

THE ST. MARY’S COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Chapter 2: SUCCESES AND REMAINING CHALLENGES SINCE ADOPTION OF THE 2002 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2002 Comprehensive Plan was based on eight visions of a future that would characterize the quality of life in St. Mary's County. Paralleling the growth of population and development in the years since 2002 were many improvements in the facilities and services provided by the County as prescribed by the 2002 plan to achieve the visions. While much remains to be done in the years ahead to ensure quality of life, much has been accomplished.

2.1 SUCCESES

Vision 1. Development is concentrated in suitable areas.

- A. The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in February 2002 was followed by a comprehensive rezoning (text and maps) in May 2002. Notable changes to the zoning ordinance to implement the Comprehensive Plan include such features as:
1. Emphasis on compact development served by adequate roads and utilities. The ordinance provides opportunities for high density housing (townhouses or apartments) that is clustered to preserve open space.
 2. Design standards including parking requirements, height limits and building setbacks were revised to reduce building coverage and allow more open space.
 3. Accommodation of a mixture of land uses, e.g., commercial, residential and office space in a single zone.
 4. Because the Comprehensive Plan reduced the size of the Lexington Park and Leonardtown Development Districts, corresponding areas northwest of Leonardtown and southwest of Lexington Park were down-zoned from Residential Low Density (RL) to Rural Preservation District (RPD).
 5. New zoning regulations increased the number of potential dwellings that may be built within the growth areas while reducing the number of potential dwellings in the RPD. A program to transfer residential development out of the RPD and into growth areas – the TDR program – was carried forward and improved from the previous plan. The TDR program was also expanded to allow increased commercial development using TDRs from rural areas.
 6. In-fill and redevelopment were encouraged in the growth areas.
 - a) A number of businesses received Enterprise Certification resulting in over 450 new jobs.
 - b) The Lexington Manor Redevelopment Project is a multi-million dollar project designed, in the early phases, to eliminate blight and residential encroachment on Patuxent River Naval Air Station. In later phases, the northern segment may be redeveloped for commercial and recreational use.
- B. In 2003 the Callaway Village Center concept plan was updated to include a school site.
- C. In 2005 the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan was updated.
- D. In 2005 the Lexington Park Development District Master Plan was adopted and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan; this was followed in 2006 by a

comprehensive rezoning for this Development District.

- E. In 2006 a County-wide transportation plan was adopted, incorporating the 2002 master plan for the County airport.
- F. In 2008 the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan (CWSP) was revised and re-adopted to further implement the Comprehensive Plan.
 - 1. Areas removed from the Lexington Park and Leonardtown Development Districts by the 2002 Comprehensive Plan were designated as not planned for service.
 - 2. The policy was carried forward to prohibit extension of public water and sewer service from within a designated growth area into a rural preservation area except to correct health hazards such as septic system failures.

Vision 2. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected.

- A. The comprehensive rezoning of 2002 reduced development potential in the rural preservation areas.
 - 1. The base residential density in the rural preservation area was reduced from 1 dwelling per three acres down to 1 dwelling per five acres.
 - 2. The program for transferring development rights (TDR) was strengthened.
- B. The revised ordinance also accomplished the following:
 - 1. Family conveyance provisions were clarified.
 - 2. Zoning categories were created for rural service centers (RSC) and for existing rural limited commercial uses (RCL).
 - 3. Regulations were added for the purpose of protecting sensitive areas.
 - 4. Right-to-farm measures were adopted.
 - 5. Major residential development is required to be clustered and open space is to be preserved.
 - 6. Scenic highway corridors are to be protected through zoning regulations.
 - 7. Agricultural easement programs were enhanced.
 - 8. The TDR program was modified to further reduce development potential in rural areas and especially in rural legacy areas.
 - 9. Community water systems are required for rural subdivisions of 25 or more lots.

Vision 3. Sensitive areas are protected.

- A. Sensitive area protection was increased with the 2002 comprehensive rezoning. The new ordinance:
 - 1. Implemented protection of portions of McIntosh Run and St. Mary's River watersheds by down zoning lands in those two watersheds that were removed in 2002 from the Development District boundaries.
 - 2. Down zoned the Bushwood Village Center to reinforce protection of Church Swamp.

