Land Use Element Plan?

Responses were recorded during a discussion period, and then presented to the group at large. All responses recorded at the meeting were posted on the Department's website as a starting point for discussion by the on-line community. Participants in the on-line community had access to all the information and materials presented at the meeting, and they were able to discuss suggestions among themselves as well as vote on the ideas presented. Phase I of the on-line community was launched on the day before the scheduled public meeting and remained active for approximately one month.

As a result of the input received during Phase I, reoccurring themes were identified for each of the topical areas listed above. These themes were used to generate discussion opportunities for Phase II of the public participation process.

Phase II was initiated in early April. This meeting was structured as a workshop where attendees could stop in at any time to gather information on the ongoing process and share their viewpoints. At the workshop, the public was asked to provide strategies for the identified themes within each topical area. Community Areas was also added as a topic for public discussion. At the Community Areas station, participants were asked to discuss concepts that applied to their community. Maps, data, community plans and visions, strategic plans, policy guides, and other management tools were available so the public could understand what information the County relies on to address challenges and concerns.

Once again, Phase II of the on-line community offered citizens all of the information presented at the workshop and offered the same opportunities for comment, discussion and voting as presented in Phase I. The site opened the day before the workshop and remained open for approximately one month. The information gathered from both phases of the public participation process was then used to develop a draft Plan.

The 2012 Plan includes a series of themes and implementation strategies. Each element of the Sustainability through Growth Management and Resource Conservation portion of the Plan addresses the primary themes identified during the public participation process. Strategies were developed to address the challenges associated with each theme, and comments about the various community areas were incorporated into plans for the respective community area.

From the public participation process it was clear that there is strong support for maintaining and enhancing the quality of life of Harford County citizens. Quality of life is a reoccurring theme and influences the strategies proposed throughout the Plan.

A draft Plan was released for public review in October 2011. The Plan was available online, at Harford County public libraries and from the Department of Planning and Zoning. Comments on the draft Plan were solicited through a combined online and public workshop process. A public workshop was held at Harford Community College. Participants were provided with an opportunity to visit a series of stations where they could discuss the proposed Plan with staff. The information provided at the workshop was also made available on the Department's online community site. As with previous online community input opportunities, citizens were able to comment on the various sections of the Plan and discuss their comments with other citizens. This process encouraged citizens to identify what they thought was best about the Plan and what items were missing or not sufficiently addressed. All of the information and materials presented at the public meeting was also available on the County's website.

HARFORD COUNTY PROFILE

Harford County is located in the north central portion of Maryland at the confluence of the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay (Figure 1). It is bounded by Baltimore County on the west, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on the north, the Susquehanna River on the east, and the Chesapeake Bay on the south.

The County has a land area of 440 square miles or 235,676 acres, and is the 11th largest County in the State of Maryland. Harford County is bisected by two physiographic provinces, the Piedmont Plateau and the Coastal Plain with the Fall Line roughly following Interstate 95 (I-95). In the rolling topography of the Piedmont, elevations reach almost 800 feet in the northwestern portion of the County (Figure 2). However, the highest point occurs at Slate Ridge east of Whiteford. Here the elevation reaches just over 804 feet. The terrain in the County ranges from the rolling topography of the Piedmont to the gentle slopes of the Coastal Plain with the lowest elevation occurring along the Chesapeake Bay. The variety of the County's landscape is further enhanced by the number of major streams and rivers that flow through the area such as the Susquehanna River, Little Gunpowder River, Bush River, Deer Creek, Winters Run, Bynum Run, and Gashey's Run.

There are three incorporated municipalities in Harford County, the County seat in the Town of Bel Air, and the cities of Aberdeen and Havre de Grace. All of the municipalities have addressed the requirements of House Bill 1141 by including a Municipal Growth Element and a Water Resources Element into their comprehensive plans. These plans provide a common foundation for addressing Smart Growth initiatives and other sustainability challenges related to the Bay Restoration Program and the Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).

Another major land area in the County is Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG). Occupying over 39,000 acres, the Proving Ground is a Federal facility created by Presidential Proclamation in 1917. While there are several smaller land holdings belonging to APG throughout the County, the majority of the facility is located on the two peninsulas bordered by the Bush and Gunpowder Rivers and encompassing the majority of the County's Chesapeake Bay waterfront. Since the initiation of the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) in 2005, the mission of the Proving Ground has changed from predominately a military mission to one of civilian contractors whose technological achievements in national defense, intelligence, medical research, engineering, and computer technology support the war fighter.

Demographic Profile

Demographic data provides a basis for guiding planning efforts. It can help to predict future needs for housing, community facilities, infrastructure and other services. In order to define these needs, some basic demographic data has been compiled. The social and economic factors considered include statistical data on population, age distribution, number of households, average household size, number of years lived in a home, type of employment, and household income. The Census Bureau divides Harford County into 57 census tracts for the purpose of data collection and reporting. Information from the 1990, 2000, and 2010 Census was used in this Plan. Projections through 2035 have been made using 2010 Census data.

For this Plan, the 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) was also used because the 2010 Census did not gather data about certain demographic variables. Because the ACS provides a five year average, it is not always possible to provide direct comparisons with previous Census data.

