

Chapter 5

Land Use Plan Concept

The shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are proving to be an important factor in attracting people to live and play in this County. This quote from the County's first Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 1965 and its supporting analysis of the County at that time indicated there was evidence of the population "clustering" at many locations along the County's extensive shorelines. Among the County's most prominent physical features are the tidewater bays and estuaries that indent the land and divide the western portion of the County into a series of peninsulas and islands.

Almost 400 years ago Captain John Smith sailed up the Chesapeake in 1608 and landed on Kent Island, however, it was almost another 100 years before the County was officially "founded" in 1706 and named for the reigning British monarch, Queen Anne. Kent Island has continued to serve as a gateway onto Maryland's Eastern Shore, at first bringing passengers by steamboat and ferry service where they would make rail connections to the Bay-side and Ocean-side resorts, and continuing with the construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge so Western Shore vacationers can reach the beach.

Development pressure was increasing in the County in the 1960's as a result of the opening of the first Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1952. By 1964, land speculators had already subdivided approximately 9,000 small lots in Queen Anne's County, of which 80 percent of those lots were on Kent Island.

The completion of the second span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1973 was long awaited by the many travelers anxious to "reach the beach." The second span also played an important role in the development of Kent Island as the commute became easier to employment centers on the Western Shore in Annapolis, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. As a result, Kent Island became much more of an attractive bedroom community and provided the catalyst for additional development pressures, such as retail services and marinas, which also necessitated new infrastructure.

The construction of a public sewerage system for the Chester, Stevensville, Kent Narrows and Grasonville wastewater subdistricts was completed in 1981 utilizing EPA grants. Consequently, the availability of sewer had a significant impact on the development potential, the Stevensville and Chester communities on Kent Island, as well as the Kent Narrows and Grasonville areas. The treatment facility addressed the failing septic systems and allowed properties to be developed that otherwise had not yet been since they did not pass percolation tests under the State's Wet Season Standards developed in 1973 or the On-site Construction Standards developed in 1985.

The County updated its Comprehensive Land Use Plan again in 1987, fourteen years after the opening of the second Bay Bridge and six years after the construction of the Kent Narrows/ Stevensville/ Grasonville (KNS&G) wastewater treatment plant. The 1987 Comprehensive Plan's primary goals and objectives were to preserve and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, to maintain the County's existing rural character and to preserve and protect large areas of the County for agricultural use. The growth management component of the 1987 Plan intended to limit urban sprawl and concentrate or direct new growth into areas designated as "growth nodes" where growth could be adequately serviced by public infrastructure and directed away from environmentally sensitive and rural areas. These "nodes" included Stevensville, Chester, as well as Kent Narrows, Grasonville, and the incorporated towns of Queenstown and Centreville.

After the Plan was adopted, the County completed a comprehensive down-zoning process and adopted a new set of zoning and subdivision regulations. With the rezoning of the entire County, the new zoning classifications resulted in approximately 10 percent of the County dedicated to residential uses, 1 percent to commercial and industrial and 89 percent to agricultural/rural uses. When compared to the 1965 Comprehensive Plan, the 1987 Plan initiated an obvious and significant overall decrease in the long-term development potential of the County.

In 1993, Queen Anne's County adopted a second major Comprehensive Plan Update. The 1993 Plan reaffirmed the guiding principles of the 1987 Plan and added policies to assure compliance with the mandates of the State's 1992 Planning Act. One of the major recommendations of the 1993 Plan Update was that specific development plans should be prepared for each of the County's six designated Growth Areas: Stevensville, Chester, Kent Narrows, Grasonville, Queenstown and Centreville. Each area plan, once adopted, became a part of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan. The essential framework of the 1987 Plan and acreages dedicated to the specific uses remained the same.

In 2002 the County adopted a new county-wide Plan that conforms to the State's 1992 Planning Act and the Smart Growth Legislation of 1997. The 2002 Queen Anne's Comprehensive Plan addressed two themes: encouraging and directing growth into the existing communities and growth areas (Kent Narrows, Chester, Stevensville, Grasonville, Queenstown, and Centreville) and the continued effort to preserve agricultural lands.