3. Implemented protection of sensitive areas with Resource Protection Standards in the zoning ordinance to create a single set of protection standards for development countywide (similar regulations apply in and out of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area).
 4. Implemented setbacks from sensitive area buffers to reduce or eliminate damage to buffers due to initial construction and daily activities once built.
 5. Reduced building setbacks and removed the 2-acre exemption for stormwater management to facilitate clustering.
 6. Streamlined the process to meet forest conservation regulations for projects that fully protect sensitive areas.
 7. Enhanced floodplain regulatory protection to prevent encroachment of development and to reduce risk for floodplain residents.
- B. Protection of cultural and historic resources was achieved through identification, surveys, development of management plans and implementation of regulations including:
1. Two phases of a historic roads survey were completed.
 2. A Religious Freedom Byway Corridor Management Plan was adopted and incorporated by reference in the Comprehensive Plan.
 3. The St. Michael's Manor historic district overlay was created.
 4. The Southern Maryland Heritage Areas Management Plan was adopted and incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- C. Subdivision regulations were amended to require preservation of a minimum of 50% open space for major subdivisions in the rural preservation district (RPD) and low density residential (RL) zoning districts.
1. Developed and adopted plans for preservation and protection of resource lands.
 2. In 2005 the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan was updated.
- D. A watershed restoration action strategy (WRAS) was adopted for the McIntosh Run watershed; efforts to prepare a WRAS for the St. Mary's River watershed were initiated.
- E. Countywide mapping of sensitive areas and improved access to the mapping via geographic information system (GIS) software has allowed improved identification of potential impacts, enhanced review of projects, and increased protection of sensitive areas.
- Vision 4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.
- A. The importance and influence of the Chesapeake Bay on the character of the County and quality of life was emphasized in the adopted Community Vision of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan and continues to be a shared value.
 - B. Stewardship of the Bay and of the land benefited from the new regulations and initiatives for protection of sensitive areas listed above in Vision 3.
 - C. Responsibility for stewardship of the Bay was extended to all landowners via the Resource Protection Standards that created uniform protection standards for development countywide.

- D. Water resource protection was enhanced via updated stormwater management regulations that address both water quantity and quality and protection for stream channels from damage due to smaller storm events.
- E. Forest protection is recognized as critical to protection of water quality and sensitive resources. Regulations to protect forest land were made more consistent in and out of the Critical Area by rules governing conversion of harvested lands, countywide protection of forest interior dwelling species (FIDS) habitat, and requirements for maintaining state mapped green infrastructure when sites are developed.
- F. Native vegetation is required for mitigation planting to enhance and restore native habitats. Regulatory incentives are provided to allow removal of non-native invasive vegetation that is harmful to natural habitats.
- G. Watershed planning and development of implementation strategies have identified responsibility and action needed for Bay restoration and stewardship as a first step.
 - 1. The Breton Bay WRAS and the St. Mary's River WRAS focus on problem identification and citizen involvement.
 - 2. Development of total maximum daily load (TMDL) caps for impaired water bodies identify problem areas, sources of the problems and goals for implementation.
 - 3. Tributary Strategies use a sub-watershed focus to tailor actions to the local jurisdictions. These have been partially successful in achieving regulatory and fiscal implementation by the state, and are promoting local voluntary actions to reduce nutrient loads and enhance the health of the watershed.

Vision 5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced.

- A. The comprehensive rezoning of 2002:
 - 1. Provided non-residential development bonuses for construction standards that improved energy efficiency or incorporated "green building" design.
 - 2. Created mixed use zones and design standards that will foster more efficient development and accommodate "live where you work" objectives of smart growth.
 - 3. Augmented forest conservation provisions that streamline processing for projects that fully protect sensitive areas.
- B. The renovation of Banneker and Leonardtown Elementary Schools incorporated elements of "green building" design. The new Evergreen Elementary School is a "green building".
- C. Re-use of obsolete and abandoned structures included:
 - 1. Chesapeake Charter School.
 - 2. The old Lexington Park Library on Coral Drive is now the Three Notch Players Theater.
 - 3. The former Bay District VFD is now an operations facility for Habitat for Humanity.