VICINITY MAP
Harford County, Maryland

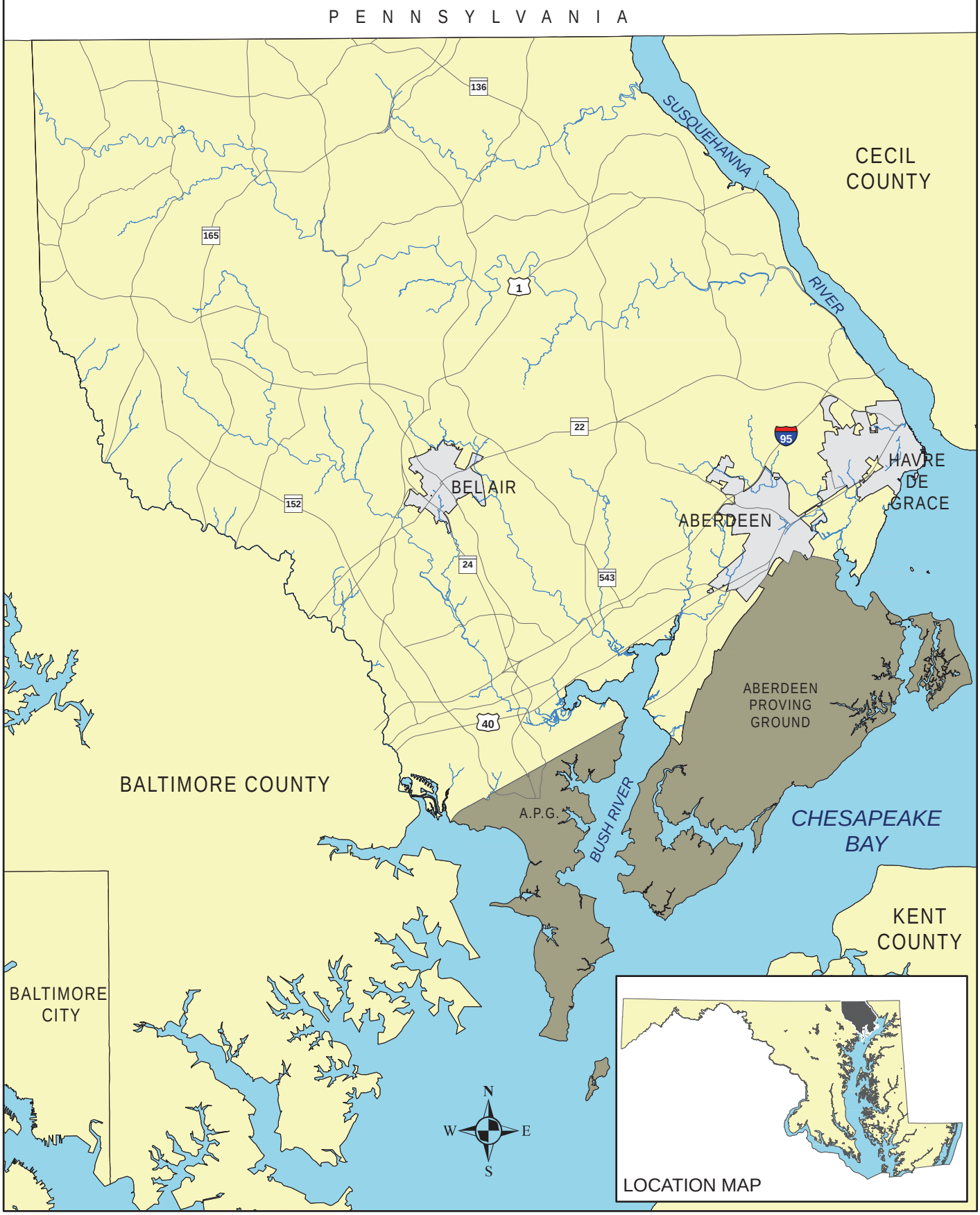

Figure 1

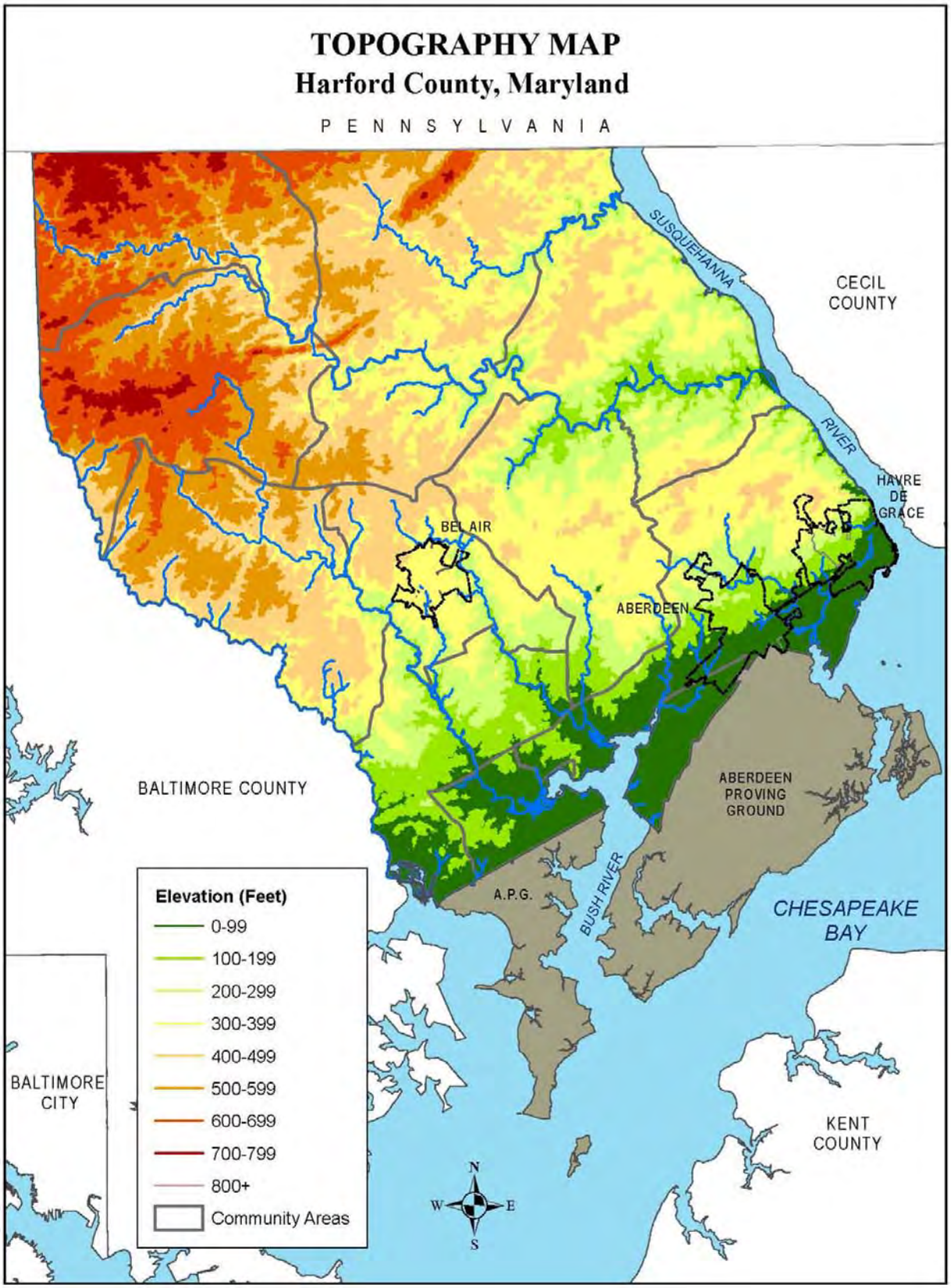
TOPOGRAPHY MAP
Harford County, Maryland
PENNSYLVANIA
SUSQUEHANNA
RIVER
CECIL COUNTY
HAVRE DE GRACE
BEL AIR
ABERDEEN
BALTIMORE COUNTY
ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND
A.P.G.
BUSH RIVER
CHESAPEAKE BAY
BALTIMORE CITY
KENT COUNTY
Elevation (Feet)
0-99
100-199
200-299
300-399
400-499
500-599
600-699
700-799
800+
Community Areas
N
W
E
S

Figure 2

Socio-Economic Profile

Between 2000 and 2010, Harford County's population increased by 12% as compared to a 20% increase for the period 1990 to 2000 (Figure 3). In 2000 the County's population was 218,590. By 2010 it had increased to 244,826 residents as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Census. This change represented an annual growth rate of about 1.2% as compared to a 2% annual growth rate for 1990 to 2000 and a 2.5% annual growth rate for the period 1980 to 1990.

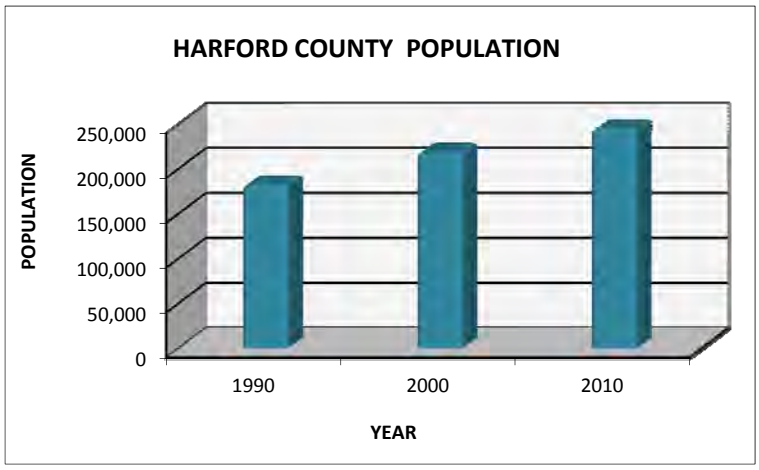

Figure 3

Approximately 16% of the County's population resides in the three municipalities (Figure 4). The City of Aberdeen remained the largest municipality in the County with a 2010 population of 14,959. In the 2010 Census report, the Town of Bel Air and the City of Havre de Grace had populations of 10,120 and 12,952 respectively. Between the years of 2000 and 2010, the City of Havre de Grace experienced the largest percentage of growth with a 14% increase in population. However, this is almost 50% less than the 26% population increase it experienced between 1990 and 2000.

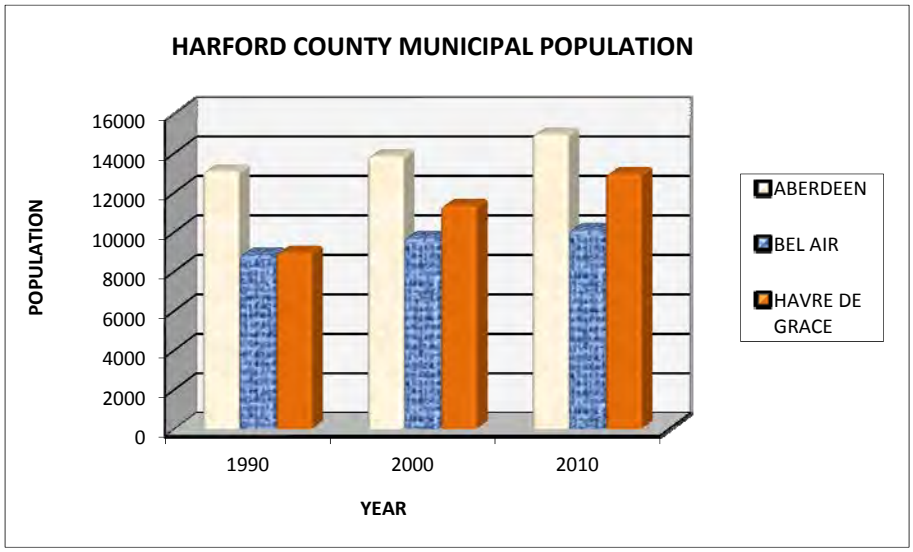

Figure 4

Age Structure

In the 2010 Census, the 45 to 64 age group constituted the largest percentage of the population (29.2%) just surpassing the 25 to 44 age group(25.4%) who had been the majority of the population in the 1990 and 2000 Census. During the period 2000–2010, the number of people 85 and older increased the most (89.2%) followed by the 20-24 age group that increased by 40.3%. Those four years of age and younger and the 25 to 44 age group experienced a decline. Even with these declines, the majority of the County's population (58.3%) is now younger than 45 years of age (Figure 5).

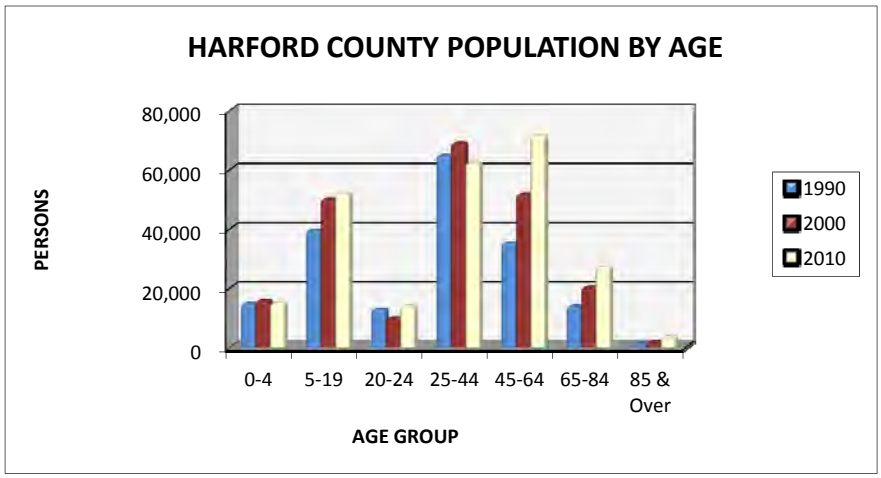

Figure 5

Housing

While the 2010 Census calculated the number of housing units in Harford County, it did not identify them according to housing type. However, this information is available from the American Community Survey. The ACS identified 95,248 housing units in Harford County, which is an increase of 12,102 units from the 2000 Census (Figure 6). Single family dwellings continue to be the primary housing unit type in the County, comprising 61% of the existing housing units. According to the ACS there are 58,515 single family houses. The ACS also showed that the County experienced a 20% increase in the number of townhouses as compared to a 50% increase during the period 1990 to 2000. The ACS also showed that the number of townhouses in the County is 18,168, comprising 19% of the total number of units. Since 2000, the number of owner–occupied units increased by 17.9% while the number of renter-occupied units decreased by 3.8%. Just over 81% of the total units in Harford County are owner-occupied as compared to 78% in 2000 and 74% in 1990.