Following the adoption of the 2002 County Comprehensive Plan and the January 2004 adoption of the new zoning and subdivision regulations in Chapter 18, the County pursued updating the various Community Plans. This commenced with the update of the Plans for Chester and Stevensville. The Citizen Advisory Committees appointed for each of these communities began meeting jointly, and determined that the interests and issues facing each were sufficiently common in nature to permit their consolidation into one larger committee. Topics considered lead to combining the two Community Plans into one document as part of this update.

In response to the issues and concerns that emanated from the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) evaluation of Community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (see chapter 3) the CAC developed its recommendation for a land use concept for the Chester/Stevensville

communities and surrounding areas. Many of these areas were formerly designated as "growth areas." That designation was established in previously adopted Community Plans including Plans prepared for each of these two communities in 1997 and 1998 and was further reinforced by their subsequent designation as Growth Areas in the 2002 County Comprehensive Plan.

As part of the process to develop this Community Plan update, a wide variety of issues and concerns regarding past plans were expressed by the CAC, but in large part this range of concerns centered on two central and related themes. First was the concern that the volume, rate, and planned location of development within and adjacent to both communities exceeded the county's capacity to provide infrastructure in the form of highways, sewer and water facilities and other services and facilities. Second was the concern that the rate and pace of development taxed the natural environment and was detrimental to water quality, wildlife habitat and Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas resources that are sensitive to development disturbances. Concern regarding the need to protect these environmental resources also extended to the role they play in also defining the Island's "rural character." A wider range of issues integral to both of these themes was perceived by Committee members as threatening to their quality of life and therefore prompted them to recommend a number of changes in planning direction.

In the Spring of 2005 the County also commenced with the update of the Kent Narrows Community Plan. The report from the Kent Narrows Citizen Advisory Committee was submitted to the Planning Commission in November 2005, and issued for review in January 2006. The Planning Commission conducted a Public Hearing on April 12, 2006, on the Draft Kent Narrows Community Plan. The geographic area defined as "Kent Narrows" includes land area on both the east and west side of the Narrows; the west side being part of the landmass of Kent Island.

Therefore, it is recognized in this Plan for Chester and Stevensville that the Kent Narrows is part of a separate and distinct Community Plan, and that any references in this Plan for new provisions for "Kent Island" does not entail that portion of the Island that is defined as part of the Kent Narrows Community Planning Area.

When it comes to community character, Queen Anne's County recognizes that its towns, rural areas, and suburban landscapes are diverse from one another. Therefore, community character is also a matter of defining how varying combinations of landmarks and views, historic and environmental features, density of development, landscaping, signage, architecture, vehicular transportation, and pedestrian circulation needs create an individual sense of place in specific localized settings. Therefore, this Community Plan for the Kent Island communities of Chester and Stevensville provides an opportunity for a closer look at these specific places and more finely-tuned research and analysis of possibilities and solutions within the context of the overall County-wide Plan. The detailed plan process in crafting this Community Plan provides a channel for special place-specific design guidelines. It is also a means of more closely coordinating infrastructure and financing commitments with long-range land use, as well as other goals and objectives.

Proposed Community Planning Area Boundary

Key areas currently designated within the Community Planning Area boundary established with the 1997 /1988 Plans for Chester and Stevensville that are proposed for removal include:

- **South Route 8 Corridor**

Several parcels all located South of Route 50 and East of the Maryland Route 8 corridor totaling approximately 408 acres in land area are proposed for removal from the Stevensville Community Planning Area. Most of this area has been proposed for developments that have not secured plan approvals including "The Cloisters" (105 acres and 291 residential units), and "Kent Manor" (227 acres and 450 units). Under the terms of the Stevensville Master Plan District (SMPD) zoning designation these two areas and other lands proposed for removal in this location would be permitted to develop as many 1,411 residential units. Actual plans proposing development on two parcels within this area and referenced above have proposed a total of 741 units in recent years.

Proposed changes in land use designation in this area should establish a density of one residential unit per 20 acres within those portions of the area that are located in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area (approximately 1/3 the total land area or 112 acres), consistent with the County's "Countryside" zoning district. The designation of remaining lands (approximately 296 acres) should limit development to a maximum of one residential unit per five acres if cluster development design standards were applied.