- 4. Charlotte Hall Visitors Center.
 - D. The County's Commission on the Environment and its Water Policy Task Force have been active in efforts to conserve resources.
 - E. In 2007 legislation was adopted at the state level to require a water resources element in comprehensive plans.
 - F. The County's recycling program has been expanded.
 - G. County government adopted a policy to increase its use of recycled products.
 - H. Public transportation has expanded. St. Mary's Transit System, or STS, now connects with Charles and Calvert Counties, as well as with the Maryland Transit Authority's commuter service to Washington. STS also serves the southern portion of the County and offers weekend service. A Transportation Development Plan (TDP) was completed in 2007 and approved by the Maryland Transit Administration.
 - I. The Lexington Park Master Plan and the 2006 Transportation Plan call for an expanded network of sidewalks and bicycle trails to accommodate alternatives to automobile use.
 - J. The County has encouraged alternative energy, renewable energy and reliability for demand and growth.
- Vision 6. Economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined.
- A. The strategic partnership with the U.S. Navy includes a signed MOU on encroachment mitigation and prevention.
 - B. Provisions to accommodate natural resource extraction, farming and forest production, and marine commerce have been strengthened.
 - C. Agricultural development included a wholesale auction house, farmers markets in the north and central parts of the County, and expanded parking for patrons at the northern farmers market.
 - D. A streamlined process for approval of roadside stands was adopted.
 - E. Acquisition of the Fenwick property (150 acres), including a site for a year-round farmers market in the southern part of the County was completed.
 - F. The County expanded and improved land preservation programs, including the Mattapany Rural Legacy Area, new TDR provisions, and the use of Installment Purchase Agreements to acquire agricultural land.
 - G. Agricultural diversification was evidenced by two new agri-tourism venues that have been established, a new winery initiative, and several new winegrowers in place.
 - H. Workforce housing and affordable housing initiatives were advanced, including offering payment in lieu of taxes and impact fee waivers and deferrals.
 - I. Lexington Park revitalization continued, including implementation of a business loan guarantee program, streetscape improvement program, Lexington Park Enterprise Zone and a restructured Community Development Corporation.
 - J. Landscape improvement programs were utilized, including matching grants for enhanced land or streetscape of commercial and industrial properties located on Great Mills Road (MD 246), Three Notch Road (MD 235) and Point Lookout

Road (MD 5).

- K. The Small Business Development Center and the College of Southern Maryland were supported through collaboration in developing business programs and services to expand the St. Mary's County economic base.
- L. Cooperative efforts were made with the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) to stimulate private investment, create jobs, attract new businesses, encourage the expansion and retention of existing companies, and provide businesses with workforce training and financial assistance.
- M. The County continued to work with the St. Mary's Chamber of Commerce, the Patuxent Partnership, Southern Maryland Navy Alliance, Leonardtown Business Association and St. Mary's County Economic Development Council.
- N. On-going close working relationships were fostered with local contractors concerning upcoming base programs.
- O. Participation continued in industry conferences and annual publication of the Technology Handbook for St. Mary's County.
- P. The County enjoyed on-going collaboration with the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) - International to capitalize on international business opportunities for St. Mary's County companies in an effort to expand and diversify the local economy.
- Q. St. Mary's County Board of County Commissioners conducted business tours – "On the Road with the County Commissioners."
- R. Maintenance and provision of a list of available commercial buildings and sites was published to assist potential businesses in locating to the County.
- S. Expanded support and opportunities for tourism included:
 - 1. The new Welcome Center serves as Visitor Gateway to the County. It also serves as an anchor for tourism growth in the northern part of the County.
 - 2. New sites and infrastructure including the Leonardtown Wharf revitalization, Historic St. Mary's City new and refurbished exhibits, adaptive re-use of historic barn at Sotterley to meeting and events space, the new Patuxent River Naval Air Museum, Blackistone Lighthouse Replica, Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Park, and Potomac River exhibits and site enhancements.
 - 3. New regional programs include the State Tourism Area Corridor Signs, Southern Maryland Heritage Area, Religious Freedom By-way Corridor Management Plan, State Civil War Trails program, Potomac Heritage Trail, Southern Maryland Trails and Southern Maryland Bicycle Routes.
 - 4. Expanded lodging opportunities exist through multiple bed and breakfast facilities and hotels.

Vision 7. Adequate Public Facilities and Infrastructure are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur.

- A. Water and Sewerage Service: the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan was revised and readopted in 2008.
- B. The reconstruction of Patuxent Park's sewer and water lines and roadways began

in 2008.