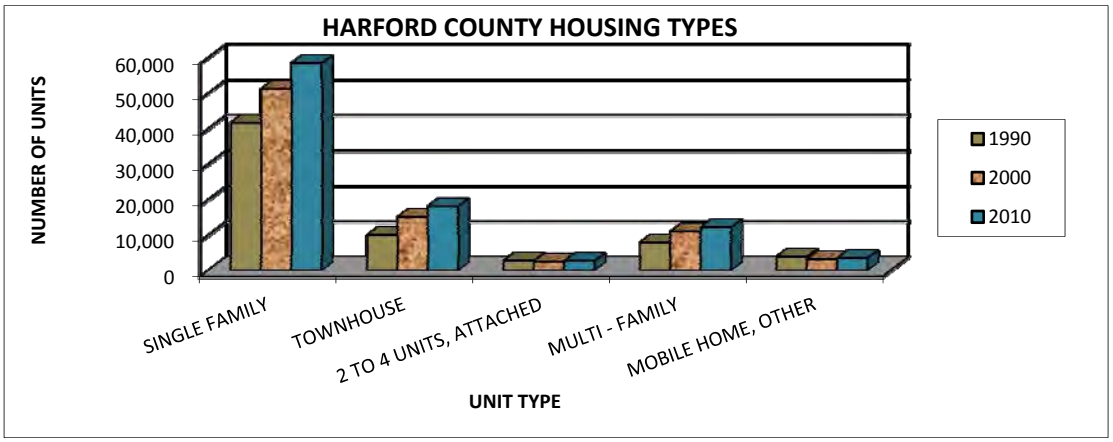

Figure 6

Historically, the average household size in Harford County has been higher than the State average, as shown in Figure 7. In the 2010 Census, the average household size in Harford County (2.68) is still slightly higher than the State average of 2.61 persons per household. The size has been steadily declining through the years going from 3.45 in 1970 to 2.83 in 1990, 2.72 in 2000 and 2.68 in 2010.

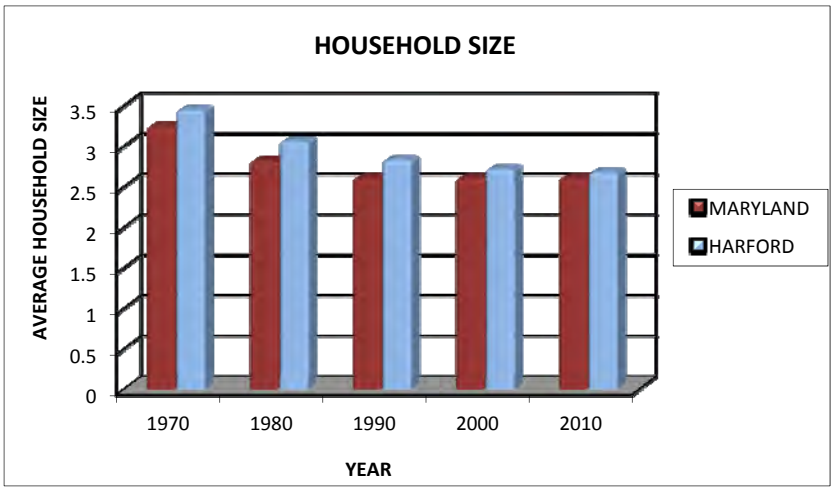

Figure 7

As identified in Figure 8, the total number of occupied households in the County increased from 79,667 in 2000 to 90,218 in 2010. This reflects an increase of 13% as compared to the 20% increase that was reflected in the 2000 Census.

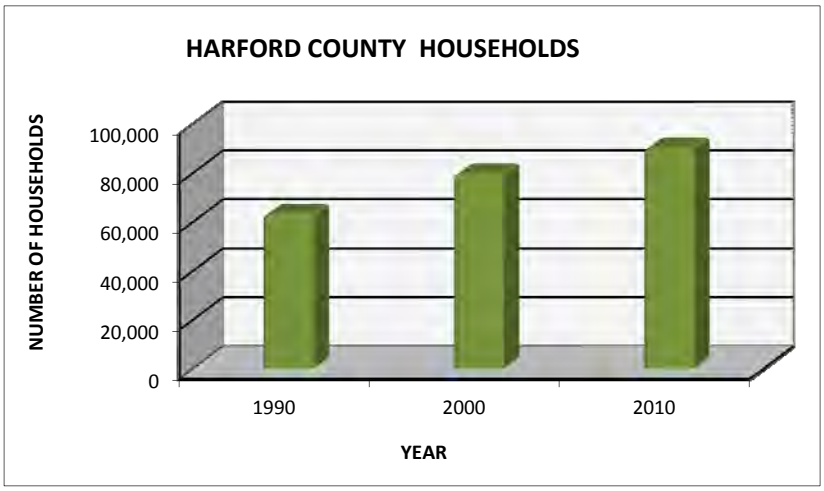

Figure 8

Of the households established by 2010 just about 51% (or 46,463 households) had been living in their present home for 10 years or less (Figure 9).

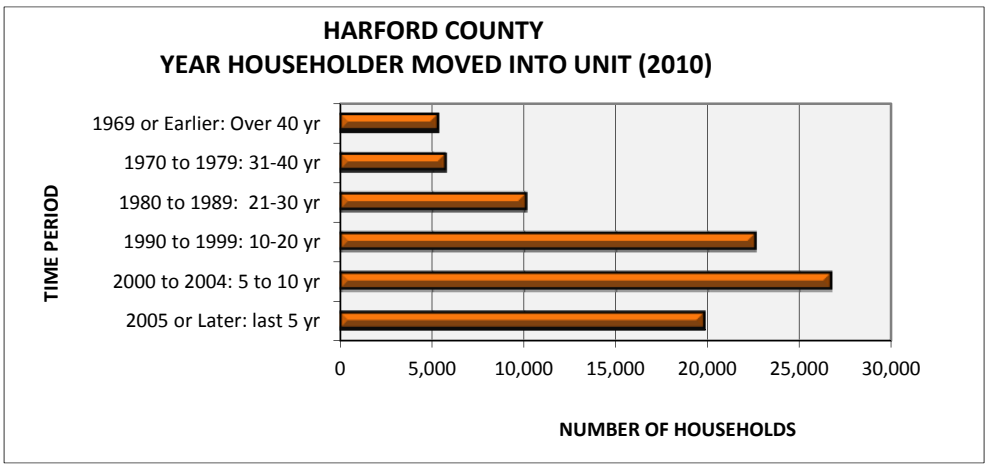

Figure 9

Income

Based on ACS data, the median income in Harford County was $75,872 as compared to $57,234 in the 2000 Census. About 70% of the households in the County had a median income of over $50,000 with almost 34% of the households having a median income of $100,000 or greater (Figure 10). Overall, income levels in the County have continued to improve since 1990. However, based on American Community Survey data, the poverty rate for families considered living in the poverty level has increased to 4.3% as compared to 3.6% in 2000 and 4.1% in 1990.

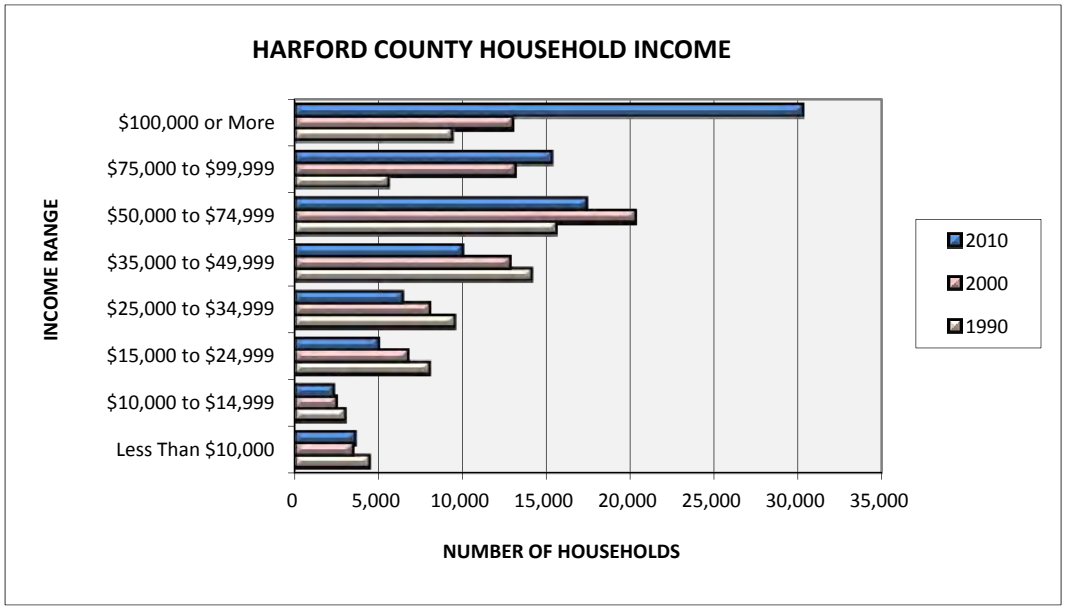

Figure 10

Occupation

The occupation of residents in Harford County based on employed individuals 16 years of age and over is shown in Figure 11. This figure identifies the top three occupations as management – professional and related occupations (51,008), sales and office occupations (32,531) and service occupations (18,060). Overall employment in the County increased almost 12%.

