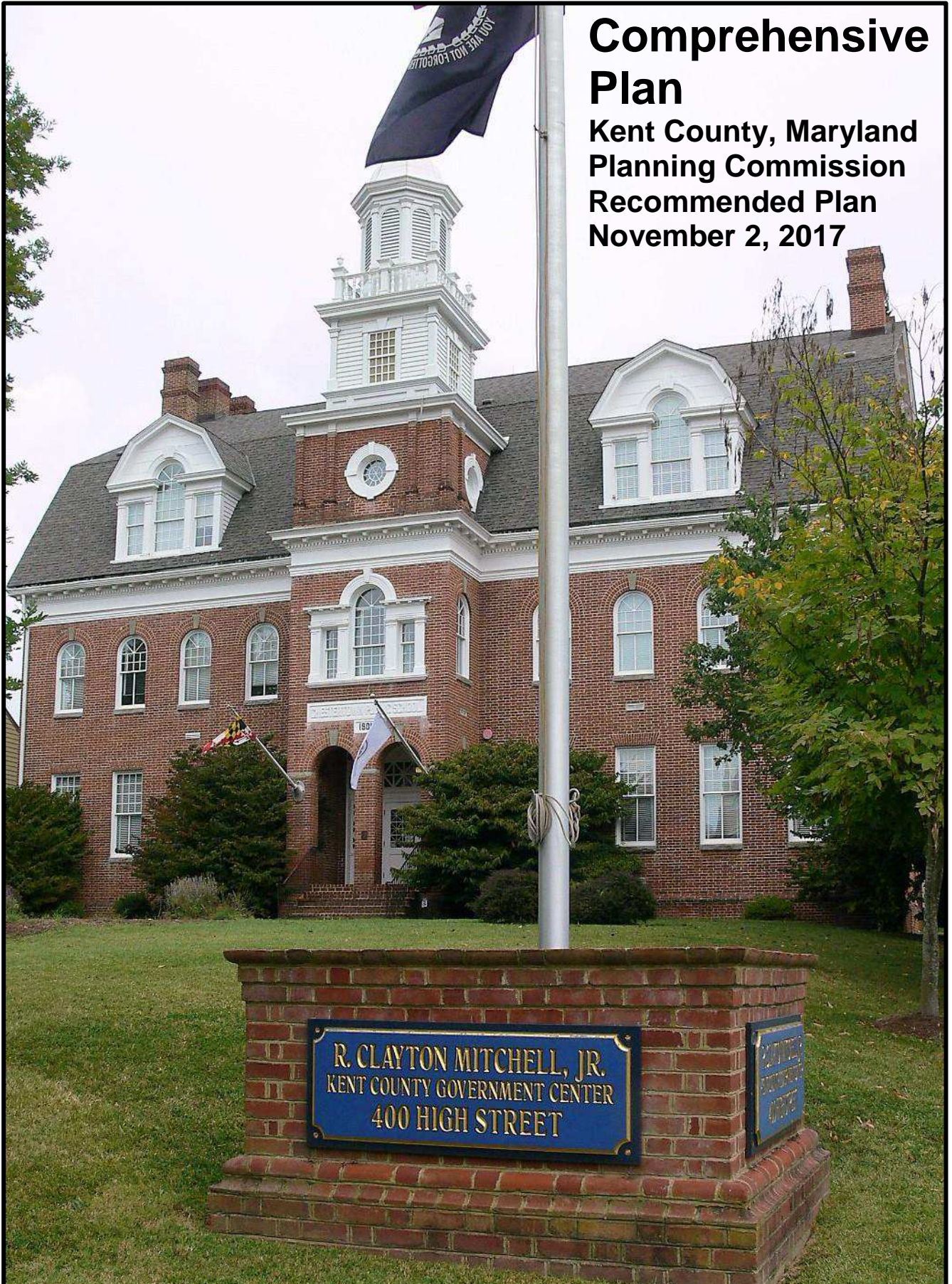


# Comprehensive Plan

Kent County, Maryland  
Planning Commission  
Recommended Plan  
November 2, 2017





# Comprehensive Plan

## Kent County, Maryland

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# Vision and Purpose of the Kent County Comprehensive Plan

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## Vision

It is Kent County's vision to preserve its historic and cultural traditions, along with its high quality of life, while embracing sufficient economic opportunities to provide for the economic well-being of our citizens. This Plan recognizes that agriculture is the keystone to Kent County's heritage and its future. Agriculture is the lynchpin that buttresses the County's economy, culture, history, and everyday experiences. Kent County cannot afford to have this key element damaged or displaced. This recognition of agriculture's status as the highest and best use for much of the County is an essential tenet of this Plan.

Rich agricultural, natural, cultural, and human resources provide the basis for the County's superior quality of life. Fertile soils, gentle topography, mild climate, verdant woodlands, the Chesapeake Bay with its productive tidal tributaries, wetlands, and marshes create an environment nearly unrivaled. These natural features enrich our economy and our lives.

Kent County steeped in historic tradition is home to towns and villages with a strong sense of identity. They retain much of their original design which serves as a template for their continuous and steady development. From these abundant natural and man-made resources emerged our rich local culture, character, and economy.

Kent County and the Eastern Shore face unprecedented change. Historic modest growth rates and patterns are threatened and undermined by modern suburb style development and potential changes in commuter patterns. Although development

pressure has lessened recently, improvements to US 301 and the renewed discussions of an additional Bay crossing place the County in a perilous position that is detrimental to this Vision.

Our challenge and the County's vision, as we look to the future, requires the County to continue to protect the quality of our environment and its associated enviable quality of life while meeting the economic and other needs of all our citizens. This special place has been purchased at a high cost, one of limited job opportunities, particularly for our young citizens.

Although our economy has expanded from natural resources and working lands based industries to a more diversified one that includes manufacturing industries, health care, employment opportunities with Washington College, retail, tourism, and other service-oriented businesses, we must seek innovative ways to continue economic diversification. This will provide suitable job opportunities for all Kent County citizens. Vigilantly safe-guarding our precious and irreplaceable resources is our mission. Therefore, we must wisely plan our future.

The following principles serve to guide this Comprehensive Plan as well as future policy and public investment decisions and other County actions:

1. Foster a diverse, stable economy that provides economic opportunities for all our citizens, which is essential for a healthy and balanced community.

2. Stewardship of our lands and waters is a universal ethic.
3. Continue and reaffirm our commitment to supporting agriculture and promoting working landscapes.
4. Preserve our cultural, historic, and archeological resources as they are essential to maintain our sense of place.
5. Preserve the County's unique quality of life; growth is planned to occur slowly and deliberately at a manageable rate which would not exceed the County's historic growth rate.
6. Ensure growth occurs in limited and specific locations in a way that complements and enhances each designated growth area's character. These locations will be a result of mutually agreed upon boundaries established by working with existing communities.
7. Provide the elements necessary to enrich the lives of our citizens and sustain a healthy community by including:
  - a. a high-quality system of public and private schools,
  - b. a quality set of recreation and cultural activities,
  - c. an effective transportation system,
  - d. a variety of housing types, and
  - e. a safe and healthy environment.

Kent County citizens prepared this document for Kent County citizens. It remains the responsibility of our citizens, both present and future, to promote and protect this Vision of the future.

## Authority

The Kent County Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in accord with the provisions of the Land Use Article, Subsection 3 of the *Annotated Code of Maryland*. (*Md. Land Use Code Ann. § 3*). Kent County has been a Code Home Rule County since 1970.

## Purpose

The Comprehensive Plan is the principle policy document outlining the County's direction and recommended actions affecting land use, public investment, and important other community characteristics and aspirations. Its policies and recommendations are designed to be valid and effective for many years. Properly used, the Plan provides the basis for decision-making at all levels of government and will guide the private sector toward acceptable, beneficial, and profitable activities affecting the land and our people.

The Comprehensive Plan contains the statement of development policy for Kent County by the County Commissioners. The Plan presents a series of goals and strategies to guide the preparation of County regulations and the implementation of County programs and investments.

These goals and policies are organized in eight functional categories dealing with the economy, towns and villages, the countryside, the environment, housing, transportation, community facilities and public services, and historic and cultural preservation. Each section contains a summary of important issues and trends, a statement of goals which should guide the County's administrative programs, and a list of strategies that the County will take to reach these goals.

The Plan requires public cooperation and support to be successful. It also requires far-sighted and steadfast leadership by elected and appointed officials and public agencies. They must consistently support the Vision and goals and maintain a long-range view when the Plan's Vision and policies are threatened by expediency or quick profit. Further the County must consistently promote this view in all matters dealing with the Comprehensive Plan and the subjects it covers.

In addition to serving as a guide for expenditure of public funds in the acquisition of land and the construction of public facilities, the Plan forms the necessary background for regulating land development in the public interest. Zoning and subdivision standards are necessary to achieve orderly growth and an acceptable pattern of land use. Growth and change occur with time, and good planning principles must be established to preserve our Vision for the future.

Land use regulation has a long history of maintaining and improving property values and the County's quality of life. This also ensures the minimization of conflicts among land uses while providing for public health and safety.

## **Relationship to Other Plans and Laws**

Kent County, as required by State laws, has prepared, and continues to update a variety of specific plans and ordinances. Among them are the County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, Solid Waste Plan, Economic Development Plan, Land Use Ordinance, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Watershed Implementation Plan, "Stories of the Chesapeake" Heritage Area Management Plan, and the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. While

providing more detailed information and policy, all plans and laws shall follow, and conform to, the County Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides the basic and essential policy direction and guides the development of these other plans.

## **Maryland's Twelve Planning Visions**

Maryland in 2009 adopted 12 visions which reflect the State's ongoing aspiration to develop and implement sound growth and development policy. Local jurisdictions are required to address these visions as expressed in §1-201 of the Land Use Article in the local comprehensive plan and implement them through zoning ordinances and regulations.

This plan is consistent with the State's 12 visions, which are listed below, and are hereby included in this Comprehensive Plan and will be implemented through application of this Plan, the *Kent County Land Use Ordinance*, and other policies, actions, and regulations:

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

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.
5. **Infrastructure:**  
Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner;
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;
7. **Housing:**  
A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes;
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;
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;
10. **Resource Conservation:**  
Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved;
11. **Stewardship:**  
Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection; and
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.

## Snapshot of the County

Kent County, founded in 1642, is the second oldest county in Maryland. Prior to European colonization, a mosaic of native societies inhabited the area, including the Tockwoghs and Wicomisses. Early settlers were greeted by the magnificent expanse of the Chesapeake Bay, the beautiful Chester and Sassafras Rivers, whose waters teemed with fish; myriad waterfowl, verdant forests, and rich productive soils.

Although much has changed since Kent County’s early days, much remains the same. The hallmarks of Kent County continue to be the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, and our rich farmland. These resources shaped our economy, culture and character and they continue to serve as the foundation of this Comprehensive Plan.

Kent County recognizes the future brings change, so the primary purposes of this document are to plan for change and guide the resulting development. Described below are the major change agents in Kent County. Additional and more thorough information used to develop this plan is contained in the *Comprehensive Plan Background Document*.

### **Population: Kent County's population will continue to steadily grow.**

Kent County continues to have the lowest population of any county in Maryland, but in 2010, the Census reported the county's highest population to date. The County's 2010 population of 20,197 represents approximately a 5% increase since 2000.

This growth rate has been significantly lower than nearby counties (about 18%), the Upper Eastern Shore region (15%), and the State (9%) and is projected to continue to slowly increase at least through the year 2040. The Maryland Department of Planning projects Kent County's population will reach 21,400 by the year 2020, and 23,500 by the year 2040 with an average growth rate of 0.5 percent per year.

In 2010, most the County's population (60%) was located outside its incorporated municipalities. The Town of Chestertown held 26% of the County's population; the remaining jurisdictions accounted for 14% of the County total.

### **Demographics: Kent County's population is aging**

Kent County's population continues the out-migration of young adults and an in-migration of older age groups, especially those of retirement age. Since 1997, there has been a slow but steady decline in the number of school-age children, while the number of citizens over 60 has continued to increase.

The Maryland Department of Planning projects this trend to continue. In 2000, the median age for the County was 41.3 years and had increased to 45.6 years by 2010. The median age for the State in 2010 was 38 years. In 2010, the County's population 60 years old and older was 29% of the total population, which was four percent higher than in 2000.

### **Employment: Well-paying jobs are scarce in Kent County**

Since the publication of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, the County has seen a mixed picture in job growth and wages. The County's 2006 Plan noted that well over half of the new jobs created in the County since 1985 occurred in the two lowest paying segments of the economy: services and retail trade. However, recent trends have delivered jobs in the top growth categories of education services, construction, and professional/technical services with a more favorable wage structure. The economy has transitioned from one based on manufacturing and the natural resource-based industries to one emphasizing health care and service providing industries.

### **Housing: Single family detached housing remains the dominant housing type in the County**

In 2010, Kent County had 10,424 total housing units (including owner and renter occupied units and vacant units), representing an 11% increase between 2000 and 2010. Approximately 79% of all housing units are single family detached units and over 71% of the 8,165 occupied housing units are owner-occupied. During the 2000's, nearly 65% of the new housing units constructed were single family detached homes, and 21% of the remaining new units were in single family attached category.

**Subdivision Activity: The number of existing undeveloped lots in the County could satisfy projected population growth for more than the next 30 years**

In 2015, Kent County had 3,761 unimproved parcels representing 28.8% of the total number of parcels in the County. Although many of these parcels may not meet current Health Department and/or zoning standards preventing their development, many will be able to meet these requirements. In addition, 88 new parcels have been created since 2009 in the unincorporated areas of the County. An analysis of subdivision activity shows a continuing trend of smaller lots located within developed areas. The County will coordinate with the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) on a development capacity analysis in its annual reports to MDP.

**Land Use: New lots and new dwellings are being located within already developed areas and approximately 31% of the land area is protected by private easements or held as parkland**

Between 1973 and 2002, the amount of developed land increased by almost 135%, but between 2000 and 2010 conversion to development grew more modestly by 22% according to the Land Use/Land Cover data maintained by the Maryland Department of Planning. However, much of Kent County remains open. About 91% is forest, wetlands, used for agriculture or is otherwise classified as undeveloped lands, while 9% is classified as developed.

**Agriculture: Kent County is taking proactive measures to slow farmland conversion to development**

According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, Kent County continues to lose farmland albeit at a slow rate. The agricultural community is committed to maintaining a strong industry

and supported changes to the Land Use Ordinance that limits the ability of landowners to create farmettes. The right to farm law was readopted in 2004 with stronger language to better protect farmers from potential nuisance complaints. In addition, many landowners are interested in permanently protecting their land through easements and the County Commissioners have committed County funds and resources towards these efforts.

**Forest Land: Kent County is one of the counties with the least amount of forest cover in Maryland**

About 24% of Kent County is forested, reflecting the County's intensive agricultural use. According to the Department of Natural Resources, 64% of streams in Kent County have inadequate forested buffers.

**Goals and Strategies**

This Comprehensive Plan establishes goals and strategies to achieve our Vision for Kent County's future. The following Plan contains goals and strategies that address the following eight areas in which the State's 12 visions previously mentioned are integrated:

1. Economy
2. Towns and Villages
3. Countryside
4. Environment and Water Resources
5. Housing
6. Transportation
7. Community Facilities and Public Services
8. Historic and Cultural Preservation

The goals for each of these areas describe the County's policy and an intended future that would result. The strategies describe concrete actions that the County will take to achieve the goals and the County's Vision for the future. This plan's final chapter identifies the County's special implementation priorities.

# Economy

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Agriculture remains the County's keystone land use and is the preferred land use for most of the County. It has served as the cultural foundation for the County and is planned to continue its important economic and cultural role.

Kent County's economy builds on the traditional livelihoods of farming, fishing, forestry, and hunting associated with its working landscapes and natural areas. Although many County residents still derive income from these industries, resource-based occupations provide full-time employment for a small and decreasing number of County workers. Alternative employment now provides the bulk of employment.

Broad national and regional demographic and economic trends will affect Kent County's labor force and economy to varying degrees. Nationally the population is aging and new generations are coming into the mainstream. The nature of work has changed with automation causing dramatic shifts in employment opportunity. These new generations challenge many traditional employer expectations.

Seniors also challenge old assumptions, with 90% of those 50 and above planning to work past the traditional retirement age of 65. Longer life spans and longer work lives will mean increased tax generation and consumerism.

Kent County's location enables it to retain its rural character. Its proximity to the mega-markets of the Mid-Atlantic Region and the nation's capital place it strategically for compatible economic growth (see Map 1). Matching this favorable location with suitable infrastructure and work force characteristics has been the County's challenge. Map 1 shows the County's regional context.

Kent County's employment base continues to skew toward the retail and service sectors. However, recent job growth has occurred in the higher paying education and health care fields. Further job creation in health care is forecast to meet the needs of an aging population for medical and personal services. Retail job growth will result from the demand for convenient access to retail shopping in Kent County. Agriculture, education, healthcare, manufacturing, and tourism drive Kent County's economy.

Many of our young adults after completing their education leave the County in search of alternative economic, social, and cultural opportunities. It is a County priority to retain young citizens by creating jobs that provide a living wage and suitable career opportunities. The Kent County median household income would be improved by providing such employment opportunities especially for those who would otherwise leave the County.

This Comprehensive Plan reaffirms the importance of traditional local occupations and seeks to take advantage of Kent County's resource and location advantages to develop its existing business base and strong entrepreneurial spirit. The County will seek a more diversified economy that will provide economic stability, better-paying jobs, and a balanced tax base sufficient to support improved public services and facilities.

The County will assist in the expansion of existing employers, attract clean industry, promote the development of small businesses, and enhance tourism. The County will also upgrade its infrastructure and develop a work force able to adapt to current and future work place requirements.

“Quality of life” is an important site selection criteria for many major employers and therefore, preserving Kent County’s rural character and villages is an integral part of the economic development strategy.

## **Business and Industry**

### **Goal: Support Existing Business**

*Strategy: Implement the Kent County Economic Development Plan as amended.*

County departments, the private sector and County citizens will work to implement the infrastructure, education, and other recommendations in the County’s economic development plan, as amended and regularly updated.

*Strategy: Complete and occasionally update strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) study of Kent County.*

This study will detail the County’s attributes that either encourage or discourage business growth along with special opportunities and threats that may affect the economy. A clear-eyed assessment of these attributes will enable the County to most effectively target its economic development efforts. The purpose of the research is to:

1. Obtain a better understanding of the role of economic development in the County
2. Identify successful economic development strategies
3. Identify niche, new or emerging markets appropriate to Kent County
4. Identify the needs of the increasing number of retirement age residents
5. Identify the education and skills required by existing business and those new businesses appropriate to Kent County

6. Identify the skills of existing residents and local graduates
7. Identify opportunities for specialized business clusters such as medical or green business parks

This study would dovetail with, and its recommendations will become a part of the economic development plan to create a comprehensive strategy for economic development.

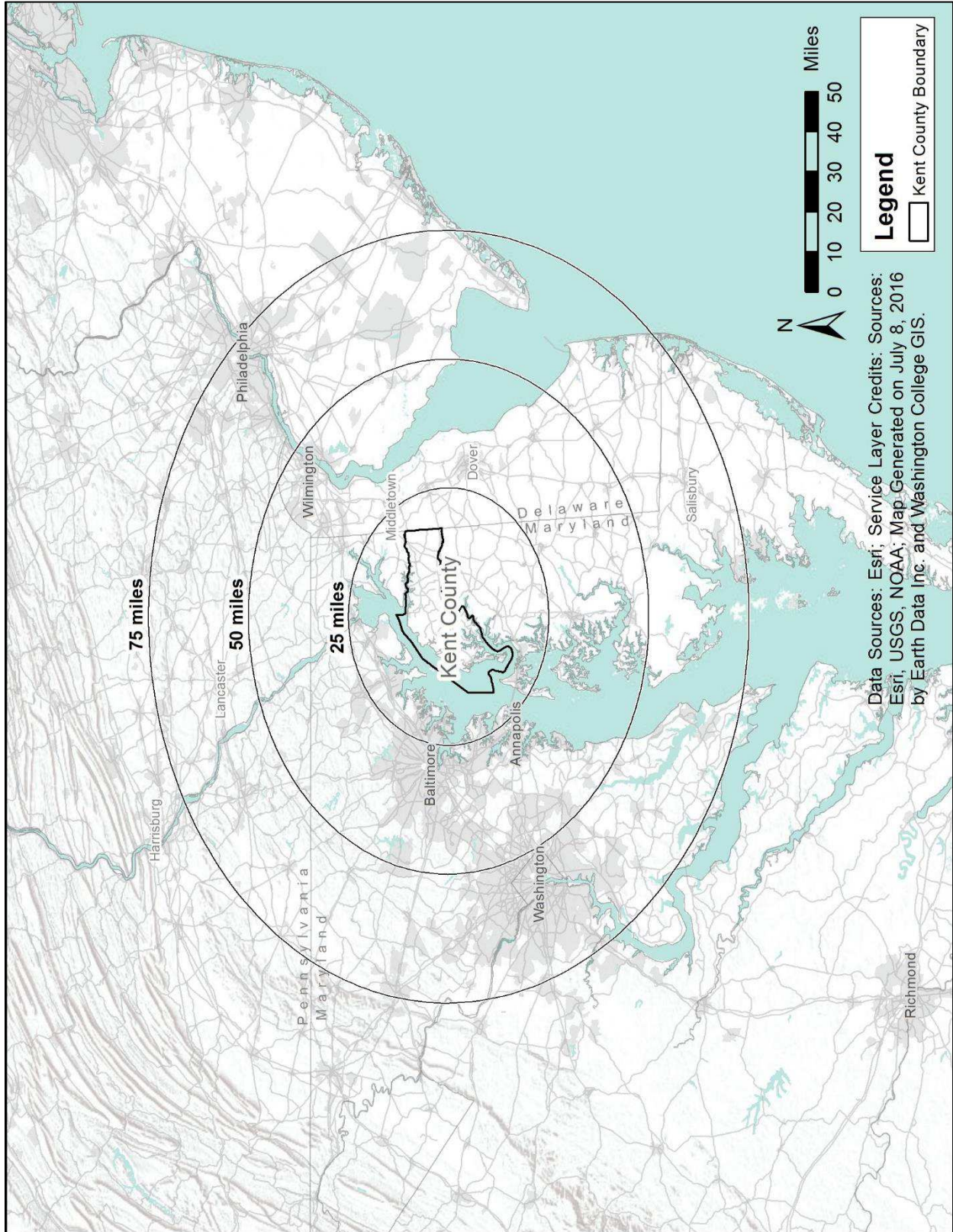
*Strategy: Retain and promote existing businesses and assist in their growth.*

Retention and expansion of local firms generally provides the most productive focus for local economic development efforts and will be the key to the County’s economic success. Where it is consistent with the goals and policies of this plan, the County will offer assistance in their local expansion and retention efforts.

The County will maintain an inventory of available commercial and industrial buildings, as well as available land to assist local firms in finding space for growth and expansion within Kent County. This inventory will be posted on the County’s Economic Development webpage.

The Department of Planning, Housing, and Zoning will continue to assist employers through the subdivision, site plan, and building permit processes. The County’s Economic Development Office will assist businesses ready to transition from home-based businesses and cottage industries into the larger business community. This last point is important to maintain the viability of surrounding neighborhoods in the event a business grows beyond a home-based scale.

Map 1 – Regional Context



*Strategy: Support the County's Health Care Industry.*

Kent County serves as home to the Shore Medical Center at Chestertown, the region's hospital, as well as several other health care facilities. The health care industry nationally is facing challenging times due to changes in inpatient versus outpatient care and the insurance environment. The hospital and its associated facilities are critical contributors to the local economy, with its high wage employment, and its vital services to County residents.

Kent County is fortunate to have its health care community and is committed to supporting it. The County will focus economic development efforts to support existing health care businesses and encourage the development of new health-related businesses, thereby reinforcing a strong economic base while meeting community needs.

*Strategy: Promote appropriate industrial development in the designated industrial parks.*

Kent County will encourage the growth of local industries and recruit new industries to locate in the designated industrial development areas in the County.

*Strategy: Develop a "buy local" program.*

Encouraging consumers to purchase goods grown or produced locally helps retain the maximum amount of money in the local

economy. These dollars provide wages and profits that multiply within the local economy. Dollars that leak outside the community are lost, so maximizing the purchase of local goods will result in greater County economic growth.

*Strategy: Maintain and enhance a quality of life and other factors that are key business location factors.*

Kent County's outstanding scenic qualities, water-based recreation, and proximity to metropolitan areas fulfill a major business creation and relocation requirement. This combined with broadband service coming

on-line, the County will now enter a new category for economic development. The additional factors of work force compatibility and retraining capacity will be the next challenge. The goal is to provide the life style and amenities desired by employers while retaining the County's rural small town character.



Figure 1: Consumption of local products maximizes economic benefits

### **Goal: Expand and Provide More Diversity in the Size, Number, and Type of Businesses**

*Strategy: Promote development of small locally owned businesses.*

The County's Economic Development Office will act as an information clearinghouse to promote small and minority-owned business development by making entrepreneurs aware of State-sponsored small business loan, grant, and incubator programs, as well as assistance available from the Federal Small Business Administration. The County will continue to

support and encourage small and minority-owned businesses to use the local chapter of SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives), the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Small Business Administration (SBA).

*Strategy: Encourage the development of cottage and home-based business.*

Cottage and home-based businesses provide opportunities for telecommuting, entrepreneurship, and reuse of older buildings.

The Planning Commission will evaluate current regulations that pertain to cottage and home-based businesses and recommend revisions to these regulations to encourage the creation of these low impact businesses. Likewise, the Planning Department will assist cottage and home-based businesses through the permitting process. The County's Economic Development Office will assist such businesses through the transition from home-based business into the larger business community.

*Strategy: Recruit new businesses which are compatible with the County's environmental resources.*

The County will recruit environmentally sound, well-paying sustainable industries. Sustainable industries are defined as those which do not destroy or undermine the resources they depend upon, have some close or inherent link to the community and support other public goals and policies. In particular, the County will target businesses that support traditional life styles and in turn, maintain the character of the countryside.

Examples are value added agricultural operations using local raw materials or agricultural research companies.

The County's Economic Development Office

will facilitate economic development leads or ideas and assist new and existing businesses through the local, State, and Federal permitting processes.

*Strategy: Complete the installation of countywide high-speed broadband internet service and build on this resource to create new business and employment opportunities.*

Kent County has expanded broadband internet service throughout the County, which will greatly improve internet access and processing speed. This will facilitate on-line economic opportunities and the growth of other businesses in the County. With this additional fiber-optic broadband backbone, dependable high-speed internet service will be available throughout the County. The County should promote the broadband internet service to attract clean high-tech businesses and enable existing local businesses to expand.



Figure 2: Economic development planning builds the local economy

*Strategy: Promote the development of the County employment centers.*

The County has developed a business park which has the infrastructure necessary to attract desirable businesses and assist existing businesses with expansions. The County will continue to actively promote the development of future public and private employment centers as a means to develop a more diversified economy

By designating suitable areas of varying size, location, and natural characteristics with appropriate infrastructure and zoning, the County can encourage potential employers to locate in areas where employment and industrial uses are desirable and compatible. The County can also provide a stronger commercial/industrial tax base to help balance County tax revenues.

*Strategy: Expand regulatory flexibility for the creation of and location of employment centers and industrial uses.*

Through its economic development planning and land use implementation measures, the County will consider flexibility in and an expanded area of employment center and industrial zoning in general. These efforts will especially focus on the Worton area, and the US 301 corridor.

Potential new sites will be located where infrastructure exists or can be cost-effectively developed consistent with this Comprehensive Plan and the County's Water and Sewerage Plan.

*Strategy: The County will coordinate and work with the County's private economic development organizations to foster improved business and job growth.*

The County will coordinate and work with for example, the Chamber of Commerce, the Young Professionals, the Chester River Wellness Alliance, the Women in Business, and other such organizations to bring about compatible business and job growth.

*Strategy: The County should explore funding sources and the feasibility of developing a supply of fully serviced industrial land and employment centers.*

Vacant land appropriately zoned and served by infrastructure offers a suitable location for expansion of local businesses or for outside firms to relocate to the County. Often relocation decisions are very time sensitive without time for the extension of utilities and site work.

*Strategy: Assist employers through the permit process.*

The Planning Department will assist a prospective employer through the subdivision, site plan, and building permit process.

Likewise, the Economic Development Office will launch a public awareness effort to familiarize the people of Kent County with the need to support intelligent, planned economic development. Economic development is a process of creating and using physical, human, financial, and social assets to generate improved and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for a community or region.

*Strategy: Support the efforts of the Upper Shore Regional Council.*

The Upper Shore Regional Council was created in October 2003 (*Economic Development Article, Title 13, Subtitle 10*). The Council is a regional planning and development agency for Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties. It exists to foster the physical, economic, and social development of the region.

The Council initiates and coordinates plans and projects for the development of the area's human and economic resources.

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with the incorporated towns and private sector economic development efforts.*

The County Commissioners and the Economic Development Office will work closely with the incorporated towns, the Chamber of Commerce and other private sector groups in developing an integrated and coordinated economic development strategy.

This strategy will be included in the County's economic development plan. Joint efforts could include assembling information for prospective employers and developing recruitment packages for businesses that are consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.

*Strategy: Encourage more young people to live and work in Kent County.*

Create opportunities for more young people to stay in or move back to Kent County without sacrificing their opportunities to earn a living wage. Improve the median household income of County residents by providing good quality employment opportunities.

## **Education and Training**

### **Goal: Develop an Educated Work Force with the Skills and Training Required to Serve Current and Future Kent County Employers**

*Strategy: Commit to excellence in the school system.*

Kent County should strive to have the best school system in the State and cater to the needs of all students. This will require innovative practices and outreach to business and community leaders.



Figure 3: Education provides future opportunities

*Strategy: Develop secondary and post-secondary school training and apprenticeship programs that will train local residents and provide skilled workers that match the County's long-term labor force needs.*

A skilled labor force is a critical ingredient in attracting new employers as well as satisfying the growth demands of existing businesses. Targeted training and apprenticeship programs developed in cooperation with local businesses and non-profit organizations including resource-based business will help meet their needs, while also providing opportunities for Kent County workers to advance and obtain better-paying jobs.

Kent County government will encourage a continued dialog between the business community and educational institutions, including but not limited to the Kent County school systems, Washington College, and Chesapeake College, to identify those skills needed by graduates to successfully compete in the job market.

*Strategy: Support and encourage trade education at Kent County High School and in the community.*

Public school job training must meet the needs of our present and future demand for labor. The County recognizes the need to strive for excellence at both the academic and the vocational level in our public-school system. In cooperation with the local community, Kent County will identify jobs and special skills needed in Kent County as they change, such as historic restoration and paramedical. The County will also seek to develop partnerships with local trade organizations to provide training for a variety of job opportunities.

*Strategy: Increase involvement of local businesses in local education system.*

The Economic Development Office will foster a cooperative relationship among public and private education, private employers, community colleges and training facilities to establish and nurture vocational training programs. These programs must be designed to satisfy the training needs of local businesses and to develop skills in younger workers or to re-train existing workers. This effort will emphasize skills needed in the future and provide training that enables workers to learn and adapt to new technologies.

*Strategy: Work with Washington College and Chesapeake College to strengthen research-based job opportunities for graduates.*

The County will continue to work to provide a connection between Washington College's growing research strength and the County's economic development efforts. Likewise, the County will encourage local employers to recruit Chesapeake College graduates.

*Strategy: Explore the development of a County volunteer coordinator program.*

Volunteerism provides benefits to the organization as well as the volunteer. The County's growing retired population seeks meaningful use of their time. Studies show this results in an average 7.5-year life span extension and many rewarding experiences.

County government and other service organizations can benefit from the experience and diverse skills seniors offer. Young volunteers can gain résumé building experience as a first step into their careers. Successful county government models exist requiring little investment and resulting in substantial productivity and citizen service benefits.

*Strategy: Support development of marine trade programs.*

Marine trades offer well-paying, skilled jobs. Marinas require staff with specialized training to service, construct, repair, commission, and maintain boats. Currently, there is a need for these skilled employees and marine trade programs that can certify students in these specialized areas. The marine trades have traditionally been and are expected to continue to be important to the County's economy.

*Strategy: Promote historic restoration education.*

Kent County's historic preservation not only promotes a sense of community, but also provides an economic niche market for heritage tourism and historic renovation. The County will support a variety of educational tools such as, historic restoration training in the high school trade education program and apprenticeship programs.



Figure 4: Local retailing provides employment and income to the economy

## Retailing

**Goal: Develop Diverse Retail Opportunities that Provide Wide Availability of Goods and Services with Competitive Selections and Prices**

*Strategy: Promote development of local shopping and family dining opportunities.*

Many Kent County residents want a better selection of consumer goods and prices locally. Currently, many residents shop in neighboring sales tax free Delaware, travel to other locations or shop on-line in order to find greater variety in price and style.

The Economic Development Office will assess the existing merchant mix and retail offerings and identify retail gaps. Opportunities for retail and service activities also may be appropriate for certain villages. The Planning Commission when reviewing such proposals will consider traffic and other secondary impacts. Any retail development in the villages or their designated growth areas must be compatible in size, scale, and architecture with existing

development design guidelines.

In cooperation with the local business community, the County will look for ways to promote the local shopping opportunities that exist in the County.

## Natural Resource and Working Lands Based Industries

**Goal: Maintain and Strengthen Natural Resource and Working Lands Based Industries**

*Strategy: Promote the "Kent County Economic Resource Bill of Rights" which includes the right to farm, the right to fish, and the right to hunt.*

Farming, fishing, and hunting not only serve as the foundation of the County's economy but also of its culture. However, as the County continues to grow and diversify, the noise, odor, and dust associated with these activities may be viewed by some as a nuisance.



Figure 5: Commercial fishing is a tradition in Kent County

To avoid potential nuisance complaints and emphasize the importance of farming, fishing, and hunting, Kent County will continue to implement and strengthen, if necessary, the existing right-to-farm law and adopt right-to-fish and right-to-hunt regulations. In addition

to limiting nuisance complaints, these ordinances address zoning flexibility, equipment storage and other accessory needs of these natural resource-based industries.

*Strategy: Promote Kent County as a boating center.*

Kent County has many of the basic ingredients for becoming an important boating center:

1. An abundance of waterfront
2. Proximity to major population centers
3. Existing marine infrastructure

The County's Tourism Department will promote all types of boating activity: large and small boats, boating business and industry, and tourism opportunities through boating.

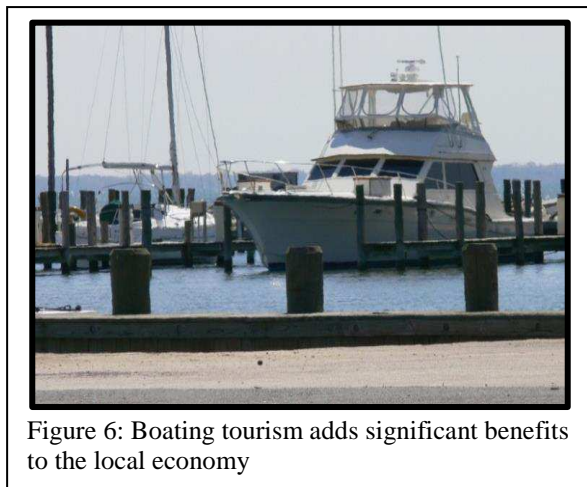


Figure 6: Boating tourism adds significant benefits to the local economy

Boating related businesses not only include marinas, but sailmakers, yacht design and building, boat repair, yacht sales and charters.

Kent County will promote use of its many assets to assure that a full range of boating related industries and businesses continue to be developed.

Boating plays an important role in the local tourism efforts. The County will work with the Chamber of Commerce, existing

businesses, and boating professionals to identify ways to expand boating related tourism in the County.

The upper reaches of the rivers, areas around Eastern Neck Island, and the County's many creeks provide unique opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, crabbing, rowing, and other water-related activities. The county will examine ways to promote boat rentals and other small businesses which capitalize on this asset.

*Strategy: Support commercial fishing industry.*

The commercial fishing industry is deeply rooted in Kent County's economy, history, and culture. The protection of the County's working waterfront and access to tidal waters are vital to the fishing industry. Kent County watermen must continue to have access to public docking facilities and vital waterways. To that end, the County is committed to providing loading and unloading access for fin and shell fishing and docking and mooring for commercial fishing boats and vessels. Kent County also supports finfish and shellfish processing.

*Strategy: Reconcile the needs of both commercial and recreational interests for water access.*

Kent County watermen must continue to have access to waterways and places where boats and equipment can be loaded and unloaded. Currently, watermen share this access with recreational boaters.

In recognition of the importance of commercial watermen, the County will continue to provide conveniently located docking facilities through zoning and the public landings program.