- C. Transportation improvements provided increased capacity and enhanced options for travel:
1. In 2006 a County-wide transportation plan was adopted.
 2. Three Notch Road (MD 235) was reconstructed between the intersection of Patuxent Beach Road (MD 4) and Great Mills Road (MD 246), and was fitted with bike lanes and sidewalks.
 3. FDR Boulevard:
 - a) Alignment has been confirmed through the Lexington Park Development District Master Plan and the Transportation Plan.
 - b) Segments have been completed in association with development projects.
 4. Chancellors Run Road (MD 237) has been widened, and Norris Road has been aligned with Buck-Hewitt Road.
 5. Pacific Drive has been extended to Pegg Road.
 6. Service road connections have been installed to serve the First Colony and South Plaza Shopping Centers, the Laurel Glen Shopping Center (which includes K-Mart), and Wal-Mart.
 7. A State Highway Access Control Plan has been developed for Three Notch Road (MD 5 and MD 235) from Patuxent Beach Road (MD 4) to the Charles County line.
 8. Lawrence Hayden Road has been planned to be realigned to connect with Indian Bridge Road as part of a system of cross-County connector roads. The extended road would also serve the new Evergreen Elementary School.
 9. A “roundabout” has been completed at the junction of Maddox Road (MD 238) and Budd’s Creek Road (MD 234).
 10. Trails:
 - a) The Three Notch Trail alignment has been confirmed through the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan, the Transportation Plan and the Lexington Park Development District Master Plan. Portions have been completed.
 - b) A planned network of bicycle paths and trails has been adopted in the approved Transportation Plan.
 11. Grants have aided the County in maintaining bridges and correcting flood areas.
- D. Solid Waste. As it was revised and readopted in 2005, the Solid Waste Management and Recycling Plan:
1. Assures protection of public health and the environment (e.g. the St. Andrews Landfill gas migration system).
 2. Encourages reduction in the amount of waste generated.
 3. Promotes the re-use of waste materials.

4. Expands the range of materials to be collected for recycling.
 5. Supports single stream collection of recyclable materials to reduce cost and to increase participation.
 6. Facilitates the recycling of resources recovered from waste.
 7. Guides the re-use of landfills.
- E. Recreation and Parks. The 2005 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan identifies a wide range of recreational sites and facilities that have been upgraded or installed since 2002:
1. Northern Senior Activity Center.
 2. Chaptico Park.
 3. Leonardtown Wharf Waterfront Park.
 4. Great Mills swimming pool.
 5. Myrtle Point Park Master Plan adopted October 2005.
 6. John G. Lancaster Park improvements, including off-leash dog area, disk golf course, and pedestrian pathway.
 7. Wicomico Shores golf course, clubhouse, and Riverview Restaurant.
 8. 7th District Park playground and tennis courts.
 9. Chancellors Run Park 90' baseball field, playground, and pavilion.
 10. Cecil Park playground and tennis courts.
 11. Elms Beach Park playground.
 12. Nicolet Park facilities expansion, including a spray park and skate park.
 13. Carver Recreation Center.
 14. Three Notch Trail, Phases I, II, and parts of III and IV.
 15. Improvements at public landings: Forest Landing, Bushwood Wharf, Abell's Wharf, and St. Inigoes.
 16. St. Clements Shores playground.
 17. The County secured a long-term lease for the use of the park owned by St. Peter Claver Church (known as Cardinal Gibbons Park) in the 1st District.
- F. Libraries:
1. A new 25,000 SF library was built in Lexington Park at a cost of \$6.1M. This replaced a 10,000 square foot facility. The Lexington Park Library offers amenities not available at the other County libraries including a computer lab and a coffee bar.
 2. Leonardtown Library's 2nd floor was renovated for the library system's administrative offices.
 3. Public transportation is available to all three library branches through STS.
 4. In 2006 a consultant was hired to conduct a county-wide study to determine the need for library facilities through 2025. The report, *St. Mary's County Library Comprehensive and Integrated System Analysis*,

was approved by the Library Board in March 2007 and presented to the County Commissioners to guide future growth of the library system.

5. A library system assessment was completed, and it identified Leonardtown Library as the highest priority for expansion. A new 39,000 sq. ft. "green" library was subsequently programmed for design and construction on the "Hayden property" in Leonardtown.

