CHAPTER 3: A GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

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Chapter 3: **A Growth Management Strategy**

Any successful plan will include sensible growth management strategies that will protect private property rights. During two years of plan preparation, the citizens of St. Mary's County, the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners have consistently recognized the benefits that occur in a setting that provides for a full range of growth options. Strategies must necessarily include regulations, but can be coupled with incentives to encourage compliance. Decisions to invest in public facilities and services need to be made to support shared objectives. Organized pursuant to the visions that grew out of Maryland’s “Smart, Green, and Growing” legislation, the County's community vision represents its desired future as an expression of policy made by all who participated in its preparation.

**Community Vision:**

**Preserve and Enhance the Quality of Life, by Recognizing and Protecting the Unique Character of St. Mary’s County as a Chesapeake Bay Peninsula.**

** Foster Economic Growth and Create an Atmosphere of Excellence by Focusing and Managing Growth to Create Vibrant, Attractive Communities; by Protecting the Rural Character and Economy of the Countryside by Nurturing the Shoreline and Adjacent Waters; and by Preserving and Capitalizing on the Natural Resources and Historical Quality of the County.**

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

A. New development is clustered to preserve rural lands and open space land uses.

B. Infrastructure is planned to provide for controlled concentrated growth. The County responsibly assesses the impacts of all projects and proposals against environmental or infrastructure capacities. Excessively paved roads and expansive, under utilized parking lots are no longer allowed. Water dependent and related enterprises infuse the history and cultural heritage of the County and the health of the Chesapeake Bay is vital to the continued viability of these industries.

C. Ecosystems are protected, preserved, and enhanced by independent actions of individual citizens.

D. The County receives support, praise, and encouragement from outside of the community as a result of successful public education and outreach efforts and citizen participation campaigns that incorporate the community's values.

Vision 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.
The County's primary higher educational institutions work as partners with County Government to increase citizen participation in the planning process through research and community outreach. Local higher educational resources are tapped for educational forums and as a community resource.

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

A. The amount of new residential growth that has occurred in the rural planning area has been substantially reduced.

B. Growth boundaries are determined through balanced analysis of sensitive areas, build out potential of available lands, population and employment demands, and efficient utilization of public services and resources.

**Vision 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.

A. New residential and employment growth is internally and externally integrated, creating neighborhoods and communities rather than a predominant land use pattern of scattered subdivisions and strip retail or office plazas.

B. Attention to architectural standards and urban design compatibility is accommodated as expected by the community. Open space requirements in the Development Districts are reviewed and revised as needed.

C. Historic and cultural landmarks are preserved, enhanced and made accessible.

D. Existing communities are revitalized. New businesses are encouraged to reuse existing structures, or construct new infill buildings in order to utilize existing infrastructure, and bring new activity into declining areas. Owners of existing structures are encouraged to maintain and retrofit the buildings and grounds to be made attractive and energy efficient. Dilapidated or unsafe buildings are renovated for adaptive reuse and made safe and secure or removed. Illegal junkyards and other blighting influences are removed or brought into compliance with applicable regulations and ordinances.

E. Infill development on existing developed tracts is encouraged. Preservation and protection of remaining environmental features on sites is rewarded through regulatory streamlining, which supports goals for focused growth, economic development and reduction of consumption of resources through revitalizing existing developed areas.

F. All capital improvements for buildings of at least 10,000 gross square feet and structural modifications of more than 50% of a building’s gross floor area that are publicly funded demonstrate sustainable design standards and achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver or an equivalent standard.

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

A. School, water and sewer facility service areas are drawn to implement the comprehensive plan growth area concept.

B. The capital improvement program and capital budget assign spending priority to growth and priority funding areas over other expenditures.

Vision 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.

A. Individual property access is denied on major thoroughfares, especially Three Notch Road (MD 5/235) and Point Lookout Road (MD 5), where access is limited to roadways with a functional classification of collector road.

B. Collector roads are interconnected for safety, reduction of congestion during peak periods, and for additional business access.

C. Road improvement priorities have resulted in new and improved road links to the growth centers.

Vision 7. **Housing:** a range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes and addresses issues of homelessness, blight removal and community revitalization.

Vision 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.

A. Tourism development and broadened economic opportunity are closely linked to historic, cultural and environmental resources.

B. A business friendly regulatory environment fosters a diverse and growing economy.

C. Existing facilities at NAS Patuxent River and Webster Field are protected from encroachment by development.

D. Diversification is supported.

E. Land use policies are applied to promote new industry and to encourage use of Department of Defense technology by private industries.

Vision 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.

A. Land and natural features important to maintaining the environmental health of the county, which present constraints for development, and which are critical to reducing damage to the Chesapeake Bay, are preserved from disturbance and enhanced to increase the effectiveness of their benefits for erosion control, filtering of sediments and nutrients and provision of essential habitat for wildlife. In return, citizens receive benefits of reduced construction costs, minimization of erosion and flood events, improved water quality for drinking and recreation, and
increased property values from a more scenic living environment.