*Strategy: Promote and support the agricultural industry and secure its future in the County.*

Economic development strategies should promote and support agriculture recognizing it as the County's primary land-based industry with substantial potential for additional growth. This policy recognizes agriculture's keystone role in the County's identity and culture and its significant economic contribution. Maintenance and growth of this industry will have significant and ongoing influence on the overall prosperity and identity of Kent County. Additionally, a new generation of farmers is materializing and investing in local agriculture. Agricultural support industries and suppliers are doing likewise.

Economic development efforts should recognize the need to maintain agriculture's critical mass which ensures the market for needed agricultural suppliers and services. Effort should be made to attract agricultural related industries that not only provide job opportunities for County residents but also support the diversification of the agricultural industry and use raw materials from area farms.

The County will review plans, policies, and regulations to ensure support for the continuance of agriculture in the County. Kent County's land use policy recognizes agriculture as the primary and desired land use for most of the County.

*Strategy: Encourage the development of farm-based business including agri-tourism.*

Farm-based and value-added businesses are intended to expand the economic opportunities on farms while maintaining the agricultural character of the area. Agricultural-related businesses include but are not limited to small packing/canning plants, dairies, roadside stands, crop genetic companies, wineries, breweries, tasting rooms and equipment repair. Growing trends are the direct sale of farm products to the consumer and agri-tourism, which will be encouraged and supported.

Another recent trend has resulted in farmers providing amenities and opening their land for families to spend a day at the farm. This provides supplementary income to the land owner. Such uses are and will continue to be permitted in the agricultural area.

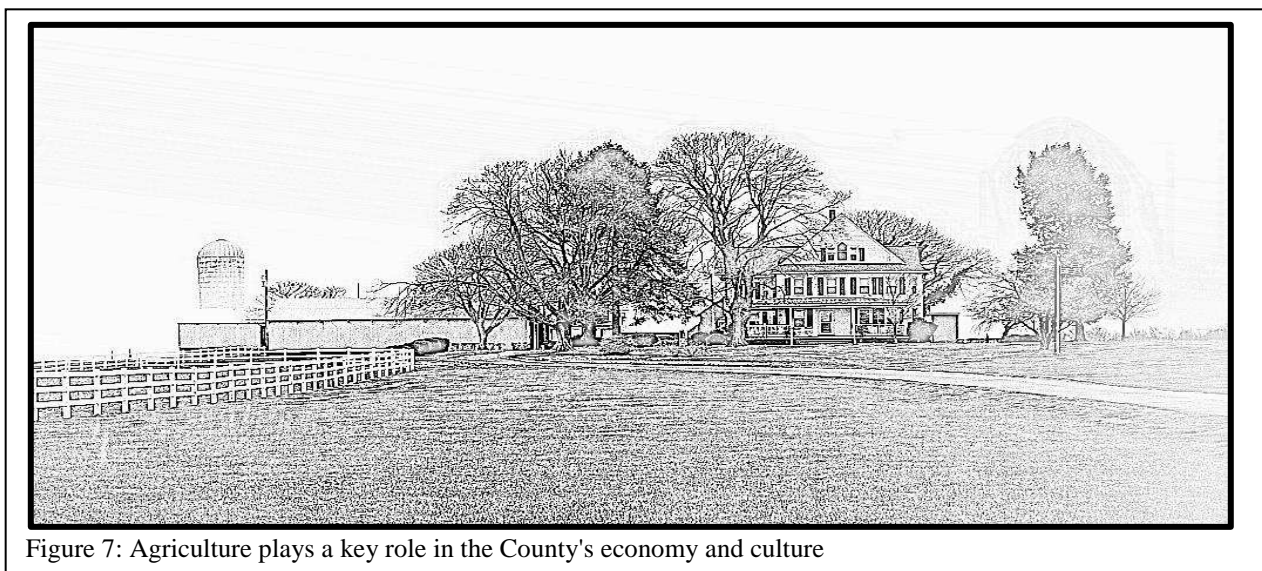


Figure 7: Agriculture plays a key role in the County's economy and culture

*Strategy: Support efforts to encourage young farmers to continue the County's agricultural tradition.*

Like the rest of the population farmers are aging. The County will need to lend its encouragement and support to programs designed to support and develop young farmers.

*Strategy: Participate in regional efforts to expand working lands and resource based economic opportunities.*

The County will support efforts to assist interested farmers with product diversification (including specialty and niche market development). The County will nurture entrepreneurial enterprises established by local farmers and community supported agriculture.

## Tourism

**Goal: Enhance and Expand Locally Based Tourism that Is Rooted in the Unique Natural, Cultural and Historic Features and Qualities of Kent County**

*Strategy: Continue to support and coordinate the County's tourism marketing program.*

The abundance of natural, recreational, cultural, and historical resources in Kent County provides ample opportunities for tourism, making it an important component of the local economy.

The main tourism season runs May through October, with strong shoulders of April and November. Tourism visitation is highest on weekends but is significant during the week as well. Tourism generates \$55.7 million dollars a year, lodging tax brings \$283,000 per year to the County and tourism-related direct jobs number nearly 500.

Kent County should seek to attract new and repeat visitors, and work to extend their stays with new attractions, events, agri-tourism and programs.

Success will require a focused marketing effort that includes cooperation with towns, business associations, and local tourism-related businesses. This effort should encourage year-round tourist activities that promote the natural and cultural qualities of the County. History or natural resource-based tours and programs including cooperation with neighboring counties to market the Eastern Shore as a destination, will help sustain year-round employment and economic opportunities. Heritage and agri-tourism have grown in recent years and provide a special opportunity for expansion of Kent County tourism.



Figure 8: Interpretive signage enriches the tourism experience

*Strategy: Integrate Kent County sites, facilities, and activities with a coordinated regional tourism program.*

The County will actively participate in regional tourism efforts that link and promote the Eastern Shore's unique attractions and activities. This participation includes joint

advertising and marketing of Civil War Trails, State Heritage Areas and the National Scenic Byway, theme events, and other programs that invite exploration of the Eastern Shore's historic and recreation sites.

This would attract new and repeat visitors to our tourism-related businesses and encourage the visitor to stay longer by expanding the destination experience. The *Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan* as incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan provides some of the framework for this cooperative effort.

*Strategy: Promote and expand facilities, services, and activities that support natural resource-based economic development.*

The County will advocate the development of tourist facilities and activities that support agricultural or maritime operations, arts and entertainment venues, eco-tourism, and historic sites and museums, while retaining the unique character of the area and the quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors.

These facilities and activities include:

1. Public restrooms
2. Adequate lodging and restaurant facilities
3. Arts and entertainment facilities and programs
4. Recreational opportunities, such as paddling, golfing, bicycling
5. Commercial campgrounds or primitive camp sites
6. Night life entertainment
7. Trail and park development
8. Appropriate retail and service operations
9. Coordinated directional signage
10. Interpretive historical, agricultural, cultural, and landscape markers

*Strategy: Explore the development of selected waterfront sites to maximize their accessibility and functionality for residents and tourists.*

Landscaping, site, and facility amenities should be provided at selected County owned sites along the waterfront to increase its functionality for residents and tourists. The County should investigate the purchase of waterfront property for the creation of a waterfront park.

*Strategy: Link cultural heritage and tourism.*

Projects and publications which link cultural heritage and tourism hold potential to become important components in the County's tourism program. For example, the County and local historic preservation organizations could develop self-guided tours, such as a farm and



Figure 9: Appropriate signage enhances the streetscape

country tour, a waterways paddling tour, bike trails, and a church tour. These tours may be along designated scenic roads, roads with designated bicycle lanes, or separate hiking and biking trails. In many communities, simply providing these trails increases tourism.

*Strategy: Promote the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area.*

The County supports the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area's environmental, recreational, and cultural values, as well as its role in identifying significant historic sites and districts on the National Register of Historic Places. The *Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan* enhances these resources, improves linkages, advances economic development strategies, and provides for stewardship and preservation.

*Strategy: Promote the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway.*

The Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway is one of the numerous scenic byways in the United States. It celebrates life on the Eastern Shore.

Kent County is rich in agricultural, natural, cultural, and human resources. Quality soils, topography, climate, woodlands, the Chesapeake Bay with its tidal tributaries, wetlands, and marshes create an environment rivaled by few other areas. These natural features enrich our economy and the lives of our citizens. They serve and promote the function of the scenic byway system.

Kent County is also steeped in historic tradition. Towns and villages have a strong sense of identity, retaining their original design as a framework for their continuous and steady development. From these

singular resources and features emerged our local culture, character, and economy.

*Strategy: Identify and develop year-round attractions and events that increase the County's tourism-related economic development potential including historic, cultural, and arts-related activities and venues.*

*Strategy: Develop tourism management policies.*

The Tourism Advisory Board, in cooperation with regional partners, will investigate programs and policies that minimize the impact of tourism. These policies may include:

1. Standards and guidelines for bus tour operators
2. Outreach and education to bikers and boaters

*Strategy: Identify and promote theatrical and cultural arts and entertainment districts.*

Artists and craftsmen can serve as a magnet for economic growth while adding to a community's cultural offering. Arts and entertainment activities generate direct and spin off economic activity helping to create the critical mass of activity at a community's center. There are a number of programs to help attract new artists or assist existing artists. Most notably designation by the State of Maryland as an Arts and Entertainment District, such as was accomplished by the Town of Chestertown in 2015, qualifies artists and property owners in the district for State tax incentives. The County recognizes the contributions of its artists and craftsmen and will support efforts to encourage expansion or new growth in art-related fields.

# Towns and Village

Of all Kent County's attributes, perhaps none are as special or as identifiable as its towns and villages. Some of our communities are architectural jewels, while others retain their agricultural and utilitarian charm. One of the guiding principles of this Comprehensive Plan is to encourage growth to occur in and around these existing towns, villages, and neighborhoods thereby preserving our otherwise rural character, agricultural lands, and environment.

Accomplishing this goal requires a policy framework that:

1. Guides town and village growth so it maintains and enhances existing character, keeping towns and villages desirable places to live, so they will continue to attract residents who might otherwise reside in the countryside;
2. Insures that new growth's look melds with its surroundings;
3. Insures that the County consults with the residents of existing villages regarding planned growth around their communities;
4. Facilitates new development that results in an affordable and a diverse County housing stock suitable for all County citizens.

Kent County contains incorporated towns laid out in colonial times, suburban subdivisions, along with its villages. Some villages have public water and sewer services.

By way of definitions, this plan refers to all unincorporated communities as villages. Earlier comprehensive plans recognized

hamlets a subset of smaller unincorporated communities. For clarity, this Plan has eliminated the reference to hamlets as it carried no policy implications. The County's villages vary in their size and in their complexity and intensity of land uses. This variation in character is recognized and fostered in the policies later in this element addressing village growth and design.

The County's incorporated towns are:

1. Betterton
2. Chestertown
3. Galena
4. Millington
5. Rock Hall



Figure 10: Towns and villages serve as social, cultural, and economic centers

The following villages have public services:

1. Butlertown
2. Crosby
3. Chesterville Forest
4. Edesville
5. Georgetown (north)
6. Fairlee/Georgetown
7. Kennedyville
8. Tolchester Beach
9. Sharptown
10. Worton

The following communities are also considered villages but do not have public services:

1. Colemans
2. Golts
3. Lynch
4. Massey
5. Still Pond
6. Big Woods
7. Locust Grove
8. Melitota
9. Morgnec
10. Pomona
11. Sassafra

See Map 2 for a map of the County towns and villages.

This Comprehensive Plan's primary land use policy encourages development to occur within the designated growth areas (Village Centers and Town Growth Areas) while preserving the existing character of these communities and their historic and cultural features. The following policies and strategies work to achieve this goal.

## State Legislation Affecting Towns and Villages

As noted in the plan's introduction, the State has adopted several legislative initiatives affecting growth and development across the State. Two measures particularly affect towns and villages. They required the designation of Priority Funding Areas (PFAs) and the Septic Tiers.

The *1997 Priority Funding Areas Act* directs State funding for growth related infrastructure to Priority Funding Areas (PFAs), providing a geographic focus for State investments in growth. PFAs are existing communities and places where local governments plan for future growth in concert with State funding. Within PFAs

certain growth-related projects are eligible for State funding. PFA status is required for projects that encourage growth and development such as highways, sewer and water construction, economic development assistance, and State leases or construction of new office facilities. An exception process exists for public health and safety needs. Map 3 identifies the County's priority funding areas. The County will encourage growth to locate in PFAs as these areas are consistent with the County's designated growth areas

In addition, the Maryland General Assembly approved the *Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012*, also known as the septic law. This law required counties in concert with its municipalities to designate and distinguish all land within a county based on current and future wastewater treatment systems and planning. Four basic tiers were established with:

- Tiers 1—areas currently served by public sewer
- Tier 1A—areas currently served by public sewer but are not considered growth areas
- Tier 2—areas planned to be served by public sewer
- Tier 2A—areas identified as Municipal Growth Element areas
- Tier 3—areas served by onsite sewage disposal systems which are located in Rural Villages as designated under the Priority Funding Area Act, Neighborhood Development Areas, and undeveloped tracts of land adjacent to developed areas
- Tier 4—areas served by onsite sewage disposal systems which are located in Priority Preservation Areas

- Tier 4A—areas served by onsite sewage disposal systems which are dominated by agriculture or forest

The tier designations and maps are incorporated in this Comprehensive Plan and appear in Map 4.

## Growth in Towns

The five incorporated towns of Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington, and Rock Hall are the County’s principal residential, commercial, and business centers. These towns are the best locations for future growth and development.

The towns have planning commissions, zoning boards, comprehensive and other plans, and ordinances along with supporting physical infrastructure. These growth centers also contain the critical mass of population allowing for the most efficient and convenient support systems and uses.

Given this goal of focusing growth in existing population centers, the County will coordinate and support town efforts to manage growth. To this end, Kent County will also coordinate its planning efforts with the towns’ growth aspirations.

### **Goal: Insure that Towns and Villages Are Attractive Places to Live and Work**

*Strategy: Promote towns and villages.*

The County will add to the towns’ activities and vibrancy by promoting cultural, recreational, and social events in the towns. The County will also investigate tax incentives and focus Federal and State funds on restoring houses and promoting small businesses within the towns and villages. A Countywide analysis is suggested to assist focusing incentives in targeted areas.

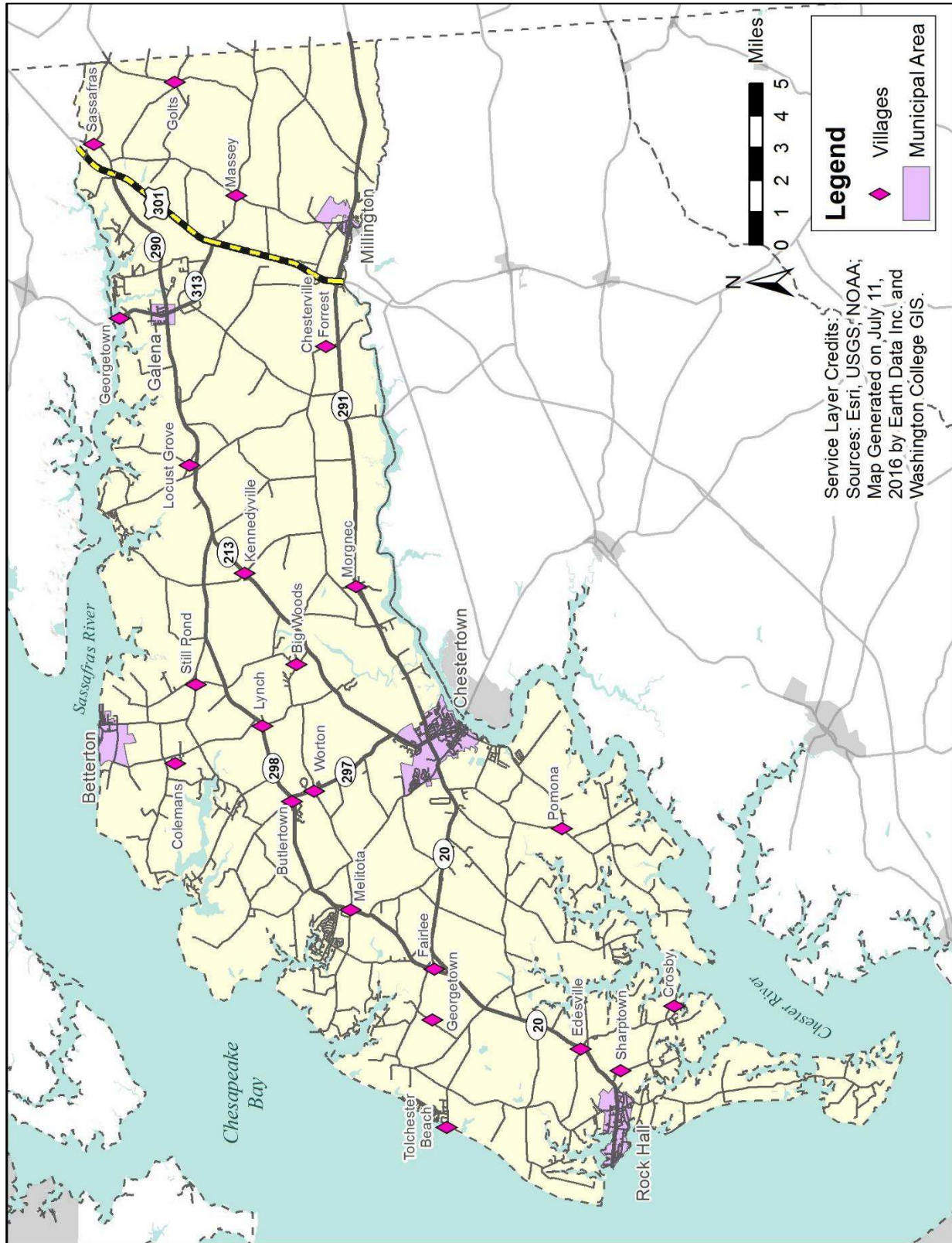
*Strategy: Locate major public and private facilities in the towns.*

The County will encourage and guide the location of major public and private facilities, such as major health care facilities, post offices and schools, into the towns. These facilities function as community gathering points reinforcing the towns’ place making and social interaction.

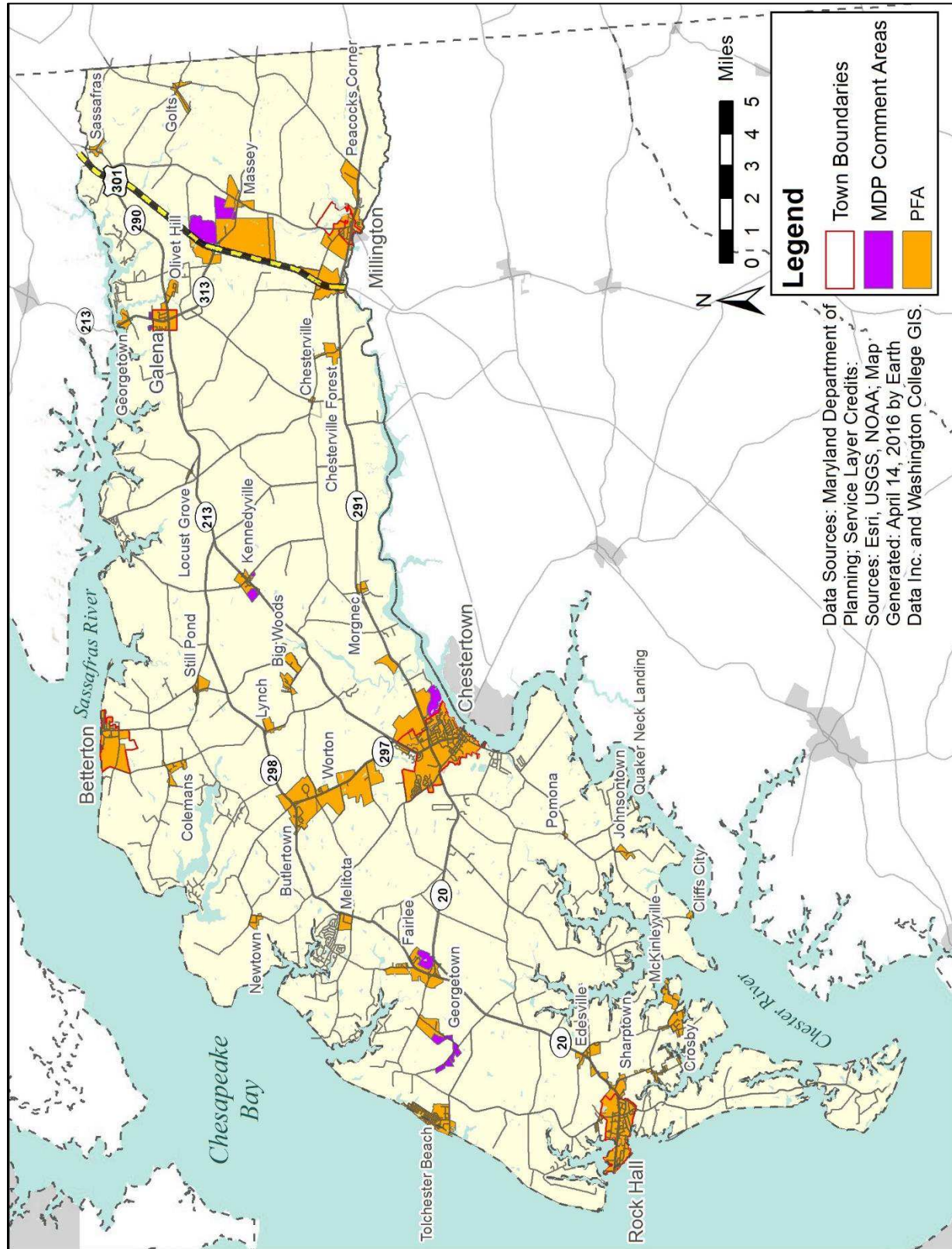
*Strategy: Provide public amenities to encourage development within the designated growth centers.*

The County will focus on adding new and enhancing existing public amenities such as parks, open spaces, pedestrian paths, landscaping, bikeways, water access, public parking, pedestrian trails, community centers, and other recreational facilities in the designated town growth areas and in the villages.

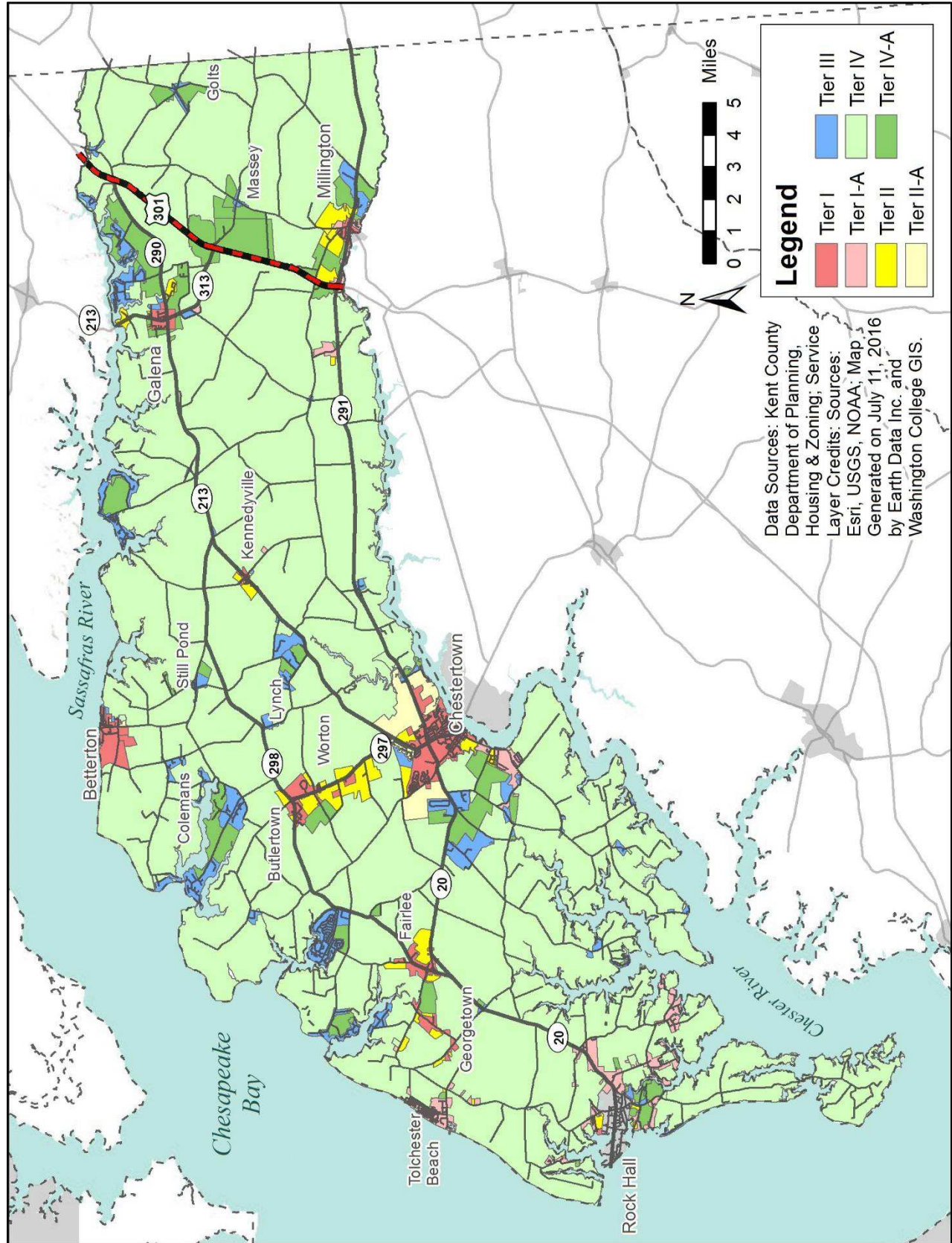
Map 2 – Towns and Villages



Map 3 – Priority Funding Areas



Map 4 – Septic Tier Designations



*Strategy: Require developers to engage and inform citizens during the development review process through the incorporation of a participation program.*

Kent County residents have and will continue to actively participate in land use and development decisions in their communities due to direct effects on quality of life.

Kent County requires developers to provide and implement a citizen's participation plan. These plans must provide that the developer consults with residents and other interested parties in an open dialogue outside the standard government review process. Citizen participation plans facilitate communication early and on a continuing basis. This ensures that both developers and citizens have adequate opportunities to understand and resolve concerns and issues related to proposed projects. The County will provide models and guidelines that describe citizen participation techniques.

*Strategy: Investigate techniques to encourage the maintenance and reuse of existing structures to eliminate physical blight.*

The beauty and function of the County's villages result from a general awareness and active concern for the structures and landscaping of the communities. Poorly maintained properties fall into disrepair, blighting the neighborhood, and diminishing property values. This in turn discourages upkeep of surrounding properties. This is especially important for prominent buildings such as churches which serve as the architectural focus for many villages.

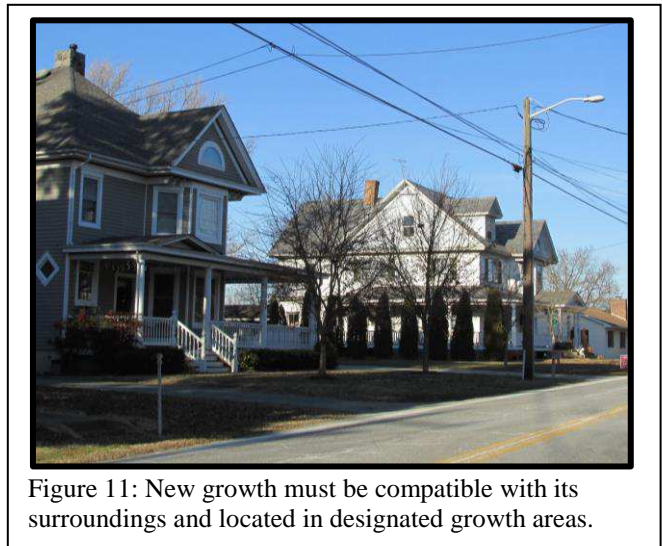
Kent County will identify tools, such as tax incentives and the State's rehabilitation programs, to encourage the maintenance and reuse of existing structures Countywide. Investing in existing properties will help

preserve the vicinity's character. This is vital to pursuing the County's vision and economic development strategy.

### **Goal: Coordinate Growth Planning with the Towns and in the Villages**

*Strategy: Develop designated growth areas in cooperation with the towns.*

The County will work with interested incorporated towns to identify and map County designated growth areas for the towns consistent with municipal growth



areas. In 2006, the State adopted HB 1141, the *Local Government Planning Act* which requires municipalities to include a municipal growth element in their comprehensive plans. These elements are intended to provide a formal process for assessing growth potential, identifying future growth locations within the jurisdiction (municipal growth areas) along with future annexation sites.

The County's designated growth areas should be coordinated closely with the towns' municipal growth areas and encompass existing development and identify areas for new compact, mixed use neighborhoods. Where appropriate, the County Designated

Growth Area may include a growth boundary that represents the physical limits of future town growth. Map 5 locates the County's designated growth areas.

When approved by both the County and the towns, the designated growth areas will be incorporated into both the town and County comprehensive plans. This strategy will create a system of town growth boundaries that are the dividing line between areas planned for community development and green-belt areas planned for resource-based uses such as agriculture, forestry and limited development designed to maintain the rural edge of each town.

*Strategy: Village growth shall be tied to a village's available public services.*

Villages can serve as appropriate locations for additional growth provided the level of public services can sustain the proposed amount of development. That is, sufficient public wastewater treatment capacity and/or water supply capacity must exist for villages within a sanitary service area.

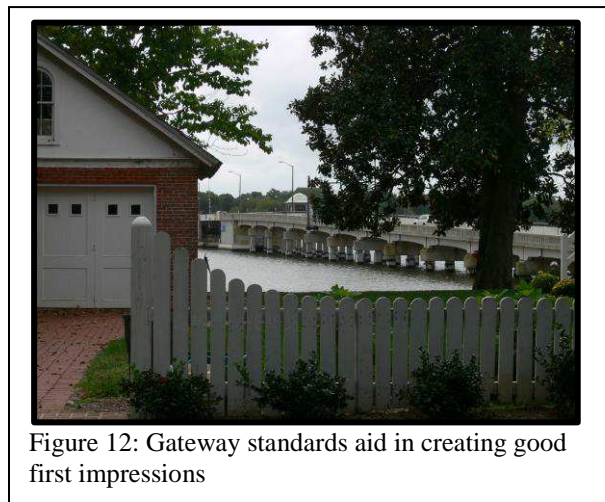


Figure 12: Gateway standards aid in creating good first impressions

*Strategy: Coordinate development of the municipal growth elements' growth areas with the respective incorporated town.*

The County has worked and will continue to work with each of the incorporated towns in

the development of and revisions to town municipal growth elements and will continue this cooperative relationship for their future updates. The towns' municipal growth elements address their growth areas, annexation, public facilities and amenities, and design and environmental guidelines. The County will coordinate the location of its designated growth areas with the towns' planning efforts.

*Strategy: Coordinate project review with the incorporated towns.*

The County will forward subdivisions and site plans proposed for sites within one mile of a town boundary to the town for their review and comment. The towns' recommendations must be submitted in a time frame consistent with and to not unduly prolong the plan review process.

*Strategy: Developed town gateway standards.*

The town gateways, where the transition occurs between the County's agricultural areas and its traditional town centers, strongly influence local and visitor perceptions of the County creating what is likely to be a lasting first impression. The County will work with the towns to develop design guidelines that will insure safe and aesthetically pleasing entrances.

These guidelines should address the accommodation of pedestrians, landscaping and screening, contextual building and site design, access improvements, and intra-parcel connections. From an urban design perspective, two issues: landscaping and appropriate sign controls when properly addressed can dramatically improve a corridor. The other design elements can also play an important role.

## Growth in Villages

### **Goal: Insure that Future Growth Complements and Enhances the Character of the Existing Villages**

*Strategy: Explore the creation of a limited number of additional village zoning districts to improve the relationship between the distinct character of certain villages and their zoning.*

The current village zoning districts permit a mix of commercial and residential uses, which are appropriate for some villages. Other villages' character may be inadvertently altered by some of the uses now permitted. This could be rectified by creating one or several additional zoning districts to better capture the mix of residential and commercial uses within diverse villages. The Planning Commission will study this approach and make recommendations to the County Commissioners.

*Strategy: Explore the use of the Sustainable Communities Program for maintaining County villages' character and expanding economic opportunities.*

The County will identify which villages are program eligible and pursue sustainable community designation for such villages. The Sustainable Communities Program is designed to conserve resources, provide green spaces and parks for recreation and agriculture, offer many options for transportation, use natural and cultural resources wisely for future generations, and consider the social and economic needs of all residents.

*Strategy: Ensure that development in villages reflects the historic character of the area.*

The villages of Kent County each have their own distinctive character, yet all exhibit the fundamental design elements of traditional communities. They have similar and or consistent:

1. Distinct edges between villages and their rural surroundings
2. Lot sizes and configurations
3. Building scale, massing, materials, roof configurations and orientation to the street
4. Fenestration patterns
5. Land uses

Consideration should be given to general traditional neighborhood design elements. These elements should reflect the community's physical expectations for future development. Such guidelines do not guarantee excellent architecture, but they do help to create a degree of compatibility and consistency with and between new development and its surroundings.

With new growth targeted to towns and villages, ensuring appropriate design will prevent the erosion of character. Sprawling subdivisions and strip commercial development along major roadways, typical of suburban style, automobile-dependent development, is not in keeping with Kent County's historic village settlement patterns. For these reasons, growth in our towns and villages must be carefully planned.

Some important village characteristics include the following, accompanied by associated strategies as appropriate:

Edges and Boundaries–The towns and villages will have well-defined boundaries between their development and their agrarian surroundings. This enhances community identity, preserves agricultural land, and limits the extension of public services (water, sewer, etc.). Future development will be promoted within these boundaries and be restricted in the outlying areas.

The amount and location of designated growth areas around the existing towns and villages will be determined based on the ability to provide water and/or sewer service, the degree of existing development, environmental constraints, the logical extension of existing roads, and the amount of anticipated growth. Some villages may have sufficient undeveloped land to accommodate all future development and need not designate additional growth area.

Buildings–Buildings provide the backbone of a village's character. New buildings and additions to existing buildings should maintain and enhance character. By incorporating the important architectural characteristics of a particular village, a new building or addition can blend with its surroundings. These important architectural design elements were noted above. Design guidelines are intended to inform residents and businesses of how best to make improvements to their properties that add rather than detract from community character.

Spatial Relationships–This concept refers to the historic patterns of development and traditional spatial relationships between buildings, lots, and streets. These relationships create a visual rhythm that influences a community's architectural feel.

Public Spaces and Open Space–Within the communities, public and especially valued open spaces and/or facilities will be

identified, planned, and designed. Important criteria include such area's location, access, linkages, and function. These spaces will provide a variety of uses suitable for active and passive recreation. The County and affected designated communities will explore and implement financial options for the acquisition and maintenance of these public spaces and facilities.

Transportation and Circulation–Properly planned and designed vehicular and pedestrian pathways provide efficient and safe circulation to and within communities. The County will develop a comprehensive transportation plan to include: public transportation services, pedestrian linkages (bikeways, pathways, sidewalks, and trails), vehicular corridors (public streets, alleys, and roadways) and accessible public parking.



Figure 13: Villages contain many important architectural examples

Historic Sites and Traditional Uses–Historic preservation promotes the revitalization of our towns, villages, and engenders a sense of community. Economic benefits include increased property values and preservation of resources that support heritage tourism.

The preservation of historic and cultural resources will be incorporated into the planning and development of the designated growth areas.

Natural Environment—The protection and preservation of the natural environment will be incorporated into the planning and development of the communities and designated growth areas. The communities will promote and maintain the significance of the waterfront environment including the Chesapeake Bay, rivers, and streams. This is even more important now with the national and State emphasis on Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) attainment.

Significant Views—Prominent views inspire and define a community. Significant visual elements and vantage points will be inventoried and prioritized. Measures will then be established to protect important views and visual elements. Such elements could include an identifiable icon of the community's character, prominent views within the community, and special entranceway features and/or waterfront areas.

Community Service Facilities—Service facilities provide the means for a community to be self-sufficient, maintain cohesiveness and community identity. Public services such as water and sewer, a post office, and community centers will be promoted in the planning and development of the designated communities. Commercial and professional service uses would be encouraged in appropriate villages.

Timing and Phasing of Future Growth—Large developments if developed without phasing have the potential to overwhelm an existing community. Growth phasing will be encouraged to prevent over-development.

## Moderate Density Development

Kent County has several stand-alone suburban residential areas of moderate density. These areas are designated Neighborhood Development Areas; they include:

1. Gregg Neck/Shorewood
2. Chesapeake Landing
3. Coopers Lane
4. Kentmore Park
5. Tolchester

While these areas are largely developed, some additional infill and redevelopment can be expected. The County does not encourage or expect to create new Neighborhood Development Areas.