G. Schools. New, renovated or planned schools since 2002 include:

1. Lexington Park Elementary School.
2. Esperanza Middle School.
3. Leonardtown High School.
4. Forrest Technical Center.
5. Chesapeake Charter School.
6. Piney Point Elementary School.
7. Carver Elementary School.
8. Evergreen Elementary School.
9. Leonardtown Elementary School.
10. Margaret Brent Middle School.
11. Fairlead Academy.
12. New elementary and middle schools are planned for the "Hayden property" in Leonardtown.

H. Fire and rescue:

1. A new Bay District fire hall was constructed.
2. A new fire and rescue station was built near Golden Beach.
3. A residential sprinkler ordinance was adopted requiring automatic fire sprinkler systems to be installed in new homes served by a public maintained water system.

I. Human Services: The Dr. J. Patrick Jarboe Family Education and Head Start Center, dedicated in July 2002, is home to the Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency Program, Southern Maryland Tri-County Community Action Committee's Head Start Program, and Tri-County Youth Services Bureau programs. The center also provides space for Boys and Girls Club meetings, and "GED" (general education degree) classes.

J. Storm Water Management, (e.g. improvements at Governmental Center Campus)

Vision 8. Funding is available to achieve these Visions.

A. Grants.

1. Certified Local Government grants have been utilized and continue to be available for historic preservation initiatives.
2. State grants have supplemented the County's implementation of the Critical Area Program.
3. Program Open Space and other state grants.

4. Transportation enhancement funds.
- B. Tax credits for restoration of designated local historic landmarks are available.
- C. A fee in lieu schedule provides an alternative to the purchase of TDRs for development in certain areas. These funds are available for agricultural land preservation programs. Fees in lieu are also collected to mitigate for future development related traffic impacts.
- D. The annual budget and five-year capital improvements program (CIP) is directed at implementing the Comprehensive Plan.
- E. Economic Impact Fees are collected.

2.2 REMAINING CHALLENGES

In creating a plan for the future it is necessary to evaluate progress toward the achievement of these eight visions. Despite progress in meeting objectives under the 2002 plan, there are changes needed that can improve effectiveness in meeting County goals. In the following paragraphs, each vision will be analyzed to identify needs to be addressed by this comprehensive plan.

Vision 1. Development is concentrated in suitable areas.

- A. The County must maintain a land use plan which accommodates compatible uses while guiding future growth into efficiently serviceable areas. The plan cannot be static, but must be periodically redesigned after evaluating development versus preservation needs in conjunction with the necessity to provide essential services which are concert with the character of the County.
- B. An important principle of this land use plan is the need to focus new development in designated growth areas. This can only be accomplished if supported by the necessary infrastructure. The continuing maintenance of the rural character of the County and protection of sensitive areas and natural resources must also be a priority. The goal of this element of the Plan is to ensure future land use patterns respond appropriately to growth opportunities with an eye toward respecting historic and environmental resources, neighborhood fabric, and the existing pattern of settlement. Specific needs to be addressed if this vision is to be realized include the following:
 1. Maintain the strong sense of community that exists in the County by providing facilities for and promotion of community activities.
 2. Encourage the development of commercial entertainment that will attract residents of all ages.
 3. To improve the appearance of development and its impact on the visual character of a community, and the economic health and viability of businesses, the County should consider creating design standards. A landscape ordinance, architectural design standards, and improved sign standards would also improve visual character.
 4. Ensure capacity of the Charlotte Hall Town Center to accommodate expected growth in the northern part of the County. Prepare a town center master plan to evaluate needs and to guide provision of safe and adequate infrastructure, (notably sewer service and traffic circulation) and land use patterns, recognizing the increasingly regional importance of Charlotte Hall as situated between Lexington Park, Prince Frederick, Waldorf and

La Plata. A possible outcome of this master planning could be upgrading this growth area to a development district, although town center status should be adequate in the short run (six to ten years). The master plan would be mindful of the historic and cultural nature of the area and would continue efforts to strictly protect environmentally sensitive areas. The master plan is also to include reference to the Board of County Commissioners approved plan for senior housing and recreation amenities on the County-owned property behind the Northern Senior Activity Center (approved February 20, 2007). Design standards should be prescribed and implemented to encourage concentrated development that creates attractive, safe communities with green space and preserved areas for community gatherings.

