

**Policy: Maintain zoning appropriate for major employment on infrastructure-served land with good access.**

*Actions:*

- (1) Recommend that the County Council evaluate rezoning and PUD proposals that convert M or OT zoned land to residential or retail use to consider the long-term effects on the economy.
- (2) Ensure that adequate land and structures remain available to accommodate new and expanding primary employers not suited for mixed-use environments.
- (3) Consider ways to guide new employment opportunities to quality mixed-use development.
- (4) Preserve the County's limited deep-water access for industrial uses.
- (5) Consider amending the BCZR to limit the amount of residential development permitted in the OT zoning classification.

## LAND USE BALANCE

A fiscally strong jurisdiction must maintain a healthy balance between residential and non-residential land uses. Different types of land use have variant effects on a county's finances. Some land uses contribute more in tax revenue than they consume in public services, such as schools, police and fire services. Some land uses consume more services than they pay for directly through property taxes. A balanced economy is needed to provide a healthy place to live, work and play. A strong employment sector: industrial, office, and commercial, provide jobs and tax revenue. A diverse choice of housing is essential to providing a qualified work force to fuel the employment sector.

**Policy: The County should maintain a healthy balance between residential and non-residential land uses inside the URDL.**

*Actions:*

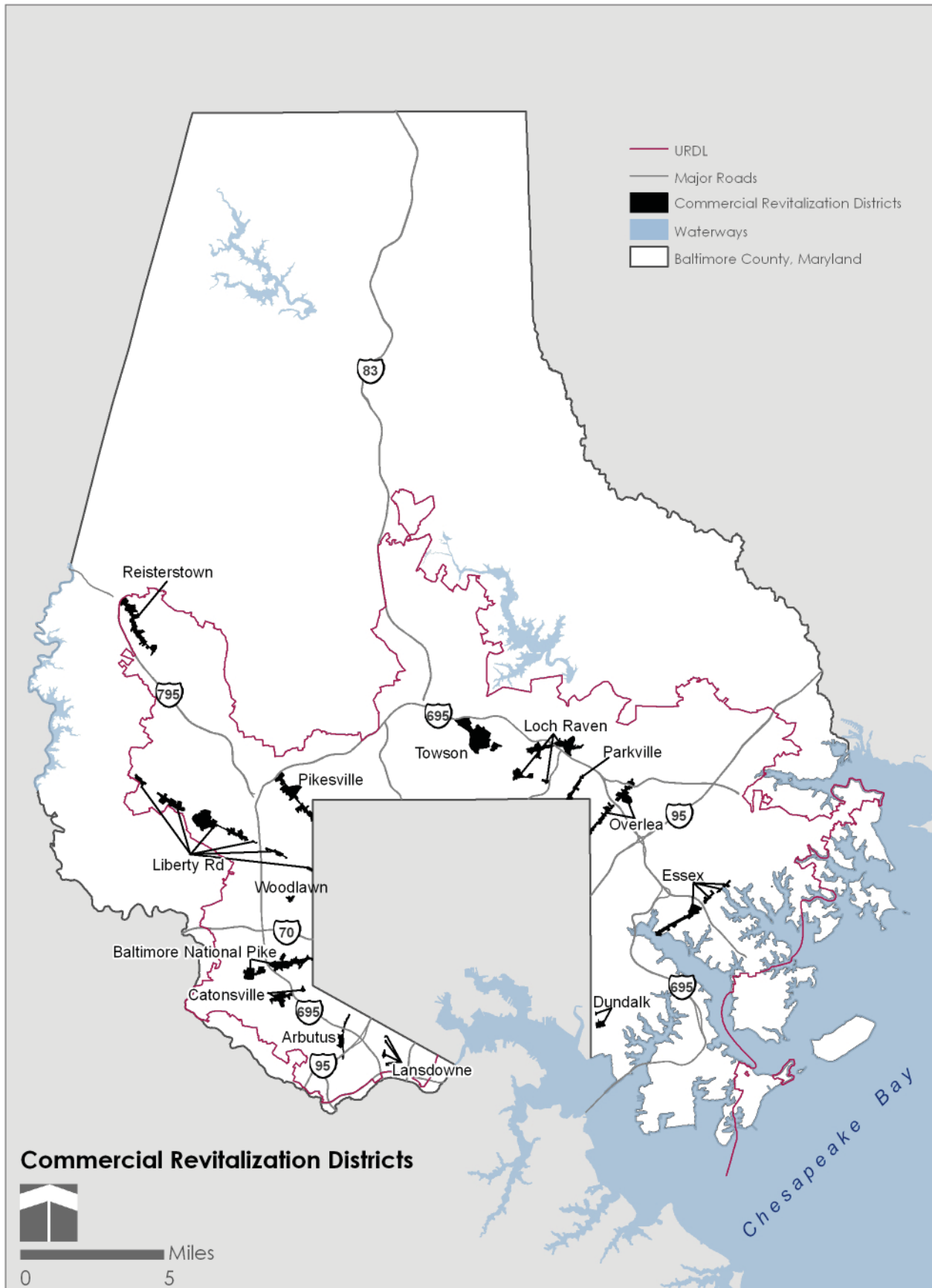
- (1) Consider encouraging zoning requests that promote mixed-use development.
- (2) Ensure that land use proposals contribute to a healthy balance of residential and non-residential uses and open space.
- (3) Work proactively to promote employment driven projects compatible with residential uses.
- (4) Direct mixed-use development to Community Enhancement Areas.

## COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION DISTRICTS

Baltimore County has 14 officially designated Commercial Revitalization Districts (CRDs). These areas were once the commercial hubs of the County's older beltway communities and offered a range of retail, service, and entertainment uses. However, beginning in the 1960s and 70s, changes



Map 35: Commercial Revitalization Districts





in demographics and retail shopping preferences fundamentally altered the role of these main street commercial centers. As people became more dependant upon the automobile, they moved farther out preferring the greater range of retail choices and convenient free parking over smaller mom and pop neighborhood shops along older commercial main streets. This trend continues. Most suburbanites patronize full service grocery stores, big and junior box retailers (e.g. Target, Wal-Mart, Pet Smart, Best Buy), chain specialty shops, and national restaurants.

To remain viable, the CRDs must differentiate themselves by capitalizing upon their downtown development patterns, strengthening the existing base of small businesses, and attracting new and different uses. Each district is unique with its own set of attributes and liabilities and revitalization efforts must be tailored to address these differences. Successful revitalization in smaller districts is built upon a series of small complementary successes and larger districts

may benefit from key redevelopment projects that restructure the local economy. Attaining a sufficient and balanced mix of quality uses is an important goal that should be accompanied with creating a safe, attractive, and walkable environment. Another goal is using creative marketing of the districts to businesses and customers.

The most successful downtowns have a mix of synergistic uses that support each other. Downtown housing and office uses have residents and employees that patronize retail shops, restaurants, and service uses such as hair salons, banks, and dry cleaners. Theaters and other entertainment uses are destinations that draw customers into the downtown, who then also patronize restaurants and bars before and after a movie or performance. Institutional uses, supply a high number of patrons and employees for retail and restaurants, and students for downtown housing.

When compared to newer town centers that are trying to replicate the character and qualities of real downtowns, original town centers often have unique challenges. Redevelopment costs can be higher with land assemblage and parking; surrounding household incomes and densities may be more diverse; multiple owners have different perspectives; and the infrastructure may be aging and outdated. Jurisdictions must have an extensive toolbox of incentives to retain and attract the mix of uses needed to keep a CRD healthy. The County has a range of incentives that can be tailored to individual project needs, including: low interest loans, tax credits, and specialized grants, key infrastructure improvements such as parking garages, sewer expansions, and road realignments and improvements, sale of publicly owned land, demolition of obsolete structures, permitting process assistance, flexible zoning, and liquor licensing.