### **Goal: Insure that all New Development or Redevelopment Meets High Standards for Planning, Workmanship, and Design**

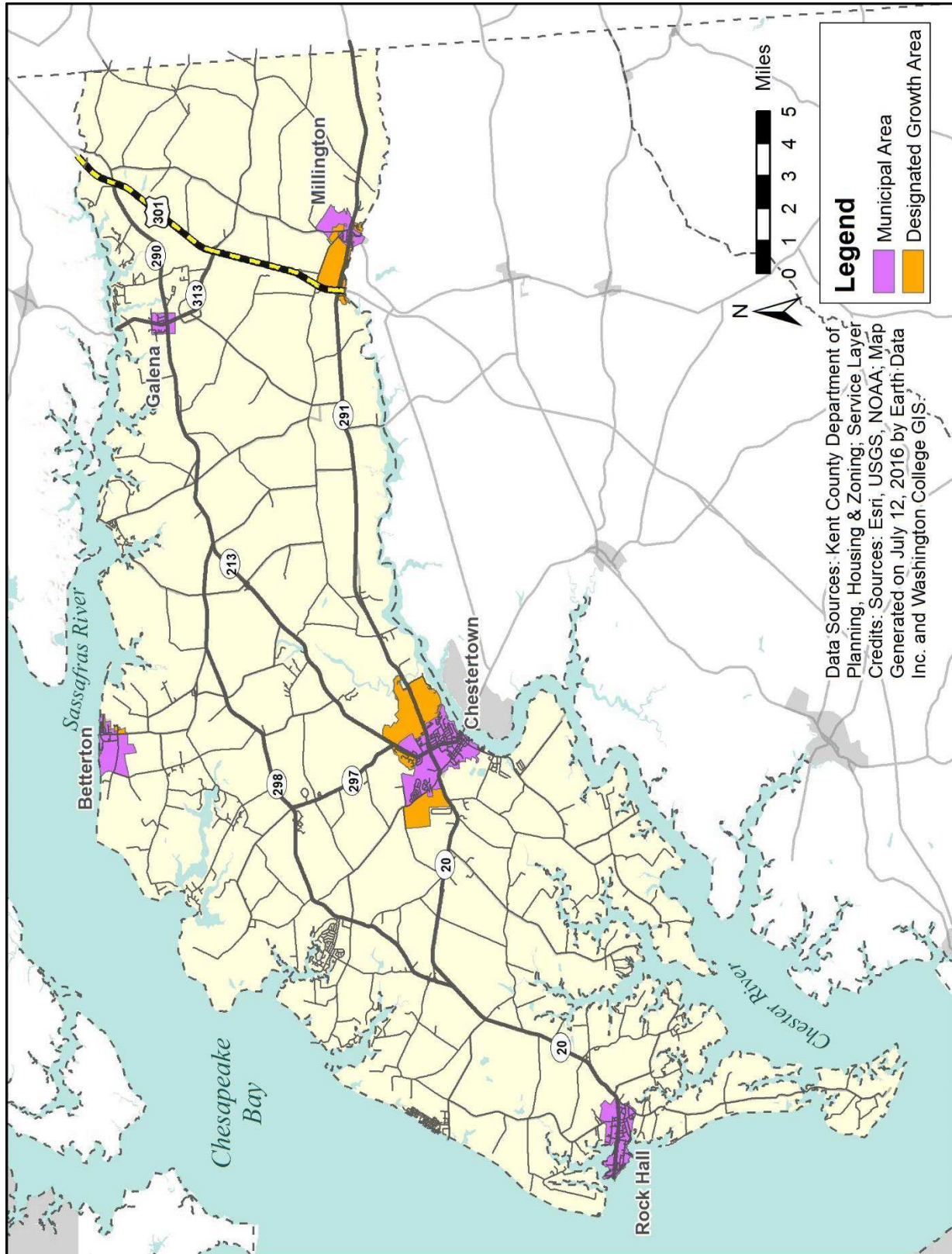
*Strategy: Enhance the character of the Neighborhood Development Areas.*

The County will enhance the character of designated Neighborhood Development Areas by encouraging compatible infill development, appropriate community services, and reinforcing neighborhood identity through well designed landscaping, signage, and architecture.

*Strategy: Insure that future development, redevelopment, and infill is completed in an environmentally and context sensitive manner.*

The County will encourage techniques such as conservation subdivision as a means to protect environmentally sensitive areas, groundwater resources and their recharge areas, historic archeological and cultural resources, and scenic view sheds.

Map 5 – Designated Growth Areas



## Community Design

Kent County's unique character and special sense of place evolved over time and resulted as materials and construction techniques changed. Additionally, citizens have consciously chosen and actively pursued preserving the County's architectural heritage and to enhance it through well designed growth.

This plan seeks to maintain a traditional development pattern of compact towns and villages surrounded by working landscapes. Given the importance of the towns and villages to the County's overall character, the County will emphasize the traditional design, scale, and character through all new development and improvement efforts.

### **Goal: Implement Thorough Design Review for New Development and Major Renovations**

*Strategy: Evaluate design guidelines.*

Existing design guidelines communicate the desired architectural specifics for new development and provide the means to guide future development in a manner which reflects existing community character. The County will evaluate the existing design guidelines to ensure that they continue to adequately address landscaping, building character, signage, and site design. Maintaining historic patterns of development and spatial relationships between buildings and the street must be illustrated to meld future development with existing community character.

*Strategy: Encourage a wide variety of housing styles and sizes in all developments.*

Design guidelines should not become an impediment to modern materials and construction techniques. Done sensitively a

variety of housing styles in the County's communities will add to its sense of place.

Recently, community concerns about the long-term impacts and sustainability of neighborhoods have grown. This is especially true as many new developments have taken on the look of a phalanx of homes with overly repetitive rooflines, front facades, materials, and prominent garage openings. Kent County desires to avoid such development from dominating and defining community character. The County will encourage through its design guidelines new developments provide sufficient variation to remain visually interesting.

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with village residents and community organizations to develop a street improvement, tree planting, and maintenance program for all villages.*

Street trees contribute to the health of the community, the beauty, and the overall character of historic villages. Planting of street trees has been demonstrated to greatly improve property values and decrease the length of time new and resale residences remain on the market. They are also a prominent feature adding to a neighborhood's sense of place. Significant stormwater benefits also accrue to communities with abundant street trees.

The County will work cooperatively with property owners, residents, business, and community organizations to plant street trees along village roads and to implement other street and roadside improvements.

## Growth Management

In order to achieve the Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives, the County will continue to investigate innovative and current growth management tools and investigate new tools as they emerge that

control the scale, location, type, intensity, and timing of development and redevelopment.

Where appropriate, the County will work with the incorporated towns in developing and implementing these tools. This system of tools must be consistent with the overall vision for the County and can only achieve success through regional cooperation, active citizen involvement, and an ongoing monitoring of the results.



Figure 14: New growth will be properly planned and phased

*Strategy: Ensure that the County’s Capital Improvement Program addresses the fiscal impacts affiliated with growth.*

A strong Capital Improvements Program (CIP) identifies the new or improved facilities and services required to support anticipated growth consistent with the County’s future vision. A CIP may include an analysis of the fiscal impacts of growth, a priority listing of needed improvements and facilities, their estimated cost (including life cycle operation, and maintenance costs), and the proposed funding sources.

Given the level of detail contained in a CIP, it usually extends only five or six years into the future and is updated each year as projects are completed and new projects are added. The CIP should be part of the annual budget.

*Strategy: Coordinate future development with the provision of infrastructure.*

Kent County will explore options to coordinate development in the towns and villages with public infrastructure improvements. The County will carefully review these options for appropriateness to a rural community and for unintended consequences with an eye toward preventing sprawl development. The types and amount of infrastructure required of new development will be a function of its scale and location. The Planning Commission shall require suitable infrastructure for such development as part of its development review.

*Strategy: Insure that development pays its share of the cost of providing public facilities and services.*

Revenues from new growth should be sufficient to pay for all public service and facility expansions required by the new growth plus the wear and tear that the development imposes on existing infrastructure. It should include a proportionate share of funding for scheduled replacements and the potential impact on housing cost and traffic congestion. The County will continue to use developer’s agreements to specifically identify facilities required to meet demand on public facilities created by a particular development covered by the agreement.

*Strategy: Develop a series of indicators as a means of evaluating the success of the County's Plans and Policies.*

In 2009, the State adopted the *Smart Growth, Measures, and Indicators and Implementation of Planning Visions Act*. This act requires counties to produce an annual report for submission to the Maryland Department of Planning, which summarizes significant planning and development actions and activities. It also requires the analysis of development indicators if 50 or more new residential units are constructed in a year. The indicators list the amount of the items below that occurred inside and also that which occurred outside a county's priority funding areas:

1. Amount and share of growth
2. Net density of growth
3. New lots created
4. New home building permits issued

In addition, the County is to provide a development capacity analysis every three years which details the ultimate residential unit potential for the county. The development capacity is based on zoning and prescribed assumptions about the relationship of zoning to a site's actual development yield of residential units.

The annual report must also contain the acres of land preserved during the year. Further, the County must establish a goal for the percentage of development that will locate within its priority funding areas and a time frame for achieving this goal.

This last requirement presents a problem. Priority funding areas are based on backward looking criteria and in some jurisdictions, may encourage growth in unsuitable areas such as high-hazard areas. Kent County must establish the required percentage while maintaining consistency with the policies identified in the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Ordinance.



# Countryside

The gently rolling countryside underlain by rich fertile soils blankets the County. This gift of immeasurable value is the essence of Kent County both physically and culturally. The US Department of Agriculture identifies approximately 57% of Kent County as prime farmland; Maryland as a whole has 23% prime farmland.

The County has some of the best farmland in the United States having a larger percentage than even the renowned Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. This combined with the proximity to the mega-markets of Baltimore, Washington and New York City makes Kent County an ideal location for agribusinesses to thrive.



Figure 15: Rural land uses cover most of Kent County

According to the 2012 US Census of Agriculture, the County's market value of agricultural production topped \$112.2 million—up 31% from 2007. Crop sales accounted for \$78.3 million and livestock sales totaled \$33.8 million.

In addition to being an important component of the local economy, agriculture also provides a picturesque agrarian landscape which enhances County tourism and is vitally important to residents' overall quality

of life. This rural character also provides the motivation for many new residents to relocate to Kent County.

This Plan recognizes that agriculture is the keystone to Kent County's heritage and its future. This Plan provides the policies to ensure this continues.

Growth on the Eastern Shore has seriously threatened farmland and farming. In 1997, the American Farmland Trust identified the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain (primarily Delaware and the Maryland Eastern Shore), as the ninth most threatened agricultural region in the United States. The Eastern Shore's leading poultry company has let it be known, that if development continued as it had in the early years of this century, they would need to relocate.

Residential and commercial developments are slowly eroding the Eastern Shore's agricultural base, an asset that can never be replaced. Not only does development directly consume farmland but it then can create conflicts among farmers and their new neighbors due to normal farm

operations timing and associated noise and dust.

Current agricultural operations use large specialized equipment administering many land treatments suburbanites may find objectionable. These new neighbors object to the noise, odor and dust associated with operations often continuing late into the night. Additional growth and the traffic that comes with it, inhibits transferring farm equipment from field to field. Non-farm

neighbors may also voice opposition to the expansion and diversification of nearby agricultural operations fearing greater conflicts.

It only takes a short drive in any direction away from Kent County to see the development pressure which Kent County faces. Development pressure may not be as easily recognizable within Kent County, but the symptoms are clear. The 2006 Comprehensive Plan reported:

- Between 1996 and 2003 there were 221 new lots created with 44% of those lots being created in 2002 and 2003. During this same time period, 55% of the new lots were created in the countryside.
- Between 2004 and 2005 the average size of new lots has decreased, although new lots in the countryside still tend to be larger than new lots in areas zoned for development.
- Between 1997 and 2002 the number of farm operations and the average farm size has remained fairly constant, but the median farm size has decreased from 179 acres to 160 acres.
- There continues to be a large percentage of absentee ownership of agricultural land, which the National Agricultural Land Study identifies as a symptom of an urbanizing community.

More recently, development pressure as a result of the 2008 recession has moderated but many of the factors that drove second home growth on the Eastern Shore at the turn of the century remain and could re-emerge.

However, agriculture in Kent County remains strong. Investment in machinery and buildings continues to be significant. The new fertilizer supply company and its investment in a rail spur show the private sector's confidence in Kent County's agricultural future.

Competition for land remains elevated with high per acre rents and active farmer demand for agricultural land. At 75%, Kent County has the highest percentage of total land area in farms of any county in the State, as reported in the 2012 Census of Agriculture. In addition, between 2004 and 2015, the majority of the new lots created each year were located in areas zoned for development with the exception of 2009 and 2012. The locations of lots created in 2009 were an anomaly when 7 of the total 9 lots created were within agricultural and resource areas. In 2012 only five new lots were created, however, all were in the agricultural and resource areas. From 2004 through 2015 a total of 351 new lots were subdivided, but of those only 65 (18.5%) were located in the agricultural and resource areas and 286 (81.5%) were in development areas.

Agriculture is the lynchpin that buttresses the County's economy, culture, history, and our everyday experiences. Kent County cannot afford to have this key element damaged or displaced.

In the past farmland was often considered vacant land, an interim use or a holding zone for future development. Today, planning theory has matured with full recognition given to agriculture's value to the County, the State, and the nation. This recognition of agriculture's status as the highest and best use for much of the County is an essential tenet of this Plan.

So, in Kent County agriculture is viewed as a permanent and preferred land use for the majority of the County. The County recognizes that to retain farmland, agriculture's economic viability must be retained and enhanced. Also, care must be taken to prevent conflicting land uses from locating in designated farming areas. Rather, residential, commercial, and industrial uses must be strategically located in and around our existing towns and villages.

Kent County recognizes that a successful farmland retention program requires a comprehensive approach that integrates a variety of techniques, promotes the purchase of farms by farmers and minimizes the potential conflicts between farmers and their non-farm neighbors. The following goals and strategies provide the County's broad based program for the retention and growth of agriculture in Kent County. It is a program that was thoughtfully developed and holds a major key to this Plan's success.

## **Countryside Defined**

For the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan, the Countryside element applies to the Priority Preservation Area and the areas of Kent County dedicated to the viability of not only agricultural production, but also the success of a wide variety of agricultural preservation programs. The Countryside is characterized by land in the unincorporated areas of the County involved in active agricultural production, conservation of sensitive habitat, and preservation of agritourism and natural resource-based tourism.

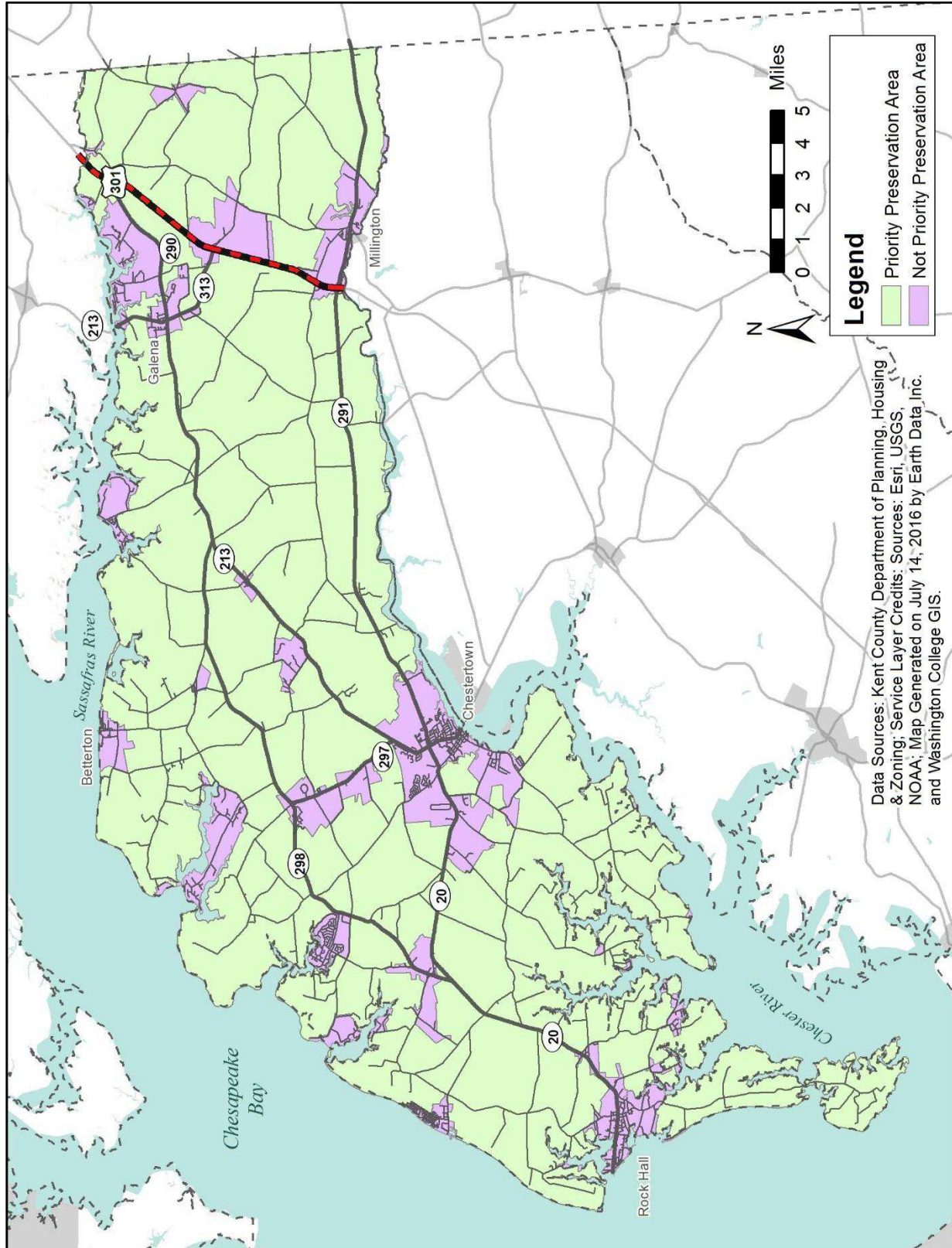
## **Priority Preservation Area**

With the Maryland General Assembly's adoption of the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006, counties with certified agricultural preservation programs were required to adopt a Priority Preservation Area Element as part of the comprehensive plan. The following section is intended to fulfill the requirements of Agricultural Article 2-518 and State Finance and Procurement Article 5-408 and to serve as Kent County's Priority Preservation Area Element. Map 6 locates the County's PPA.

The purpose of the Priority Preservation Area (PPA) is to:

1. Establish appropriate goals for the amount and types of agricultural resource land to be preserved by the County;
2. Describe the kinds of agricultural production the County intends to support and the amount of development the County intends to allow;
3. Describe the methods the County will use to concentrate preservation funds and other supporting efforts in the PPA to achieve the goals of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and the County's preservation acreage goal; and
4. Identify shortcomings in the ability of the County's zoning and land management practices and identify current or future actions to correct the shortcomings.

Map 6 – Priority Preservation Areas



## Priority Preservation Area Origins

In the 1980s, the County started taking steps to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture. One of the tasks given to the Agricultural Advisory Commission was to identify and map farmland that should be for agricultural use. The area was to consist of enough land to support a variety of agricultural activities and maintain a market for the necessary support services in the County.

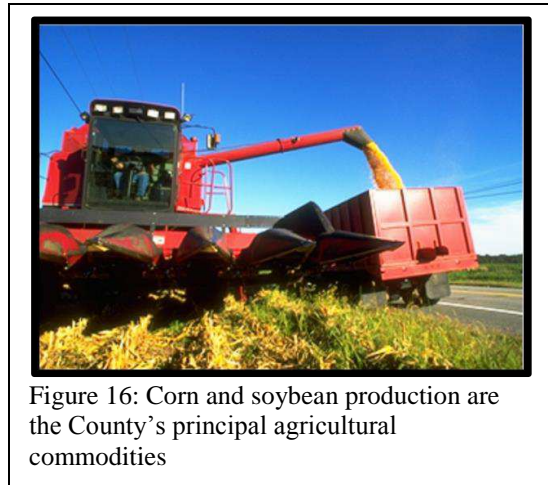


Figure 16: Corn and soybean production are the County's principal agricultural commodities

The original Priority Preservation Area map included almost all of the undeveloped land in the County. In addition, Kent County farmers made it clear that no targeted area of the County should be given special preference for easement acquisition—all farmers should be given an equal opportunity to participate in land preservation programs—and the County's easement ranking system will bring the best farms to the top of the list.

Therefore, the County's Priority Preservation Area consists of the majority of the County's "resource lands," excluding any lands within growth areas or areas already too fragmented by development. Resource lands are defined as any parcel zoned Agricultural Zoning District (AZD) or

Resource Conservation District (RCD). Resource lands also include any lands already protected by an easement.

The initial PPA Element and map were incorporated into the 2006 Comprehensive Plan as an appendix adopted by a resolution of the County Commissioners on April 27, 2010.

The sum of the PPA consists of sufficient land to help maintain a market for the necessary agricultural support services in the County. The agricultural areas will contain some sensitive areas not well suited for agriculture in order to provide large contiguous land areas.

## PPA Designation and Acreage Goal

The State mandates that the County establish an acreage goal within its PPA through easements and zoning that equals at least 80% of the remaining undeveloped areas of land in the PPA as calculated at the time of application for Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and the Maryland Department of Planning certification or recertification. Essentially, this is one area or more where agriculture will be the focus of long-term efforts and investment by the County to ensure its ongoing success and profitability.

The total land area of the County is 179,840 acres and the total area in resource lands is approximately 151,350 acres. Under the County's Land Use Ordinance, a parcel over 20 acres is considered a farm, and for the purposes of the PPA, parcels under 20 acres are considered developed. Approximately 6,630 acres within the PPA are subdivided into parcels under 20 acres and 142,925 acres are considered undeveloped. Eighty percent of the undeveloped land is approximately 114,340 acres.

The County has a long tradition of land preservation. Since the 1970s when the first easements were donated to the Maryland Environmental Trust through the FY 2008 MALPF easement offers, almost 29,775 acres of private land has been placed under some type of easement, and approximately 7,950 acres is publicly owned as park, recreation, or resource management land. By 2017 a total of 38,863 acres were protected by easements. Therefore, approximately 46,813 acres, or 33 %, of the undeveloped portion of the PPA are already protected in some fashion.

### **Preventing Fragmentation**

The County adopted its current Land Use Ordinance in December 2002, which went into effect in October 2003. This Ordinance encourages the preservation of agricultural and resource lands and addresses the farmette issue through subdivision provisions.

Within the Agricultural Zoning District (AZD) the base density remains at 1 dwelling unit per 30 acres; however, subdivided lots may be less than 30 acres with the stipulation that the total aggregate acreage of new lots cannot comprise more than 10% of the original tract, known as the 10% rule. Subdivisions where the resulting parcels are 100-acres or larger do not count toward the maximum developed percentage. With this restriction, landowners are unable to fragment the Agricultural Zoning District into 30-acre farmettes.

As an alternative to the AZD density of 1 dwelling unit per 30 acres, there is also an enclave development provision that allows a density of 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres provided that bulk and design standards can be met, which are quite restrictive. The maximum enclave size is 10 dwellings and the minimum is 3 dwellings. In addition, the maximum lot size is 0.75 acres and the 10%

rule still applies. Only one enclave is allowed per parcel. There is also a 600-foot setback from the external access road, plus a 600-foot setback from any protected lands (easements or local County Agricultural Preservation District). Furthermore, the applicant must demonstrate that the remaining agricultural land is suitable for commercially viable agricultural enterprises and that neighboring agricultural operations will also not be adversely impacted.

### **Challenges for the Priority Preservation Area**

The County's most significant limitations in the acquisition of agricultural preservation easements is dependence on the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) as the primary program for the purchase of easements. The County recognizes the need to find alternative sources of funding to support land preservation and will continue to investigate means of increasing funding from other sources.

As has been in the past, there is still insufficient development pressure to support a transfer of development rights (TDR) program within the County or collaboratively with the towns. However, the County will continue to keep the possibility of developing a TDR program as an option for the future. In addition, the County will review existing fees and regulations to evaluate whether or not they interfere with existing agricultural operations or the ability of farmers to diversify. The County is committed to taking a pro-active approach to investigating new opportunities to promote and maintain its strong agricultural industry.

## **Goal: Support Agriculture as a Permanent and Preferred Land Use**

*Strategy: Promote Kent County as an agriculturally-friendly county.*

Maintaining a strong agricultural industry is a core principle in Kent County. Over the years, the County has supported programs and policies to encourage a diversified agricultural economy. Stewardship of our lands and waters is a universal ethic and any agricultural operation which respects the lands, waters and culture of the region has a place in Kent County. As agriculture has changed, the County has responded by changing regulations and policies to keep the industry strong. In Kent County, agriculture is an important component of the economy and not just a way of life.

The County will promote itself as an agriculturally-friendly place through its land use policies, as well as economic and tourism development efforts. There is no one kind of agriculture the County intends to support. Agriculture is a changing industry and farmers need to be able to change and adapt to stay in business. With an ethic of stewardship for our lands and waters guiding decisions, the County will continue to support all types of agricultural operations. It has served and will continue to serve as a place for farmers who want to continue farming. The County will periodically review and, if necessary, update the right to farm ordinance.

The Agricultural Zoning District also considers how land uses can affect agricultural operations. Beginning with the 1989 Zoning Ordinance, the County removed uses that could be incompatible with farming, such as new churches. With the 2002 Ordinance, the County expanded the uses that support agriculture, which included allowing structures for processing animals and farm products.



Figure 17: Agriculture is the preferred land use in the Countryside

*Strategy: Support programs and initiatives to maintain the economic viability of agriculture.*

To ensure proper consideration of agricultural issues and the inclusion of the agricultural community in all decisions affecting the future of farming, the County will appoint agricultural representatives on its relevant boards and commissions.

Moreover, the County intends to allow very limited development in the Priority Preservation Area. The County is committed to directing growth adjacent to existing neighborhoods, villages, and towns. The County has one of the lowest land conversion rates in the State and the demand for agricultural land remains high. At the present time, there is competition among farmers for land whenever farms come up for sale, and there continues to be an influx of farmers from other regions who want to relocate to Kent County due to its reputation for strong support of the industry.

*Strategy: Identify land for agricultural use through the Priority Preservation Area.*

Through the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 (HB 2), and as modified during the 2007 Legislative Session by HB 1354, the State required counties to incorporate a Priority Preservation Area Element into its comprehensive land-use plan in order to be certified under its Certification Program.

A Priority Preservation Area (PPA) is an explicitly delineated area within the county. As a certified county, Kent County maintains a designated agricultural Priority Preservation Area. As part of the re-certification evaluation, the County is required to maintain policies, ordinances, regulations, and rules that, at minimum, do not interfere with normal agricultural and forestry activities and, preferably, support the ability of working farms to engage in normal agricultural and forestry activities.

See the preceding Priority Preservation Area discussion for the details of this technique.

The purchase of easements and efforts of local land conservancies will be targeted to these the Priority Preservation Areas and the related map will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary.

### **Goal: Support Agriculture through Outreach and Education**

*Strategy: Promote a regional Farm Link Program.*

The County will encourage a local agricultural interest group to establish a Farm Link Program which helps match farmers (especially young farmers) with those who want to sell or lease their farms.

*Strategy: Develop an outreach program to recognize agriculture and its importance to the County.*

It is important for visitors and new residents to recognize the importance of agriculture and its value to the County. Outreach through brochures, interpretive sites along the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway, or signs located at key gateways may encourage people to become more aware of the countryside and to better understand the needs of farmers.

*Strategy: Promote the use of best management practices and support full funding of technical assistance and cost share programs.*

Although most farms already employ best management practices, there is a need to develop comprehensive farm management plans and update existing practices. Comprehensive farm management uses coordinated nutrient and erosion control practices to mitigate the environmental impacts of agriculture. One way to introduce new practices to farmers, contractors and the community is with agricultural and habitat restoration field days. Such field days should be fostered.

Increased funding is necessary to provide the technical assistance to prepare the plans and the cost share to then implement the plans.

### **Goal: Maintain Agricultural Land and Forests**

*Strategy: Retain the Agricultural Zoning District.*

The County has established and will maintain the Agricultural Zoning District (AZD). It is important to focus attention on agriculture as an industry rather than merely addressing open space or the preservation of rural character. In Kent County, continuing agriculture as an industry is recognized as a key element to the County's economic development and serves as a cultural

underpinning, so its retention and viability has always been and will continue to be a top priority for County land use and other policies.

For agriculture to continue as a viable industry, specific standards which address preferred uses, farmland retention and diversification of the agricultural economy are essential. These standards have been built into this Plan's implementation policies and must be vigorously pursued.

Farming, animal husbandry and agribusiness are the primary and preferred uses in the Agricultural Zoning District. The district shall implement the following policies:

1. Construction that is not related to farming or agricultural support services is not appropriate. To minimize conflicts between land uses, such non-farm construction must be limited and that which is allowed must officially recognize the characteristics of an active agricultural community, i.e. odor, dust, and noise. In particular, housing development should be limited as such development in agricultural areas sets up conflicts between agricultural operations and their neighbors. In addition, as protection of rural character and view-scape, there can be no more than two new lots fronting on an existing public road; any additional lots would be served by a deeded private road.
2. As time changes and market demand shifts, the ability to diversify agricultural operations and to expand agribusiness and agricultural support services is crucial to the continuance of agriculture as an industry. These businesses are critical adjuncts to the agricultural

industry and may involve necessary noise, dust, and odor. The County will review existing setbacks and buffers for these types of business mindful that for most of the County agriculture is the preferred use and conflicting non-farm construction shall continue to be discouraged.

3. Farm-based businesses and cottage and home-based occupations that are compatible with agricultural operations are encouraged in the agricultural zoning district as a means to further diversify the County's economy.
4. Large contiguous areas of prime agricultural land are critical to an expanding and prosperous agricultural industry. The preservation of such areas reduces the potential for conflicts between farmers and their non-farm neighbors, allows the diversification of agricultural operations and reduces the need for regulations governing nuisances sometimes associated with agribusiness. It is therefore essential to minimize land consumption by non-farm related development and to target the Agricultural Zoning District for easement programs and farm retention policies.
5. Public water and/or sewer systems are not planned for this zoning district and will not be extended into or through this zoning district except to correct situations where:
  - a. An existing developed property has a dysfunctional on-site wastewater treatment or water supply system (hereafter

referred to as a sanitary system) that, due to the parcel's characteristics, cannot be replaced with a system meeting current health and environmental standards; and

- b. There exists a public or other community sanitary system that can practically and economically supply service to the parcel and its existing uses; and
- c. The provision of such service will not result in material expansion, new lot creation or otherwise materially intensify the use of the property; and
- d. The Planning Commission makes a finding that provision of the service is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan; and
- e. A Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan amendment is approved by the County and the State; and
- f. This policy shall not be interpreted to allow additional new development and/or material intensification of an existing use and is reserved for special circumstances to protect public health and the environment and not to foster development of residential, commercial, and/or industrial uses in this zoning district.

*Strategy: Retain the Resource Conservation District.*

The County will maintain its current standards for the Resource Conservation District (RCA). The district shall implement the following policies:

- 1. Conserve, protect, and enhance the overall ecological values of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, its biological productivity, and its diversity;
- 2. Provide adequate breeding, feeding, and wintering habitats for wildlife populations that require the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, or coastal habitats to sustain viable populations;
- 3. Conserve the existing developed woodlands and forests for their water quality benefits;
- 4. Conserve the land and water resource base necessary to maintain and support such uses as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and aquaculture. This includes areas characterized by nature-dominated environments (that is, wetlands, forests, and abandoned fields) and resource-based activities (that is, agriculture, forestry, hunting, fisheries' activities, or aquaculture).
- 5. Public water and/or sewer systems are not planned for this zoning district and will not be extended into or through this zoning district except to correct situations where:
  - a. An existing developed property has dysfunctional on-site wastewater treatment or water

- supply system (hereafter referred to as a sanitary system) that, due to the parcel’s characteristics, cannot be replaced with a system meeting current health and environmental standards; and
- b. There exists a public or other community sanitary system that can practically and economically supply service to the parcel and its existing uses; and
  - c. The provision of such service will not result in material expansion, new lot creation or otherwise materially intensify the use of the property; and
  - d. The Planning Commission makes a finding that provision of the service is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan; and
  - e. A Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan amendment is approved by the County and the State; and
  - f. This policy shall not be interpreted to allow additional new development and/or material intensification of an existing use and is reserved for special circumstances to protect public health and the environment and not to foster development of residential, commercial, and/or industrial uses in this zoning district.

*Strategy: Review the Rural Character Zoning District.*

The purpose of the Rural Character Zoning (RCD) District is to satisfy the market demand for rural lots in a location that

minimizes conflicts with agricultural operations while maintaining rural character. The Rural Character District may function as a transition between towns, villages, existing developments, and the Agricultural Zoning District. The following policies will apply to the Rural Character District:

1. Residential development will follow design standards to preserve rural character. These design standards will provide guidelines for protecting significant rural features, preserving scenic views, designing with the natural topography, and locating new buildings to minimize their impact on rural character.
2. Recreational uses, such as golf courses, racquet courts, and stables may locate in these areas, but most commercial and industrial uses will be prohibited.
3. Public water and/or sewer systems are not planned for this zoning district and will not be extended into or through this zoning district except to correct situations where:
  - a. An existing developed property has dysfunctional on-site wastewater treatment or water supply system (hereinafter referred to as sanitary system) that, due to the parcel’s characteristics, cannot be replaced with a system meeting current health and environmental standards; and
  - b. There exists a public or other community sanitary system that can practically and economically supply service to the parcel and its existing uses; and

- c. The provision of such service will not result in material expansion, new lot creation or otherwise materially intensify the use of the property; and
- d. The Planning Commission makes a finding that provision of the service is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan; and
- e. A Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan amendment is approved by the County and the State; and
- f. This policy shall not be interpreted to allow additional new development and/or material intensification of an existing use and is reserved for special circumstances to protect public health and the environment and not to foster development of residential, commercial, and/or industrial uses in this zoning district.

*Strategy: Reduce the number of undeveloped lots in the Priority Preservation Area.*

Currently, there are over 3,700 undeveloped parcels in Kent County, though only 932 of those parcels are located in the Agricultural Zoning District or the Resource Conservation District. Of those, 388 are parcels that are 20-acres or greater in size that meet the County's threshold for being considered a farm. This means that 544 parcels are undeveloped lots of less than 20-acres.

In order to achieve the goal of maintaining the rural and agricultural character of the County, the number of existing, scattered, undeveloped lots located in the agricultural and resource conservation areas must be

reduced. The County will pursue lot consolidation methods for landowners to voluntarily incorporate these parcels into the main farm parcels.

**Goal: Promote Voluntary Programs to Permanently Preserve Agricultural Lands**

*Strategy: Investigate a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program.*

Most Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs are voluntary private sector processes for preserving farmland. Such programs create "sending" areas, from which a property owner can sell and thereby transfer development rights; these are the areas the County wishes to preserve. Also created are "receiving" areas where transferred development rights are "put down" and can be converted into additional lots.

Receiving areas are designed for growth and must have adequate public facilities. The price for the transferred right is determined by market forces with the County registering and tracking their sale and location/use.

For example, a developer purchases development rights (density) from a landowner in a sending area and the purchased development rights enables the buyer to create additional lots equal to the number of development rights purchased from the sending zone in a designated receiving zone.

The Agricultural Zoning District would be designated as a sending zone for development rights. The Rural Character Zone and planned growth areas around towns and villages would be designated as "receiving" zones, allowing densities to increase if TDRs are purchased.

Through inter-jurisdictional agreements, the incorporated towns could also be designated as “receiving” zones. The densities of the designated growth areas under their base zoning would be relatively low, with TDR as the only means to permit higher densities, thereby encouraging the use of TDRs. The TDR Program would set out the maximum permitted densities for these areas.

*Strategy: Explore County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program.*

The County will explore options for funding a County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to supplement the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and Maryland Environmental Trust Program.

The creation of a local PDR program would allow the County to establish its own standards for determining easement value, set its own procedures for paying landowners, and have more control over funding levels. The funds generated from this program will be used for acquiring development rights in the Agricultural Zoning District.

*Strategy: Maintain a State Certified Agricultural Preservation Program.*

Kent County will continue to maintain State certification of its agricultural preservation program. The Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation currently certify county agricultural land preservation programs, which affects the allocation of State agricultural transfer tax revenues.

Counties which are certified, such as Kent, retain 75% of the locally derived agricultural transfer tax revenues. One requirement of certification requires the commitment of County funds towards easement acquisition. The County will continue to commit the minimum funds necessary to remain

certified and will look for ways to increase funding above the minimum requirement.

*Strategy: Participate in all available land preservation programs.*

There are a variety of land preservation programs available. The County will continue to participate in as many programs as possible. These programs may include but are not limited to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Maryland Environmental Trust, the Rural Legacy Program, the Federal Farmland and Ranchland Preservation Program, and the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy Agricultural Security Corridor.