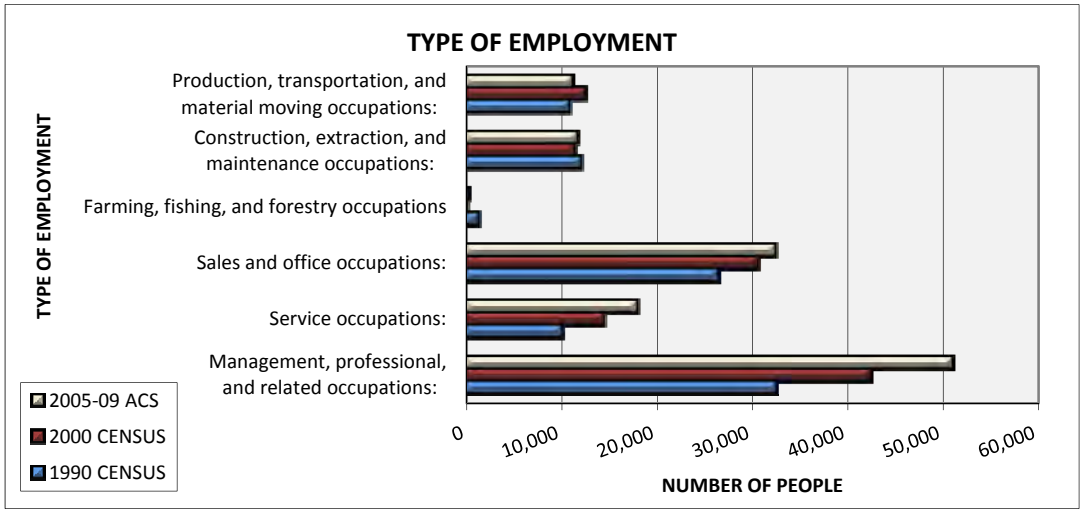

Figure 11

Growth Projections

Several factors have contributed to the continued population growth in Harford County. The County is strategically located between Washington, D.C. and New York and is considered part of the Baltimore Metropolitan Region. It is served by several major transportation corridors that cross its borders. The transportation corridors include Interstate 95, U.S. Routes 1 and 40, and the CONRAIL, CSX, and AMTRAK rail lines. The County is also serviced by MARC which connects the County directly to Baltimore and Washington. Population growth in the County has also been affected by the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) activity at Aberdeen Proving Ground. As a result of the changes to the Proving Ground's mission and the associated relocation of contractors and support services from various military installations throughout the country, the County's population is projected to continue to grow.

Using the 2010 Census as a baseline, estimates have been made for 2015 through 2035. These estimates were determined by a number of variables including building permits, average household size, and household vacancy rates. Projections for the five, ten and twenty year periods beyond 2015 use the same information to build an anticipated rate of growth. It is important to note that projections also consider past trends and land availability.

While the County's residential building permit trends provide an indication of projected growth, permits vary from year to year depending on economic conditions. By observing trends in permit activity, improved projections of growth can be made (Figure 12). Using this data and assumptions about vacancy rates and average household size, population figures and the number of households were projected through the year 2035.

HARFORD COUNTY RESIDENTIAL PERMIT ACTIVITY BY JURISDICTION: 2000 – 2010

YEAR	TOTAL PERMITS	HARFORD COUNTY	ABERDEEN	BEL AIR	HAVRE DE GRACE
2000	1,591	1,498	69	5	19
2001	1,885	1,841	20	5	19
2002	1,886	1,754	71	3	58
2003	1,991	1,718	72	99	102
2004	1,777	1,440	66	78	193
2005	2,113	1,466	160	104	383
2006	1,001	654	20	18	309
2007	788	598	34	0	156
2008	511	421	22	1	67
2009	587	456	6	30	95
2010	548	377	8	42	121
TOTAL	14,678	12,223	548	385	1,522

Figure 12

Population Projections

Between 2000 and 2010 the County's population increased by 26,236 people to 244,826. Population projections for the County, as shown in Figure 13, reflect an expected increase of 35,600 people between 2015 – 2035 with a population of 292,620 projected for 2035.

YEAR	ENVELOPE	RURAL AREA	TOTAL
2000	156,769	61,821	218,590
2005	174,110	63,055	237,165
2010	179,786	65,040	244,826
2015	189,914	67,106	257,020
2020	198,365	68,985	267,350
2025	206,509	70,811	277,320
2030	214,474	72,456	286,930
2035	219,188	73,432	292,620

Figure 13

During this period, the population distribution among the various age groups will also change. The most significant change will occur in the 85 and older age group. An increase of 145.3% is projected for that age group, with the next greatest increase occurring in the 0-4 age group. This group is anticipated to grow by 27.7%. The slowest growth rate is projected to occur in the 20-24 age group (7.4%); with the 45-64 age group being the only one projected to experience a decline (-11.3%).

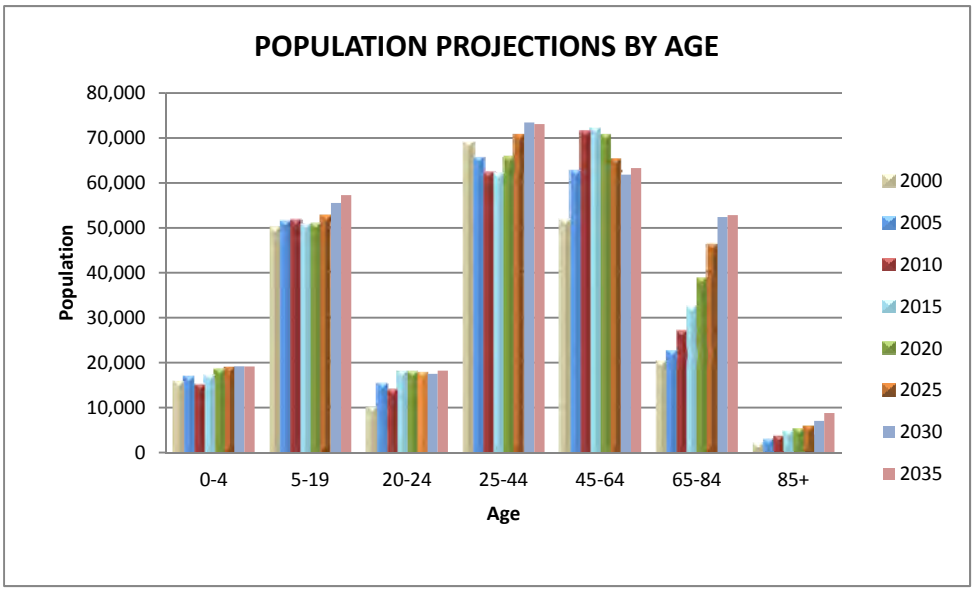

Figure 14

Since 1977 the County's guiding policy for land use decisions has been to focus new growth within the Development Envelope. Almost 74% of the County's population was located within the Development Envelope in 2010. The estimated population of the Development Envelope in 2015 is 189,914 and this figure is expected to increase to 219,188 in the year 2035. This projected growth results in approximately 75% of the County's population being within the Development Envelope.

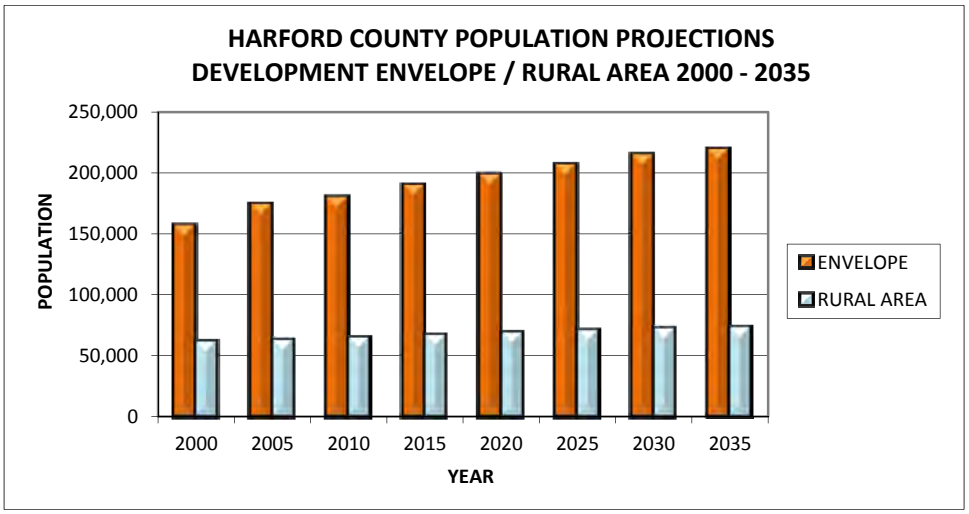

Figure 15

Housing Projections

Population figures presented above directly reflect the increase in total households anticipated to occur between 2010 and 2035. For 2010, the number of occupied households within the County was 90,218 resulting in an overall increase of 13% since 2000. This, however, reflects a slower rate of growth than the 20% increase that occurred between 1990 and 2000. Of these, 69,900 households, or 75% of the total number of households in the County, are located within the Development Envelope.

Between 2010 and year 2035, the number of households countywide is projected to increase by 28%, to 115,476. As identified in Figure 16, approximately 87,661 or 76% of the total number of households in 2035 are expected to be located within the existing Development Envelope. The remainder of the households, about 24%, will be located outside of the Development Envelope.

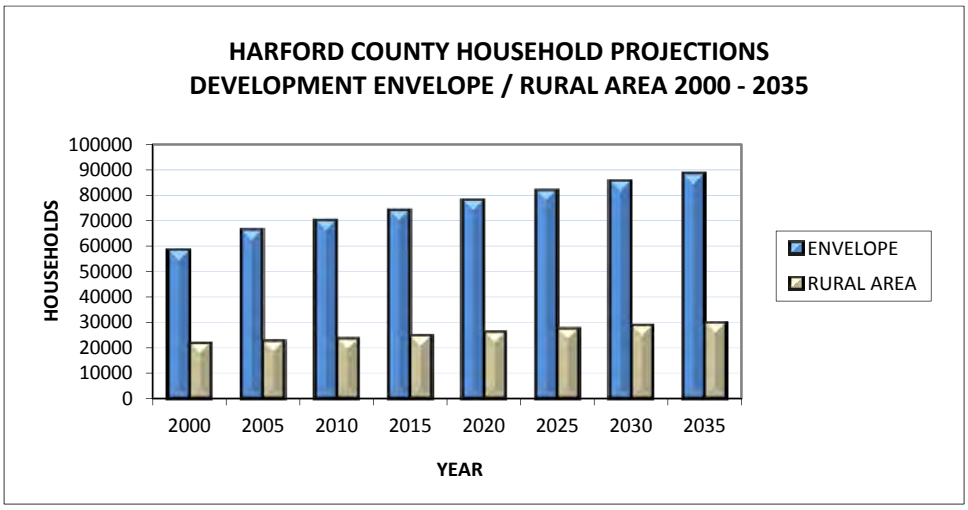

Figure 16

Development patterns support these projections. Since 1990, an average of 82% of the new residential development has occurred within the Development Envelope (Figure 17). Based on an average distribution rate of 80%, a total of 20,490 new households will be located within the Development Envelope by the year 2035.