5. Incentives must be provided to redevelop older or blighted areas to efficiently use existing infrastructure. By increasing the allowable density in the Lexington Park Development District, with a corresponding decrease in open space requirements, infrastructure and land may be more efficiently used.
6. Enforcement of the Annual Growth Policy must be continued to further direct residential development to growth areas. This in turn would relieve development pressure in rural areas. The need to discourage “strip” commercial development along major transportation corridors outside growth areas has been identified to preserve rural character and further direct such development to more suitable areas.

Vision 2. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected.

- A. Preserving the rural character of Saint Mary’s County is a continuing goal and new approaches must be found to achieve it. Focus must be kept on targeting 60,000 acres for agricultural preservation, and progress towards meeting this goal must be continually evaluated and new strategies must be explored and implemented. The County must continue to monitor its efforts to direct new growth. There is a need to enhance the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation program and the use of transferred development rights (TDRs). Development in existing neighborhoods outside of growth areas needs to be encouraged to take advantage of existing infrastructure, provide an affordable alternative to those unwilling to live in more urbanized development districts, and ease development pressures in the RPD.
- B. The creation of farmstead subdivisions (lots of 15 acres or larger) that cannot be further subdivided should be encouraged. This may be accomplished by reducing farmstead subdivision requirements or offering incentives to encourage the subdivision of land in this manner.
- C. A continuing effort must be the on-going evaluation of the Annual Growth Policy (AGP). The annual percentage of new dwelling units in the RPD must be evaluated and adjusted as needed to discourage further development of rural areas.
- D. The implementation of new strategies for the preservation of the local farm industry must be one of the highest priorities. Farms are developed because it is financially advantageous to do so. If agricultural lands can be allowed to generate a greater financial return than development, this will discourage its conversion

and serve to preserve the County's heritage, support the continuation of family farms, and preserve rural character. Significant new initiatives, such as grape production and wineries, must be sought to replace the tobacco buy-out through alternative crop production. Additional local outlets for the sale of agricultural products are also needed. Greenhouse production must be sustained and expanded to facilitate year round income. Farm related commercial and industrial activities and agri-tourism to diversify income must be encouraged.

- E. Protection of environmentally sensitive areas remains a critical concern. Efforts need to be made to acquire these properties that could then be used for passive recreational activities. County owned properties constrained by sensitive areas may be carefully developed to provide for public use (including much needed water access), handicapped access, and for passive recreational activities.

Vision 3. Sensitive areas are protected.

- A. The County must continue to identify and protect the following sensitive areas and resources: streams and their buffers; 100-year floodplains; habitats of threatened and endangered species; and steep slopes and other areas in need of special protection including tidal wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), waterfowl areas, colonial bird nesting sites, shorelines, tidal and nontidal floodplains, nontidal wetlands and their buffers, anadromous fish spawning areas, groundwater and mineral resources, and wildlife corridors. As required by the state legislature in 2006, agricultural land (green infrastructure gaps, buffers, open space, forest conservation mitigation) and forest lands (green infrastructure and forest interior dwelling species habitat) intended for resource protection and conservation must also be protected.
- B. Encourage consideration of hazard mitigation in the early stages of development. Balance development goals with avoidance of known high risk areas such as: floodplains, coastal erosion zones, and areas of known high risk due to natural hazards.

Vision 4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.

- A. The County must continue to use a suite of regulatory programs (Critical Area Program, forest conservation regulations, stormwater regulations, requirements for open space conservation and clustering etc.), tax and funding incentive programs (Agricultural Districts, Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Easements, a transfer of development rights program, installment purchase agreements, etc), and planning programs (Wicomico Scenic River Management Plan, Tributary Strategies for the Patuxent and Lower Potomac Rivers, Breton Bay and St. Mary's Watershed Restoration Action Strategy) to require when necessary and promote when possible the stewardship of Bay, its tributaries, and the land and watershed resources. There must be an increased understanding of the watershed resources, and the impacts on those resources that result from the activities of those who live, work and recreate in the watershed.

Vision 5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced.

- A. The County must continue its established objectives, policies, and actions based primarily on avoiding loss, minimizing unavoidable loss and mitigating to offset the impacts associated with the loss. The County must also continue to develop ordinances and programs to effectively protect sensitive areas, to set and measure

progress in meeting goals for preservation, to set limits on the allowable loss of resources, and to assure that mitigation for unavoidable impacts is the responsibility and duty of those who benefit from the impact. There is a need to conserve energy and water, and to increase the amount of solid waste that is recycled.