The County supports the efforts of the Eastern Shore 2010 Agreement original goal to preserve through permanent easements 50% of the Upper Eastern Shore’s Resource Lands by 2010.

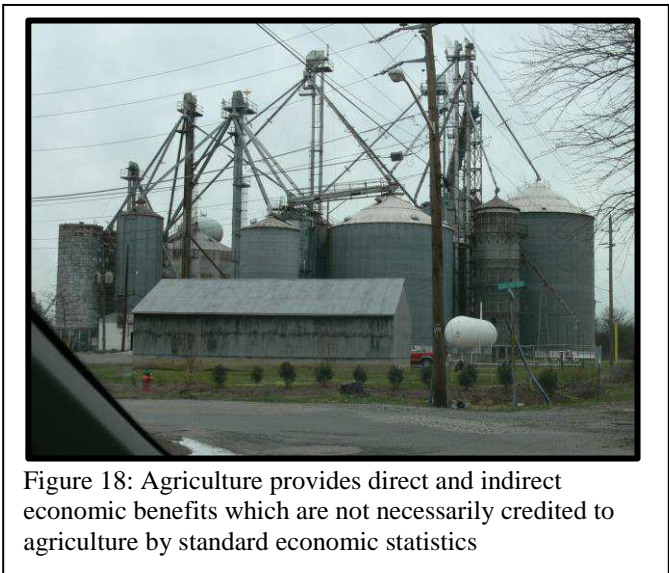


Figure 18: Agriculture provides direct and indirect economic benefits which are not necessarily credited to agriculture by standard economic statistics

*Strategy: Explore tax credit incentive program for lands protected by MALPF districts and easements.*

Many counties offer tax credits to landowners enrolled in the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Program as an incentive to encourage

landowners to participate. It may also be possible to use a tax credit program to provide funding for land preservation by allowing landowners to pay the full tax but have the value of the credit placed in a land preservation fund.

*Strategy: Support funding of all land preservation programs.*

It is important at all levels of government that funding for agricultural preservation programs be maintained or increased. These programs may include but are not limited to the Federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program, and the Rural Legacy Program.

**Goal: Protect Agricultural Areas, Forested Lands, and Open Spaces in the Countryside**

*Strategy: Protect agricultural areas from incompatible capital projects.*

Often, public construction projects such as highways, schools, and sewer and water facilities can disrupt agricultural activities, take agricultural land, or encourage sprawling development patterns. Incompatible capital projects will not be located within the Agricultural District unless it can be proven that no other alternatives are available, and they shall be located so as to minimize adverse effects on the neighboring agricultural land.

*Strategy: Protect forested land and other open spaces in the Countryside.*

Not all land in the Countryside is suitable for agriculture. Although these areas may not be productive agriculturally, they are an important part of our rural character and natural environment. Steep or poorly drained soils are often forested or are wetlands; both provide valuable wildlife habitats and protect water quality. The County will encourage the conservation of these areas.



Figure 19: Forests provide ecological, stormwater, and economic benefits

*Strategy: Define scenic view sheds and develop guidelines to protect the most threatened views.*

The County will consider completing a study to define important scenic views and will consider developing guidelines to protect the most threatened views. The loss and marring of scenic views especially along the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway as well as in and around our historic villages will have a major impact on the rural character of the County.

# Environment

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Kent County is blessed with a rich natural resource base. The County seeks to maintain and improve these natural resources through the practice of sustainability in its development regulations and policies and its own facilities and operations.

Simply put, sustainability seeks to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It provides for inter-generational equity.

Kent County's most prominent hallmarks include the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, fertile soils, rich marshlands, and a landscape teeming with wildlife. These resources along with the lifestyle and economy they generate are the foundation from which our local culture emerged. Today, not only are they key elements of Kent's economy and quality of life, but also, they are the very essence of its character. These irreplaceable resources combined with our citizens' resourcefulness will serve to keep the County thriving while honoring our natural heritage.

The County's important natural resources includes:

- Clean air,
- Prime agricultural land,
- Tidal and non-tidal wetlands,
- Woodlands and large forests,
- Ground water aquifers,
- The Chesapeake Bay,
- The Chester River,
- The Sassafras River
- Other rivers and their tributaries and ponds,
- Mineral resources,

- Working landscapes for agriculture and fisheries,
- Vistas and open space,
- Historic sites, heritage, and cultural areas,
- Dark nighttime skies and
- A peaceful, unhurried atmosphere.

The County also values its diverse ecosystems, which include:

- Hedgerows
- Verdant cropped fields,
- Diverse shorelines,
- Meadows,
- Forests,
- Wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation, and other plant communities.



Figure 20: Kent County provides many enriching opportunities

These systems contain a wide variety of wildlife including deer, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, waterfowl, game and song birds, colonial nesting water birds, raptors, fish, crabs, and a rich variety of shellfish.

These environmental resources have enhanced Kent County in a wide variety of ways, and the County strives to continue its

balanced approach to their sustainable use by:

1. Keeping its communities desirable places to live that offer economic and other opportunities to their inhabitants
2. Preserving natural resources
3. Sustaining natural biodiversity for the services it provides to society and for its inherent value

Incorporated within this Environmental Element is the Water Resources Element, Areas of Critical State Concern Element, the Mineral Resources Element, the Sensitive Areas Element, a Fisheries Element, and Flood Control Element. These combined Elements identify the strategies and proposals for achieving environmental stability and enhancements while contemplating planning the County's future.

## Water Resources Element Analysis

The Water Resources Element (WRE), as defined by *the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland §1-410*, establishes:

1. A clear relationship between existing and proposed future development;
2. The relationship between drinking water and wastewater demand and the facilities necessary to meet demands created by anticipated development; and
3. The measures needed to limit and control anticipated stormwater and non-point source water pollution generated by new development.

Simply put, the Water Resources Element should answer three questions:

1. Is there adequate water supply to meet current and future needs?
2. Is there adequate wastewater and septic supply to meet current and future needs?
3. What, if any, impact will meeting these needs have on water resources?

Within this section, the data and results of the Water Resources Element Analysis are summarized. The complete data set and analysis of the Water Resources Element are located within the *Kent County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan*.

The Water Resources Element identifies drinking water resources and wastewater treatment facilities needed to support existing and future development. It also identifies suitable receiving waters for existing and future wastewater and stormwater discharges. With the initial Water Resources Element adopted in 2010, Kent County and the Towns of Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington, and Rock Hall prepared a water resources element to "focus growth in areas best suited to use the existing and planned water and wastewater infrastructure that will protect and preserve the natural environs, promote economic growth and support diversity of living environments in Kent County." The current Water Resources Element continues this approach.

A key element of the Water Resources Element is the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) Land Use Change Analysis Model 2016. This model provides a scenario for potential growth and its location in Kent County through the year 2040. As a model,

it is based on a series of assumptions which have been documented by MDP. The model relies on population and household projections, development location, and yield trends of the last 20 years. It also contemplates existing zoning and a series of assumptions about the development potential of parcels. The model then aggregates by subwatershed the individual parcel development potential considering population and household projections to make its residential unit projections.

The model provides a starting point which represents a most-extreme growth scenario for anticipating future demand for public water and sewer services and the resulting pollution loads. This projection does not represent the County's historic or current growth patterns which imply less growth. The model assumes based on past trends about half of new development (50%) would be served by public water and sewerage services with the other half served by individual wells and on-site septic systems.

MDP projections for the year 2040 reveal a County population of 23,500 people and 10,675 households. The most recent County American Community Survey estimates a current population (2015) of 19,787 people and 7,448 households (2014). Therefore, the County is expected to grow by about 3,713 people or an additional 2,500 households by 2040. If the ratio of public water and sewerage service in the MDP Land Use Change Analysis 2016 Model (50 percent) is factored in, then the County's and town public water and wastewater treatment systems can expect an increase of approximately 1,857 people requiring about 1,250 new connections by 2040.

Kent County in its Comprehensive Plan and its Land Use Ordinance has established and continues to implement strong policies designed to preserve its agricultural base and

direct most urban development to the County's towns and villages. The County has been successful in its implementation of Smart Growth principles.

It appears that the MDP Model may be predicting more developed acreage to occur in the rural portions of the County than the County's policy would permit. Therefore, the County will continue to monitor, through its annual reports and its interim review of the Comprehensive Plan, the actual location and amount of future development. It is expected that future development will continue to respond to County growth policies. This may result in the demand for public water and sewerage services to grow sooner than predicted by the model.

The five incorporated towns in Kent County all offer public water and sewer service to residents and businesses within their boundaries and, in most cases, to residents in limited, designated areas outside their corporate limits. The Kent County Department of Water and Wastewater owns and operates all water and wastewater systems (including transmission and collection infrastructure) in the County's unincorporated service areas and entered inter-municipal agreements with the Towns of Chestertown, Millington, and Rock Hall to serve areas in the County with failing septic systems.

**Goal: Maintain and Implement the Water Resources Element (WRE).**

*Strategy: Incorporate the WRE into the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, the Watershed Implementation Plan and other relevant County policies and actions.*

The County's water resource goals, in cooperation with its municipalities, are to:

1. Maintain a safe and adequate water supply and adequate amounts of wastewater treatment capacity to serve planned growth
2. Identify stormwater runoff and the measures needed to limit their environmental impact
3. Take steps to protect and restore water quality
4. Meet the County's river and stream water quality regulatory requirements

The first step in the analysis in the Water Resources Element is a projection of land use changes for the County and for each of the County's six six-digit subwatersheds using the Maryland Department of Planning's Land Use Change Analysis Model.

A map of the watersheds is shown in Map 7. Below in Table 1 are the projected land use changes from 2010 to 2040 for the entire County.

Note that the acreages for land use change in Table 1 have increased over the initial MDP Land Use Change Model (2010 Water Resources Element). This change occurs due to projected growth of 2,500 additional households residing in Kent County and to changes resulting from improved accounting for developed lands in rural areas. The prior model did not assign developed acreage to large parcel rural residential units. The revised model attempts to better track development acreage in rural areas.

This land use change analysis projects that by 2040 there could be an additional 2,500 households in the County that would increase the demand for sanitary services (water and wastewater facilities) and generate an increase in stormwater runoff in need of management. The detailed

projections by subwatershed are contained in the Water Resources Element located within the *Kent County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan*. Map 8 below locates the County's existing land cover.

*Strategy: Support the goals of the WRE as listed below. These strategies are consistent with statutory requirements of the Md. LAND USE Code Ann. §1-410:*

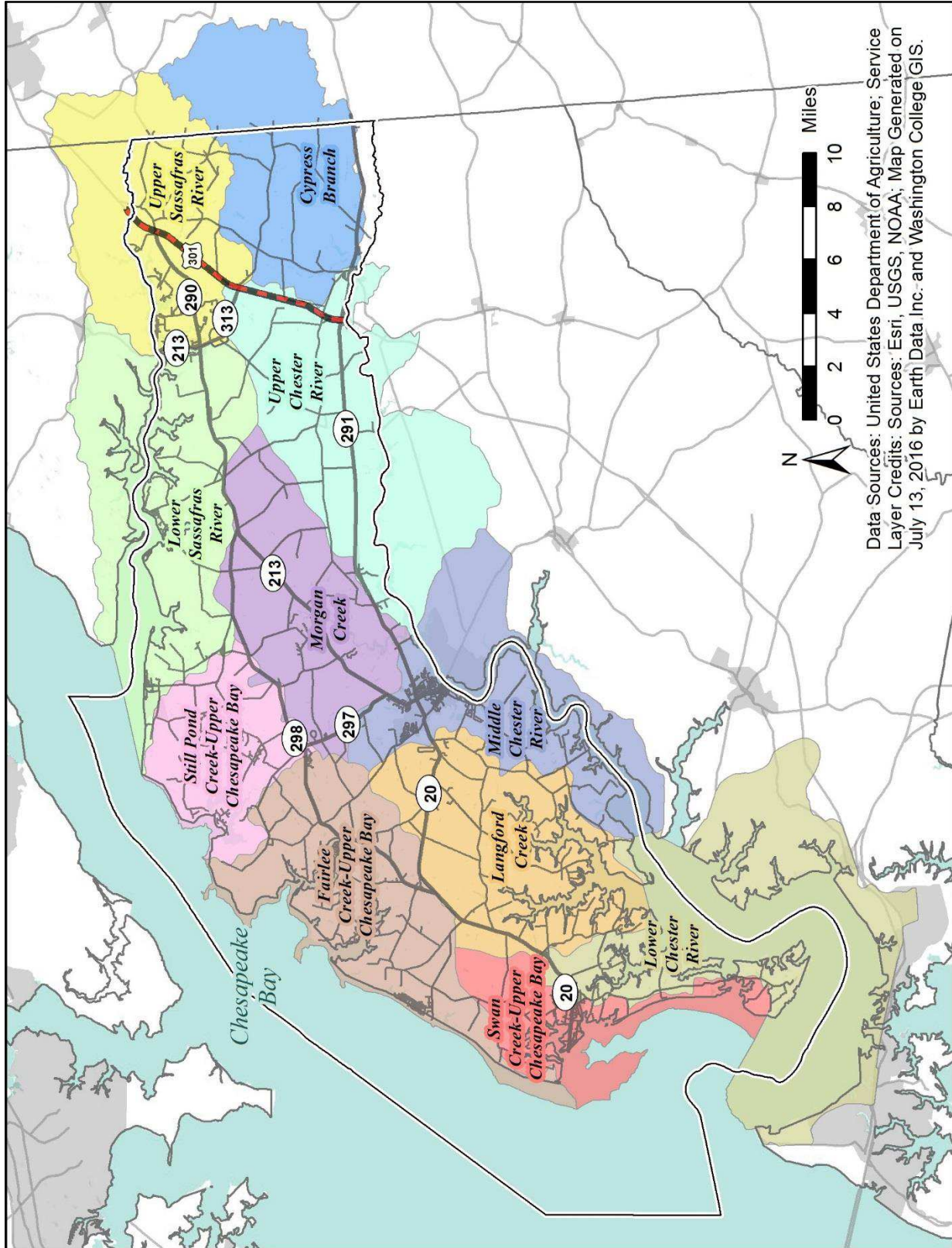
1. Assure that existing and planned public water systems meet projected demand
2. Assure that existing and planned public wastewater collection and treatment systems meet projected demand without exceeding their permitted capacity for treatment or nutrient load limits
3. Assure that the County's stormwater management policies reflect the most recent State requirements
4. Maintain land use patterns that limit adverse water quality impacts

### **Watersheds**

Located in the Atlantic Coastal Plain, Kent County is comparatively low-lying, with relief seldom exceeding 80 feet. The Eastern and Central portions of the County are characterized by a broad, gently rolling plain; the Northwestern section is deeply incised by streams with their shorelines' steep banks. In some cases, these bluffs are 20 to 80 feet high. Large flat plains and terraces characterize the Southwestern County gently sloping toward the water.

The Sassafras and Chester Rivers are tidal estuaries navigable by small boats almost to the Maryland-Delaware line. These rivers and the Bay give the County its long (40 miles by 8 to 10 miles wide) crescent shape.

Map 7 - Subwatersheds



The shoreline undulates with many bays and inlets. A deep-water channel suitable for ocean-going vessels passes close to the coast between Tolchester and Howell Point. Along much of the coastline the water is deep enough for pleasure boats to travel and moor within a few feet of shore.

Minor streams are few and short. A watershed divide runs down the County's spine between Massey and Still Pond and separates the streams flowing north into the Sassafras River and those flowing south into the Chester River. At Still Pond the divide splits into a west heading branch and the other turns southwest gradually losing altitude toward Rock Hall. The County has 17,280 acres of surface water within its boundaries.

The following addresses the County's environmental goals and strategies and provides the components of the County's Sensitive Areas Element.

**Goal: Encourage Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay, Its Tributaries, and Their Watersheds through Planning**

*Strategy: The County will make all reasonable efforts to protect the economic viability of our natural resource-based industries and our working landscapes for County citizens.*

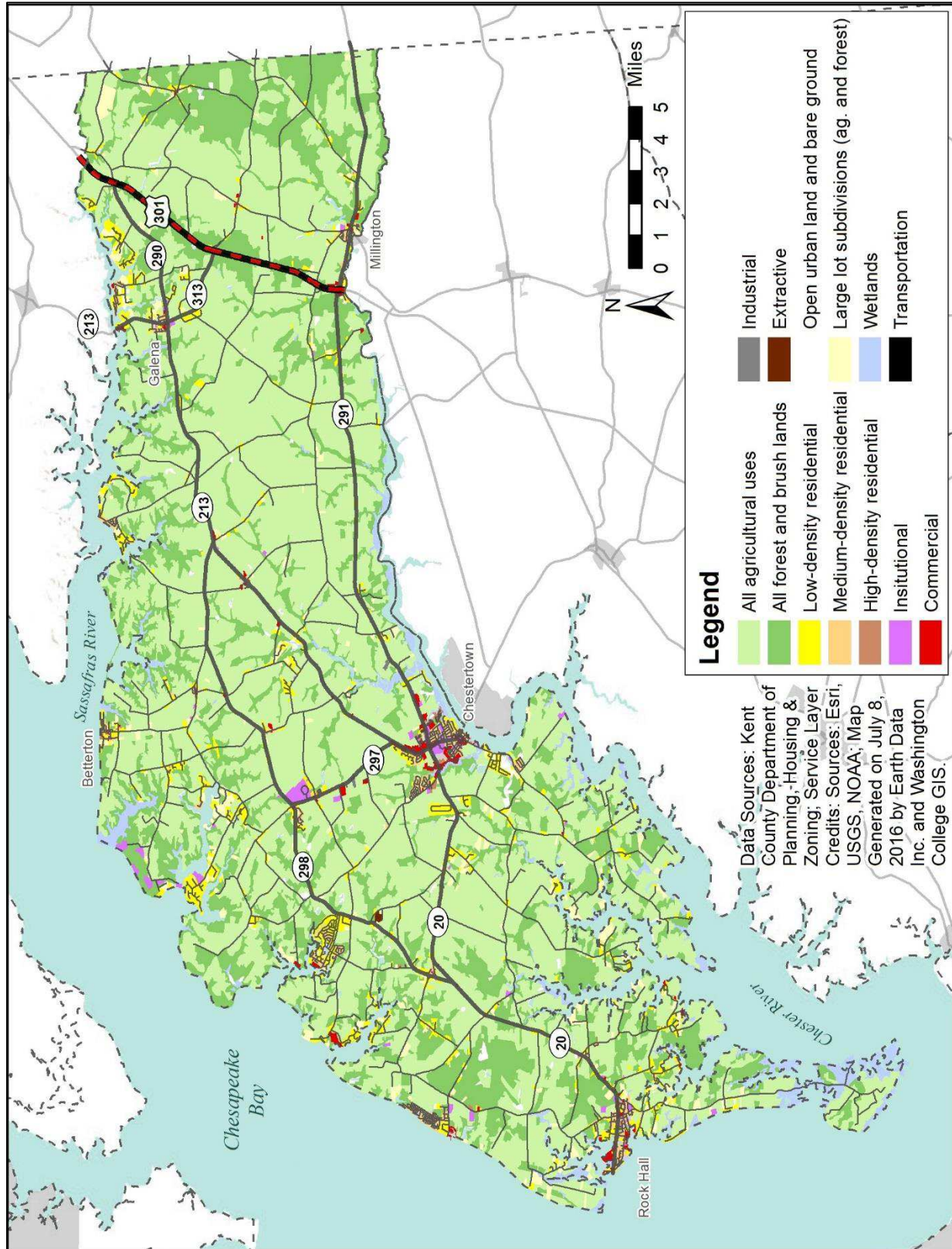
The County will work with the State and Federal governments so that regulations and restrictions on such operations will be developed and implemented after all data used for their development has been properly peer reviewed in accord with the Data Quality Act standards and by applicable County policies.

Table 1: Kent County Land Use Acreage, 2010-2040

Land Use	2010	2040	Change
Low Density Residential	6,371	8,679	2,308
Medium Density Residential	2,128	2,373	245
High Density Residential	227	223	-4
Commercial	994	1,127	134
Industrial	38	38	-1
Institutional	934	933	-2
Extractive	31	31	0
Open Urban Land	350	331	-19
Cropland	113,111	110,465	-2,647
Pasture	794	792	-2
Orchards & Vineyards	1,755	1,725	-30
Row & Garden Crops	59	59	0
Deciduous Forest	35,122	34,569	-553
Evergreen Forest	1,134	1,078	-55
Mixed Forest	5,405	5,278	-127
Brush	336	286	-51
Water	79,007	79,007	0
Wetlands	4,397	4,397	0
Beaches	0	0	0
Bare Exposed Rock	0	0	0
Bare Ground	49	24	-25
Transportation	202	202	0
Very Low Density Residential (ag)	2,442	2,912	470
Very Low Density Residential (forest)	1,955	2,328	372
Feeding Operations	304	290	-13
Agricultural Buildings	290	290	0
Totals	257,435	257,435	0

Source: Maryland Department of Planning, Land Use Change Analysis, 2016

Map 8 – Existing Land Cover



In addition to strictures applying to farming, commercial fishing and seafood operations, this strategy will apply to all regulations and programs undertaken to implement the State's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and/or the current Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Kent County seeks to ensure all State and Federal regulations are properly prepared and implemented.

*Strategy: Encourage inter-jurisdictional watershed planning.*

The County will continue to promote multi-jurisdictional watershed planning and watershed management within and adjacent to the County. Community involvement is a crucial aspect for the success of the program and will be incorporated throughout this work. This process incorporates:

1. Identification of the basic need and direction of the watershed management program, including the collection of preliminary data and the identification and assembly of all interested parties
2. Coordination with the State, local watershed associations, and other non-governmental organizations to monitor County water bodies
3. Continued encouragement of volunteer efforts to collect detailed water quality data and analysis
4. Development and pursuit of specific goals and objectives for the watershed management program
5. Definition, identification, and protection of sensitive and other environmentally-significant areas as part of the comprehensive planning and zoning process directing human activities away from environmentally sensitive areas

6. Development of detailed implementation strategies and procedures to achieve the goals and objectives
7. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the watershed management program and make program changes as required

### **Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)**

The Water Resources Element strives to assure that the Comprehensive Plan fully integrates water resources issues and potential solutions into its overall planning mission. A major new component of this effort, Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) has moved to the forefront of national, State and local water quality improvement efforts. The Federal Clean Water Act requires States to assess their waters, producing a list of impaired waters. For such waters, a TMDL must be calculated. The TMDL estimates the level of a pollutant which a water body can assimilate and continue to meet water quality standards.

The MDP Land Use Change Model 2016 and the nutrient loadings projected by MPD/MDE reflect an increase in development that would result in greater nutrient loadings. To offset these loads, implementation of the County's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) is essential. This plan includes best management practices, such as low impact development, implementation of the current stormwater management regulations, installation of nitrogen removing septic systems, and other County and municipal water quality improvements. It is also essential to ensure that development is directed to town or County public water and sewerage service areas.



Figure 21: Water quality planning will provide environmental and economic benefits

**Goal: Implement programs to improve water quality resulting in removal of County tributaries from the impaired waters list**

*Strategy: Monitor and update the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and achieve local and Baywide Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) through the most cost-effective strategies and techniques.*

Developed with citizens, businesses, the agricultural community, and non-profit groups, past water quality planning included the development of Watershed Restoration Action Strategies (WRAS) and the County’s Phase I and its Phase II Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs). These plans serve as a blue print for restoring and maintaining a watershed’s key environmental resources including water quality, and aquatic and terrestrial resources.

In 2002, the County completed a WRAS for the Middle Chester River Watershed. In 2006, a WRAS for the Upper Chester River was finalized. The SassafRAS Watershed Implementation Plan was finalized in 2009 and approved in 2010 by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Kent County Phase II WIP (Phase II) was completed in 2011. The County will work cooperatively with adjacent jurisdictions to develop and implement watershed restoration action strategies and to update and implement Phase II WIP strategies.

The County’s Phase II WIP as displayed in Table 2 below, lists the WIP strategies and Table 3 provides the current and projected nitrogen loads by sector from 2009 through 2025, the TMDL target year. Table 4 provides the percent nitrogen reductions needed by sector to meet the 2017 and the final 2025 targets and is derived from the information in Table 3.

The State’s TMDL strategy is to achieve 75% reduction by 2017 and to have all necessary best management practices in place to meet the final TMDLs levels by 2025.



Figure 22: Kent County's land is nearly surrounded by water

The TMDL program is designed to have bodies of water meet water quality standards. The Kent County WIP identifies its strategy for taking water quality improvement actions. However, the WIP notes that significant funding and staffing shortfalls exist unless additional resources are made available.

*Strategy: Work with the State and Federal governments, as well as neighboring jurisdictions and nonprofit organizations to develop programs and techniques to procure sufficient financial and staff resources to fully achieve the TMDL targets.*

Pollutants include nutrients, toxic metals, and numerous other biological and chemicals that degrade water quality. States are responsible for addressing all TMDLs and removing water bodies from the impaired waters list. Kent County will continue to collaborate with the County's towns and watershed organizations in order to achieve the TMDLs reduction goals established for the County.

Kent County will continue to work with the State and Federal governments to secure sufficient funding and/or techniques to overcome local resource shortfalls to fully achieve the TMDL. Also, the County will continue its collaborative efforts with neighboring jurisdictions and nonprofit organizations to explore regional support and approaches to implement nutrient load reduction goals.

*Strategy: Enforce current stormwater management regulations with their environmental site design requirements.*

Maryland's current stormwater management regulations (The "Stormwater Management Act" 2007) apply to all new development and redevelopment projects that did not have final project approval for erosion and

sediment control and stormwater management plans prior to May 4, 2010.

These regulations require the use of environmental site design (ESD) to the maximum extent feasible. Environmental site design is described by the Maryland Department of the Environment as "using small-scale stormwater management practices, nonstructural techniques, and better site planning to mimic natural hydrologic runoff characteristics and minimize the impact of land development on water resources."

Environmental site design conserves natural drainage patterns, soils, and vegetation while minimizing developed areas, and reducing runoff volumes to more closely mimic natural conditions. The objective is to design a post-development site to have drainage characteristics that closely resemble natural conditions.

### **Goal: Encourage Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay, Its Tributaries, and Their Watersheds through Best Management Practices**

*Strategy: Promote the use of native plantings.*

The County will encourage homeowners and businesses to use native plants for landscaping. Native plants tend to require less maintenance and are less sensitive to adverse weather conditions and are habitat and food for indigenous species.

*Strategy: Promote the use of best management practices such as, bio-retention and environmental site design, as a means of water quality improvement and stormwater management where appropriate.*

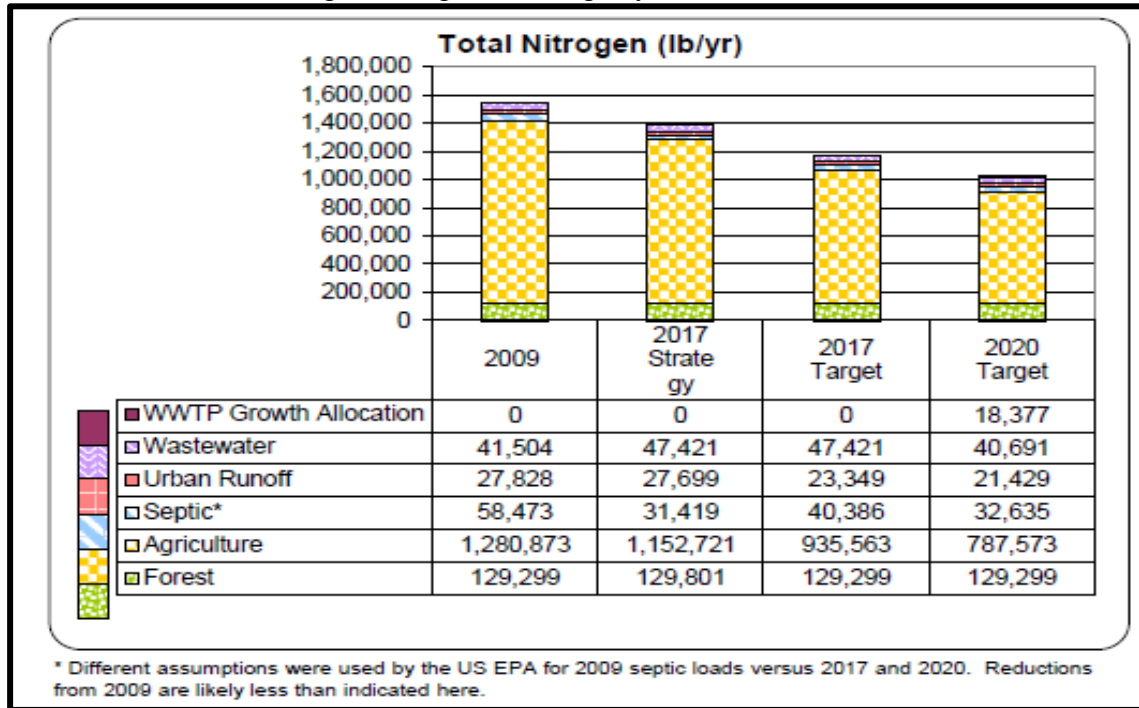
Bio-retention provides stormwater treatment that enhances the quality of downstream water bodies by using soils and native woody and herbaceous plants to naturally remove pollutants from stormwater runoff. Bio-retention installations consist of a porous soil mixture covered by a thin layer of mulch with plantings of native grasses, shrubs, and small trees. These facilities are designed to promote evapotranspiration, maintain soil porosity for stormwater infiltration, encourage biological activity, and promote natural uptake of some pollutants. Bio-retention systems function similarly to engineered infiltration/filtration practices with the added advantage of improved aesthetics

**Table 2: Kent 2017 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Strategies by Sector**

<p><b>Air</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clean Air Act implementation</li> <li>▪ Maryland Healthy Air Act</li> <li>▪ Clean Air Interstate Rule</li> <li>▪ Tier-2 Vehicle Rule</li> <li>▪ Nonroad Engine Rule</li> <li>▪ Heavy-Duty Diesel Engine Rule</li> </ul> <p><b>Water</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Major WWTPs – Continue upgrades to ENR</li> <li>▪ Minor Industrial – Identify loading targets and issue schedules in permits for reductions</li> <li>▪ Upgrade Large Minor Municipal WWTPs (0.1-0.5 MGD) – 5 Plants to be determined</li> <li>▪ Continue to eliminate sewer overflows</li> </ul> <p><b>Urban</b></p> <p>Urban Nutrient Management Law – Continue the regulation of fertilizer applications on commercially managed lawns</p> <p><b>Septics</b></p> <p>Continue upgrade of new and failing septic systems in the Critical Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Septic hookups to ENR plants</li> <li>▪ Require upgrade of all systems in Critical Area</li> </ul> <p><b>Agriculture</b></p> <p>Various Practices (e.g. Cover Crops, Conservation Plans, Nutrient Management Plans, Forest/Grass Buffers, and Animal Waste Management BMPs on AFO (Animal Feeding Operations) and CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations))</p>
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Source: the Kent County Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan, November 2011.

Table 3: Current and Target Nitrogen Loadings by TMDL Sector



Source: the Kent County Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan, November 2011

Table 4: TMDL Nitrogen Reductions by Sector

Nitrogen Reductions to Meet 2017 TMDL Target				
	2009	2017 Target	Amount Reduced 2017	Percent Change 2017
Wastewater	41,504	47,421	(5,917)	14.3%
Urban Runoff	27,828	23,349	4,479	-16.1%
Septic	58,473	40,386	18,087	-30.9%
Agriculture	1,280,873	935,563	345,310	-27.0%
Forest	129,299	129,299	-	0.0%
Totals	1,537,977	1,176,018	361,959	-23.5%

Nitrogen Reductions to Meet 2025 TMDL Target				
	2009	2025 Target	Amount Reduced 2025	Percent Change 2025
Wastewater	41,504	40,691	813	-2.0%
Urban Runoff	27,828	21,429	6,399	-23.0%
Septic	58,473	32,635	25,838	-44.2%
Agriculture	1,280,873	787,573	493,300	-38.5%
Forest	129,299	129,299	-	0.0%
Totals	1,537,977	1,011,627	526,350	-34.2%

Source: the Kent County Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan, November 2011

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Federal, State, and non-profit organizations to achieve an increase in the amount and quality of non-tidal wetlands.*

Between 1950 and the late 1970's, the Bay experienced substantial wetland losses. The County recognizes the need to maintain and increase non-tidal wetlands as these wetlands play a vital role in maintaining water quality for the health of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries and also provide critical habitat for birds, plants, and amphibians. Non-tidal wetlands also play an important role in flood and stormwater control.

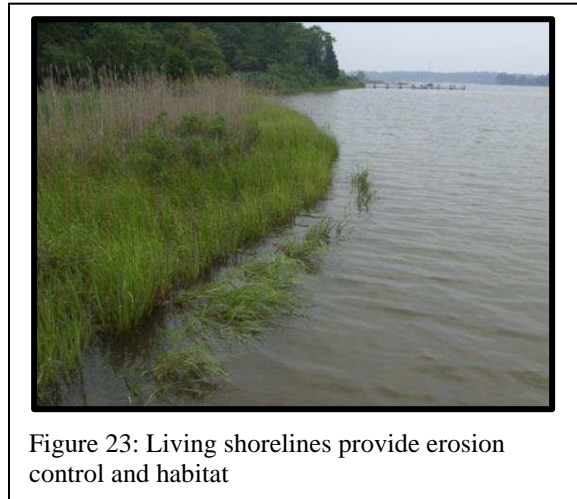


Figure 23: Living shorelines provide erosion control and habitat

*Strategy: Establish a Wetland Banking Program.*

Wetland banking involves the restoration, creation, enhancement, and in certain defined circumstances, preservation of wetlands expressly for compensating for the loss of wetlands. Advance planning will identify appropriate locations for, and uses of, wetland banks.

Wetlands should be created on a priority basis where they can be a natural extension of existing habitat, such as along existing water bodies. Creation of isolated wetlands is not preferred but can provide significant benefits none-the-less.

*Strategy: Encourage the protection of important aquatic resources.*

Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) serves as important food, nursery, and habitat for many species of fish and fowl. In recent times, SAV in Kent's tributaries have followed a recurring pattern of abundant beds in some years followed by severe declines and then full recovery in a few years.

Shellfish beds are both an economic and a natural resource. The bottom (benthic) community provides food for bottom feeding fish such as yellow perch and spot. Activities such as pier construction and sewage outfalls must be limited and those permitted must be designed to minimize their impacts. Guidelines are available from the State to design such facilities properly.

*Strategy: Promote beneficial use of dredge spoils.*

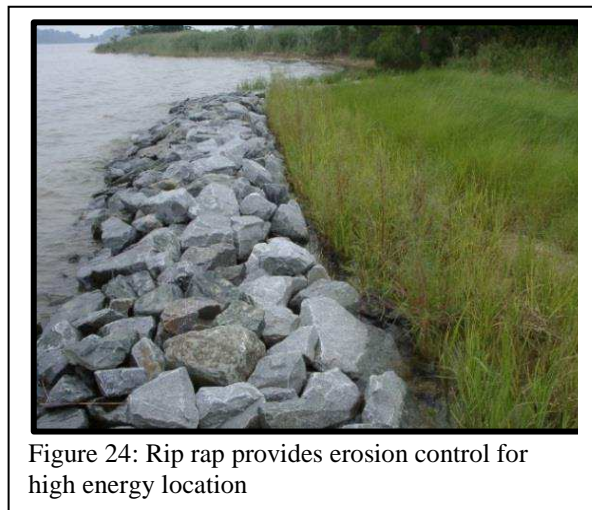
The County recognizes the need to maintain navigable depths in the Bay, harbors, and tributaries. Dredging is inherently destructive to habitat and needs to be timed and executed in a manner that minimizes the environmental effects.

Many Bay islands in the County have eroded and disappeared. The County will explore with appropriate Federal and State agencies whether local eroded islands are appropriate sites for dredge spoil disposal. Reconstituted Bay islands can restore tidal wetlands and provide important upland habitats that are in short supply while using what otherwise would be a waste product. The Poplar Island restoration project in Talbot County could serve as a model.

*Strategy: Encourage shore erosion control and promote living shorelines as the preferred method of shoreline stabilization.*

The County will encourage stabilization of eroding shoreline. Kent County, working with State, will encourage waterfront property owners to consider living shorelines as the preferred treatment to restore eroding shorelines. While not all sites are appropriate for living shorelines, the County will continue to work with property owners, watershed organizations, and State agencies to promote opportunities to implement living shoreline projects.

On many sites, living shorelines have proven effective at stabilizing shorelines while providing vital shoreline fish and other wildlife habitat. For higher energy wave action sites, rip rap and stone revetments protect shorelines by reflecting wave energy. Such structural solutions provide erosion protection, but little habitat.