***Policy: Retain and attract quality retail, office, service, residential, entertainment, and institutional uses that create well balanced and economically vital mixed-use.***

*Actions:*

- (1) Use targeted public investment to encourage private reinvestment.
- (2) Identify redevelopment/revitalization opportunities in the CRDs and establish a process to determine land use and development goals of the area.
- (3) Conduct specialized analyses of properties and redevelopment proposals.
- (4) Utilize the Consultant on Call Program to provide expedited professional studies on market feasibility.
- (5) Continue familiarization tours to provide education about the County's CRDs and community enhancement areas to upgrade and expand the types of uses, improve poorly managed properties and marginal businesses, and fill vacancies.
- (6) Promote the increased use of the Small Business Resource Center that provides free technical, financial, and marketing assistance.
- (7) Study the use of mixed-use codes in designated community enhancement areas.
- (8) Periodically review the range and scope of incentives to maximize their effectiveness.

The districts, like community enhancement areas, should be the “front door” to the residential neighborhoods, and help establish the overall image of a community. The appearance of the CRD is important to the business and residential communities, and is both a private and public responsibility. The government, primarily through streetscape programs, is generally responsible for the streets, sidewalks, medians, and sometimes alleys. Individual property owners are responsible for a building's façades, and any private parking lots. Improvements should focus on views from the public areas. A commercial center or corridor with attractive curb appeal and stable and desirable uses may encourage people to invest in the community.

***Policy: Improve the appearance and walkability of the Districts.***

*Actions:*

- (1) Continue to promote the Architect on Call Program that provides free professional design advice for business or property owners seeking to improve the exterior of their building and/or lot.
- (2) Promote the Building Investment Loan Program that provides zero percent loans for exterior and interior improvements through annual mailings to property and business owners, the business organizations, specialized advertising, and “word of mouth” examples.
- (3) Promote walkability and enhance the attractiveness of older village centers through implementation of streetscape programs managed by the Baltimore County Office of Community Conservation.
- (4) Develop streetscape design around a Complete Streets Program.
- (5) Continue beautification-landscaping partnerships with business organizations.
- (6) Enforce the County code and fund the Commercial Revitalization Action grants for programs to improve the physical appearance of the business environment.



Studies consistently show that when customers buy from an independent, locally owned business, over two thirds of the money spent stays in the community and is used for purchases from other local businesses. These businesses create more jobs locally, and often provide better wages and benefits than nationwide chains. Owners frequently live in the community where their business is located.

***Policy: Market Commercial Districts to potential businesses and patrons.***

*Actions:*

(1) Media campaigns including radio, television, print advertising and social media marketing will be developed and utilized during the winter holiday and spring shopping seasons.

(2) Continue to provide design support in promoting community events and districts through the use of Designer On Call, a resource that offers design services for

local initiatives involving the ReDiscover Your Neighborhood Downtown branding.

(3) Maximize partnership with the Baltimore County Revenue Authority to provide convenient parking opportunities.

(4) Promote the County's CRDs and CEAs at regional and national conferences.

(5) Update district profiles and county websites to attract businesses to the districts.

(6) Participate in statewide organizations and programs that promote the revitalization of downtowns across Maryland.

(7) Continue neighborhood promotional campaigns to encourage consumers to shop and eat in locally owned businesses.

## TOURISM

Visitors to Baltimore County added \$1.97 billion to the local economy in 2008, according to a study by IHS Global Insight. The study reports that the County's tourism industry supported almost 20,000 jobs, \$545 million in wages, and contributed \$15 million in hotel, amusement and admission taxes.

Baltimore County's 219 miles of Chesapeake Bay waterfront offer unrealized potential to enhance the visitor experience and quality of life for County residents. Over the past decade, eastern Baltimore County has seen over \$600 million in public and private investment. County initiatives have eliminated many aging, blighted apartment complexes, replacing them with open space and hundreds of modern single family and townhomes. Many of the County's 90 marinas and yacht clubs have made significant improvements to their facilities, with waterfront restaurants and a water taxi service adding to eastern Baltimore County's amenities.

***Policy: Increase visibility and access to visitor destinations in Baltimore County.***

*Actions:*

(1) Explore methods to unify the waterfront as a regional destination.

(2) Further develop the County's network of bike and walking trails to connect parks, waterfront amenities, and nature centers with