Vision 6. Economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined.

- A. An economic development strategy is a major component of the comprehensive plan. Economic growth is needed to support basic infrastructure which in turn fosters further economic growth. A balance between commercial, industrial, and residential development is also needed to foster job creation and economic diversity which are keys to long term economic prosperity. Economic diversity in turn generates the need for a variety of housing types (including work force housing), expanded infrastructure, recreation and entertainment facilities, and the availability of essential goods and services.
- B. Efforts must continue to protect, enhance and diversify the County's economic base. Recognizing that Patuxent River Naval Air Station and Webster Field are the economic engines that drive the economy, this plan must continue to protect these valuable assets from encroachment. There is a need to more clearly define and strengthen existing air buffering regulations for both the Naval Air Station and its annex at Webster Field.
- C. While acknowledging the Navy's contribution to the local and regional economy, the County must encourage the diversification of its economic base. Of principal importance are expanding employment opportunities and reducing the salary gap between Department of Defense (DOD) and the private sector workforce. Expansion of industrial zoned areas to accommodate new business types continues to be a need. Incentives must be provided to facilitate the establishment of light industrial business.
- D. Procedures should be implemented that will reduce the turn-around time for commercial site plan approval. Emphasis should be given to streamlining the review process. Development decisions need more scrutiny initially to assure that design and planning achieve plan goals for achieving vibrant, attractive, safe, environmentally sensitive and sustainable development. Once these design and quality of life issues are adequately addressed, administrative streamlining may be appropriate. Individual property rights must be a consideration in evaluating all development proposals.
- E. In order to maintain a competitive advantage in attracting leading edge technology businesses to the County, the upgrade of the electronic infrastructure, including broadband and fiber optics remain among the highest of priorities, and educational facilities must be helped to keep pace with employer requirements.
- F. There is a need to protect and grow traditional industries, such as seafood, agricultural, and tourism. At the same time, the vacation and resort industry must be invigorated. This can be facilitated by giving emphasis to the County's water based recreational opportunities and historic resources. There must also be emphasis on the expansion of artistic and cultural opportunities beyond those provided by local educational institutions. The development of venues to accommodate such opportunities continues to be a need.

Vision 7. Adequate public facilities and infrastructure are available or planned in areas

where growth is to occur.

- A. The provision of facilities and infrastructure to support growth in designated growth areas must be a major component of the County's strategy for the future. Two major issues affect the provision of public facilities and infrastructure (PFI). First, existing needs created by the rapid growth of the past few years must be more effectively accommodated. Secondly growth or redevelopment should be permitted only if adequate PFI is available. Adequacy will be more readily available with the redevelopment of existing and perhaps obsolete or dilapidated development. This revitalization would be a most cost effective and efficient utilization of PFI. Such efforts would also direct growth away from rural areas.
- B. The goal of the Adequate Public Facilities and Infrastructure element is to provide public facilities in a manner that is not only consistent with this plan, but is manageable with regard to capital outlay. The County's Annual Growth Policy (AGP) will permit growth to occur at a managed rate and allow infrastructure to keep pace. The AGP must remain a component of the residential site plan and subdivision approval process. A finding of adequate public facilities must continue to be made prior to any major site plan or major subdivision approval.
- C. Public sewerage service is a strong director and facilitator of growth. As such, it is imperative that these facilities be limited to designated growth areas except to serve areas with failing septic systems where there is no feasible alternative. To prevent the over commitment of capacity, the County will continue to maintain the sewer allocation policies of the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan. These policies ensure that the capacity of sewer systems supports development only to the extent that it can be fully served. In order to insure that capacity keeps pace with anticipated growth, a facilities plan must be followed. Expanded facilities should be both privately and publicly funded when they will accommodate growth or redevelopment within growth areas.
- D. Of principal importance is adaptation or creation of community facilities with the ability to serve multiple public uses. When constructing new facilities, such as schools and libraries, priority must be given to multi-use functionality of the facility. It is essential that the same multi-use functionality be applied to the land as well. For example, co-locating school or library facilities with public parks or playgrounds would be an efficient use of land, parking and utilities.
- E. The transportation system must remain a priority, including maintenance and enhancement of the road network to assure an acceptable level of service throughout. There is a need to achieve peak period capacities at acceptable levels along all arterials through the careful application of access management and the development of a separate supporting network for local traffic. In areas of existing or anticipated congestion, a circulation system must be maintained that encourages the separation of through and local traffic. This needs to be done while planning for adequate capacity to serve new development in planned growth areas. Planned improvements to the transportation network must correspond with and support the overall land use plan. Focusing development in growth areas can help manage the spread of traffic congestion and support alternate modes of transportation. In support of a better circulation system, land use and transportation policies and capital investment strategies need to be directed at reducing the number of individual vehicle trips. This can be accomplished by implementing transportation demand reduction policies such as the 4-day work