*Strategy: Implement boating best management practices.*

The County will seek funds to install pump-out stations and oil recycling at marinas. The County should require all marinas to install pump-outs stations, recycle oil, and other toxic materials generated by marine uses.

Wake limits must be established where necessary on County tributaries to prevent erosion of the shoreline. The County will encourage participation in the State's Clean Marinas Program.

Community docks will be encouraged instead of individual piers in new development. The County will promote the distribution of boating courtesy pamphlets to residents and visitors.

### **Goal: Encourage Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay, Its Tributaries and Their Watersheds Through Research and Education**

*Strategy: Support water quality monitoring and enhance baseline-monitoring efforts on County streams and rivers.*

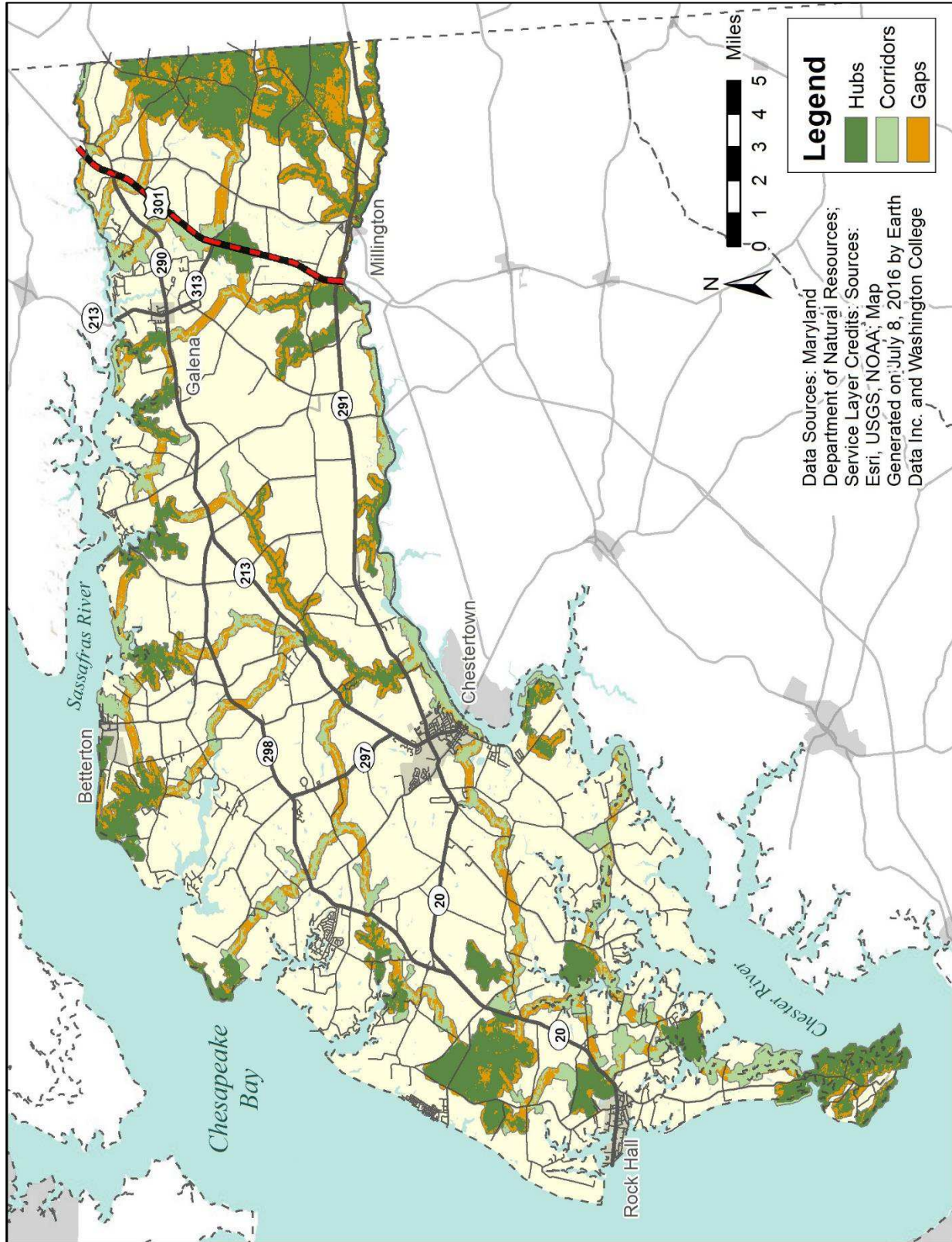
Kent County will continue to foster a system of citizen water quality monitoring projects for each watershed in the County. All monitoring shall meet minimum standards to allow comparison over time and between watersheds. Work with the State, local watershed associations, and other non-governmental organizations to monitor County water bodies. Continue to encourage the volunteer efforts to collect detailed water quality data and analysis.

*Strategy: Identify the County's green infrastructure and strive to fill gaps.*

Kent County identified those lands important to the County's ecological health. These lands, referred to as Kent's green infrastructure, provide the natural foundation needed to support diverse plant and wildlife populations and enable valuable natural processes such as filtering water and cleaning the air to take place.

Map 9 below maps the County's green infrastructure.

Map 9 – Green Infrastructure



*Strategy: Continue to promote environmental protection, education, and restoration.*

Kent's citizens have always been at the forefront in environmental protection. To promote use of the most effective best management practices, new technology, green building, and environmentally sensitive development practices, Kent has established a clearinghouse for educational materials, grants, technical assistance, and literature concerning watershed restoration and sustainable development techniques.

*Strategy: Coordinate natural resource conservation, green infrastructure, and sensitive area policies with the incorporated towns.*

Environmental resources extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries. The County will work with the incorporated towns to develop policies to coordinate natural resource protection and enhancement. During development review, the County, where appropriate, will strive to connect open space with existing dedicated open space in the incorporated towns.

## **Groundwater**

The majority of Kent County's water supply is obtained from groundwater resources. Likewise, much of the water entering the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries comes from groundwater.

Groundwater supplies are substantial and its quality is generally good. Since there are many homes with old wells located in the unconfined aquifer nearest the ground surface, the preservation of water quality for human consumption becomes crucial. Since there are also many properties with on-site septic systems, techniques to maintain and improve ground water quality and to reduce

their nitrogen contribution to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are also crucial.

## **Drinking Water**

Ground water is the County's sole source for domestic potable water. It comprises 94% of the County's overall water supply. Surface water is used for irrigation and livestock watering only. Generally, on the Eastern Shore groundwater supplies are considered to be abundant. There are four aquifers that supply nearly all groundwater in Kent County, they are the:

- Aquia
- Monmouth
- Magothy
- Raritan Patapsco

Groundwater quality is generally good although water from several aquifers contain high levels of iron requiring iron removal systems for satisfactory domestic use. Other water quality problems include hardness, septic contamination, and shallow wells for which drought may limit production. Most new potable water wells are drilled to depths of 60 feet to over 200 feet making them significantly more resistant to short-term drought conditions. Maryland's water quality regulations require that all surface waters be protected for water contact recreation, fishing, and protection of aquatic life and wildlife.

Table 5 summarizes by subwatershed each public water system's projected total and new households from the 2016 MDP Land Use Change Analysis Model along with the expected need for capacity changes. Map 10 locates the County's water service areas.

Table 5: Water Plant Capacity Summary				
Sub-watershed	Public Water Systems	Total Projected New Households	New Households with Public Water Services	Capacity Changes Required
Sassafras	Betterton	463	232	No*
	Galena			
Still Pond-Fairlee	Fairlee/	587	294	No
	Georgetown			
Lower Chester	Rock Hall	400	200	Yes
Middle Chester	Chestertown	729	365	No**
	Kennedyville			
	Worton/Butlertown			
Upper Chester	Millington	182	91	No
<p>* Additional capacity is not required if most new households locate in the Galena service area. Betterton is not projecting growth beyond its current capacity.</p> <p>** Chestertown will seek additional groundwater appropriation and is planning to increase its system capacity.</p> <p>Source: Kent County Water Resources Element, 2016.</p>				

As Kent County’s growth and development continues even at its expected modest pace, demand for potable water will increase in step. Not to be underestimated in comparing current services to growth projections is the large County and town population comprised of second home residents. This population is not tracked by MDP or the Census, as this population is counted in its primary places of residency whether those residences are Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, or Florida. However, many of these people are using both public water and sewer services causing spikes in the systems in summer months, weekends, and holidays.

These inhabitants, along with a substantive population of recreational boaters, account for a discrepancy between people served by town and County water and sewer and MDP population statistics and growth projections.

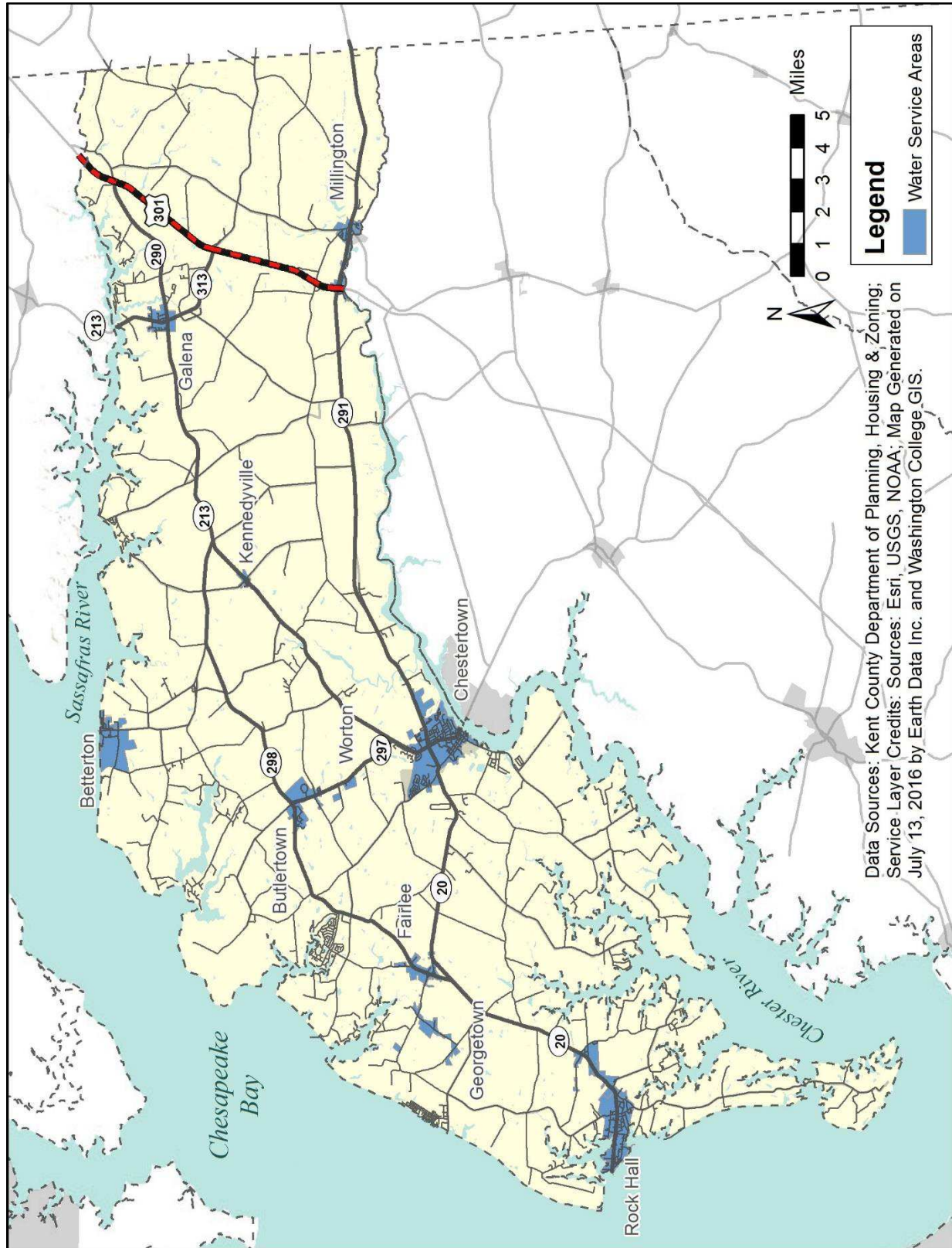
For this reason, when planning public facility expansions, this fact and a somewhat larger margin of safety should be factored in.

**Goal: Ensure that Public Utilities are Available to Serve Projected Growth and Development**

*Strategy: To serve projected growth, the County and the municipalities will need to obtain additional water supplies, and will, in many cases, need upgraded and expanded water and wastewater treatment facilities as well as water distribution systems.*

With an additional 3,713 people projected to live in the County, it is assumed that over half of the new households will be served by public water supply resulting in approximately 1,250 new connections to existing systems. Again, considering the

Map 10 – Water Service Areas



second home population and tourism, demand projections should anticipate a transition from seasonal to full time use as second homes become year-round residences for retirees relocating to the County and as tourism grows. These factors will surely increase water demand requiring the above noted additional margin of safety.

## Individual Wells

In 2016, it is estimated that approximately one half of the County's households have onsite wastewater disposal systems (4,089 of 8,175 total households). Such households also use individual wells. Since 1945, approximately 6,900 potable residential wells have been drilled in Kent County. These wells draw water from a variety of aquifers typically the nearest available formation, with no single aquifer favored.

Groundwater quantity and quality appear sufficient to meet all future demand during the next several decades for individual water supply systems in Kent County.

New development's effect on water supply is a frequently-expressed concern. However, neither the County nor MDE records contain an example of a new subdivision with new individual wells has adversely impacted the water supply of other existing wells.

Many of the County's major business and industrial parks, as well as most of its major commercial areas receive public water. However, the County is home to several major industries which rely on individual wells, such as many nurseries. Since 1945, there have been 113 wells drilled in Kent County for industrial and commercial use.

Natural rainfall in most years is inadequate to support agriculture in the County. Many farmers use individual wells (approximately

147 wells have been drilled in Kent County since 1945 for agricultural use), on-property streams or springs, or reclaimed stormwater collected in farm ponds to provide water for livestock, or for limited irrigation purposes. Large-scale irrigation for agricultural purposes comprises a significant use of groundwater in Kent County. Surface water is also used for irrigation and livestock watering, but to a smaller degree than groundwater.

Based on MDE's water balance methodology, Kent County's groundwater recharges at an average rate of over 200 million gallons per day. Without more detailed information, this volume appears adequate to serve projected growth in Kent County through 2040. However, the caveats to this finding are important. Kent County's water-bearing formations serve a region larger than the County itself. In addition, geological and seasonal variations affect groundwater resources which may at times affect their local availability.

**Goal: Update and Refine the Information on the County's groundwater capacity, particularly its capacity to serve continued growth as well as the stresses upon those groundwater resources. The last such study by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) occurred in 1980**

*Strategy: To protect groundwater supply aquifers, the County needs information regarding the extent of the aquifers, the land overlying each aquifer and up gradient lands that provide recharge.*

State and Federal agencies began developing a Comprehensive Regional Assessment of the Atlantic Coastal Plain Aquifer System in Maryland (Aquifer Assessment Plan). This plan would have covered the Coastal Plain area which encompasses most of Southern

Maryland, most of the Eastern Shore (including all of Kent County), all of Delaware south of Wilmington, and the northeast corner of Virginia. However, this plan has not been undertaken.

A proposed but unfunded U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) groundwater study and the Aquifer Assessment Plan would fully document estimated supplies and provide a more definitive picture of the County's groundwater. These plans should be resurrected to provide more accurate planning data for the study area. This information would assist State and County agencies in the review of development proposals to assess potential impact on groundwater resources. If the Aquifer Assessment Plan is completed, the County will incorporate applicable parts of the assessment in its future planning and development reviews particularly where groundwater constraints exist.

### **Goal: Protect Groundwater Resources in the County**

*Strategy: Incorporate the Maryland Geological Survey Ground Water Study into future county decisions.*

The County recognizes the importance of aquifers and their management and protection, an aquifer is a geologic formation containing saturated sand and gravel, saturated carbonate rock or saturated fractured rock that yields significant quantities of water. In order to protect an aquifer, the County needs information regarding the extent of the aquifer, the land overlying the aquifer and up gradient lands that recharge the aquifer.

This study if undertaken would provide some of this information as well as the quality of the groundwater. Using information from this study, State and

County agencies should consider the impact on ground water when reviewing development proposals. A wellhead protection plan must be prepared. Wellhead protection focuses on existing and proposed public water supply areas and their immediate recharge areas. The County will encourage the State to fund and complete this study.

*Strategy: Prepare a wellhead protection plan.*

Wellhead protection focuses on protecting existing and proposed public groundwater supply sources by managing the land surface in the recharge areas for the well in which activities may affect the quality of the water.

*Strategy: Provide landowners with septic systems information on maintaining their current systems and availability of nitrogen removal systems.*

Proper maintenance of septic systems prolongs their useful life and reduces the amount of nutrients that pass into the groundwater. However, even well-maintained septic systems are not effective at removing more than a minimal amount of the pollutant nitrogen; therefore, Kent County, in partnership with the Kent County Department of Environmental Health and community watershed associations will continue to provide educational materials and contact information concerning the use, installation, and maintenance of both conventional and nitrogen removing septic systems.

The County will continue to encourage the Kent County Environmental Health Department to perform an investigation and evaluation of existing non-conforming neighborhoods with failing septic systems, as identified in the County Water and Sewerage Plan.

*Strategy: Encourage the upgrade and installation of Best Available Technology (BAT) nitrogen removing septic systems.*

BAT Nitrogen removing systems have proven effective in improving ground water and in reducing nitrogen in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and are required for all new and replacement systems in the Critical Area. Kent County will promote their use in other sensitive areas such as ground water recharge areas and other areas deemed appropriate by the Kent County Health Department.

## **Wastewater Treatment**

At present, it is estimated that about half the County's population depends upon on-site wastewater disposal systems, known as on-site septic systems. The remainder use either a municipal, County, or private community/multiuse facility.

The County provides sewerage services to the following unincorporated service areas:

- Fairlee/Georgetown
- Kennedyville
- Worton/Butlertown
- Edesville
- Piney Neck/Skinner's Neck/Wesley Chapel
- Tolchester
- Rudnick (community septic system)
- Little Neck (community septic system)

The County also provides services to the following privately-owned and operated sewerage systems:

- Tolchester Village (formerly known as Delta Heights)
- Eastman Chemical (formerly known as Velsicol)
- Great Oak Resort Club

The Towns of Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington, and Rock Hall provide public sewerage services to their residents. Map 11 locates the County's wastewater service areas.

Problems with failing on-site septic systems have occurred in subdivisions approved prior to effective regulation controlling such systems. These areas are not generally targeted for growth, but in some cases public sewerage service has been extended to replace failing septic systems and have resolved the associated health issues. Correcting these failures without promoting growth outside designated growth areas is a challenge. Also, an important issue is even older settlements with hundreds of undeveloped recorded lots. These lots, if developed in many cases, would require public sewerage services. Such services would be difficult to economically support with an insufficient number of property owners in the resulting service areas.

Kent County owns and operates three minor wastewater treatment facilities (Kenndyville, Tolchester and Worton) and operates lines and pump stations for several municipal systems which pump to the treatment facilities. The State defines minor wastewater treatment facilities with a design capacity for processing less than 500,000 gallons per day (gpd); major wastewater treatment facilities have a design capacity of 500,000 gpd or more.

The Towns of Betterton, Galena, Millington, and Rock Hall operate minor wastewater treatment facilities; although Rock Hall is in dialogue with MDE and the County to upgrade to a major facility. The Town of Chestertown operates the only major wastewater treatment facility in the County; it is an enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) system.

Population, second home development and reductions in household size will drive the County's future development pattern. Second home residents use both public water and sewer services spiking peak demand during the summer and especially on weekends and holidays. These visitors along with the County's many boating visitors cause a significant demand not accounted for nor recognized by official population counts and projections.

Table 6 below provides existing wastewater treatment plant supply and indicates that without further plant expansions, the existing wastewater plants will be able to meet the projected demand for new connections. Also, to be considered when assessing demands on public wastewater service is the County's second home population. Projections should attempt to anticipate a transition in use from seasonal to full time as second homes become retirement homes. This transition will surely have an impact on flow and nutrient readings.

Table 6 indicates that all County and municipal plants are currently meeting flow requirements based on design capacity and average daily flow; likewise, all plants show current surpluses in flow capacity.

However, several plants will need to make upgrades to accommodate locally projected growth and or water quality issues.

These plants are listed below and the issues associated with each are discussed in the Water Resources Element data and analysis documentation to be included in the upcoming update to the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan:

- Betterton
- Galena
- Tolchester

- Rock Hall
- Chestertown
- Worton/Butlertown
- Millington

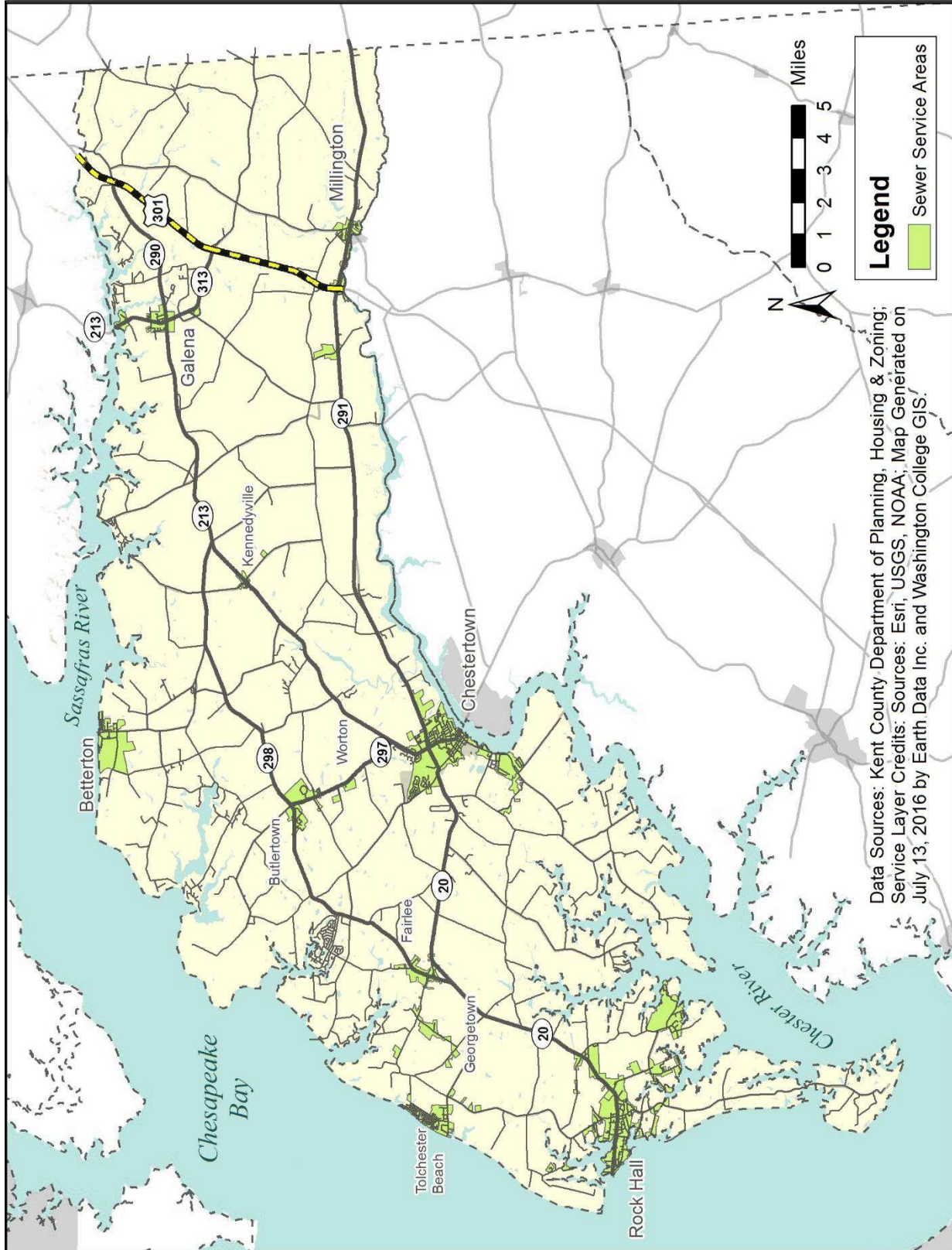
All plants have nitrogen and phosphorus nutrient caps listed in their discharge permits. Only major plants must treat these nutrients and/or upgrade their facilities to meet Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR) standards. Major plants must meet these caps, while minor plants must report nutrient loadings in a Daily Monitoring Report (DMR) which is submitted to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) monthly. Minor plants are not required to treat nutrients or meet the nutrient caps.

**Goal: Ensure that Wastewater Treatment meets Water Quality Load Reduction Goals**

*Strategy: To serve projected growth, the County and its municipalities are encouraged through the Watershed Implementation Plan's (WIP) load reduction targets to plan upgrades to existing public wastewater treatment facilities, and also to plan for cost-effective operational and maintenance practices to meet projected community needs, as well as the nutrient caps.*

This planning will need to include an appropriate margin to account for the part-time populations and their effect on peak facility demands.

Map 11 – Sewer Service Areas



*Strategy: This Comprehensive Plan directs new growth to the existing towns and villages.*

To accommodate this growth, adequate water and sewer facilities must be provided. As it is the policy of this Plan that new development pays its share of associated public facilities, appropriate developers' agreements, service areas and enterprise funds must be established. The priority for the County is to locate water and sewer systems in the designated growth areas. See the Towns and Villages Element's Designated Growth Area map for the location of the County's growth areas.

**Private Systems On-site Septic Systems**

With projected County growth of about 3,700 new residents by 2040, the MDP 2016 Model estimates that 50 % or about 1,900 new residents will be using private on-site septic systems. While such systems perform a valuable function for rural residents, if not properly maintained, they can become a public health hazard and even when maintained standard septic systems do little to reduce nutrient pollution of groundwater.

**Goal: Resolve failing on-site sewerage disposal systems**

Table 6: Kent County Wastewater Systems Capacity and Demand

Wastewater Treatment Plant/Service Area	People Served	EDUs (2015)	Permitted Flow (gpd)	Annual Average Flow (gpd)	Average Remaining Capacity (gpd)	Remaining EDU Capacity 250g/EDU
<b>Municipal</b>						
Betterton	800	329	200,000	24,000	176,000	704
Chestertown	5,400	2,200	900,000	835,500	64,500	258
Galena	600	240	60,000	40,000	20,000	80
Millington	953	381	145,000	77,400	67,600	270
Rock Hall	4,291	1,716	480,000	224,000	256,000	1,024
<b>County</b>						
Kennedyville	284	124	60,000	13,000	47,000	188
Tolchester	679	297	265,000	62,000	203,000	812
Fairlee	838	366	*	*		
Worton	<u>1,012</u>	<u>442</u>	<u>250,000</u>	<u>93,000</u>	<u>157,000</u>	<u>628</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,057</b>	<b>6,095</b>	<b>2,360,000</b>	<b>1,368,900</b>	<b>991,100</b>	<b>3,964</b>

Source: Kent County Watershed Implementation Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Plans, 2016.

*Strategy: The County is currently investigating ways to address failing septic systems in several areas.*

Residents are expected to comply with Kent County policy, which is to abate and prevent septic system failures and subsequent public health emergencies. Several areas in Kent County are not in compliance and have ground water bacterial contamination. These areas are listed below and the issues associated with each are discussed in the Water Resources Element documentation:

- Chesapeake Landing
- Golts
- Still Pond/Coleman
- Lover's Lane near Chestertown
- Georgetown near Galena

In addition, the County is actively pursuing denitrifying upgrades and retrofits to existing septic systems through the Kent

County Bay Restoration Fund Program (approximately 40 units installed with many residents on the waiting list).

### **Growth Simulation Analysis and Nonpoint Source Loading Analysis**

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) developed a non-point source nutrient loading analysis to determine how growth trends and land use planning decisions will affect future (2040) nutrient loading. Future land use was projected by a growth simulation model, which used 2010 land use and current growth trends as input. Nitrogen and phosphorus loading rates (lbs./acre/year) based on current practices were applied to the 2010 land uses and the projected 2040 land uses to establish a baseline. These baseline results can be compared to alternative future planning scenarios

### **Goal: Execute and Accomplish the recommendations and initiative in the Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP)**

*Strategy: Continue to pursue a wide variety of funded and unfunded water quality improvement initiatives as detailed in the current Watershed Implementation Plan.*

The Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) strives to meet the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) targets. The WIP includes both municipal and County level efforts to improve water quality. Below is a listing of some of the more significant County efforts addressing water quality enhancement:

1. Major and minor waste water treatment plan upgrades
2. Septic system upgrades to best available technology systems, septic system pump out program and

connections of existing septic system uses to public sanitary sewer systems

3. Stormwater management retrofits including rain gardens, rain barrels, living shorelines, implementing current stormwater management regulations, applying the Critical Area Program of a 10% pollution reduction, street sweeping, stream restorations, tree canopy and forest expansions, wetland restorations, and streamside forest buffers
4. Middle Chester River Watershed Restoration Action Strategy
5. 2010 Trust Fund Middle Chester Partners Local Implementation Grant
6. Upper Chester River Watershed Restoration Action Strategy
7. Sassafra Watershed Action Plan
8. Early Action Compact
9. Hazard Mitigation Plan
10. Kent County Bay Restoration Fund Program
11. Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Adaption Report

There are many local, State, and Federal agencies and sources of funding aiding TMDL implementation. Several State agencies and funding sources are available to assist land owners in participating in the TMDL program. The details of the TMDL program are presented in the County's current Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).

These programs assist landowners in the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help achieve the TMDLs; however, no one landowner or government agency can solve the water quality issues independently. Achieving TMDLs and improving water quality of the

Bay and its tributaries requires the long-term cooperation of State and Federal agencies, counties, and individual stake holders.

*Strategy: Continue to use zoning, the Comprehensive Plan, Watershed Restoration Action Strategies, and current Watershed Implementation Plans to guide growth to minimize future deterioration of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and foster water quality improvements.*

The location of prime agricultural land, forest, wetlands, and other sensitive environmental factors, in conjunction with existing municipalities and designated growth areas, will continue to drive County growth policy. This Plan contains a map of the County's designated growth areas in the Towns and Villages Element.

*Strategy: Support a manageable increase in stormwater runoff through the enforcement of the current Stormwater Management Ordinance and Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program.*

In addition to traditional stormwater management practices, the County promotes bio-retention as a means of treating stormwater runoff. Bio-retention provides stormwater treatment through the natural processes of vegetation, soil filtration, and other biological treatment that removes pollutants from runoff.

*Strategy: The County will continue to require conservation subdivision techniques for new subdivisions.*

The conservation subdivision techniques begin by first recognizing the site's natural resources that should be preserved. Development is then designed to avoid these resources and in the process, retain at least one half of the parcel in open space. This design technique not only uses low impact

development measures but also contributes significantly to green infrastructure corridor and nodes along with retaining suitable buffers. In the long-term, conservation subdivision design can protect and link open space nodes and corridors, as well as reduce the amount of impervious surfaces, thereby reducing growth's adverse ecological impacts.

*Strategy: This Comprehensive Plan outlines a no net forest loss strategy.*

Forest conversion is projected to total nearly 800 acres in the MDP Land Use Change Analysis Model (2016). To implement no net loss of forest, Forest Conservation Plans and Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Afforestation Plans are and will continue to be required. In addition, the County collaborates with area watershed organizations to encourage residential stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Local municipalities have completed urban tree canopy studies and are currently working on strategies and approaches to implementation. Adding urban and general forest cover along with forested riparian buffers are initiatives of the County's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) for achieving the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).



Figure 25: Local animal life relies on native plants for habitat

*Strategy: Prepare the Phase III Local Watershed Implementation Plan.*

*Strategy: Pursue the following policies and actions in addition to the WIP actions and milestones:*

1. Agriculture is the preferred land use in Kent County. The County will ensure that priority is given to water availability on behalf of agricultural use rather than subdivision on agricultural land. The County will ensure that water appropriation for proposed subdivision or commercial development does not negatively impact agricultural water use in the Priority Preservation Area.
2. Encourage improvements in irrigation efficiencies on agricultural land.
3. Encourage the management of irrigation water.
4. Encourage an inventory of existing irrigation system efficiencies and familiarize property owners with existing grant programs.
5. Investigate the use of municipal wastewater for agricultural irrigation.
6. Investigate upgrading all minor wastewater treatment facilities to ENR technology.
7. Consider a wastewater capacity and feasibility study for all its facilities.
8. Investigate policies which encourage all new commercial and residential development on private septic systems be nitrogen removing septic systems.
9. Avoid the proliferation of alternative wastewater systems (technologies used in lieu of those permitted by conventional regulatory authority). These systems shall not be permitted merely to allow property owners to develop previously undevelopable properties.
10. Encourage marinas not hooked into public water and sewerage systems to consider the installation of nitrogen removing septic systems.
11. Explore policies establishing boating “No Discharge Zones” within County waterways.
12. Encourage all County marinas to become registered with the Maryland Department of the Environment’s Clean Marinas Program.
13. Investigate ways of incentivizing retrofits, inspections, and maintenance of existing systems.
14. Pursue septic system education and/or maintenance agreements.
15. Consider the installation of nitrogen removing septic systems in Rudnick and Little Neck.
16. Consider water capacity plans for all its systems.
17. Identify groundwater recharge areas and investigate protection strategies accordingly.
18. Consider the development of a wellhead protection plan.
19. Continue to coordinate with the towns regarding annexations and proposed green-belts.
20. Consider the implementation of a 15 percent lot coverage limit on all new development.
21. Encourage water quality improvements for new development through stormwater management techniques such as rain barrels, rain gardens, and native planting plans.
22. Review initiatives found in its Local Basin Implementation Plan.

For the details of the Water Resources Element analysis and adopted policies, see the Water Resources Element data and analysis to be located in the forthcoming update to the Kent County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan.

## Plant and Wildlife Resources

Our quality of life is enhanced by Kent County's interrelated and diverse ecosystems. We must protect these resources if we are to maintain this quality of life. Multiple species planning is necessary before plants and animals become endangered or threatened.

### **Goal: Restore, Enhance, and Protect the Finfish, Shellfish, and Other Living Resources, Their Habitats, and Ecological Relationships to Sustain Our Fisheries and Provide for a Balanced Ecosystem**

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Federal, State, and non-profit organizations to achieve an increase in the native oyster population.*

A restored oyster population in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary would play an invaluable role in the restoration of the Bay ecosystem. Oysters filter the water and thereby reduce nutrients, turbidity, and chlorophyll. An increase in oyster reefs provides habitat for fish and other organisms. The County will look for

opportunities on County owned lands and encourage waterfront property owners to participate in oyster grow out programs.

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Federal, State, and non-profit organizations to achieve an increase in submerged aquatic vegetation.*

Submerged aquatic vegetation's (bay grasses) health is an excellent yardstick measuring Bay restoration progress. The health of these grasses is closely linked to water quality. They provide essential food and habitat for many important species of waterfowl, fish, shellfish, and invertebrates; remove suspended solids from the water; protect shorelines from erosion; and oxygenate the water.

The Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement and its successors adopted a goal to restore submerged aquatic vegetation to the highest levels observed during the 1938 to 2000-time frame.

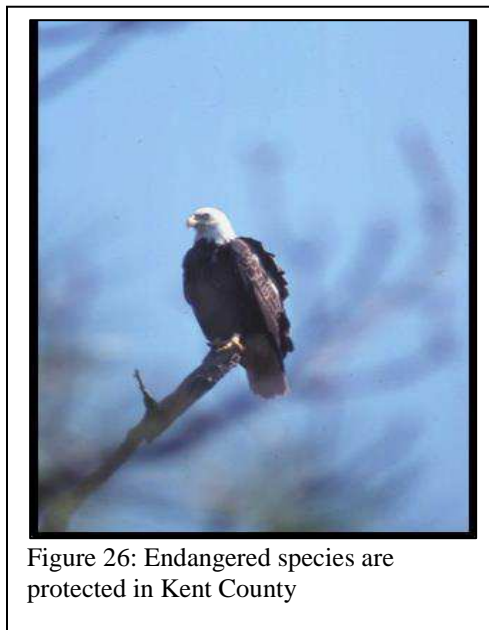


Figure 26: Endangered species are protected in Kent County

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Federal, State, and non-profit organizations to develop management plans to control phragmites and other invasive species interfering with the restoration and integrity of the Bay's ecosystem.*

Phragmites is a very aggressive invasive wetland plant that spreads rapidly by rhizomes and seed in both tidal and non-tidal wetlands. Phragmites out-competes and can completely overtake valuable wetland plants that

provide both winter food and cover for many wetland-dependent wildlife species. Phragmites provides poor quality habitat.

The Chesapeake Bay Program's Invasive Species Work Group has developed a list of priority invasive species in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and listed six as in need of regional management plans; they are:

- Mute swans,
- Nutria,
- Phragmites australis,
- Purple loosestrife,
- Water chestnut and
- Zebra mussels.