HARFORD COUNTY RESIDENTIAL PERMIT ACTIVITY: 1990 – 2010

Year	TOTAL PERMITS ISSUED	PERMITS ISSUED INSIDE ENVELOPE	% INSIDE	PERMITS ISSUED OUTSIDE ENVELOPE	% OUTSIDE
1990	2,498	2,069	83%	429	17%
1991	2,011	1,560	78%	451	22%
1992	2,399	2,005	84%	394	16%
1993	1,756	1,381	79%	375	21%
1994	1,714	1,434	84%	280	16%
1995	1,534	1,276	83%	258	17%
1996	1,856	1,575	85%	281	15%
1997	1,565	1,279	82%	286	18%
1998	1,675	1,328	79%	347	21%
1999	1,830	1,477	81%	353	19%
2000	1,591	1,299	82%	292	18%
2001	1,885	1,551	82%	334	18%
2002	1,886	1,536	81%	350	19%
2003	1,991	1,575	79%	416	21%
2004	1,777	1,455	83%	322	18%
2005	2,113	1,803	85%	310	15%
2006	1,001	783	78%	218	22%
2007	788	655	83%	133	17%
2008	511	427	84%	84	16%
2009	587	509	87%	78	13%
2010	548	481	88%	67	12%
Total	**33,516**	**27,458**	**82%**	**6,058**	**18%**

Figure 17

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Harford County's Master Plan establishes an overall vision for the County to guide its future growth. The Master Plan also addresses the "Visions" of the State's 2009 Smart Green and Growing Local Planning Act and recognizes the County's role in regional planning efforts. It establishes a series of Guiding Principles that will connect the element plans that support the Master Plan. The element plans include the Land Use Element Plan and a series of functional element plans.

The Land Use Element Plan is viewed as the core element of the Master Plan since it provides the primary direction for achieving the Master Plan's goal and guiding principles. It also designates land use categories throughout the County, and it prescribes basic strategies that will guide the County in directing the location and form of future growth in a sustainable manner.

The Land Use Element Plan identifies designated growth areas that are suitable for more intensive development. These include the Development Envelope, an inverted "T" shape generally described as the MD Route 24/924 corridors north to MD Route 23, U.S. Route 1 in and just west of Bel Air, and the areas generally south of I-95, the municipalities, the Rural Villages, Harford Community College, the HEAT Center, and areas designated as Mixed Office. Because these areas are also recognized by the State as Priority Funding Areas (PFA), they will also be given precedence over other areas to receive State funding for improvements to roads, water and sewer, and other growth related needs. The State's Smart Growth law carefully states these areas are not to be used to encourage growth in rural areas. The nine designated rural villages will retain the prohibitions against public utilities as do all the other areas outside the Development Envelope that do not already have public utilities.

Element Plans

The other element plans present the framework for providing services for the growth outlined in the Land Use Element Plan, as well as measures to help preserve the County's heritage. Harford County has developed a number of element plans over the years. The Water and Sewer Master Plan, and the Solid Waste Management Plan are developed by the Department of Public Works, and the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan is developed by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The Consolidated Plan, prepared by the Department of Community Services, has also been adopted in accordance with Federal requirements from HUD.

The remainder of the element plans are prepared by the Department of Planning and Zoning. These include the Transportation Element Plan, Historic Preservation Element Plan, Natural Resources and Water Resources Element Plan, the Priority Preservation Area Plan, and the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program Plan. These plans fulfill State requirements including those noted in Article 66B, which establishes guidelines for comprehensive plans that must be followed by both Charter and non-Charter Counties. Each of the element plans has a unique purpose which is described below.

The Water and Sewer Master Plan sets the foundation for the timing and planning of public water and sewer facilities in appropriately zoned areas. Provision of services in a manner consistent with the Land Use Element Plan follows and supports the Development Envelope concept.

The Solid Waste Management Plan evaluates the County's closed and current solid waste facilities and develops a 10-year program for operations associated with these and future facilities.

The Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan addresses the County's needs for open space and recreational areas while considering these areas as part of a larger system of preserved lands. It explores the relationship between land used for active recreation in the broader context of land preservation and appropriate use of natural resources. This plan fulfills the State's Program Open Space requirements and therefore qualifies the County for Program Open Space funding.

The Consolidated Plan outlines how the County will use Federal, State and local funds to address the housing and community development needs of low to moderate income families. It is designed as a collaborative process where a community establishes a unified vision for community development. It offers Harford County the opportunity to shape the various housing and community development programs into effective, coordinated, neighborhood and community development strategies.

The Transportation Element Plan details the relationship between land use and transportation decisions. It establishes goals and objectives for planning and implementing an efficient, safe, multi-modal transportation system for the County. This includes planning for roads, public transportation, bike and pedestrian connections, and transportation demand management.

The Historic Preservation Element Plan strengthens the County's historic preservation efforts. It explains how historic structures and archaeological sites further an awareness of the importance of the County's heritage among its citizens. Increasing interest in heritage tourism has the potential to broaden the County's economic base as well.

The Natural Resources and Water Resources Element Plan satisfies the requirements of the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992, and House Bill 1141 Land Use-Local Government Planning which calls for the creation of a Water Resources Plan. The Plan includes methods for protecting environmental resources, including streams and their buffers, steep slopes, floodplains and the habitats of threatened and endangered species. The Plan also identifies and protects water resources for future growth.

The Priority Preservation Area Plan was created as a result of House Bill 2, the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006. It defines the Priority Preservation Area boundary and sets a goal of preserving 80% of the land within the Plan boundaries.

The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program is a State initiative to manage land uses within 1,000 feet of tidal waters and tidal wetlands. Its goal is to protect water quality and natural habitat, and to carefully accommodate future growth in environmentally sensitive areas.

Maryland State Planning Acts

Various pieces of State planning legislation have combined to change the way the State of Maryland and Harford County address land use planning. Since the 1990s the State has promoted smart growth principles through a series of planning legislation. The "Planning Acts" place new responsibilities on the State and local jurisdictions to implement comprehensive land use plans in a sustainable and fiscally responsible manner.

The Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 established seven "Visions", which were first addressed by Harford County in the 1996 Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan. In 2000, the State of Maryland added an eighth "Vision" for adequate public facilities and infrastructure.