week and telecommuting as well as increasing the use of public and alternative transportation. The alternative transportation component needs to include a bicycle and pedestrian network that provides safe and functional connections between residential, employment, recreational, shopping and transit centers. In keeping with the land use plan to discourage development in rural areas, there is a need to limit transportation improvements outside of growth areas to essential capacity improvements as well as the upgrading of substandard roads and bridges. There is a need to implement traffic calming strategies and engineered retrofit projects to reduce vehicular speed and enhance the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and those relying on horse-driven transportation. Identified transportation corridors need to be reserved, dedicated and/or mapped in accordance with Article 66B in order to ensure safety and the availability of right-of-ways for the planned transportation network.

- F. Communications systems throughout the County need to be upgraded. In today's world of internet based education, telecommuting, and internet based commerce, countywide access to high speed internet and cellular service is a must.
- G. Other needs that have been identified include additional library and indoor recreational facilities, including an arts center. The need for after-hours express medical care in Lexington Park has also been identified.
- H. Support the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative Reliability Project.

Vision 8. Funding is available to achieve these Visions.

- A. To assure the availability of funds to achieve these visions, public spending must first be prioritized in a manner that is consistent with the eight visions of this plan. Expenditures for public facilities should be directed to existing developed areas with existing infrastructure. Through the capital improvements program, investments should be made in areas where growth is planned to occur while limiting expenditures in those areas where we wish to discourage development. Provision of facilities and services in the rural areas must be limited as they cannot be cost efficiently provided and would encourage undesirable growth.
- B. Existing facilities must be maintained, expanded or upgraded wherever practical. Adaptive re-use of existing facilities must be evaluated before the provision of new facilities. Where practical, public facilities must serve multiple functions. Within growth areas, Priority Funding Areas must be established to qualify capital improvement projects for state funding.
- C. Developers must be required to pay for or provide the additional facilities and infrastructure needed to support their development, especially outside growth areas. The County should consider providing facilities and infrastructure within growth areas to direct growth and encourage rehabilitation. The residential impact fee must be evaluated and adjusted if it is not truly offsetting the impact of new residential development on roads schools and parks.
- D. A broad range of traditional and non-traditional funding mechanisms must be pursued to address this plan's objectives. The County needs to continue using grant funding wherever possible. Fees in lieu must be efficiently used for their intended purpose. Funds collected today can be expected to have diminished purchase power in the future. Installment purchase agreements should be used to acquire or preserve additional land.

2.3 CONCLUSIONS

In general, St. Mary's County must strive to preserve and enhance its present character and improve the quality of life for its citizens while maintaining a pace of growth and development that is well managed. Development is to be of a controlled nature, directed to the most appropriate areas and discouraged in other areas. Such a philosophy is necessary to cost-effectively provide levels of public services and facilities that will be required to support present and future residents.

The State's 2009 Smart, Green, and Growing Legislation replaced the existing eight planning visions with 12 new visions that address quality of life and sustainability, public participation, growth areas, community design, infrastructure, transportation, housing, economic development, environmental protection, resource conservation, stewardship, and implementation approaches. These new planning visions are the basis for this Comprehensive Plan which provides guidance for public decisions concerning how development will be managed and where capital improvements and public services should be provided to support it. The Plan serves as notice to all of the County's intent regarding its future and identifies controls, management measures, financial investments, and incentives necessary to achieve County objectives. The Board of County Commissioners is committed to addressing identified needs through adoption of this plan, zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, and capital improvements programs along with other tax and finance policies and initiatives.