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Federal, State, and non-profit organizations to provide fish passage for important anadromous species.*

In Maryland, the target fish species for restoration are:

- American shad,
- Hickory shad,
- Alewife herring,
- Blueback herring,
- Yellow perch, and
- White perch.

Anadromous fish (shad and herring) spend most of their life cycle in marine waters and return to fresh waters to spawn each spring. Shad and herring are historic migratory species that once spawned in most Bay tributaries until much of their spawning habitat was destroyed by development. This along with over-fishing has led to their disappearance in local, Bay and ocean waters.

Unlike West Coast salmon, shad and herring do not die after spawning, and will keep returning to spawn as long as they live. Semi-anadromous fish (perch) spend their life cycle in brackish water, such as the Bay and the lower reaches of its tributaries and return upstream to spawn.

Striped bass are large anadromous fish that usually spawn in the freshwater tidal zone and may move upstream to feed after spawning.



Figure 27: Wooded riparian buffers improve water quality.

### **Goal: Protect Plant and Wildlife Resources within the County**

*Strategy: Maintain and enforce existing County regulations for wildlife protection.*

The current County Land Use Ordinance requires the protection of forest interior dwelling birds and threatened species, endangered species, and species in need of conservation.

*Strategy: Prepare a Biological Resource Management Plan.*

Plans that protect individual species after they become endangered are costly, requiring species by species and project-by-project review. They also frequently fail in their goal of protection. It is apparent that more specific wildlife and ecosystem information is needed in order to give clear advice to landowners, developers and government officials that are interested in sensitive development practices.

The purpose of a biological resource management Plan would be to guide the management of plant and wildlife resources

in Kent County. This plan will provide all members of the community with the information needed to make informed and rational land use decisions. The Plan will require extensive public participation. Funding will be sought from State, Federal and private sources. The plan will include an:

1. Inventory of existing wildlife data, involving local wildlife groups, and relevant information gathered from State, Federal agencies, and research institutes;
2. Analysis of existing data and broad goals for managing wildlife resources; establishment of specific management guidelines for each species habitat protection and viability (with assistance of wildlife resource specialists with special attention paid to threatened and endangered species);
3. Solicitation of public input and comments regarding defined goals and management guidelines from public hearings; and
4. Recommendations for County policies and for land owners to protect and enhance wildlife habitat.

Map 12 below displays the County's environmentally sensitive areas.

## **Forest and Woodlands**

One of Kent County's many environmental assets is its tree-lined waterfront. There are 268 miles of tidal shoreline, virtually all of which is wooded.

These woodlands provide a striking backdrop for both land and water-related activities and serve as riparian water improvement buffers and important habitat.

Trees continue to line the major inland streams. Most of the larger forests still standing are in the County's extreme eastern section.

### **Goal: Conserve Existing Woodlands, Encourage Reforestation, and Promote Proper Forest Management Practices**

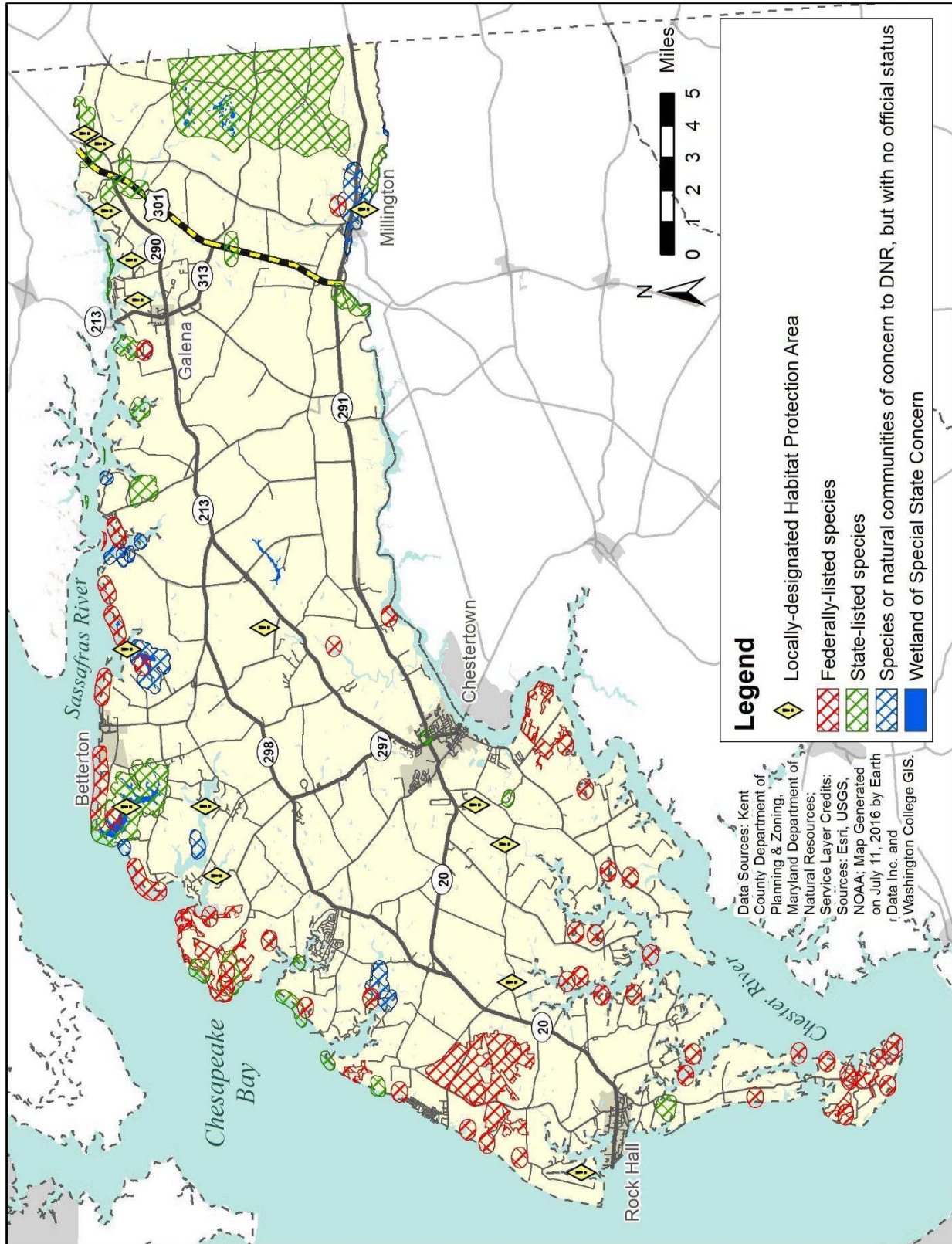
*Strategy: Retain and expand riparian forest and large forested areas through implementation of forest conservation regulations and education.*

Riparian forests provide valuable habitat and decrease runoff pollutants. Large forested areas provide the unique habitat required by forest interior dwelling birds. Kent County recognizes that forests are protective land uses and should be managed to maximize values for timber, recreation, wildlife, and water quality.

The State's forest conservation act requires retaining and adding forest assets for new development and redevelopment. The County will continue its enforcement to receive the environmental and aesthetic benefits of additional tree cover.

Forest banking is the restoration, creation, enhancement, and in certain defined circumstances, preservation of forest to compensate for the disturbance to or removal of woodlands or forest. The priority for reforestation must expand riparian or large forested areas or protect highly erodible soils. The use of multiple native species will be required when possible.

Map 12 – Environmentally Sensitive Areas



*Strategy: Implement woodland and forest management and harvest methods that maintain sustainable yields of forest products.*

Although logging plays a relatively small role in the County's economy, forests still need to be managed properly for their economic, recreational, and ecological value. Reforestation and afforestation should be encouraged on highly erodible soils and other appropriate areas. Reforestation is establishment of a forest through artificial production or natural regeneration. Afforestation is the planting of open areas not presently in forest cover or in areas where forest has always or very long been absent.

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Federal, State, and non-profit organizations to achieve an increase in area of forest in the County.*

Forests perform important environmental, recreational, and economic functions. Forests protect stream banks and soils, clean the air, and provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife. Forests also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and supply raw materials for fuel, lumber, paper, and many other products.

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Federal, State, and non-profit organizations to achieve to the habitat goals set forth in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and the current Chesapeake Bay agreement.*

On June 28, 2000, the Chesapeake Executive Council signed the "Chesapeake 2000" Agreement. Several subsequent agreements have continued and refined the original agreement's objectives. These agreements have and will guide the Chesapeake Bay Program along with State and local policies into the future. In 1984,

the Maryland General Assembly adopted the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Protection Law. Kent County is committed to doing its part to achieve the goals set forth in these documents.

## **Air Quality**

Kent County, along with much of the eastern United States, is now listed as an ozone attainment area. However, prevailing westerly winds carry pollutants from the industrial areas of the Western Shore as well as vehicle-generated smog from the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Kent County residents are also concerned about potential toxic air pollution from the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Harford County, which is only a few miles across the water.

*Strategy: Encourage the State to add additional air quality inspectors for the Eastern Shore.*

Kent County will encourage the State to strictly enforce Federal and State air quality standards in Kent County and to provide additional inspectors to monitor air quality for the Eastern Shore.

*Strategy: Implement the strategies identified in the Kent and Queen Anne's Early Action Compact.*

The Early Action Compact serves as Kent and Queen Anne's Counties' official air quality improvement plan and contains quantified emission reduction measures. It is designed to enable early proactive approaches designed to help the counties to obtain the 8-hour ozone standard.

Emission reduction measures set forth in the Plan include ozone action days outreach programs, ridesharing, promotion of alternative transportation, tree planting, and energy saving plans.

## Mineral Resources

Kent County is underlain by deposits of sand, clay, sandy clay, and silt resting on crystalline rocks. These rocks slope to the south and southeast at the rate of 60-150 feet per mile. The depth of the Coastal Plain sediments ranges from 900 feet in the northeastern portion to 2,200 feet in the southeastern portion.

Sand and gravel are the predominant minerals found in Kent County. An unusual seam of high quality spec and concrete sand and gravel runs southeasterly from Baltimore through Kent County to Lewes, Delaware. These aggregates are vital to a healthy economy, and Kent County recognizes that sand and gravel are resources of increasing commercial value.

### **Goal: Conserve the County's Mineral Resources for Future Use while Safeguarding the Environment and Surrounding Communities**

*Strategy: Determine the impact of mining on the County's infrastructure.*

Mining operations in Kent County have been limited and have not significantly impacted the County road system. However, an increase in mining activity may cause increased damage to low-capacity County roads. The County should continue to monitor levels of extraction activity and be prepared to ensure that extraction operations pay their fair share of roadway maintenance or improvements.

*Strategy: Review the existing regulations governing sand and gravel extraction.*

Kent County has established and will maintain regulations governing mineral extraction. The County will periodically review the existing Land Use Ordinance, as

well as State and Federal regulations governing sand and gravel extraction to assure reasonable access to these resources while safeguarding the environment and the community from potential negative impacts of extraction and the transportation of extracted materials.

Reclamation and post-extraction plans are essential to assure that mining sites are restored to a usable State.

## Agriculture

Agriculture, basic to the character and economy of the County, will be encouraged. The importance of agricultural productivity to the economy of Kent County underscores the need to avoid the wholesale or wasteful encroachment on farmland. Kent County has the highest percentage of prime farmland in the State. The unique combination of quality soils, topography, and climate makes Kent County an ideal location for productive agriculture and bestows upon the County a particular responsibility for the stewardship of the land.



Figure 28: Agriculture provides long-term stability to the economy, the culture, and the environment.

## **Goal: Promote Sound Management of Agricultural Land**

*Strategy: Establish conservation and management plans for agricultural land in the County.*

The Federal and State government strongly encourage farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to develop farm management plans to minimize agricultural water pollution. Conservation and management plans include, but are not limited to, soil conservation, water quality, nutrient management, and pest management.

To fulfill the County's obligation as stewards of our farmland, the County:

1. Encourages the development of the full range of conservation plans incorporated into a single farm management plan for all agricultural land in the County
2. Supports additional funding or incentives to ensure the implementation of these plans on all agricultural land
3. Recommends coordinating the preparation of all plans under the direction of the Soil Conservation District and University of Maryland Cooperative Extension
4. Encourages the private sector to prepare conservation plans
5. Promotes precision farming
6. Supports the agricultural sector's efforts to meet the TMDLs

*Strategy: Protect the County's agricultural soils through the use of Best Management Practices.*

Best management practices (BMP) are measures developed for controlling point and non-point sources of pollution. BMPs are intended to allow for productive use of the land while mitigating potential negative influences of that land use. BMPs use a variety of structural, regulatory, and non-regulatory measures to encourage farmers to incorporate soil conservation. Examples include: conservation tillage, contour farming, conservation structures (e.g. detention basins, gully control structures), grazing restrictions, and animal waste management facilities. The County will encourage the development, updating, and implementation of farm management plans to ensure BMPs are used to the appropriate extent.

*Strategy: Seek additional funds to fully staff the Soil Conservation District to speed in the review and thereby the implementation of conservation plans.*

## Development Constraints

Several areas of the County are not desirable for habitation because of development constraints. These areas include 100-year floodplains, cliffs, steep banks subject to possible failure, and highly eroding shorelines.

Floodplains, the products of natural floods, moderate and store floodwaters permitting their infiltration, absorb wave energies, and reduce erosion and sedimentation. Wetlands found within floodplains and the floodplains themselves help maintain water quality, recharge groundwater, protect fisheries, and provide habitat and natural corridors for wildlife. Stream buffers found within floodplains also help to maintain water quality and provide important habitat.

Safeguarding the many natural functions performed by floodplains benefits adjoining and downstream properties by minimizing flooding's economic and safety risks (and cost) by contributing to the maintenance of

water quality and quantity. This may directly affect drinking water supplies and recreational opportunities; and in many cases, help restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay—a goal which will benefit the entire public.

The preservation and protection of riparian steep slopes is especially important because of the potential harm to water quality and aquatic habitat. Collapsed slopes add sediment and phosphorus to the receiving waters. Communities pay the economic costs associated with loss of water quality, as well as hazards such as flooding and landslides and other problems caused by the steep slope disturbance. The identification and protection of steep slopes within a community helps to protect the downstream properties from these hazards. Protection also provides aesthetically pleasing open space and maintains the slope's local biodiversity.

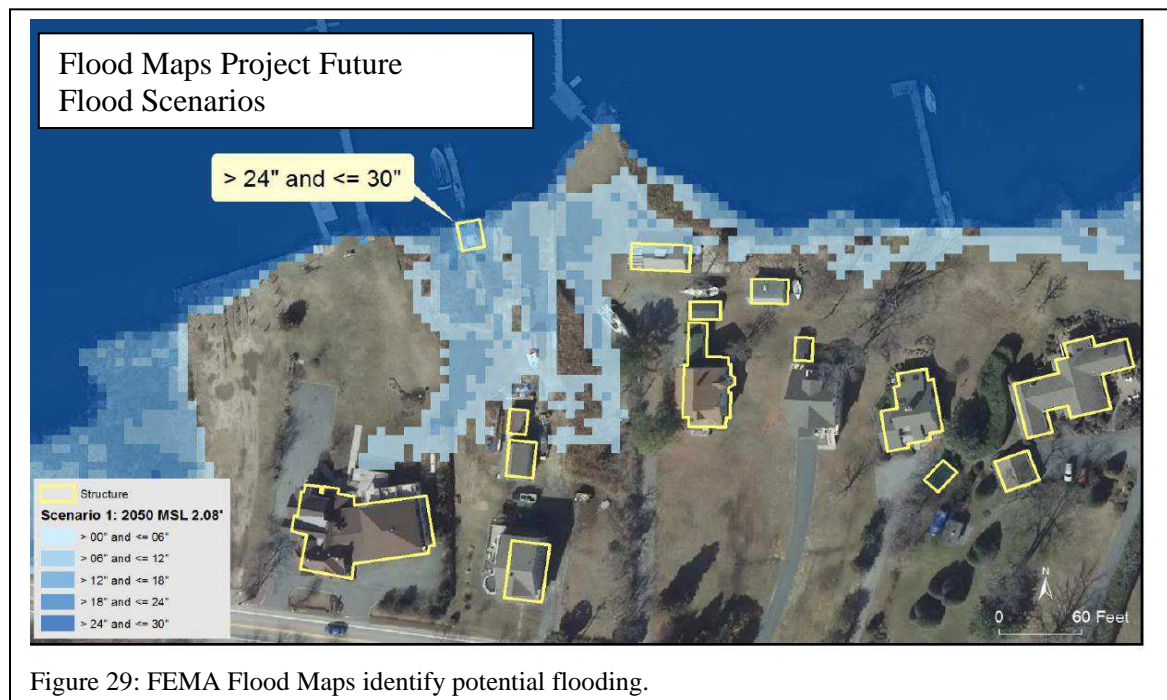


Figure 29: FEMA Flood Maps identify potential flooding.

**Goal: Limit Development in Areas with Constraints in Order To Improve Safety and Reduce Environmental and Property Damage**

*Strategy: Maintain, enforce and if necessary, strengthen existing regulations for floodplains and buffers.*

Kent County's existing regulations address building, filling and other disturbances within stream buffers, shoreline cliffs, and floodplains for their flood reduction and habitat protection benefits. The County will keep its floodplain regulations current with standard practice and attain higher levels of protection as appropriate.

*Strategy: Implement the results of the County's Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Analysis and the County's current Hazard Mitigation Plan.*

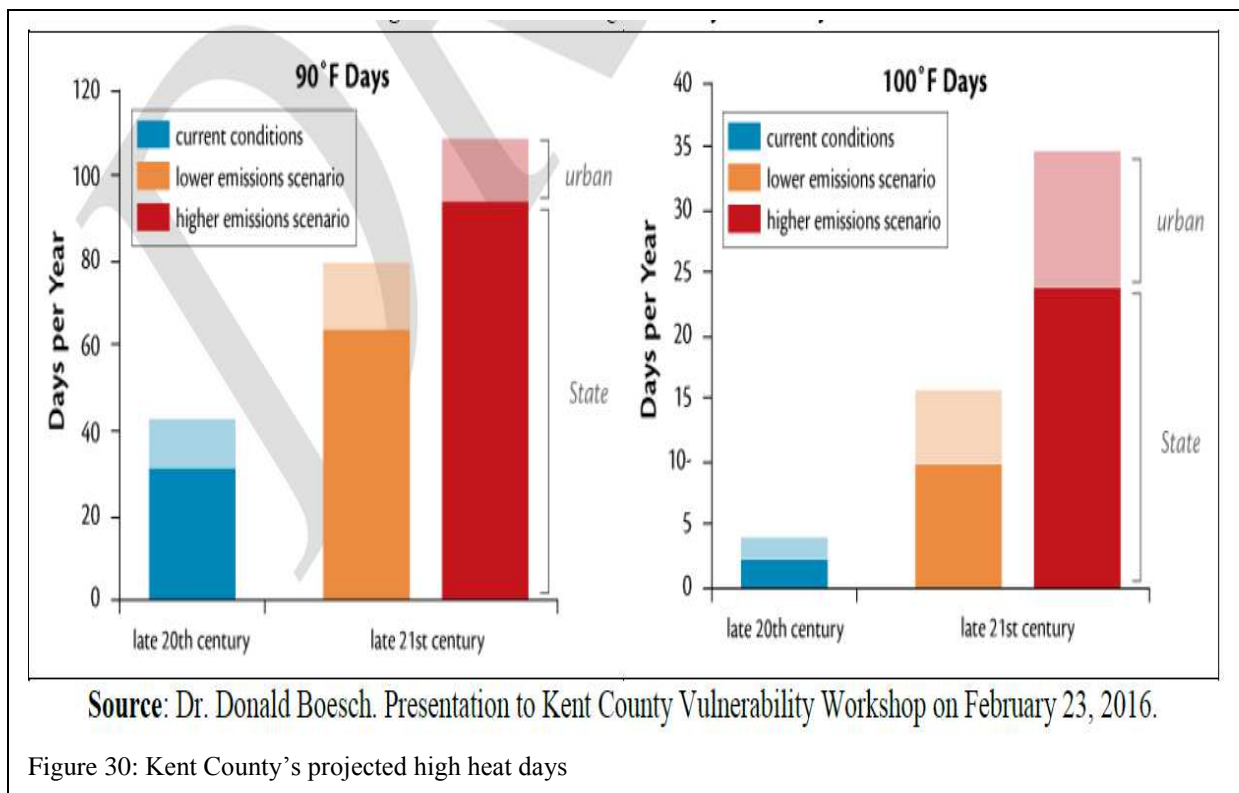
Corroborated by the County's study of impacts into its vulnerable resources, natural

and man-made hazards may affect Kent County. To reduce future property damage and threats to human safety, the County has adopted and updated its Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan was originally adopted in 2004 and updated in 2014. It identifies and characterizes the County's potential natural and man-made hazards and provides appropriate actions to reduce their negative effects.

*The Climate Change and Sea Level Adaptation Report* met three intended purposes:

1. To augment the *Kent County Hazard Mitigation Plan* by understanding how existing hazards and risks may evolve and intensify in the future due to climate change;
2. To inform the Kent County Comprehensive Plan and other



planning processes by recommending strategies for mitigating risks, becoming resilient to extreme events, and adapting to changing conditions; and

3. To stimulate conversations and improve collaboration across governmental departments and with community stakeholders

The report provides recent data and provides preparedness and resilience actions.

Tide gauges for the Chesapeake Bay and the Mid-Atlantic Coast show rates of sea-level rise twice that of the worldwide average. Evidence is mounting that the effects of climate change have begun and that sea level rise will accelerate. Awareness has generally grown, and hazard mitigation strategies are contained in the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan to address these challenges.

Islands once populated in colonial times and during the past century have disappeared due to submergence and related shore erosion. The County will continue to coordinate with local partners to monitor and evaluate current science of climate change and sea level rise and adjust its hazard mitigation planning accordingly along with implementing the actions contained in its Hazard Mitigation Plan and its climate change response plan.

*Strategy: Participate in the Community Rating System Program.*

The Federal Insurance Administration will grant flood insurance premium reductions to property owners whose community participates in the Community Rating System (CRS) and achieves a higher standard for flood protection, preparedness, and mitigation. In order to qualify for the CRS program, a community

must have floodplain programs which address four broad categories:

- Public information
- Mapping and regulation
- Flood damage reduction
- Flood preparedness

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Federal, State, and nonprofit organizations to acquire new digital elevation models to more accurately determine the locations of floodplains.*

*Strategy: Maintain and enforce existing regulations for steep slopes and shoreline cliffs.*

The County Land Use Ordinance's standards protect steep slopes and provide for shoreline cliff setbacks in the Critical Area. The County continues to monitor their effectiveness and will modify them should changes be needed.

*Strategy: Inventory steep slopes outside of Critical Area and if necessary protect them.*

Most steep slopes in Kent County occur along the shore in the Critical Area. The County will use the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) maps to determine if the extent of steep slopes outside the critical area is large enough to require protection. Soils on steep slopes will also be checked for erodibility.

### **Goal: Promote Sustainable Building Practices and Provide an Effective Renewable Resource Strategy**

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Therefore, sustainability requires strategies and techniques for current activities which consume resources in a manner that allows future users their full use without

unnecessarily foreclosing future users' options.

Kent County will take a two-tiered approach to sustainability. The first tier addresses sustainable development and building at the site scale. The second tier addresses the use of renewable resources in a manner consistent with maximizing its benefits while not adversely affecting the County's overarching directive to maintain its character and promote its rural and agricultural heritage. This section begins by addressing sustainable building and development.

Sustainable building techniques create structures during construction and in operation that are healthier and more resource efficient. This applies to all of a structure's life phases including its demolition. This approach balances current needs with future demands in an equitable manner.

Sustainable building strategies include the:

1. Efficient use of energy and water
2. Selecting building materials with the smallest environmental footprint throughout their lifecycle
3. reduction and recycling of waste from construction, remodeling, and demolition
4. material selection, design, and operation of buildings in a manner that promotes occupant health

*Strategy: Encourage energy and water efficient building design and use of appropriate alternative energy sources*

Current State-mandated building codes require the design and operation of new and modified buildings to contain significant thermal resistance and minimum air leakage along with the proper sizing and selection of

mechanical, electrical, water heating, and lighting equipment.

Kent County will also encourage the use of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, and biomass and investigate Federal and State incentives such as tax credits for the use of alternative energy sources. The County will provide information to area residents on available programs.



Figure 31: Kent County's environment provides economic benefits and is a key element of the local quality of life

*Strategy: Permit and encourage individual renewable energy use.*

Renewable energy systems are encouraged for individual residences, businesses, and institutions so long as such installations can be constructed to be compatible with the character of the neighborhood.

*Strategy: Identify and zone locations suitable for larger/utility scale renewable resource facilities.*

Continue to include provisions in the Land Use Ordinance which provide suitable locations for large scale renewable energy facilities. Such areas will be located to not unduly impinge on the County's rural character nor its productive agricultural lands.

# Housing

Kent County recognizes the need for a wide range of housing types meeting the needs of all County residents. The quality of housing affects the County's socioeconomic characteristics and helps determine the County's economic growth. Housing also greatly affects the County's general attractiveness as a place to live and conduct business. Housing diversity in the range of unit types and affordability is a key component for sustainable, healthy, and economically vibrant communities.

Traditionally, single family detached housing has been and continues to be Kent County's principle type of housing. Of the County's 10,616 housing units, 70.2% were single family detached units in 2014

With past and anticipated reductions in household size and the aging of the County's population, there will likely be an increase in the preference for housing styles with less maintenance such as townhouses and condominium ownership as well as rental units and other options that allow for aging in place. By the year 2040, it is predicted, that one in three County residents will be over 65 years old.

The County's demographic trends will create the need for additional housing choices where convalescent care and assisted living facilities are available as well as development of continuing care retirement communities.

Seasonal and vacant homes represent a significant percentage (13.2%) of the County's housing supply. In Maryland, only Worcester and Garrett Counties have a greater percent of seasonal housing than Kent County. This underscores the increasing desirability of second homes in

Kent County and the County's attraction to retirees.

The County's primary housing challenge is meeting local housing needs while ensuring that new housing is suitably located, compatible with existing community character, and offers diverse housing opportunities for all household income levels and age.



Figure 32: Traditional and new forms of housing will be needed in the future

The standard for affordability set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) States that a household spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing is considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. The State in their *2013 Housing Maryland Report* identified that 32.8% of owner and 52.3% of renter households in Kent County were housing-cost burdened as reflected with 2010 statistics.

Kent offers one of the most desirable residential locations in the Mid-Atlantic Region due to its natural beauty, moderate climate, desirable communities, and proximity to major metropolitan areas.

Many of the County's current housing problems – escalating housing cost and rents, overall demand for housing, and potential pressure of growth—result from these qualities.

Kent County recognizes that a successful housing policy requires a comprehensive approach that integrates a variety of techniques and is one that is critical to maintaining a strong and vibrant community. The following goals and strategies are designed to address the housing needs of the County.



Figure 33: Kent County's housing stock is generally in good condition

**Goal: Provide a Wide Range of Housing Opportunities to Meet the Needs of Kent County Residents**

*Strategy: Foster opportunities to collaboratively implement approaches, methods, and programs to provide diverse housing options for all levels of household income.*

Affordable housing is an important County priority, and the County will take a proactive leadership role in working with community groups and each County jurisdiction to collaborate and coordinate housing efforts. The County will establish a housing clearinghouse which will provide educational materials, technical information concerning grants, and information on best

practices.

The responsibility for effectively addressing the County's housing needs and assuring effective application of fair housing laws needs to be shared by community groups, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. The purpose of this approach is to remain aware of available resources and be creative in developing and responding to opportunities to achieve the County's housing goals.

*Strategy: Review County and State tax policies.*

Tax policies have the potential to both positively and negatively affect housing affordability. Tax incentives can encourage rehabilitation of substandard structures and development of vacant, dilapidated, or underused land.

Increasing taxes can also result in displacement of long-term residents. Kent County will review its tax policies to encourage rehabilitation and creation of affordable housing and to limit the negative impacts of gentrification on existing residents.

*Strategy: Conduct a Countywide housing inventory.*

The County will periodically conduct a countywide housing inventory. The results will be used to identify the County housing needs and to target future efforts. It will include a summary of housing types, affordability, vacancy rates, physical conditions, and an inventory of vacant lots. The study should also address any increase in price and ownership retention of those homes built as affordable housing. Washington College is a potential partner for completing the inventory.

*Strategy: Review the County's infrastructure and development policies.*

The County will evaluate its policies to strategically encourage a mix of housing types, sizes, and prices in designated growth areas. In reviewing its infrastructure plans, the County will look for incentives to promote affordable housing.

*Strategy: Assist in the rehabilitation of substandard units.*

The County Commissioners will continue to work with and promote Federal and State programs for rehabilitating substandard housing units for low and moderate income families, as well as encouraging private sector rehabilitation projects. Reuse of existing structures not only offers opportunities for housing variety but also strengthens and revitalizes existing communities through the maintenance of structures and elimination of blight.

*Strategy: Encourage the development of housing for all income levels.*

The County Commissioners will provide incentives to encourage private sector investment in the development of a variety of housing types. Incentives may include development at higher densities and development requirement variations without the purchase of development rights in villages and in designated growth areas.

The County will encourage the creation of new and the expansion of existing mobile home parks to meet the need for affordable housing. However, scattered mobile homes will be discouraged.

*Strategy: Continue to allow the creation of accessory dwellings in specified zoning districts.*

Accessory dwellings are independent, complete living units typically created within

a single-family home or in an accessory structure on a property. These units add affordable rental housing to the market while keeping the dream of homeownership alive even when housing costs seem prohibitive.

Accessory dwellings are permitted in the Agricultural and all residential zoning districts provided that certain conditions specific to each district are met. The Commercial and Commercial Crossroads zoning districts also allow for accessory apartments.



Figure 34: Multifamily housing meets an important need.

*Strategy: Permit migrant labor camps.*

Migrant farm camps are permitted subject to all Federal, State, and local regulations. These camps are important to supply labor necessary for some types of agriculture. The County will support the efforts of appropriate State agencies to ensure that the quality and conditions of such camps are consistently maintained in accordance with established regulations.

*Strategy: Address the need for housing for special populations.*

Simply addressing the need for additional affordable housing will not address the housing needs of all Kent County residents. There is a need to provide housing for the homeless, as well as residents who have special needs and require group home or assisted living facilities.

A number of community organizations attempt to address these needs but some County residents' needs go unmet. The County will continue to assist organizations find additional resources to expand existing programs or create new programs to better provide housing for all of Kent County's residents.

*Strategy: Work cooperatively with Washington College to mitigate the impacts of the increased demand for off-campus housing.*

Students living off-campus have a significant impact on the local rental market. These impacts include increased rental prices, loss of affordable housing, displacement of existing residents, and increased nuisance and noise complaints. The County will work with Washington College and the Town of Chestertown to identify immediate and long-term solutions to accommodate and mitigate the impact of increased off-campus housing.

*Strategy: Support the development of a range of housing options for the elderly.*

The County will encourage the development of alternative housing options for senior citizens within towns, villages, and in designated growth areas. These options include congregate care housing, sheltered housing, accessory apartments, assisted living, continuing care retirement communities, and institutional care facilities.

*Strategy: Provide equal opportunity for housing.*

No person shall, on the basis of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, handicap, or disability, use of authorized guide dogs, age, sex, or national origin, be discriminated against in terms of housing and other rights at places of public accommodation.

*Strategy: Promote energy efficient design.*

The County will continue to enforce its building and housing codes to ensure sound construction and require safe housing conditions. Current codes require the use of construction and design techniques that conserve energy, fuel, and materials. Such investments in energy-efficiency and long lasting construction are affordable and provide long-term housing benefits.

*Strategy: Establish a Kent County Housing Trust.*

Kent County will strive to establish a County-wide nonprofit housing trust whose purpose is to encourage affordable options for homeownership and rental housing, provide housing counseling, and education.

*Strategy: Investigate inclusionary housing practices.*

The County will investigate programs which encourage new developments to construct more diverse and economical housing to meet the needs of moderate income families.

*Strategy: Coordinate with local employers to encourage employee housing programs.*

Employer-assisted housing, live near your work, and other innovative partnerships between local government, businesses, non-profit housing agencies, and employers may benefit a range of stakeholders. The employer benefits from a more stable

workforce including improved morale, less turnover and reduced recruitment which result in bottom line savings. The employee, beyond receiving support from an employer to buy a home closer to work, may gain the ability to buy a first home or extra time — formerly spent in traffic—for family or community life. The surrounding community may trade-in a portion of its traffic congestion for the new investment and property taxes as former commuters buy homes near their jobs.

Explore the applicability of live-work units designed to provide for commercial and residential space. Such uses have the advantages of locating compatible commercial uses in otherwise residential areas and reducing commutation and traffic.

*Strategy: Aggressively enforce building code violations.*

The County will aggressively enforce its building and housing codes to ensure sound construction and require safe and energy efficient housing.



# Transportation

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The County's transportation system serves two important functions: first affecting where growth occurs by providing property access and, second facilitating the local economy by moving people, goods, and materials. Therefore, a well-planned, properly constructed and maintained transportation system is essential to orderly and efficient County development and an on-going effective local economy.

Several early Kent County towns developed as ports on the Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries. This emphasis on water transportation continued well into the twentieth century. However, the ability to cross the Chesapeake Bay by motor vehicle with the completion of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge's first span in 1952 and its second span in 1973 spurred Eastern Shore development.

Although we have not experienced the more intense growth of neighboring Queen Anne's County, improvements to U.S. Route 301 in Delaware may make Kent County a more convenient location for people working in New Castle County, Delaware.

However, the County's vision is to not develop the US 301 corridor with housing. To this end, coordination of local planning with our regional neighbors will be a key to properly managing growth in the US 301 corridor.

We must also be aware of the effects of our own automobile dependence in Kent County. There is increasing attention at all levels

of government to creating more transportation options while fully recognizing more than just the automobile in modern transportation system design. Nationally, reliance on the automobile is slipping, but locally it appears it will continue to serve as the dominant transportation mode.

Kent County population density will not support expensive public transportation options such as light rail, we can still take measures to reduce our dependence on private automobiles and accommodate other existing modes such as walking and biking.

These include promoting local employment centers so more residents can work-in the County with living and better wage jobs, preserving rail rights-of-way for potential future use, encouraging ride-sharing, and changing growth patterns to encourage use of alternative transportation modes, such as bicycles, walking and public transportation.



The following principles will guide Kent County's transportation policies:

1. Shorten distances between trip origins and destinations by encouraging growth to occur in designated growth areas
2. Promote and facilitate alternatives to conventional automobile travel
3. Promote safe access to roadways by minimizing the number of, and controlling the spacing between, access points along arterial and collector roads
4. Maximize separation of through and local traffic
5. Provide adequate internal and inter-parcel access to all properties especially for commercial, institutional, and industrial development
6. Promote thoughtful development patterns that require road improvements only where they will not detract from environmental and scenic resources
7. Assure documented traffic demand justifies new roads or highways.

See Map 13 below for the map of the County's roads by class.

**Goal: Develop a Safe, Convenient, Accessible, and Efficient Transportation System that Preserves the County's Historic, Scenic, Agricultural and Natural Resources and Serves the Transportation Needs of County Residents**

*Strategy: Review County road standards and classifications.*

The County will review and revise, as necessary, the road standards for new development. The Planning Commission will review and update the County functional road classification system and map. In reviewing the road system, the Planning Commission will also review and revise, if necessary, its private road standards and policies.