**Vision 10.** Resource conservation: waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.

A. Farms and forest resources are preserved from urban or suburban encroachment and the rural character and attributes of the county are maintained and enhanced. Landowner equity and property values have been enhanced by an active program of purchase and transfer of development rights.

B. Protection of the rural countryside and traditional economies and activities -- fishing, farming, forestry -- are recognized as important components of the community and rural character. This rural character is worth maintaining not only for its scenic beauty, but because of its attraction as a setting for technology and service industries which are logically concentrated near the Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

C. A coordinated cross-county network of greenways and scenic easements is established and waterfront access is enhanced to provide for passive and active recreation and an enhanced natural environment.

D. Large contiguous tracts of sensitive areas are outside of designated growth areas and zoned for rural or resource protection. Specifically, the McIntosh Run natural heritage area is excluded from the Leonardtown development district, and the St. Mary's watershed natural area and lands westward thereof are excluded from the Lexington Park development district.

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

A. Businesses, industries and individuals reduce consumption, and recycle or reuse materials. Demand for recycled products is encouraged by establishing goals for utilizing recycled products in the public sector. Schools are encouraged to educate youth about the benefits of recycling.

**Vision 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.

A. Building codes and ordinances require energy and resource efficient construction materials and methods. The use of low flow plumbing fixtures, energy efficient insulation, windows, heating, air conditioning and appliances for renovation and new construction is required.

B. Permits and inspections are required only where necessary to uphold local zoning and building codes. Regulations are adopted only when required to implement valid public policy. Overly restrictive, inflexible, and redundant regulation has been eliminated.

C. Public facilities and infrastructure are funded and constructed to keep pace with growth.

D. Revenue enhancements are charged most equitably to the direct beneficiaries of
public services and facilities. County resources are matched with other revenue sources to build the capacity to resolve local needs through innovative project and program development.

E. Resources to revitalize existing neighborhoods and communities are obtained and focused.

F. Central geographic information systems (GIS) are utilized to maximize efficiency in planning and provision of government facilities. Utilization of the County’s GIS data by the private sector helps to defray costs of planning and facilitating growth.

G. The private sector is provided economic incentives when required to participate in funding major infrastructure upgrades.
## Land Use Plan Concept

### Growth Areas

1. **Development Districts.** Primary growth centers are Lexington Park and Leonardtown: urban in pattern and form, designated for intensive residential, commercial and industrial development supported by a priority for provision of community facilities, services, and amenities. (Receiving areas for transferred development rights or TDR)

2. **Town Centers.** Secondary growth centers are Charlotte Hall, New Market, Mechanicsville, Hollywood, Piney Point: urban in pattern and form, designated for moderately intense residential, commercial and industrial development supported by provision of community facilities and services. (Receiving areas for transferred development rights)

3. **Village Centers.** Third order growth centers are Callaway, Chaptico, Clements, Loveville, Ridge, St. Inigoes, Valley Lee: intended to serve as the focus for rural community facilities, services and activities. (Receiving areas for transferred development rights)

### Rural Areas

4. **Rural Preservation District (RPD).** Prime farm land, timber land and mineral resource lands, agriculturally related industries and limited nonfarm cottage industries, and low density nonfarm residential developments characteristic of the county’s rural character which are to be preserved for a wide range of economic and aesthetic purposes. Acknowledges continued nonconforming commercial and residential activities on existing parcels throughout the district, but limits their expansion or creation. (Sending area for transferred development rights)

5. **Rural Service Centers.** Crossroads commercial, retail and business development at Avenue, Budds Creek, Dameron, Helen, Oraville, Park Hall, and St. James that has traditionally provided very localized services for the surrounding rural and agricultural area; designated and intended to offer limited opportunity for infill development to provide focused commercial nodes in the rural areas.

6. **Rural Commercial Limited.** Established areas of commercial use along county or state roadways that existed in the RPD at time of passage of this plan. Provide for continuation of commercial uses and for the commercial development of certain vacant properties where the use and commercial zoning classifications predate this comprehensive plan, and where commercial use or development would generally not alter the historic character of these areas that are located outside of a development district or town center delineated by this comprehensive plan, but which have commercial status under the 1990 zoning ordinance.

### Protected Areas

7. **Resource Protection Areas.** Sensitive areas (steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, stream corridors, hydric soils, critical natural habitats) where development is hazardous or detrimental; significant natural, cultural and historic resource areas subject to loss or harm as a result destruction, significant alteration, or inadequate protection from impacts of off-site development; Chesapeake Bay critical areas. (Sending area for transferred development rights)

8. **Neighborhood Conservation Districts.** Established areas, predominately residential, where the existing development patterns and neighborhood character are to be maintained; includes communities with concentrations of structures with historic designation; limited infill development is allowed consistent with the existing patterns and character within its respective district.
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