DESIGNATED GROWTH AREAS
Harford County, Maryland

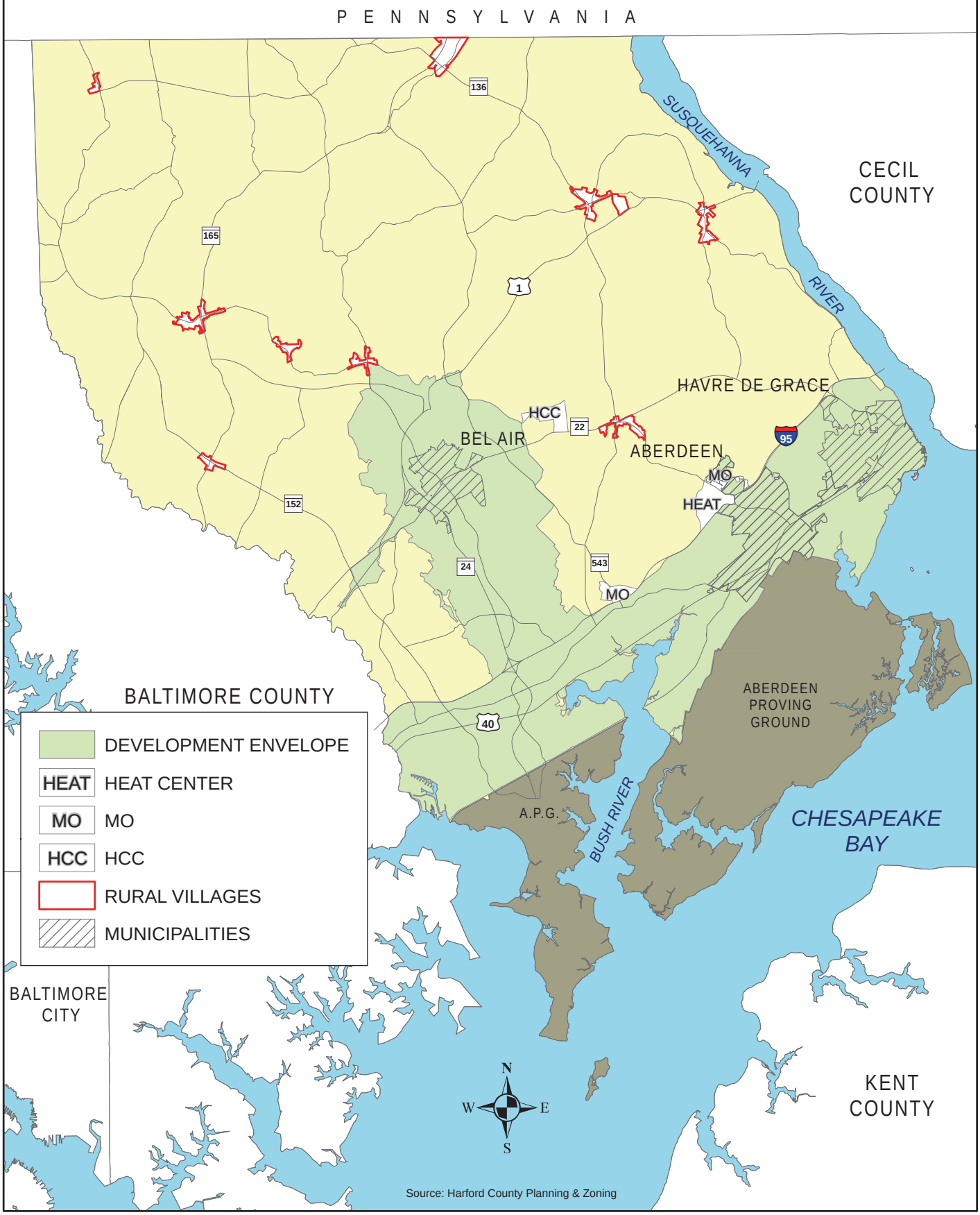

Figure 18

To further implement the 1992 Planning Act, the 1997 Maryland General Assembly adopted several programs that formed the State's Smart Growth Initiative. This initiative included land use, neighborhood revitalization, and preservation policies geared to supporting locally designated growth areas while protecting rural areas. "Smart Growth" emphasized using land more efficiently through compact development and infill. It supported mixed use development - locating residential, commercial and civic facilities within walking distance of each other. It also encouraged providing housing choices for all age and income groups, supporting transportation alternatives to the single occupancy automobile, and planning for the efficient use of existing infrastructure.

The 1997 Smart Growth Act required all Counties to identify and map Priority Funding Areas that meet the requirements of the legislation. In Harford County, the Priority Funding Areas include the Development Envelope, the municipalities, designated rural villages, the HEAT Center, and the Harford Community College and areas designated for Mixed Office (Figure 19). These are the locations where the State and County will target their efforts and funds to support economic development, new growth, and redevelopment.

Rural Legacy is another initiative of the 1997 Smart Growth Package. This program uses State funds to purchase conservation easements on large tracts of agricultural, forested, or other natural areas that are subject to development pressure. Harford County has two Rural Legacy Areas: the Deer Creek Valley, which encompasses much of the Deer Creek watershed, and the Manor Rural Legacy Area, which is shared with Baltimore County (Figure 20).

In 2006, two new pieces of planning legislation were introduced by the Maryland General Assembly: House Bill 2 – Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 and House Bill 1141 – Land Use – Local Government Planning. Harford County addressed the requirements of House Bill 2 with the adoption of a Priority Preservation Area Plan. This Plan created a Priority Preservation Area which follows the boundaries of the Deer Creek Valley Rural Legacy Area. It also established a set of strategies to further land preservation in the area and established the goal of preserving 80% of the remaining undeveloped land.

House Bill 1141 was addressed in 2009 with the update of the Natural Resources Element Plan. The Plan included the required Water Resources Element Plan. The main purpose of the Water Resources Element Plan is to ensure that Harford County has adequate water resources to meet its current and future needs for drinking water and waste water treatment. In addition, HB 1141 requires that there be suitable receiving waters and land areas to meet the stormwater management needs of existing and future development. The Plan was developed in coordination with the County's municipalities.

Another requirement of HB 1141 is that municipal jurisdictions develop a Municipal Growth Element as part of their Comprehensive Plans. Harford County has coordinated with the Town of Bel Air and the cities of Aberdeen and Havre de Grace on the creation of their growth element plans.

In order to protect Maryland's environment and natural resources while encouraging development in existing communities in a sustainable way, a series of bills were passed by the General Assembly in 2009 that collectively are called Smart, Green and Growing. These bills clarified the role of the local comprehensive plan, required accountability by local jurisdictions, and established 12 new planning visions. As part of the Smart, Green, and Growing legislative package, Harford County must submit an annual report that addresses specific smart growth measures and indicators that support the Statewide land use goal of increasing development within designated Priority Funding Areas (PFA), and decreasing development outside of these areas.

In 2011, the State introduced PlanMaryland. PlanMaryland provides a framework, process, and specific actions for furthering Smart Growth and implementing the 12 Planning Visions. The Plan focuses on managing growth, preservation, and sustainability. It calls for concentrating growth and redevelopment in towns, cities, and rural centers where there is planned infrastructure, preserving and protecting environmentally sensitive and rural lands and resources, while ensuring a desirable quality of life. The Plan establishes policies to guide State agencies toward smart growth, and it establishes clearly defined geographic areas where growth and preservation will be treated as high priorities.

Harford County's "Visions"

Harford County has responded to the Smart, Green and Growing Act by incorporating the new "Visions" into this Plan. These "Visions" are:

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.*

   Maintaining and enhancing quality of life is a priority of the citizens of Harford County. Recognizing the importance of this, Harford County Government continues to emphasize stewardship and sustainable living. The County has a long history of stewardship as evidenced by its agricultural land preservation initiatives, its strong environmental programs and its support of historic and cultural resource protection. Acknowledging the importance of "living sustainably", the County established a Sustainability Office. Beginning "at home", Harford County Government has undertaken various initiatives and studies to operate government in a sustainable manner. Because sustainability involves a process of continuous ongoing improvements, which involve a realignment of community goals and practices to grow in a more responsible and resilient manner, sustainability has been integrated into this Plan.

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.*

   Public participation is a significant component of long range planning and Harford County is dedicated to providing a forum for a broad spectrum of local viewpoints. Through public meetings, hearings, and internet sites, County government gains a better understanding of community needs and citizen's views on matters such as land use, zoning, budget decisions, and current development. This process helps everyone understand the issues so a mutual consensus can be reached for balancing future growth, enhancing quality of life, maintaining community character and protecting the County's heritage in a sustainable manner. The County is committed to continuing this interaction and will continue to provide opportunities for citizen involvement both online and at meetings. Advisory Boards, Community Councils and other similar groups also provide opportunities for community interaction. As part of the Development Review process, a Community Input Process is required for certain projects. Input from these meetings is provided to the Department of Planning and Zoning.

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

PRIORITY FUNDING AREA

Harford County, Maryland

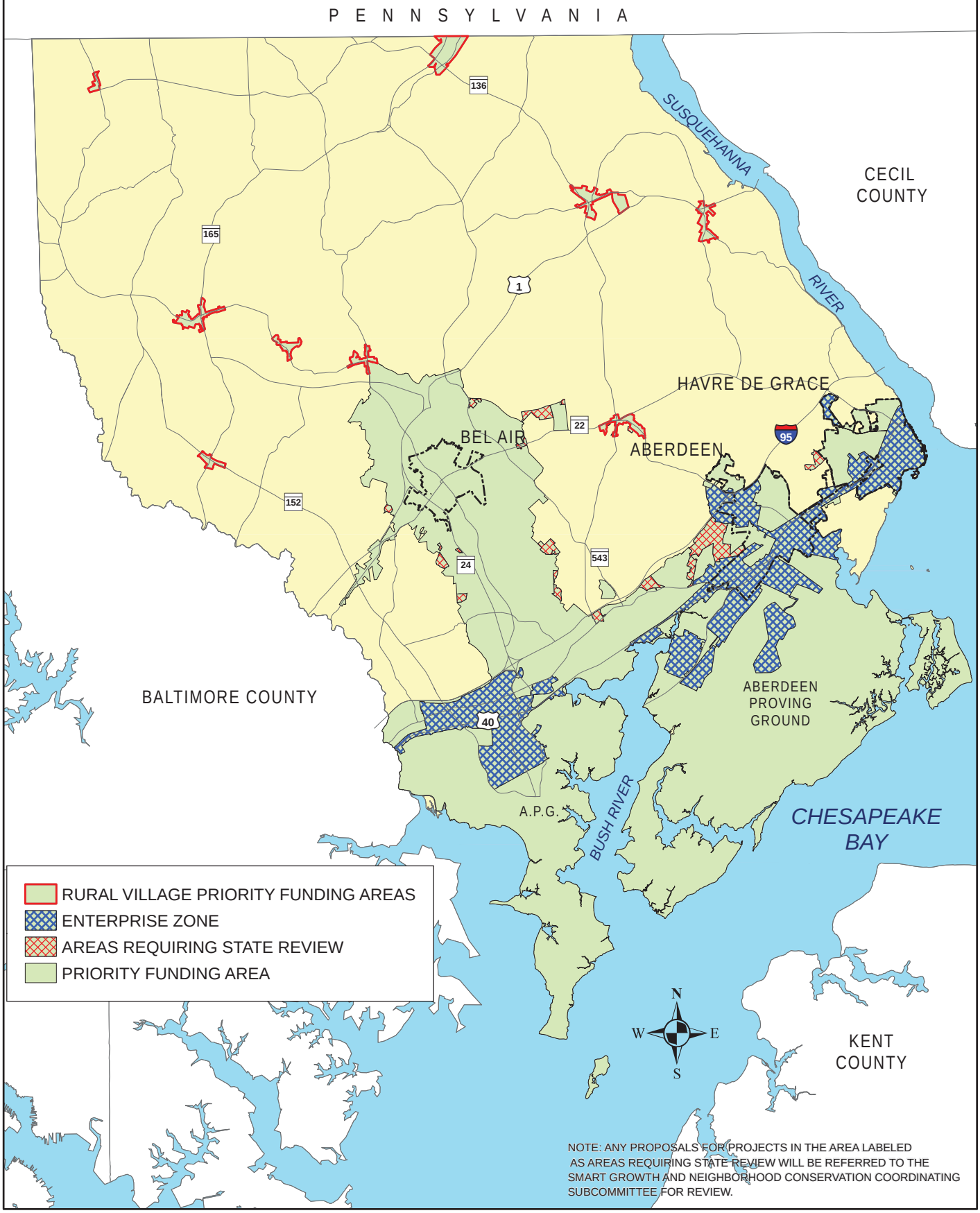

Figure 19

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION
Harford County, Maryland