*Strategy: Existing and committed funds will be used to improve the County road network, provided the improvements support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.*

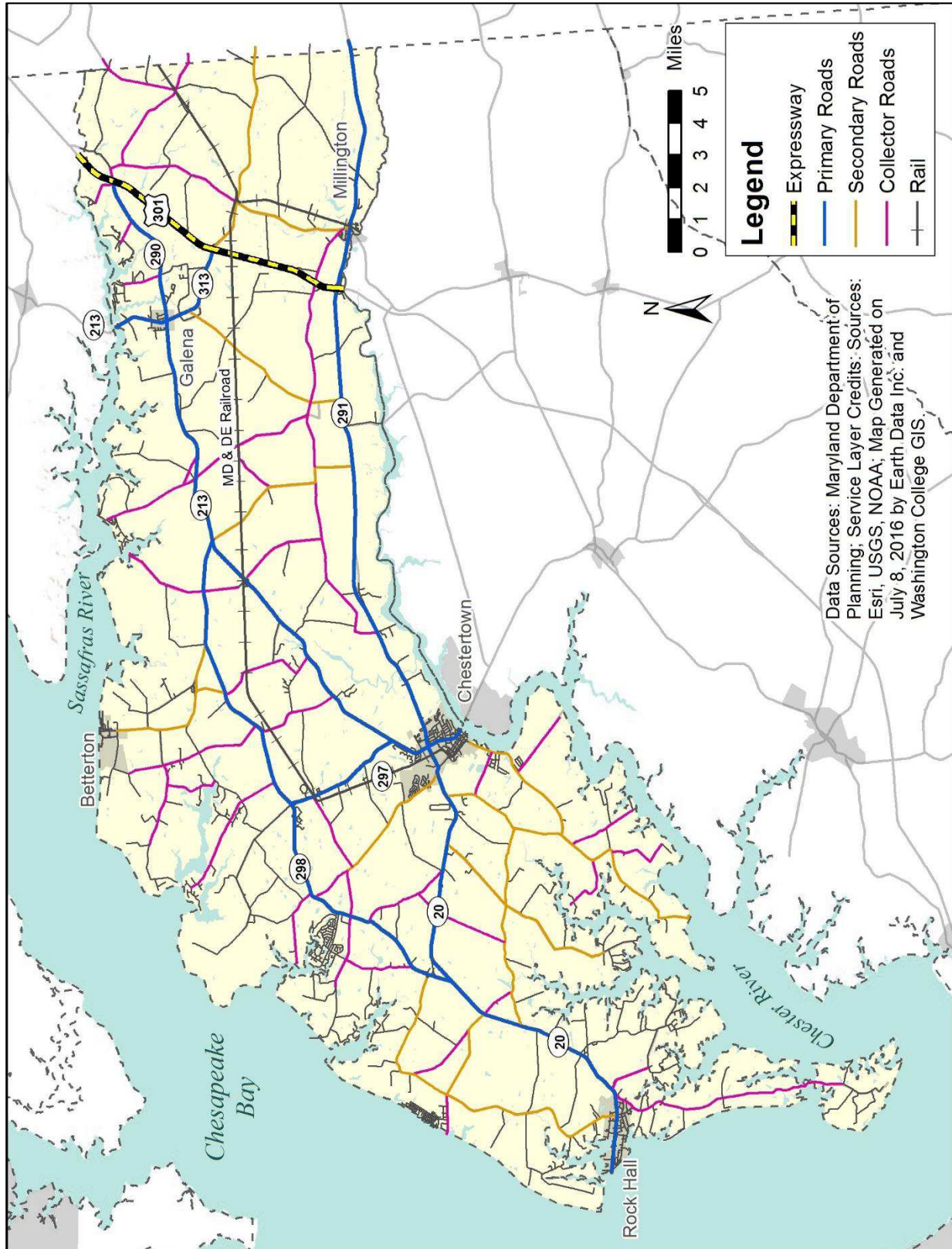
The County will review all proposed road improvements for consistency with this Comprehensive Plan. In general, funding will be focused in the towns and villages and designated growth areas and along major roads linking these areas to MD 301 or MD 213.

The County strongly supports the State's funding and construction of the Chester River Boulevard alternate for Route 213 around Chestertown to reduce traffic congestion. A secondary priority is funding and construction of a grade separated interchange at US 301 and MD 313. Road improvements in rural and agricultural areas will be limited to those addressing safety, rehabilitation, and structural concerns.

*Strategy: Work with the State to address growing truck traffic on local roads generally and such traffic diverted by toll and weigh station location on State and Federal roads.*

The County will work with impacted towns and the State to address the disruptive truck traffic which may be diverted to County and

Map 13 – Road Classification System



Town roads in order to avoid factors such as toll and weigh station locations. The County and Towns will work with the State to address the concerns raised by the US 301 Toll Diversion Corridor Working Group and will continue its dialogue with Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to resolve these issues.

*Strategy: Analyze traffic impact of proposed development.*

The County will evaluate the potential traffic impact of proposed development. Primary access points from large scale, traffic-generating development will be located to minimize impacts on residential communities. The County will also encourage truck traffic to avoid traveling through small communities and residential areas. Where appropriate, the County may include conditions on which routes trucks may use when reviewing development plans.

As part of the development review and traffic impact analysis the County will look for opportunities where developers will provide pedestrian and bicycle pathways as part of the subdivision and site plan approval process.

*Strategy: Incorporate as appropriate complete streets concepts.*

Smart Growth America defines complete streets as streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from mass transit.

The County as part of its review of road and development standards will incorporate appropriate complete street standards to facilitate effective and efficient County transportation.

*Strategy: Require developers to address the need for internal and inter-parcel connections between adjacent land uses.*

The County will require developers to address the need for internal connections (roads, pathways, and open space) between adjacent land uses and parcels, such as residential subdivisions or commercial developments to provide a secondary means of emergency access, encourage a greater sense of community, and minimize the need for inter-parcel traffic to use external County and State roads thereby reducing congestion at intersections and the distance traveled between adjoining uses.

*Strategy: Explore options to preserve historic and scenic resources along County transportation corridors.*

Kent County recognizes that maintaining the scenic quality of our roads and highways fosters and enhances the overall County character and promotes tourism. Maryland Routes 213, 20, and 445 from Rock Hall to Eastern Neck Island have been designated as the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway. Figure 37 maps this byway. There are also driving and water trails/tours through the County. The driving trails include the Civil War Trail, the Star-Spangled Banner Trail and Eastern Shore Wine Trail. The driving tours are the Kent County Driving Tour, and the Farm and Country Driving Tour. The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail is the first national water trail which travels almost 3,000 miles across the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, including the Chester River.

The County will investigate the designation of other scenic highways and will coordinate preservation efforts along these byways with the State Highway Administration's *Scenic Byway Design Guidelines* initiative.

In addition, the County will continue to prohibit new billboards, and will coordinate directional signage throughout the County and with neighboring counties.

*Strategy: Develop a Countywide bike and pedestrian strategy.*

The County will coordinate with the Town of Chestertown to continue the Chestertown Rail Trail into the County. A link between Chestertown and Worton should be considered. Further, the County will work to develop bike and pedestrian trails along the scenic highways and in MDOT right-of-way. Bikeways will be designed and located to minimize conflicts with surrounding land

uses and to maximize user safety. For example, non-roadway trails would be located on abandoned rail rights-of-way outside actively farmed areas.

The County will produce a scenic bike route map to facilitate cycling in Kent County.



Figure 36: 2 Stories of the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway

## Goal: Work with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to Improve the Transportation Infrastructure

*Strategy: Support and encourage the construction of the Chester River Boulevard.*

The current truck and agricultural equipment traffic over the Chester River Bridge and through Chestertown causes traffic congestion, safety hazards, and adversely affects local scenic and historic resources. Heavy vehicle loads on the bridge also cause structural deterioration resulting in increased maintenance costs and traffic delays. The proposed Chester River Boulevard will serve as an MD 213 alternative route for these

vehicles and also mitigate the negative impacts of escalating roadway traffic. The intent is to create a parkway with access limited to Route 291 and Hopewell Corner.

In 2010, the Maryland Department of Transportation and the State Highway Administration conducted the *Chester River Bridge Crossing Feasibility Study*. The study identified multiple concepts relative to alternative crossing options with the boulevard concept emerging as the preferred option by the community.

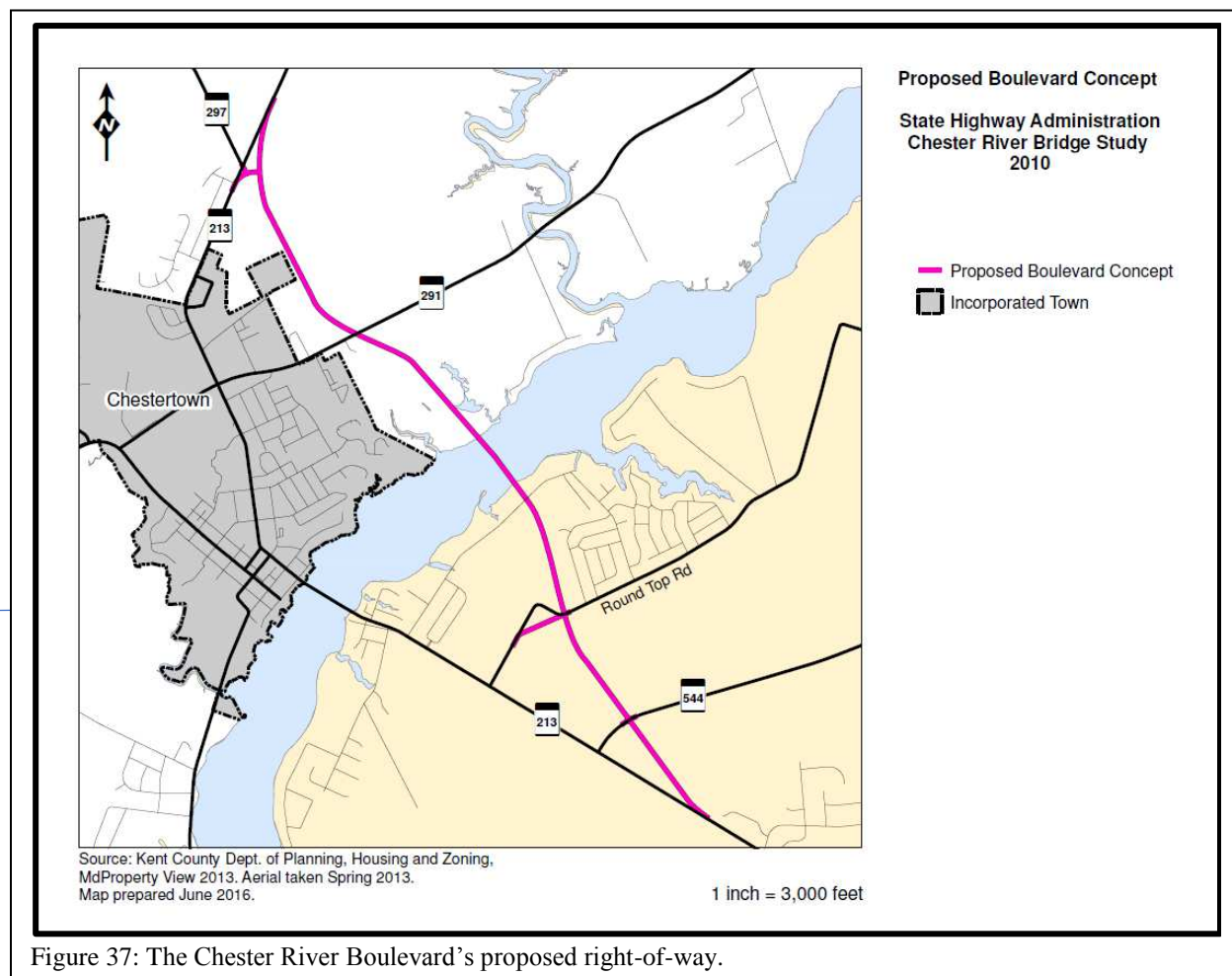


Figure 37: The Chester River Boulevard’s proposed right-of-way.

The County will ensure that the proposed right-of-way, as shown in Figure 37, is incorporated into all future development plans. So as to preserve the capacity of the Chester River Boulevard within Kent County, access to this road will be limited solely to the intersections with MD 291 and MD 213. Since this road will function as a gateway to Kent County, attractive landscaping, special controls on signage, and provision of appropriate buffers along the road will be required.

The County will continue to encourage Queen Anne's County to support the Chester River Boulevard but will also work towards construction of a bypass between MD 291 and MD 213. This project is a high priority among the County's transportation improvements.

*Strategy: Continue the strongest possible opposition to any proposal for a north Bay Bridge.*

Kent County adamantly and in the strongest terms possible opposes any proposal for constructing another bridge crossing of the Chesapeake Bay north of the existing Bay Bridge spans with a terminus in Kent County. A northern bridge crossing will have a detrimental impact on the County's rural landscape and natural resource-based economy. It will undermine the County's efforts to preserve our agricultural industry and develop a tourism industry based on our cultural, historical, natural, and scenic assets. Limiting access to Kent County will discourage development resulting from urban expansion of the Baltimore region and, therefore, help maintain the County's rural character. This is particularly important as Kent County does not now or plan to have infrastructure to support such an expansion.

*Strategy: Actively participate in all studies and committees pertaining to a new Chesapeake Bay Bridge.*

The County will actively participate through an officially designated voice/representative in all State studies and committees addressing a new crossing of the Chesapeake Bay.

*Strategy: Complete neighborhood conservation projects.*

The County will encourage the State Highway Administration to use the neighborhood conservation planning process when making improvements in any of the County's towns and villages and designated growth areas. Neighborhood conservation projects consider a project's impact beyond the edge of the pavement and directly involve affected residents in the planning process.

The resulting designs often include traffic calming techniques and improvements to drainage, sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping and streetscapes which were ignored at times in the past.

*Strategy: Encourage context sensitive design for all highway projects.*

The County will encourage the use of context sensitive design when making highway improvements. It will be particularly important to develop a consistent look for highway overpasses along the Chester River Boulevard and US 301 that respect the region's heritage. US 301 is an important gateway to the Eastern Shore and as overpass construction occurs over time, developing, and consistently using a suitable design will aid local community character efforts.

*Strategy: Preserve and maintain active rail beds in the County.*

The County will work with the Maryland Department of Transportation to preserve and maintain all existing active rail beds for potential freight or passenger use. Long-term preservation of this transportation infrastructure will play a key role in the County's economy.

### **Goal: Develop and Encourage the Use of Alternative Transportation Modes**

*Strategy: Enhance existing and create additional bicycle and pedestrian routes and linkages throughout the County.*

Bicycle and pedestrian routes and linkages provide alternative means for residents and visitors to move throughout the County and can reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled. A trail network may make it easier for residents, especially children, to use County recreation facilities and connect houses to jobs.

*Strategy: Develop and promote the use of park and ride lots and ridesharing programs.*

With more commuters moving into the County, the need for designated park and ride lots has increased. County agencies and businesses could also be encouraged to develop rideshare programs for employees. Both are ways to reduce traffic congestion, air, and water pollution. Also, the County tourism industry will benefit from park and ride opportunities as the lots can be used on weekends by tourists during special events or those visiting the County for cycling.

*Strategy: Encourage public and private transportation efforts.*

The County will continue to support and promote public, semi-public, and private transportation systems such as Delmarva Community Services (DCS).

Transportation Services in Kent, Caroline and Talbot Counties are provided by DCS. DCS is a non-profit operator. DCS operates a demand-response service, deviated fix route. This service type effectively serves the mixture of small towns and rural areas found in this tri-county region.

The demand-response system provides rural residents with more frequent transportation service than they would otherwise receive. The DCS transportation program includes trip destinations such as shopping centers, employment centers, educational facilities, adult day care centers, and senior centers. Other major activity centers include Denton, Federalsburg, Chesapeake Community College, Easton, Chestertown and Centreville.

Several public and private companies also provide transportation service in the County. These include "special needs" transportation, cab service, shuttle service to nearby airports and train stations, and van service to the western shore and large regional employers.

# Community Facilities and Public Services

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Community facilities and public services promote the overall health, safety, education, and citizen well-being. These services and facilities include:

1. Schools
2. Libraries
3. Water and sewer systems
4. Solid waste collection and disposal
5. Parks and recreation

The challenge to County government is to assure that these services and facilities are accessible, well maintained, and responsive to the needs of Kent County residents. The County regularly evaluates the adequacy of community facilities and services. This evaluation considers their function, use, and location relative to existing facilities along with their maintenance requirements and renovation schedules. Demand for new facilities must also be assessed. Few new community facilities are expected in the near future given the County's projected slow growth rate. The following criteria, however, will guide locating new public facilities:

Efficient Location—Facility sites must be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan and zoning. Proximity to population centers, suitable topography and environmental features, along with adequate utility and other relevant infrastructure must also be considered. Most often a single, centralized location is required for facilities providing countywide functions. Multiple, decentralized locations are required for facilities that serve a local service area. Whenever possible, government buildings should be located in

incorporated towns, villages, or designated growth areas. This will reduce service costs and help focus growth and enhance a sense of community.

Accessibility—The site should be convenient for most who will use the facility. Site accessibility considers various modes of transportation including pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motorized vehicles.

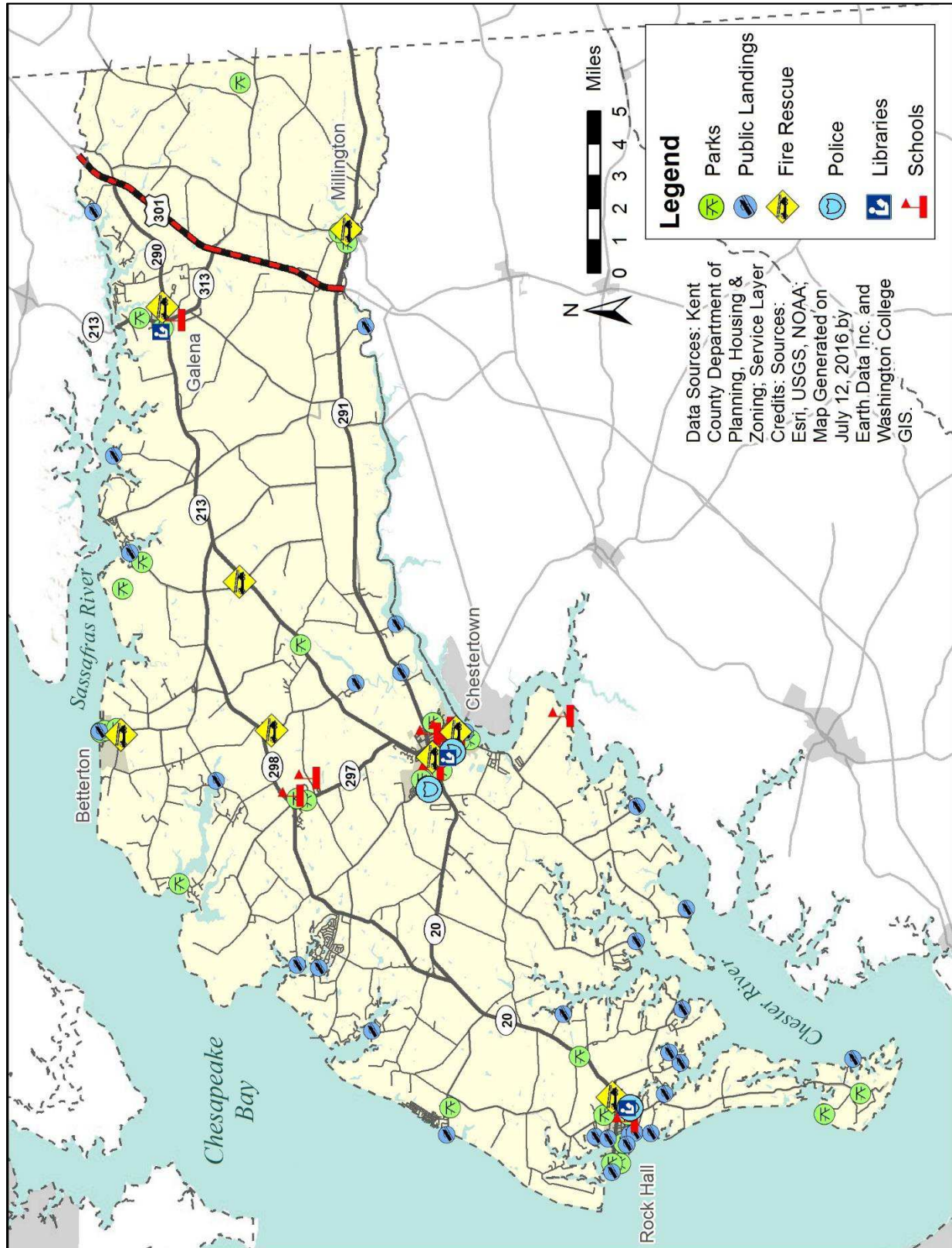
Links with Related and Supporting Facilities—Grouping related facilities in one complex or area enhances public convenience, operational economics, and provides opportunities for sharing accessory facilities, such as parking. Schools, libraries, local and community parks, and many non-county facilities like post offices are more accessible and convenient when they are in a town or village. They then can also serve as community gathering places.

Adequate Size—Ample buildable area must be provided to satisfy the present and projected space needs. Area for employee and visitor parking areas, vehicular and pedestrian access, maintenance and service access, landscaping, and other applicable regulatory requirements must also be provided.

Architectural Quality—Public buildings should set the example for quality, thereby reflecting and building community pride.

See Map 14 below for the location of significant County community facilities.

Map 14 – Community Facilities



## Education

The Kent County public school system consists of three elementary schools, one middle school, and one senior high school. Enrollment for the public schools in

2016-17 totaled 2,010 students down 28 percent from enrollment in 2000. In 2000, there were 2,795 enrolled students. Due to enrollment declines two elementary schools were closed recently.

Public school enrollment in Kent County continues its prolonged decline which began in 1997 following a “mini baby boom” in the 1990s. While the Maryland Department of Planning projects a slow population growth for Kent County during the next three decades, it also forecasts a continued low rate of births and declining household size. Current State projections call for enrollment to hold within the range of 2,010 to 2,060 students.

Kent County continues to have excess school capacity at all levels. As a result, the County’s three middle schools have been consolidated into one, centrally-located middle school. In addition, the County and the Board of Education have been faced with the tough decision of a potential consolidation of community elementary schools. It should be noted that due to the small total size of Kent County enrollment, a single event such as a large new residential development can have a significant impact on public school enrollment.

Private schools located in Kent County include Kent School, Inc. (grades K through 8), Chestertown Christian Academy (grades K through 12), Montessori Pre-School and Kindergarden (ages 2 to 6), and Radcliffe Creek School (teaches ages 6-13). Echo Hill Outdoor School provides environmental education classes, camps, and trips. In

addition, the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy Sassafras Environmental Education Center partners with local schools to serve as a site for public school educators to implement Maryland’s environmental literacy standards. Home schooling enrollment has ranged since 2005 from 62 to 79 students per year.

Washington College, a private non-sectarian liberal arts and science institution located in Chestertown has a student population of approximately 1,450. It was Maryland’s first private college and is the tenth oldest private college in the country. The College is responsible for many of the cultural activities in the County and hosts numerous special events each year that are open to the public, often without charge. Washington College provides college-level courses for advanced high school students in cooperation with the County Board of Education.

Chesapeake College is a community college offering associate degrees and certificate programs in liberal arts and career programs. It is located in Queen Anne's County and serves students from Kent, Dorchester, Queen Anne's, Caroline, and Talbot counties. These counties financially support the College. Total enrollment in 2016 was 9,395 with 2,889 students seeking credits and 6,406 taking continuing education coursework.

### **Goal: Maintain Existing and Promote New Educational Services and Programs within the County**

*Strategy: Maintain and upgrade existing educational facilities and programs.*

Many of the County schools are aging. The last new facility was built in the 1970s. The County and the Board of Education will cooperate in aggressively pursuing funding

from the State for major renovations, modernization, and necessary maintenance of the existing educational facilities within the public-school system.

*Strategy: Promote the use of schools as community centers.*

Existing public school facilities will continue to be available for community activities, such as evening or weekend meetings and workshops. Further use of school facilities for cultural, recreational, athletic, and civic activities will be encouraged.

*Strategy: Support vocational and technical training.*

The County will coordinate with the Board of Education to promote the development of vocational/technical training and apprenticeships in conjunction with local businesses. This is especially important as such jobs generally remain on-shore and the need for technical and the skilled crafts remains strong in Kent County.

*Strategy: Revitalize the adult education program.*

The average age of Kent County residents has and is projected to increase over time. This reinforces the need for adult continuing education programs and provides an opportunity to garner support for school programs. Retraining is a growing need as shifts in the economy continue creating new employment opportunities while displacing jobs that become obsolete.

*Strategy: Involve County citizens in planning for facilities and programs.*

The Board of Education should identify ways to engage County citizens in developing and updating educational services and facilities. This could include an

annual open meeting to review program progress and receive public comments.

### **Goal: Develop an Educated Work Force with the Skills and Training Required to Meet Current and Future Kent County Employment Needs**

*Strategy: Develop secondary and post-secondary school training and apprenticeship programs to train residents and to provide skilled workers.*

The presence of a skilled labor force is a critical ingredient in attracting new employers as well as satisfying the growth demands of existing businesses. Training and apprenticeship programs should be developed in cooperation with local business including resource-based business. This will help meet their needs while also providing opportunities for Kent County workers to advance and obtain better paying jobs.

The Economic Development Advisory Board will foster a cooperative relationship among the Board of Education, the Upper Shore Regional Council, private employers, community colleges and training facilities to establish and/or nurture vocational training programs. This effort will be designed to satisfy the training needs of local businesses while developing skills in younger workers and re-training existing workers. These programs will emphasize skills that will be needed in the future and training that enables workers to learn and adapt to an ever-changing employment environment.

## **Library Services**

Library service is one of Kent County's most valuable community resources. The Kent County Library, established in 1962 and expanded in 1978, provides library services to the residents of Kent, northern Queen Anne's and southern Cecil Counties. With

branches in Chestertown, Galena, and Rock Hall along with a computer lab in the Kent County Community Center, the library is supported by County, State, and private donations.

*Strategy: Ensure that the Kent County Public Library provides user-centered, community-oriented service meeting the educational, social, and economic needs of the community.*

With attention to distinct community needs, local government agencies and schools will continue to partner with the Kent County Public Library in the development of programming to better engage, inform, and empower residents. In this effort as a consumer-friendly community center (not simply a repository for books and other publications) the traditional library space will change. A re-design will include features of meeting area access and enriched resources, serving effective engagement for citizens of all ages-including preschoolers and teens. Also in this effort, digital literacy continues to be a high priority, especially relevant to acquiring job-related skills and quality-of-life in retirement.

Critically important to consumer safety, privacy protection and online security updates will be continually presented relative to all channels of digital information access. This essential partnership with social service agencies and local schools will extend and enrich opportunities for both current and future adult citizens.

Table 7: Library Parameters, FY 2016

Parameter	Amount
Total registered borrowers	13,222
Library visits	100,275
Total number of reference and informational transactions	7,373
Users of public internet computers (# of sessions)	19,343
Users of public WIFI (# of sessions)	38,412
Number of internet terminals used by public	44
Outside groups using meeting room space	272
Number of outside group participants	4,677
<b>Library Programs:</b>	
Total Library Programs	513
Children and Young Adult programs	231
<b>Program Attendance:</b>	
Total Program attendance	8,729
Children and preschool program attendance	5,560

Source: Board of Trustees of Kent County Public Library, July 2017

**Goal: Provide Public Library Services for Kent County Residents which Incorporate New Technological Advances**

*Strategy: Explore alternative funding sources to support acquisition of new library technologies.*

Working with the Friends of the Kent County Public Library and the Foundation for the Kent County Public Library, the County will explore alternative funding sources to upgrade and redesign library facilities to implement flexible space to meet changing technology needs and new ways of using the library and expand the library's computer, digital, and video technologies. Such technologies will increase information access for citizens and increase opportunities for networking and resource sharing with other library and educational facilities.

*Strategy: Maintain the Kent County Public Library's presence outside of Chestertown.*

The existing branches should be maintained and enhanced to continue the library's presence in outlying areas of the County.

*Strategy: Explore opportunities to expand the Central Branch of the Kent County Public Library.*

Projected County growth will pressure the Library to provide additional and expanded services. The current facility was not designed for the current projected County population. The County will investigate innovative methods of providing for these growing needs, including use of impact assessment during development project review, annexation agreements, and development agreements.

## Water and Sewer

Kent County obtains all its domestic water supply from groundwater sources. The four aquifers that supply the raw water are the: Aquia, Monmouth, Magothy, and Raritan-Patapsco Formations. Although groundwater in Kent County is generally abundant and generally of good quality, some areas have high iron content.

There are five existing municipal and three County water systems serving about 63 percent of County residents. The municipal systems are:

1. Betterton
2. Chestertown
3. Galena
4. Millington
5. Rock Hall

The County operates the Kennedyville, Fairlee/Georgetown and Worton water systems. The remaining County residents are

served with individual wells. Most new private wells are drilled to depths of 60 to over 200 feet. There are, however, homes with old, shallow hand-dug or driven wells that are more susceptible to contamination and going dry during droughts.

Approximately half of Kent County's population uses municipal, County, and private wastewater systems. Existing systems include the five municipalities: Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington and Rock Hall; six County systems: Kennedyville, Fairlee/Georgetown, Rudnick, Little Neck, Worton/Butlertown; and two private systems: Eastman Chemical Corporation and the Great Oak Resort Club.

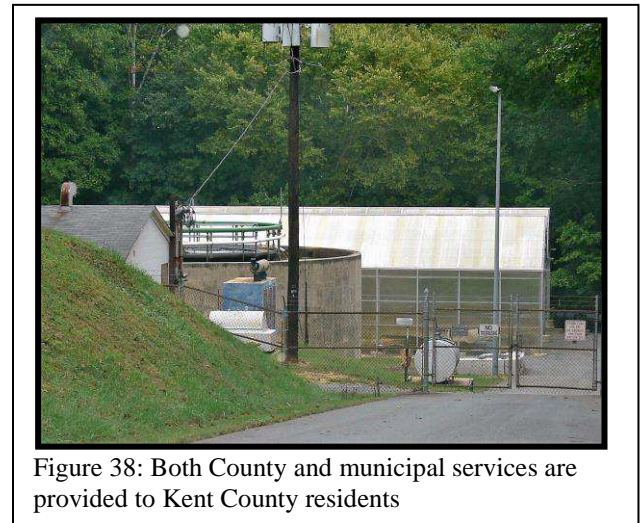


Figure 38: Both County and municipal services are provided to Kent County residents

Half of the County's population uses individual on-site septic systems. Many areas of Kent County have soils poorly suited for on-site sewage disposal. Individual septic systems can be acceptable in these areas when development disperses, but the need for central sewer systems increases as development densities intensify. The County is currently investigating ways to address failing septic systems in several areas. One solution is to connect these systems to a modern public wastewater system. This is necessary for public health and to meet water quality goals.

**Goal: Protect Drinking Water Quality and Insure Proper Wastewater Treatment within the County**

*Strategy: Implement the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan.*

By State law, the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan must comply with and conform to this Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides policy direction and guides development and the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan provides the method for serving its associated water and wastewater demand. New and existing development will conform to the requirements and guidelines established in the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan. The County will explore solutions to the water supply and sewerage problem areas identified in the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan and the Water Resources Element. The strategies and policies of the Water Resources Element are summarized in the Environmental Element of this Plan and the detailed backup and analysis will reside in the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan. County citizens will be involved in these planning efforts.

*Strategy: Establish a policy to address the provision of adequate public water and sewer facilities in designated growth areas.*

This Comprehensive Plan directs new growth to the existing towns and villages. To accommodate this growth, adequate water and sewer facilities are essential. However, the County will require new development pay its share of the cost of providing water and sewer facilities along with other required public facilities.

New and replacement water and sewer systems shall be on a priority basis located in the designated growth areas. Public water

and/or sewer systems will not be extended into the Countryside except to correct defined public health emergencies. The extension of services will not be granted to parcels between developed areas and treatment facilities.

*Strategy: Identify cost effective technologies to assure that all upgraded and new wastewater treatment facilities remove nutrients using the most cost-effective, approved methods.*

Nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, are the major pollutants causing water quality problems for the Chesapeake Bay. Most County wastewater treatment plants produce effluents that meet BNR standards and then discharge to a river or stream. The County's Water Resources Element identifies specific actions to be taken to upgrade local wastewater treatment facilities.

*Strategy: Work with the State to secure funding for wastewater treatment plant upgrades to Enhanced Nitrogen Removal (ENR), septic system connections to wastewater treatment systems, septic upgrades to best available technology systems (BAT), and cover crop best management practices to improve County waters and meet total maximum daily loads (TMDLs).*

In 2004, the State adopted SB 320, the Bay Restoration Fund. The law's purpose is to create a dedicated fund, financed by wastewater treatment plant users, to upgrade Maryland's wastewater treatment plants with enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) technology so they can achieve a high level of wastewater effluent quality (3 mg/l total nitrogen and 0.3 mg/l total phosphorus). In addition, a similar fee paid by septic system owners will be used to upgrade on-site systems and implement cover crops to reduce nitrogen loading to the Bay.

After the adoption in 2012 of HB 446 that made some amendments to the Bay Restoration Fund, the fee now raises \$127 million Statewide and has resulted in significant water quality improvement progress. The priority for the wastewater portion of the program was to address major plants; as this portion of the program nears completion minor plants are slated for upgrades.

The Chestertown system, a major system, has been upgraded to ENR and some plants have been made ENR capable while others are planned for future upgrades. See the Water Resources Element for a listing of important system parameters for wastewater treatment systems in Kent County.

*Strategy: Promote the implementation of alternative sewage treatment technologies.*

The County will promote the implementation of alternative sewage treatment technologies. Alternative technologies, such as land treatment, wastewater irrigation, mound systems, and wetlands systems could be helpful. Such systems hold the promise of lower operating costs, reduced energy demand, reuse of wastewater, and eliminating pollutant discharges. These technologies will, however, only serve the towns, villages, and their designated growth areas and areas with defined public health emergencies. Careful analysis of such systems will be required to ensure they provide acceptable levels of long-term water quality treatment.

*Strategy: Maintain and enforce current County sludge regulation.*

Kent County requires that the Board of Appeals grant a special exception before sewage sludge may be placed on land in Kent County. The special exception process invokes criteria which address impacts on

water quality, groundwater, and other environmentally sensitive areas. Additional regulations are found in the *Code of Public Local Laws of Kent County*.

*Strategy: Investigate composting and pelletization of Kent County sludge.*

Kent County will investigate and assess State of the art procedures for composting and pelletization of sewage sludge as an alternative to land application.

## **Solid Waste**

Kent County in 1992 joined in a regional solid waste management agreement with Caroline, Queen Anne's, and Talbot counties. This four-county agreement is operated by the Maryland Environmental Service (MES). The original disposal facility, Midshore I Regional Solid Waste Facility, located near Easton in Talbot County, closed in 2010. Currently, the region's solid waste travels to Midshore II located near Ridgely in Caroline County.

By agreement, each of these counties will, in turn, host solid waste disposal facilities. In accord with this agreement, the landfill will locate in Kent County by the year 2050. Kent County is also part of a cooperative agreement with these same counties to reduce and recycle solid waste in joint compliance with the Maryland Recycling Act.

Kent County has maintained and updated its Solid Waste Management Plan since 1973 to coordinate and manage its solid waste collection and disposal. The Plan is regularly updated to meet current standards and regulations.

## **Goal: Promote Recycling and Responsible Waste Management**

*Strategy: Encourage household and business recycling.*

The County will support increased household and business recycling by continuing its collection centers and publicizing their locations. The County will also promote public education of the benefits of recycling, the end use of recyclables, and explore incentives to increase recycling.

*Strategy: Require County agencies to recycle and use recycled products.*

The County will set the example for recycling as well as use of recycled products through the active use and promotion of recycled, recyclable, and reusable products. County agencies will also participate in existing or establishing new recycling programs.

*Strategy: Promote waste reduction alternatives.*

The County will promote alternatives for reducing waste such as composting, commercial, and residential waste exchanges, and source reduction measures. Source reduction includes minimizing packaging, improved production processes, and changing purchasing habits.

*Strategy: Address other solid waste management issues.*

The County will explore alternative solutions to County and regional solid waste management issues, such as:

- Alternative funding options, including variable rate and incentive-based fees for waste reduction and disposal

- Coordination with other regional agencies for disposal of hazardous waste and agricultural chemicals.

*Strategy: Begin investigating potential sites for a regional solid waste disposal facility.*

As part of the regional solid waste agreement, Kent County will eventually host the regional solid waste disposal facility. As noted above, this will occur by the year 2050, so the County will initiate this process by eliminating from consideration areas that are unsuitable due to environmental constraints, proximity to population centers, existence of prime agricultural land, and other factors. The County should commence the site selection process and notify the Maryland Environmental Service once a site is located.

## **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**

Kent County has an abundance of natural areas: the Chesapeake Bay, the Chester and Sassafras Rivers, wetlands, and forests. These natural areas provide Kent County residents with a variety of recreational opportunities as well as resource-based employment. As the County grows, and particularly as growth is concentrated in and near towns and villages, it is important that the County provide open spaces and foster in-town and village recreational opportunities.

Major parks and open space within Kent County include:

1. Millington Wildlife Management Area
2. Urieville Lake (State Fish Management Area)
3. Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge

4. Sassafra River Natural Resource Management Area
5. Worton Regional Park
6. Turner's Creek
7. County-wide Park, community and neighborhood parks, and school play fields

Other recreational facilities include:

1. Betterton Beach area
2. Bayside Landing
3. Edesville Community Park
4. Millington Pool
5. Toal Park
6. Cann Woodlot
7. Still Pond Station
8. Kent County Agricultural Center
9. Kent County Farm Museum
10. Thirty-one (31) public landings

In late 2009, the County completed construction and opened the Kent County Community Center and Pool. Located in Worton, close to the geographic center of the County, the Community Center is designed as a campus making use of existing infrastructure and 21 recreational facilities. It is adjacent to an elementary school, the County's only high school, and Worton Park. The County recognized the benefits of accessible recreational facilities to the physical and mental well-being of its citizens to improve the quality of life. It also recognized how such a facility promotes economic growth within the County. The Center has quickly become a major recreational facility, drawing patrons from within the County, neighboring counties, and the region.