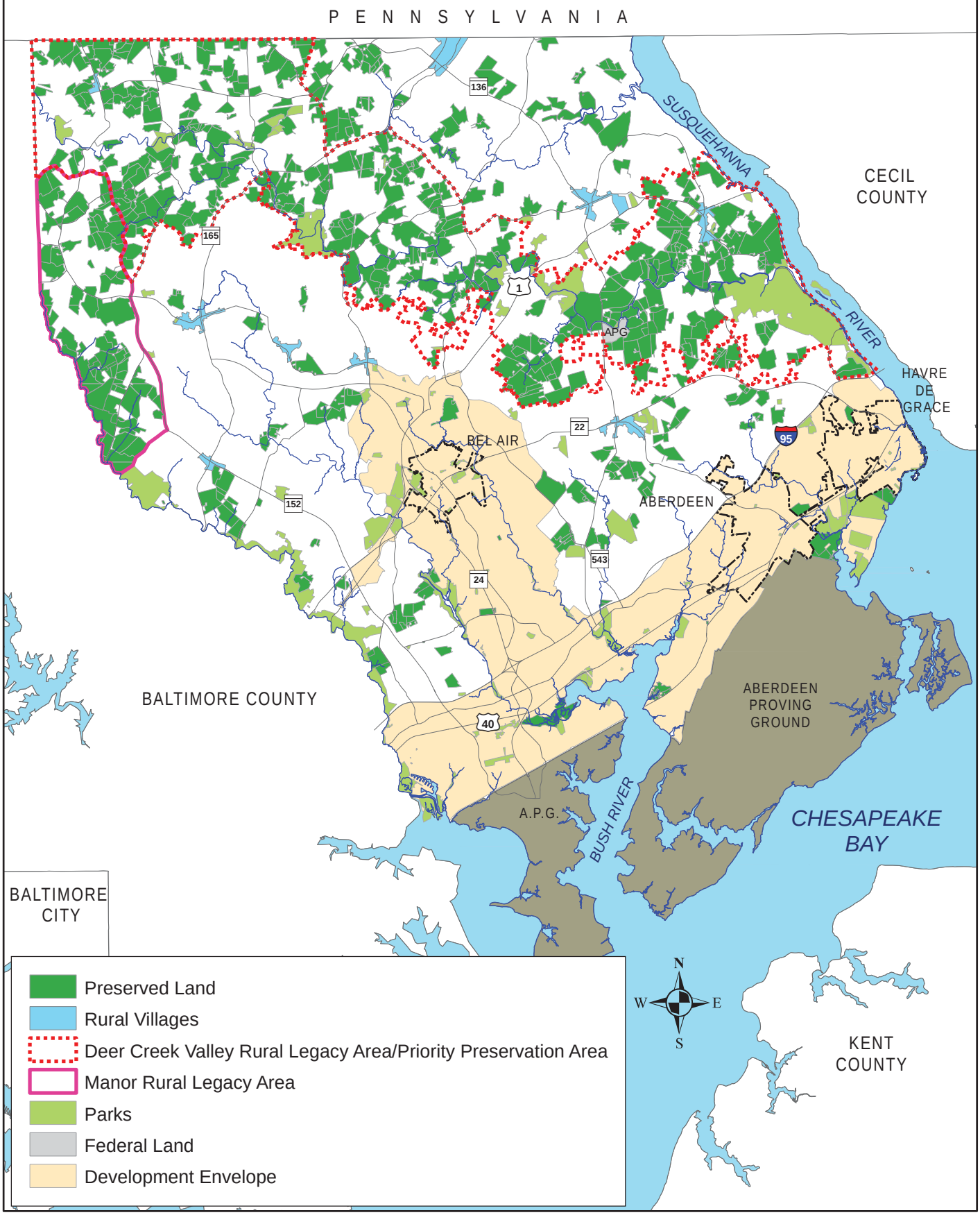

Figure 20

The 2012 Land Use Element Plan continues to focus future residential and commercial development within the Development Envelope and the other designated growth areas. Directing the majority of growth to these areas protects the integrity and economic vitality of the County and preserves the character of the rural areas. The U.S. Route 40 corridor is also targeted for redevelopment and revitalization. Infill opportunities continue to exist within underutilized sites in this corridor. The 2008 re-write of the Zoning Code helps guide these redevelopment efforts. Since 1990, an average of 82% of new residential development has occurred within the Development Envelope.

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 archeological resources.*

Preservation of community character is an important part of the County's Land Use Element Plan. As the population of the County continues to grow, it becomes increasingly important that new development and improvements to the County's infrastructure be done in a manner that supports the community's character, and ensures efficient use of land while still maintaining acceptable levels of service and safety. Neighborhood streets must be safe for pedestrians and bicyclists while permitting automobile travel at appropriate speeds. The 2008 update of the Zoning Code increased opportunities for mixed-use development, and the 2010 Transportation Element Plan emphasized transit oriented development and the incorporation of multimodal options wherever possible.

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

Since the establishment of Priority Funding Areas in 1997, these areas have been given precedence to receive State funding for water and sewer, roads and other growth-related needs. Within these Designated Growth Areas, development is concentrated around existing population centers where community facilities are provided to meet the needs of the growing population.

Public utilities are planned, funded, and constructed through agreements with the property owners and the Capital Improvement Program. The County Charter requires that the Planning Advisory Board review the Capital Improvement Program to ensure that the projects included are consistent with the recommendations of the Land Use Element Plan.

The County's Adequate Public Facilities Program monitors the number and location of new housing units approved. It also provides an analysis of the current and future capacity of specific public facilities and services. This includes educational facilities, water and sewer, and roads.

In coordination with the municipalities, the County developed its Water Resources Element Plan in 2009. This Plan ensures that Harford County has adequate water resources to meet its current and future needs for drinking water and waste water treatment. It also requires that there be

suitable receiving water and land areas to meet the stormwater management needs of existing and future development as identified in this Plan.

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.*

An effective transportation network provides safe, efficient, accessible, and environmentally sound transportation options that connect residents and workers to their jobs, schools, recreation, shopping and other community activities. Harford County's transportation needs are diverse, serving over 244,400 residents and more than 5,200 businesses. To meet the County's travel needs, the 2010 Transportation Element Plan places an increased emphasis on establishing a multi-modal transportation system that will help to improve the level of service on existing roadways and increasing transit, rail, and non-motorized transportation options - all as part of a comprehensive travel demand management program. In order to effectively plan for County maintained transportation facilities, plans and goals must be consistent with the State's initiatives.

7. *Housing: A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.*

Harford County recognizes the importance of providing a variety of housing that meets the needs of all its citizens. The update to the Zoning Code in 2008 included numerous changes that addressed affordability including providing additional opportunities for multifamily housing along with changes to densities and setbacks for single family residences, housing for the elderly, and a framework for elderly care facilities in conjunction with State health regulations. The County also has a Consolidated Plan that establishes a five year strategy for how the County will provide a suitable living environment for low to moderate income families.

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.*

Harford County is a growing community with a wide range of retail, business, service, and employment needs. Continued support and coordination with Aberdeen Proving Ground remains a key component to the local economy subsequent to the completion of the BRAC Action Plan. However, the County recognizes the importance of having a diverse economic base. To this end, the County actively supports established industrial, commercial, and agricultural enterprises, while seeking to attract other businesses to broaden its economic base.

The County also has a strong economic policy to help keep farming a viable industry in the County. The 2008 Zoning Code re-write addressed changes in the agricultural industry - expanding opportunities for agricultural diversification in a changing market. The County actively promotes its Buy Local marketing program, farmer's markets, events and agricultural tourism opportunities.

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.*

Harford County has long been committed to the protection and stewardship of the environment and environmentally sensitive lands and features such as non-tidal wetlands, forests, floodplains, steep slopes, and habitat areas for rare, threatened, and endangered species.

Specific strategies to ensure environmental protection are provided in the 2009 Natural Resources Element Plan. The County also adopted State-mandated updates to its Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program in 2011 and is in the process of drafting new floodplain regulations which will address the impacts of climate change. As part of the floodplain regulation update, the County is working with FEMA to reassess and remap the County's floodplains through a process called RISK Maps. These new maps, along with additional data, will provide state of the art floodplain mapping.

This Plan places a strong emphasis on the County as a partner in the Bay Restoration Program. The County remains an active member of the Upper Western Shore Tributary Team, and it is coordinating countywide efforts to address the requirements of Phase II of the Bay Watershed Implementation Plan.

10. *Resource Conservation: Waterways, forest, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.*

Harford County continues to be committed to the protection and preservation of its natural systems and scenic areas through the implementation of its Forest Conservation and Natural Resource District regulations. The County's agricultural preservation programs have been enhanced by the establishment of a Priority Preservation Area and two Rural Legacy Areas. The County has also been able to utilize the Forest Legacy Program to protect almost 400 acres of woodland in the Broad Creek watershed. The County continues to work with the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway on the development of a Scenic Byway Management Plan and has incorporated Scenic Byway guidelines into the County's Development Regulations.

The Land Use Element Plan outlines the County's continued commitment to the preservation of sensitive areas. This is reinforced by specific directives included in several other element plans including the Natural Resources Element Plan and Priority Preservation Area Plan which were updated in 2009. Scenic Byway strategies were included in the 2010 Transportation Element Plan, and the 2012 update of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Element Plan will also contain strategies to support the protection and wise use of the County's resources.

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

Harford County has long recognized the value of our agricultural, natural, historical, and cultural resources and has strong programs to manage them in a sustainable manner. The County also recognizes the importance of incorporating sustainability into the operation of government and into the planning that shapes the future of the County.

Many of the programs and policies implemented through the Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan support the continuation of sustainable communities. The County's designated growth areas and agricultural preservation programs work together to ensure that new growth and development are concentrated in specific areas where services and facilities can be provided as planned. The Development Regulations establish standards that balance the built and natural environment.

Recognizing the importance of leading by example, Harford County established a Sustainability Office in 2010. The County's Sustainability Coordinator works to implement the County's energy and resource management policy, and is overseeing the completion of a greenhouse gas assessment. The County is working to implement a fuel reduction and eco-driving strategy within the County fleet and has established a Green Team which is currently researching the possible integration of sustainability within the capital projects program and procurement process. In an effort to engage the community, a Harford Green Business Network has been established. This is a cooperative partnership between the Sustainability Office and the Office of Economic Development.

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.*

Harford County uses many tools to achieve the "Visions", including Adequate Public Facilities (APF) legislation to manage growth by tying development to the capacity of existing government services such as water and sewer, roads, and schools. APF laws are designed to ensure that new development does not adversely impact a community's quality of life by overburdening these facilities. The 2008 Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations re-write addressed growth and development, bringing regulations in line with today's diverse needs. Updates to the Transportation, Historic, and Natural Resource Element Plans are also used to implement these visions by first protecting our natural resources while allowing for planned growth. The County monitors the implementation of its plan strategies and prepares an annual report on the progress of plan implementation and will submit this report to the County Council. In addition, the County submits an annual report to the Maryland Department of Planning.

The County ensures that regional implementation is achieved through its participation, at multiple levels, in several regional organizations. These include the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, the Washington Council of Governments, the Mason-Dixon Task Force, and the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor.

Regional Planning – The Baltimore Metropolitan Council

The Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) was chartered in 1992 by the Maryland General Assembly. Members of the BMC include the City of Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties. BMC's goal is to improve the economic vitality and quality of life in the Baltimore region by identifying regional issues and collaborating on strategies, plans, and programs. BMC staff provides technical support to the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) and also engages in economic and demographic research, computer mapping applications, air and water quality programs, and cooperative purchasing.

Although land use planning and zoning decisions are made at the local jurisdictional levels, the BMC and the BRTB attempt to ensure that the decisions made at that level are compatible with regional needs. The Baltimore Metropolitan Council is involved in two areas of environmental planning – air and water. Some of their work involves creating regional agreements, while other areas focus on analyzing the impacts of transportation on air and water quality. A large amount of planning is dedicated to making sure that the region's transportation plans are completed in line with State and Federal air quality goals.

The BRTB is directly responsible for making sure that any money spent on existing and future transportation projects and programs is based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process. All transportation projects and programs that receive Federal funding in this region go through this planning process.

Harford County coordinates its local planning concerns with region-wide transportation and environmental issues by working with the BMC on its annual work program, assisting with the development of long range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs, and by promoting and participating in regional air and water quality efforts including the Reservoir Technical Group's (RTG) collaboration on water resource protection of the reservoirs.

INTERJURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION

Interjurisdictional Coordination is the term used to identify the system of coordinated planning required of all Maryland counties and municipalities. While Harford County and the three incorporated municipalities have continued to work together on issues related to land use, resource protection, infrastructure planning, and economic development ; the passage of House Bill 1141 – Land Use – Local Government Planning introduced another element to the process. HB 1141 required that municipal jurisdictions develop a Municipal Growth Element as part of their Comprehensive Plan. These plans must identify future municipal growth areas outside of the existing corporate limits, and these plans must be submitted to the County for review and comment.

Harford County has coordinated with the Town of Bel Air and the cities of Aberdeen and Havre de Grace on the creation of their growth element plans. Proposed annexations must be consistent with those outlined in the Municipal Growth Element Plans, and permitted development on the annexed lands must be in accordance with the County's zoning classification that is in place at the time of the annexation.

In addition, HB 1141 also required the County and the municipalities to develop a Water Resources Element Plan. Beginning in 2007 the County and municipalities initiated planning meetings to ensure that all of the Water Resource Elements were coordinated. This effort required coordination to determine water and sewer service boundaries and population projections for these service areas.

Water quality restoration is another mandate that requires interjurisdictional coordination. As part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay restoration program, local jurisdictions will be required to reduce the amount of nutrients and sediments entering the Bay. The County and municipalities are working together on the development of Phase II of the County's Watershed Implementation Plan. This will address how Harford County's share of the required reductions will be achieved.

Recognizing that many of the challenges faced locally are regional issues, Harford County continues to coordinate long-range planning efforts with surrounding jurisdictions. Opportunities to review Comprehensive Plans and Code updates are mutually extended by and to surrounding jurisdictions in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Over the years, Harford County has participated in the Baltimore Metropolitan Planning Organization, known as the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB). As a member of this organization, Harford County has attempted to coordinate local planning concerns with region-wide transportation and environmental issues. These activities have ranged from assistance in the development of regional long range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs, to promotion and participation in regional air-and-water quality efforts.

Harford County also continues to work with the incorporated municipalities to coordinate planning efforts. In addition to quarterly meetings of the elected officials, the jurisdictions' planning directors meet quarterly to discuss issues and development applications of mutual concern. These efforts are guided by the following objectives:

- Support balanced development patterns which lead to an improved environment, a better business climate, and higher quality of life.
- Optimize the use of available land resources and public infrastructure.
- Coordinate compatible interjurisdictional goals, objectives and policies to guide development and resource protection.
- Implement a cost effective and efficient provision of services and facilities.
- Establish formal and informal forums to ensure continuing communication for information sharing.
- Strengthen the traditional town centers and municipalities to assure their long-term viability.
- Avoid conflict in matters regarding annexation and development actions.
- Share resources to affect common objectives.

The County and the three municipalities will face challenges as they plan for the future. Each will have to continue to address growth management and the need to develop land in a manner consistent with all respective Comprehensive Master Plans. Bay initiatives, regional infrastructure issues, and a changing economy will also influence interjurisdictional coordination efforts. One of the major coordination efforts that must be addressed is with the cities of Aberdeen and Havre de Grace, as it relates to the future of the area between these two cities south of I-95. Identification of long term solutions for both infrastructure and public services in these areas must be addressed.

GOAL AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

GOAL: Protect and preserve the assets that make Harford County unique and utilize them to become a healthy, sustainable 21st century community.

Inherent in this goal, are certain guiding principles. Similar to the "Visions" of the Smart Green and Growing Act, these principles form the foundation of the Master Plan, and they will be incorporated into the policies and strategies presented in the Land Use Element Plan.

Quality of Life

Harford County is dedicated to achieving a high quality of life by providing a mix of superior educational facilities, an acceptable functioning multimodal transportation network, adequate public facilities, safe and sustainable communities, and the means for preserving our resources, and providing an array of recreational and cultural opportunities. The County also recognizes the unique nature of its various communities and supports the preservation and enhancement of these qualities through the use of innovative planning initiatives and the use of design principles and guidelines.

Rural Heritage

Agriculture has been and still is the predominant land use in Harford County. Historically, the communities of Harford County developed as rural crossroads to provide services and support to the agricultural community. Protecting this rural heritage is extremely important and local efforts shall be geared to protecting the rural way of life and enhancing the character of the landscape and villages. Agricultural preservation programs, promoting rural businesses, preservation of historic farms and mills, the development of architectural standards that complement and enhance the character of the rural landscape by blending rural villages and crossroads with agricultural areas, the preservation of rural roads, bridges and natural features and the implementation of the Priority Preservation Area and Rural Legacy Area programs are just a few of the ways Harford County will ensure its rural heritage will remain at the center of the community.

Resource Conservation

Harford County understands the importance of protecting and preserving our environmental surroundings and natural systems. Water resource protection, natural habitat conservation, and compliance with State and Federal environmental regulations will continue to guide land use decisions. The availability of clean air and water help define the high quality of life that is enjoyed in Harford County today. The preservation of these invaluable attributes is highly important to the continued splendor of the County.

Economic Vitality

Harford County recognizes that a diverse and vibrant economy is an integral component of a successful community. The County supports business and job development that contributes to the County's long term sustainability.

Harford County's economy is growing, with an existing base of business, service, retail, research and industrial activities. Supporting the mission of Aberdeen Proving Ground is key to the expansion of the

local economy with highly educated, high paying technical positions. The County also supports the retention and expansion of other agricultural, industrial, and service jobs to broaden its economic base as well as the expansion of educational opportunities at Harford Community College and the Heat Center. The development of various employment centers within the designated growth areas is an opportunity to provide the areas necessary for economic growth while serving as a location for investment and redevelopment.

Sustainable Growth

Making Harford County a sustainable community requires initiatives to reduce our consumption of energy, land, water, and other limited resources. By creating livable, healthy, and productive environments, and by reducing greenhouse gases, Harford County will be doing its part to alleviate the impact of global climate change.

Harford County's location along the East Coast's major transportation corridors positions the County for growth and prosperity. The need to provide for prosperity, while protecting our natural environment and preserving our agricultural and historical heritage is a balance Harford County will maintain. Offering various housing options from single family detached houses to apartment units, in a range of settings from quiet and secluded to well connected within mixed use communities, is important in maintaining a diverse and attractive community.

Healthy Communities

Recognizing the need to provide more opportunities for its citizens to become engaged in an active lifestyle, Harford County is committed to designing communities to support the lifestyle changes necessary to create a healthier environment. These communities will support and promote an active lifestyle – one that encourages walking and bicycling wherever possible, providing connections to public facilities and commercial services, and well planned and maintained recreation facilities. Healthy communities are strong and prosperous communities.

Regional Integration

To prosper in the new global economy, it is important that Harford County implement policy that not only strengthens local communities, but complements efforts at a State and regional level. Various factors have an effect on Harford County, including land use planning decisions of adjoining jurisdictions, regional initiatives such as supporting Aberdeen Proving Ground and the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor, State planning visions and programs, and Federal environmental regulations including restoring the Chesapeake Bay. By supporting these interjurisdictional initiatives, Harford County can help strengthen the entire region and local economy, having a direct internal benefit to the citizens of Harford County.