**Goal: Enhance Existing and Provide New, Recreational Programs to Meet the Recreational Needs of all County Residents**

*Strategy: Provide and promote recreational programs.*

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will identify and target citizens in need of recreational programs with an emphasis on "at-risk" youths, school-aged children, and the elderly. Continuance of existing recreation programs for school-aged children that focus on using positive peer influences in a variety of educational, recreational and service learning type activities help develop and enhance self-esteem, decision making and problem solving skills.

Additionally, the County will continue and enhance its provision of recreation programs and activities for the maximum benefit of all citizens of the County, as well as maintain and develop to the utmost the existing parks within the County, along with the identification of, and expansion for the future, new park land.

Stakeholders will be directly involved in developing, promoting, and implementing programs to meet their needs.

*Strategy: Seek funding to ensure program stability.*

The County and the Board of Parks and Recreation will actively seek public and private funding to support recreational programming.

*Strategy: Promote cooperation among recreation-related agencies.*

The County will foster cooperation among the various public agencies and other relevant public and private recreation interest groups. These efforts will increase communication and coordination of recreational programming and will provide the opportunity to share resources to better meet local citizens' needs.

*Strategy: Encourage private sector involvement at all levels of recreational development.*

The County will actively seek participation of local volunteer and civic groups in enhancing existing recreational facilities and in creating new ones. Community efforts, such as the High School Football Field Lights, have built community spirit, reduced costs, and engendered “stake-holding.” Local citizen participation will also be encouraged in the development, enhancement, and implementation of recreational programs.

**Goal: Provide for the Varied Recreational Needs and Interests of Citizens and Visitors in Kent County by Developing and Enhancing Facilities throughout the County**

*Strategy: Implement the current Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan.*

The State’s Program Open Space Law requires counties to produce a Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) and update it every five years. These plans inventory local land preservation and recreation efforts and compare them to State standards. The local plans provide the basis for the State’s efforts to provide a framework for the State to implement an integrated and coordinated approach to the provision of adequate recreation lands and facilities as well as the protection of natural resources and agriculture.

*Strategy: Promote multiple-use of existing facilities to more effectively serve community needs.*

To encourage and attract growth to the designated growth areas, the County will develop strategies to ensure provision of recreational facilities. Strategies may include development exactions, targeting of existing funding, and continued public/private partnerships for providing recreational programs, acquiring parkland, and/or expanding parks and recreational opportunities.

*Strategy: Focus development of recreational facilities in the towns and villages.*

The County will assure that adequate recreational facilities are provided in the towns and villages in order to encourage new development in these designated growth areas.



Figure 39: Kent County Community Center and Pool  
Photo: Kent County Parks and Recreation (Source: Kent County LPPRP 2012)

*Strategy: Promote sporting facilities.*

The County will promote private sector facilities for competitive shooting, archery, and other individual sport shooting activities in agricultural areas. These kinds of facilities will draw visitors to the County,

provide recreation for local citizens, and serve as a complement to the hunting industry. Playing fields/courts will be established in existing communities with an emphasis on creating multi-use facilities.

*Strategy: Seek funding to establish hiking, biking, kayak, canoe, and horseback trails throughout the County.*

The County will identify, prioritize, and seek funding to establish existing and potential hiking, biking, horseback, and water trails throughout the County. The County will include in these trails the development of a hiking/biking trail along the rail line between Chestertown and the Worton Regional Park to link existing residential, employment, and recreational areas along the 4-mile corridor.

**Goal: Enhance and Promote the Preservation and Recreational Use of Public Open Space and Natural Areas**

*Strategy: Establish a Greenways Program.*

The County will coordinate efforts with other public and private agencies, as well as individuals to establish a County-wide Greenways Program. The Greenways Program will link existing parks and open spaces throughout the County and explore connections to adjoining counties. This effort would provide pedestrian trails, access ways and links between urban and residential areas, and parks and open spaces that could offer regional opportunities.

Greenway corridors are often established through acquisition of linear parks and open spaces along prominent physical features such as streams, railways, or utility rights-of-ways.

*Strategy: Coordinate the acquisition of public parks and open spaces with other natural resource protection programs.*

Recreational amenities will be developed in natural resource areas to allow for both active and passive recreation, such as primitive campgrounds, walking trails, environmental education areas, and open space, where possible. Information guides and related programs will be developed to promote the recreational and educational use of these areas by citizens and visitors. Preservation of these areas for recreational use also can protect groundwater recharge areas, stream and reservoir water quality, and wetlands.

*Strategy: Improve public access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.*

The County will pursue appropriate opportunities to improve and expand the existing public landings to allow for additional parking, picnic areas, beaches, and passive park and open space areas. Such areas will also be considered for siting of water quality improvement best management practices. All improvements will be constructed in an environmentally sensitive manner.

The County will also look for opportunities to acquire park and open space contiguous to, or providing linkages to water bodies especially, the Chesapeake Bay. The County will explore opportunities to increase public access to the water.

*Strategy: Assure that the amount of and amenities for public open space and recreational land keeps pace with changing needs in the demographics of the population.*

In 2012, Kent County as part of the needs analysis for the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) determined

that Kent County has a slight surplus of recreation land compared to the State's goal of 30 acres per 1,000 of population but has a deficit of facilities and programming in baseball/softball, field sports, basketball, and tennis. Although the 2012 analysis indicated this deficit, there continues to be a slow and steady decline of school-age children, while the number of residents over the age of 60 has continued to increase. The 2012 LPPRP noted that since the primary users of recreational facilities and programming in Kent County are not residents over the age of 60, the deficit shown by the needs analysis may not be as severe as indicated. Therefore, the County will explore opportunities to address recreation programming needs for the senior population.

Additionally, the County's priorities will be enhancement and rehabilitation of existing parks and facilities, including meeting the unmet demand for facilities, as well as addressing public transportation to recreation facilities. The LPPRP establishes estimated short-range through long-range priorities as well as the highest priority needs.

The County is committed to providing diverse recreational opportunities, facilities, and programming to enable a viable recreation network that will serve as focal points and experiences for community activity and pride.

It is the County's policy to maintain or exceed the State's ratio of open space to population as the County grows. To that end, Kent County, will identify areas for future recreational sites, will review and evaluate programs and policies, such as the required open space and open space fee-in-lieu regulations or developers' rights and responsibilities agreements, to assure that new development provide its share of open

space and recreational land. The County will encourage the incorporated towns to consider the provision of open space and recreation land in annexation agreements.

## Culture

### **Goal: Support Lifelong Learning through and in the Arts for Young People and Adults**

Kent County recognizes and supports the arts as a central part of the County's character and as an environmentally-friendly economic development tool that contributes significantly to the County's economy. The County will investigate ways to incorporate artistic elements in to public projects whenever possible and will encourage the provision of public art and facilities in public and private buildings and spaces.

*Strategy: Identify and promote theatrical and cultural arts and entertainment districts.*

Artists and craftsmen are a vital part of the County's economy. Arts and entertainment activities stimulate business development and improve community life. The County will pursue available programs to help attract new artists and assist existing artists. Some require the establishment of arts and entertainment districts. The County recognizes the contributions of its artists and craftsmen and will support efforts to encourage expansion or new growth in arts-related fields.

*Strategy: Commit to preserving County-owned cultural and historic structures and sites.*

The County will set the example for preservation of historic and cultural structures and sites through designation, maintenance, and compatible use of County-owned sites and areas. The County will

encourage the State to preserve State-owned cultural and historic sites. The County has acquired Latham House and the Granary at Turner's Creek.

*Strategy: Promote community awareness of local culture and history through educational programs.*

The County will encourage the Board of Education to work cooperatively with local historic preservation groups to develop education programs for both students and adults which emphasize Kent County history and the importance of preserving our historic landscapes and buildings. As part of these programs, the County will encourage the development of a preservation/restoration component in the building trades' vocational education program.

*Strategy: Encourage the update and expansion of listings on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP).*

The County, in partnership with the preservation and development communities, will seek funding to review and update the existing inventory, and to expand the number of Kent County listings on the MIHP. Included in this update are all eligible historic and cultural sites, buildings, communities, land and under-water archeology, landscapes, shorelines, and historic transportation corridors within the County.

## Public Safety

The Kent County Emergency Management Agency coordinates local emergency services through the 911 system. The six County volunteer fire companies provide fire, rescue, and ambulance services. Volunteer fire companies are in Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Kennedyville, Millington, and Rock Hall. Emergency medical services are provided by the

volunteer fire companies, the volunteer Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad, and paid paramedics.

Responsibility for law enforcement in the County is shared by the Kent County Sheriff's Department, Chestertown Police Department, Rock Hall Police Department, and the Maryland State Police.



Figure 40: County services meet many residents' needs

### **Goal: Provide Effective and Efficient Emergency Services through a Unified Emergency Services System Using National and State Regulations and Standards to Guide Future System Improvements**

*Strategy: Maintain and update as necessary, the Kent County Emergency Operations Plan.*

The Kent County Emergency Management Agency is responsible for developing and maintaining the Kent County Emergency Operations Plan. This Plan delineates the roles and responsibilities of local and State government, private agencies, and volunteer organizations for the response and recovery phase of emergency activities. It will comply with the standards of the National Incident Management System. Regular drills exercising the Emergency Operations Plan should be continued to ensure the Plan's effectiveness in an emergency.

*Strategy: Implement and evaluate annually the Hazard Mitigation Plan.*

Kent County and its five municipalities adopted the first Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2004 with its most recent version adopted in 2014. The Plan must be updated every 5 years; therefore, an annual review of strategy implementation will ensure its viability. This Plan represents the essential aspects of comprehensive disaster mitigation planning through evaluation and understanding of potential hazards, vulnerabilities, and risks. It includes strategies to help guide the County in building its disaster resistance and in selecting mitigation measures to address and reduce its hazard vulnerabilities.

*Strategy: Provide a centrally located Emergency Services Building.*

The current emergency management agency is in the basement of the detention center and does not have adequate office or meeting space. The County will investigate options for providing centrally located offices for emergency management personnel and the paramedics.

*Strategy: Maintain the viability of the volunteer fire companies and rescue squad.*

The Volunteer Fire Companies and the Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad have a critical role in the delivery of fire, medical, ambulance, and other emergency services throughout the County. To maintain this system, the County should evaluate strategies to assist these organizations in the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

*Strategy: Investigate the need to provide a modern law enforcement facility that will service the needs of the County for a 20 to 25- year period.*

The Sheriff's Department occupies a portion

of a building that houses the Kent County Detention Center, the 911 Center, and other emergency service agencies. This building does not have the office space, interview rooms, secure evidence storage areas, or meeting space to meet the future needs of the Sheriff's Department.

*Strategy: Maintain adequate staffing for the Sheriff's Department.*

Future growth and development, demographic shifts, crime patterns, and technological changes may suggest changes in the staffing needs of the Sheriff's Department. A common practice for estimating law enforcement staffing prescribes a ratio of officers per 1,000 population. While this ratio is valuable for comparison and baseline purposes, the County may wish to establish a service standard that reflects changing policing philosophy and expressed community needs.

*Strategy: Investigate the feasibility of constructing a regional detention and treatment facilities.*

The Upper Eastern Shore Counties broached the idea of a detention facility designed to handle the regional needs of the area. Before moving forward, the Counties must conduct a needs and feasibility study.

## **High Speed Internet Service**

*Strategy: Complete the construction and facilitate the availability and operation of high speed internet service in Kent County.*

In 2017, a 110-mile system of high speed fiber optic internet service was under construction. Kent County will work to see its completion and will work with the provider to facilitate its availability to the maximum number of businesses and households in the County.



# Historic and Cultural Preservation

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The Upper Eastern Shore is one of the oldest working landscapes in North America and one of the last intact colonial and early American landscapes. Historic buildings and old churches that continue to serve as the focus of a community and place of gathering along with traditional landscapes are evidence of Kent County's long and significant history. The County's historic sites and structures remind us of our cultural richness and provide a reassuring sense of time and place. They also remind us of the importance of building to a human scale, and exemplify quality design and craftsmanship in construction.

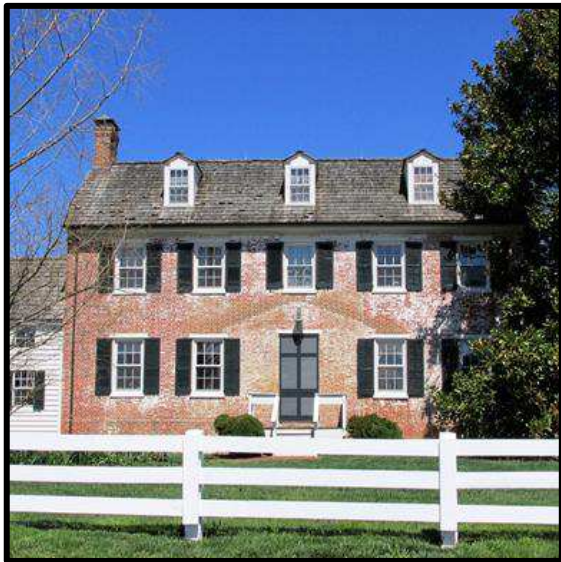


Figure 41: Historic preservation aids community cohesiveness and economic development

Kent County's traditional lifestyles centered on our fertile farmlands and rich and healthy waterways. This relationship continues today. Preserving our rural landscapes and historic buildings will support the County's natural resource-based industries, our growing tourism economy, and working landscapes. This will help preserve our links with the past ensuring our cultural and historical legacy endures.

Through local, regional, and national efforts, many residences, traditional out-buildings, commercial buildings, churches, and landscapes have been restored (or rehabilitated) and protected. Countless County historic buildings have been put to new uses with updated functionality, and often with the assistance of local, State and Federal public or private organizations.

Historic preservation goes far beyond the preservation of historic buildings and structures—it is also preservation of the context in which they are found. Kent County's past is not only reflected in the architecture of individual buildings but in the working landscapes of towns, villages, farms, and waterways. It is present in archeological sites and cultural events. Striving to protect the man-made elements and their surroundings that is the full historical tapestry benefits current and future generations.

Preservation of the objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials and association preserves the County's character and promotes a sense of community.

Preservation provides economic and cultural benefits. It promotes the revitalization and economic well-being at several levels including: individual properties, neighborhoods, villages, towns, and the countryside. Economically, historic preservation increases property values, stimulates heritage tourism, and fosters supportive commercial services. Culturally, preservation continues and adds to the community fabric enriching the County's quality of life. Heritage tourism is a low environmental impact industry.

## Past and Present Preservation Efforts—State and Federal

Some of the first preservation efforts in Kent County can be traced to the Great Depression when Congress created the Historic American Buildings Survey, known as HABS. Created in 1933 as part of the New Deal, HABS documented 28 structures in the County during this period with photographs and architectural floor plan and elevation drawings.

The next great effort was the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. This Act created the National Register of Historic Places, led to the formation of State historic preservation offices (SHPOs), and continues to provide the intergovernmental framework for local-State-Federal historic preservation efforts nationwide.

Since 1966, there have been 40 individual properties in Kent County listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 32 of which are outside incorporated municipalities. In addition, National Register Historic Districts have been established in Chestertown and Betterton, and the unincorporated village of Still Pond.

While being listed on the National Register of Historic Places does not prevent the demolition of the respective historic structures, the designation establishes structures as historically or architecturally significant and offers the ability to seek generous Federal tax credits for their rehabilitation or restoration.

The Maryland Historical Trust, created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1966 as the State historic preservation office (SHPO), provides technical assistance to local governments across the State,

including Kent County, and is the repository for the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP). The purpose of the latter is to identify and document structures, properties, and resources for historical and architectural significance.

Since its creation in 1974 by the Maryland General Assembly, more than 700 properties and structures have been documented in Kent County through the MIHP. The majority of these surveys were completed in the 1970s and 1980s. These listings on the MIHP only reflect approximately 17% of the historic structures in the County. The vast majority of historic structures remain undocumented.

The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) also accepts and administers donated easements on properties and structures throughout the State, which are subject to review by MHT staff for exterior (and sometimes interior) modifications. As of 2016, the Maryland Historical Trust holds easements on 25 properties in Kent County.

In 1991, as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, Congress created the National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP). Locally, the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway was established as a partnership between Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties, and the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA).

The Byway was designated as a State scenic byway in 1998 and a national scenic byway in 2002. Stretching from Chesapeake City in Cecil County to Stevensville in Queen Anne's County, the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway includes all of MD Route 213 through Kent County. The Byway also includes a spur along MD Route 20 and MD Route 445 to Rock Hall and Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge.

As part of and concurrent with the designation of the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway, a Corridor Management Plan was developed to provide a framework and coordination of efforts to protect historic and cultural resources along the Byway.

Lastly, in 1996, the Maryland General Assembly created the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority to provide grants and technical assistance to local governments and private organizations for the purpose of preserving, documenting, and enhancing the State's historic and cultural resources. The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, serving Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Caroline Counties, was established soon thereafter, and provides grant funding to local governments and organizations on the Upper Shore.

## **Past and Present Historic Preservation Efforts—Local**

The Kent County Historical Society, founded in 1936, was the County's first historic preservation organization. In 1958, it purchased and later rehabilitated the Geddes-Piper House in Chestertown, which served as its headquarters until moving to the nearby Bordley Building in 2014.

The Society started the Chestertown Historic House Walk in 1970, coordinated with Maryland Historical Trust in the documentation of hundreds of historic structures within the County in the 1970's and 1980's, and worked with local architectural historian Michael Bourne in the 1990's to publish *Historic Houses of Kent County*, the only comprehensive catalogue of historic structures and resources in the County.

The incorporated municipalities of Chestertown and Betterton created their own

historic districts and historic district commissions to ensure high standards for contributing buildings' treatments within their respective communities. The Chestertown Historic District Commission is currently the only Certified Local Government (CLG) in Kent County designated by the Maryland Historical Trust and the National Park Service. This designation allows the Commission to obtain additional grant funding and technical assistance for historic documentation, outreach, and education.

In response to the increasing interest in heritage tourism, new attractions have been developed and existing sites have been improved. The Historical Society operates a museum and genealogical research center from their headquarters in the Bordley Building on High Street in Chestertown.

The C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience and the Center for the Environment and Society, both at Washington College have since their founding in the 1990's provided undergraduate students with hands-on practical learning opportunities through public-private community projects. Most recently, for example, staff and students from these two centers have assisted in the research and restoration of the Charles Sumner Post GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) Hall on Cross Street in Chestertown.

There are three museums in Rock Hall. The Rock Hall Waterman's Museum honors the watermen who formed the backbone of the County's marine-oriented heritage. The Rock Hall Museum interprets elements of the region's general culture and history. The Tolchester Revisited Museum provides a historic look at the Tolchester Amusement Park.

The Town of Betterton houses the Betterton Heritage Museum. The Kent Museum located at Turners Creek celebrates the County's rural and agricultural traditions. In 2001, the schooner Sultana began its voyage as a floating classroom dedicated to ecology and colonial history. Additional sites include the African American Schoolhouse Museum, Charles Sumner GAR Hall, Cliffs City Schoolhouse, and the Massey Air Museum.

## **Kent County Historic Preservation Ordinance and Commission**

On November 14, 2006, the Kent County Commissioners adopted the County's first historic preservation ordinance, which remains in effect to the present day. The ordinance allows property owners and citizens to voluntarily petition the County to designate landmarks, sites, structures, or districts for listing in the Kent County Register of Historic Places.

To be designated, the respective structure or resource must be determined to be of historic, archeological, and cultural significance by the Kent County Historic Preservation Commission. The County Commissioners holds the final authority to designate structures, resources or properties and list them in this register. As of 2016, there are seven properties listed on the Kent County Register of Historic Places.

If designated and listed in the County register, a perpetual easement is placed upon the property and/or structure which is recorded in the County land records. Those properties on the County register are subject to the administrative review and approval from the Kent County Historic Preservation Commission for all exterior alterations to the structure or property. The Commission is

required by the County Code to use the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Structures, as the basis for their review and approval of exterior alterations.

The Kent County Historic Preservation Commission, created concurrently in 2006 with the County Historic Preservation Ordinance, is comprised of seven members serving three-year terms, six of whom must be residents of Kent County. As required by the County Code, all members shall possess an interest or background in historic preservation or related field, and at least two members shall meet the Secretary of Interior Standards of Professional Qualifications.

In addition to its role reviewing applications for the Kent County Register of Historic Places, the Kent County Historic Preservation Commission also reviews demolition permits for structures more than 75 years old or otherwise determined to be of historic significance and to document those structures prior to demolition.

The Kent County Historical Society, the Kent County Historical Trust, Preservation Maryland, the two municipal historic district commissions, the Kent County Historic Preservation Commission, and other local organizations all continue to play a major role in preserving the County's historic and cultural resources. The remainder of this chapter provides the goals, strategies, and proposals to preserve, maintain, and improve Kent County's historical and cultural resources.

**Goal: Preserve the Cultural, Historical, and Archeological Resources of Kent County**

*Strategy: Encourage listing of properties, structures, and sites of historic, archeological, and cultural significance in the Kent County Register of Historic Places.*

Unlike other historic designations, listing on the Kent County Register of Historic Places protects the historic integrity of the structure(s) and prevents demolition by neglect. With the exception of historic preservation easements held through the Maryland Historical Trust, the Kent County Register of Historic Places is the only other program available to property owners in Kent County which perpetually protects historic structures and resources. The County Historic Preservation Commission will partner with other preservation organizations and private citizens to identify potential properties for inclusion in the program, and provide educational outreach opportunities with property owners.

*Strategy: Investigate preservation policies that will enable County residents to qualify for State and Federal tax credits.*

Tax credits are a proven technique for promoting the restoration and rehabilitation of structures. The County will identify the existing tax credit programs available from the State and Federal governments, review the program requirements, and explore policies that will enable County residents to take advantage of these programs.

*Strategy: Assure that new development complements and enhances the County's rural and historic character.*

New development can either enhance or erode the County's historic character. Therefore, the County will consider the applicant's effort to design developments to

complement or enhance our rural and historic resources.

*Strategy: Facilitate a partnership between the County, preservationists, and the development community.*

A partnership between the County, preservation, and development communities (developers, builders, financial institutions) is essential to achieve the goal of preserving the County's cultural, historical, and archeological resources. This partnership will seek to promote the retention and reuse of historic and cultural resources; to advance construction and development techniques that protect historic, cultural, and archeological resources; and to identify and to develop effective incentives to generate a variety of historic preservation activities. This partnership will also review fundraising opportunities to create a preservation revolving loan fund.

*Strategy: Complete and adopt a County Historic Preservation Plan.*

With the assistance and guidance of the Historic Preservation Commission the County will explore options and opportunities, such as grant funding, to prepare a Historic Preservation Plan. This plan will address the current State of heritage resource preservation in the County by summarizing past survey and evaluation efforts and identifying known gaps or outdated information. The plan will also develop strategies and recommendations on how and where to assign priorities for the documentation of additional County historic resources and structures. It will also identify known threats for each resource type and contain goals, objectives, and a priority listing of activities for each resource. Lastly, the plan will offer recommendations on how it can strengthen and better protect historic resources in the County.

*Strategy: Encourage the update and expansion of listings on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP).*

The County, in partnership with the preservation and development communities, will seek funding to review and update the existing inventory, and to expand the number of Kent County listings on the MIHP. Included in this update are all eligible historic and cultural sites, buildings, communities, land and under-water archeology, landscapes, shorelines, and historic transportation corridors within the County. Map 15 below identifies the County's Heritage Resources.

*Strategy: Assist property owners in preserving historic and archeological resources.*

The County will work with local organizations to develop education and outreach programs to help citizens better understand the benefits and values of owning historic properties. The partnership will make owners of historic properties aware of tax credits, grant and loan programs for restoring historic buildings, and provide information on their proper maintenance and repair.

The County will maintain a clearinghouse of available resources to help citizens make informed decisions about alterations and rehabilitation of their properties. In addition, the County will continue to promote the compatible adaptive reuse of significant historic structures through the use of flexible protocols.

*Strategy: Promote the listing of structures, sites, and districts on the National Register of Historic Places.*

The County will support the efforts of local historic preservation interest groups to assist property owners and communities in

understanding the benefits of, and preparing nominations for, the National Register of Historic Places. The County will also encourage the development of a County-wide context statement for use in nominations.

*Strategy: Commit to preserving County-owned cultural and historic structures and sites.*

The County will set the example for preservation of historic and cultural structures and sites through designation, maintenance, and compatible use of County-owned sites and areas.

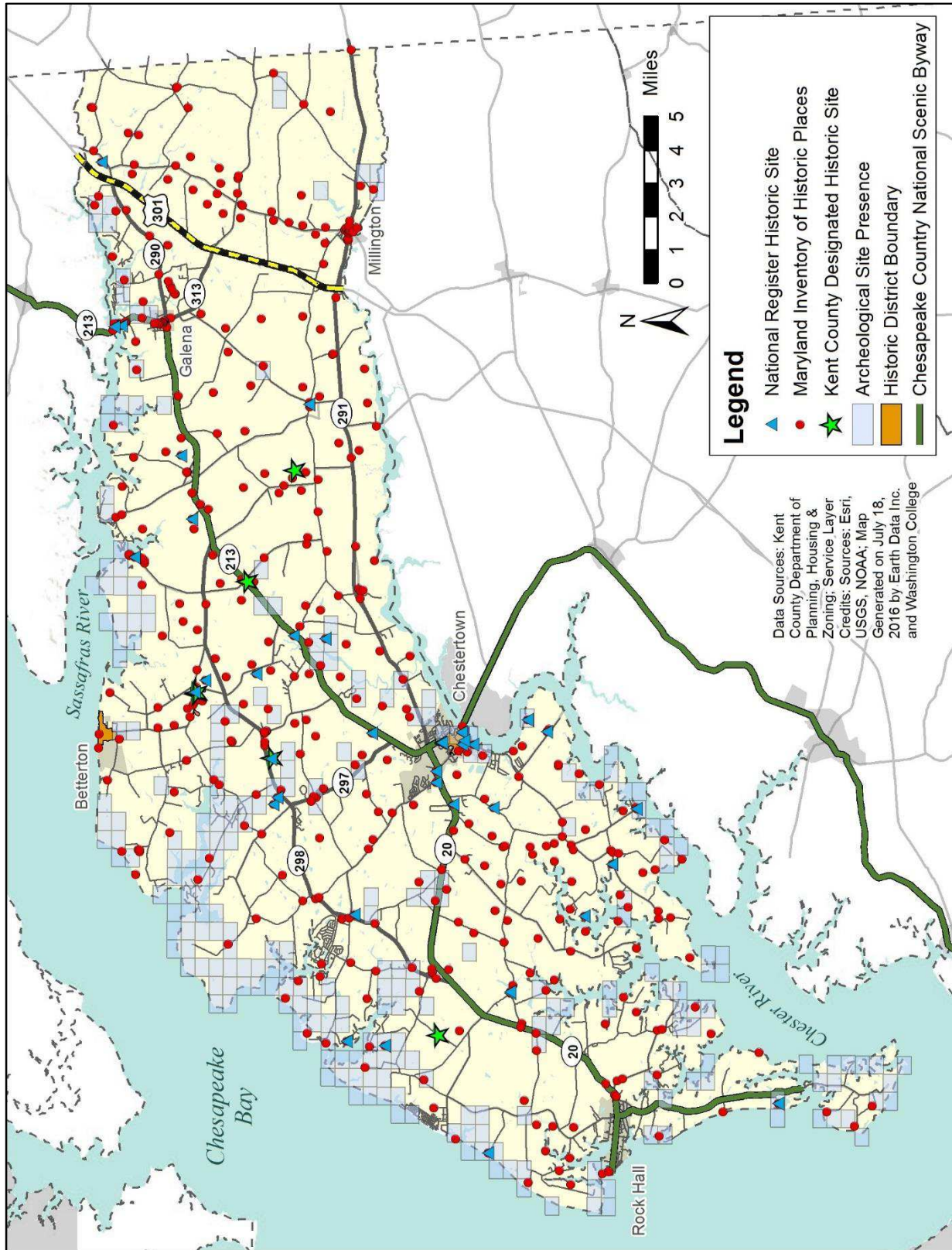
*Strategy: Promote community awareness of local culture and history through the development of education programs.*

The County will encourage the Board of Education to work cooperatively with local historic preservation groups to develop education programs for both students and adults which emphasize Kent County history and the importance of preserving our historic landscapes and buildings. As part of these programs the County will actively support the development of a preservation and restoration component in the building trades vocational education program.

*Strategy: Explore designation of significant landscapes as Rural Historic Districts.*

Preserving landscapes can be as important as preserving structures. The National Register of Historic Places provides for the designation of rural historic districts. Such districts could include large tracts of agricultural land surrounding small crossroads communities that are important to preserving the cultural heritage of Kent County. The scenic assessment conducted for the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area could be a starting point for selecting areas.

Map 15 – Heritage Resources



*Strategy: Work with local organizations to gather oral histories.*

Oral histories are an important component to understanding and archiving our historic and cultural past. Traditional lifestyles are disappearing and the histories are slowly fading away as older community members pass on. Many local organizations are already gathering oral histories. The County will encourage these organizations to work together to establish a standard methodology and central depository for collected histories.

*Strategy: Promote preservation of the County's archeological resources.*

The County's rich past is evident not only in its numerous historic structures but also in its numerous archeological sites which range from Native American settlements and burial sites to colonial and early American sites. Identifying and protecting these resources is important.

*Strategy: Explore, and earn if practicable, status as a Certified Local Government (CLG) through the National Park Service.*

This designation would enable the County to apply for additional funding opportunities to survey and document (or develop strategies for) historic resources in the County. The program will also provide technical assistance and educational opportunities to the County from the Maryland Historical Trust and the National Park Service. In return, the County agrees to maintain a Historic Preservation Commission and Ordinance as required by the National Park Service.

*Strategy: Explore the adoption of local incentives for property owners who voluntarily enter into the Kent County Register of Historic Places.*

While those properties listed in the Kent Register of Historic Places are eligible for State and Federal historic preservation tax credits, no local tax credit or other incentive is provided by the County. Local incentives may include, but are not limited to, property tax abatement and credits, the waiving of building permit fees for qualified renovations, and additional scoring points on the application for those property owners who seek to preserve farmland through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program.

*Strategy: The Kent County Historic Preservation Commission shall be responsible for the periodic review and stewardship of those structures and properties listed on the Kent County Register of Historic Places.*

The County strives to maintain an active and cooperative relationship with property owners on the Kent County Register of Historic Places to ensure that structures and resources in the program are adequately maintained. The Historic Preservation Commission will conduct periodic site visits to properties on the County's Register to ensure compliance with the historic designation and make recommendations to the property owner related to the rehabilitation and maintenance of their historic structure or resource.

*Strategy: The County seeks the adaptive reuse of historic structures and resources, as appropriate, through the development review process.*

New projects proposed by subdivisions and site plans in the County should be sited and constructed to avoid any negative impacts to historic structures or resources, especially those on or deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The Kent County Historic Preservation Commission should be consulted by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Planning Commission when a development application proposes the demolition of or significant alteration of an historic structure or resource.

**Goal: Promote Heritage Tourism as a Means to Enhance the County's Economy through Investment in Historic, Archeological, Cultural and Scenic Resources.**

*Strategy: Encourage development of heritage-related services as supplemental sources of income.*

Interpreting the County's history through guided tours and demonstrations, agri-tourism for example, would allow residents and visitors to experience first-hand the County's traditional lifestyles and gain a better appreciation for rural life. It could also provide supplemental income to those employed in natural-resource based industries during the off seasons. The *Kent County Land Use Ordinance* should be revised where appropriate to allow agri-tourism and heritage-based tourism activities in the Agricultural and Village zoning districts.

*Strategy: Develop marketing approaches to promote and encourage heritage tourism.*

The County will encourage local historic preservation groups to explore alternatives for promoting regional heritage tourism and the history and culture of Kent County. These groups will initiate and promote local events and museums that celebrate our local heritage, as well as recognize State and national events such as National Historic Preservation Week.

*Strategy: Recognize The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan as a means to further opportunities for heritage tourism and economic development.*

The *Heritage Area and Tourism Areas Act of 1996, Chapter 601 of the Laws of 1196*, requires that each jurisdiction included in a certified heritage area incorporate into its Comprehensive Plan by reference the management plan for the heritage area. The Maryland Heritage Area Authority certified, with conditions, the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, thereby recognizing heritage areas in Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Caroline Counties and their municipalities and offering a mechanism for coordinated and enhanced heritage tourism in these counties.

The *Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan*, certified by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority in April 2005, as amended, is by this reference incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan to guide both public and private investment in the heritage of Kent County in order to gain added tourism and economic benefits and to strengthen regional conservation efforts. The "Stories" add meaning to the lives of residents, young and old, and shape the visitor's experience.



# Implementation Strategies—Putting the Plan into Action

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Implementation of this Comprehensive Plan is an ambitious undertaking which will involve concerted effort and the committed leadership of many individuals, organizations, public agencies, and elected officials. Well over one hundred fifty individual strategies and initiatives were identified during the review and update to the 2006 Plan.

While these strategies are listed elsewhere in the Plan, the County, for clarity about its special priorities, lists the initiatives which require more focused and deliberate County action in this Plan Element. The County recognizes the need to continually review this list and make changes as new significant circumstances arise.

## Highest Priorities

- A. Support agriculture as a permanent and preferred land use. This will include the review of plans, policies, and regulations to ensure the continuation of agriculture as a viable industry in the County along with promoting regional initiatives to expand resource-based economies.
- B. Expand regulatory flexibility for the creation of and location of employment centers and industrial uses. Through its economic development planning and land use implementation measures, the County will consider flexibility in and an expanded area of employment center and industrial zoning in general. These efforts will especially focus on the Worton area and the US 301 corridor. Potential new sites will be located where infrastructure exists or can be cost-effectively developed consistent with

this Comprehensive Plan and the County's Water and Sewerage Plan.

- C. Continue to vehemently oppose a Northern Bay Bridge that lands in Kent County or alternative locations that significantly adversely impact the County.
- D. Work with Queen Anne's County and the State Highway Administration to ensure the construction of a new bridge crossing over the Chester River. The Chester River Boulevard will serve as an alternative route for MD 213 and create a parkway with access limited solely to the intersections with Route 291 and 213 within Kent County. The alignment is reflected in Figure 38 of the Transportation section.
- E. Continue research and analysis to implement economic development efforts and support expansion of existing businesses and the development of locally owned businesses.
- F. Continue to guide development into the villages and towns to achieve this Plan's vision and to expand shopping and service opportunities to meet residents' needs. To this end, coordinate with the County's municipalities to support the implementation of Municipal Growth Elements.
- G. Encourage continuing dialog between the County's business and educational institutional communities to enable students to either pursue post-secondary education or pursue local vocational employment opportunities. This dialogue will foster programs, training, apprenticeships, and trade education to

assure that graduates of Kent County schools have the skills necessary to successfully compete in the job market, while meeting the local needs for skilled workers and entrepreneurs. This effort will coordinate with other local labor force demands.

- H. Work with the State and the County's municipalities to implement and periodically update the County's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) to achieve the Baywide and local Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and remove the County's waterbodies from the list of impaired waters. The associated implementation measures should be rigorously scrutinized to ensure they are cost-effective. Further, reconcile both the strategies to guide development into designated growth areas and to implement the County's WIP strategy through the careful review of extension of services into the Countryside.

## **Secondary Priority Initiatives**

- A. Foster opportunities to collaboratively implement approaches, methods, and programs to provide diverse housing options for all households regardless of income.
- B. Develop a proactive Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that coordinates future infrastructure development and funding. The County will ensure that new development pays its associated share for providing public facilities and services. Public infrastructure will be located to protect agricultural lands from incompatible capital projects.

- C. Define scenic view-sheds and explore designation of significant landscapes as Rural Historic Districts. This initiative will be accompanied by crafting guidelines to protect the most threatened aspects and features.
- D. Prepare and adopt a County Historic Preservation Plan.

## **Ongoing Initiatives**

- A. Continue to participate in all available land preservation programs including the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), Rural Legacy, Maryland Environmental Trust, and the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy.
- B. Continue to integrate Kent County sites, facilities and activities with a coordinated regional tourism and marketing program.
- C. Review and update as necessary the Land Use Ordinance to ensure agri-tourism and heritage tourism are recognized and encouraged as permitted uses in appropriate zoning districts.
- D. Assure that new development complements and enhances the County's rural heritage and historic character, while also seeking the adaptive reuse of historic structures and resources, as appropriate, through the development review process.
- E. Enhance the character of Neighborhood Development Areas.
- F. Protect the County's green infrastructure through the retention and expansion of riparian forest and existing large forest tracts.
- G. Maintain and enforce existing County regulations for wildlife protection.