- **Upper Cox Creek Corridor**

Centrally located on Map 5-1 all lands located within 300 feet of edges of Cox Creek and its headwaters north of the Route 50 corridor are proposed for removal from the designated Community Planning Area.

- **North Chester Area (Chester Haven Beach)**

This location consists of lands totaling 103 acres portions of which are adjacent to the Route 50 corridor and bounded by the Chester River/Piney Creek to the East. Removal of this area from the designated Community Planning Area will support protection of scenic views from the Route 50 corridor.

- **Southeast Chester**

Land Area in Southeast of Chester which is currently located within the designated Community Planning Area consisting of approximately 180 acres located South of Route 18 and North of Goodhands Creek Road. Portions of this area totaling an estimated 120 acres are proposed for removal from the designated Community Planning Area with approximately 80 acres located near the intersection of Route 18 and Dominion Road planned to remain within the designated Community Planning Area. Assuming a density of 3.5 residential units within targeted Community Planning Areas, development of the site today under its current classification might support approximately 550 residential

units. With the proposed reclassification of lands proposed for exclusion from the Community Planning Area, potential development would be limited to approximately 240 units on portions remaining in the Community Planning Area and approximately 24 residential units on portions removed from the Community Planning Area assuming a maximum density of 1 unit per 5 acres.

- **Four Seasons**

The Four Seasons project proposes 1,350 residential units for this location between Cox Creek and Macum Creek and fronting on the Chester River. The project has received Preliminary Plan approval in the development approval process. It was the consensus of the CAC that in the event that these approvals can be revisited they advised re-negotiation of the currently executed Developer Rights and Responsibilities Agreement (DRRA) and revisions in accordance with the following recommendation. Although proposed to remain within the Growth Area boundary, this 550 acre site should be limited to 400 residential units and that development of the site should have a recreational/resort community character.

In this regard, the Planning Commission will revisit the land use of this site if the DRRA is no longer valid. Design of other development on this site should be consistent with standards referenced in this plan for the Chester Village Center Extension. (see page 5-9)

Growth on Kent Island outside the Community Planning Area will be limited in order to protect the environmentally sensitive areas that had not been developed prior to 2006.

Table 5-1 Key areas proposed for removal from the Community Planning Area Boundary	
Location	Acreage
South Route 8 Corridor	
Parcel 279 ó The Cloisterö (Kent Island, LLC)	105
Parcel 21 ó Kent Manorö (Kent Manor Inn, LLC)	227
Parcel 179 ó Dixon Holding Company	21
Parcel 269 ó Breeding Property	6
Parcel 35 ó QAC County Commissioners	11
300 foot shore buffer along Parcel 20 ó Ellendale	14
Upper Cox Creek Corridor	~ 93
North Chester Area (Chester Haven Beach)	103
Southeast Chester	120
Total	~700

Several additions to the Community Planning Area boundary are proposed. These locations are also shown on Map 5-1. They include lands adjacent to the middle school located adjacent to Route 8 at the southernmost edge of the Stevensville designated Community Planning Area. Another location crosses a small area of Camp Wright south of Bay City to allow for the possibility of providing public water and/or sewer to that institutional facility.

Proposed Land Use Concepts

Specific recommendations for land use and/or development treatment have been identified for key locations which are identified on Map 5-2. In order to implement the goals and recommendations of these proposed land use concepts the Planning Commission will consider rezoning of property as appropriate as well as any necessary text amendments to the County Code. These locations and recommendations for each area include:

- **1. Bay Bridge/Island Gateway**

This location is proposed for sensitive development treatment that first and foremost creates or enhances the sense of entry and arrival to the Island, County and Eastern Shore, and reflects Eastern shore feel and Island Character. Development treatment of this site should reflect several characteristics including:

- The design and appearance of buildings and structures that evoke a traditional Eastern Shore/Island character. This would include design characteristics in buildings or structures that reflect architectural elements which are indigenous to the region.
- It was the recommendation of the CAC that height limits on buildings and structures be consistent with requirements for maximum height limitations within airport facility clear zones and approach slopes/zones and in no case exceed 45 feet. The Planning Commission will revisit this issue in the context of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.
- Dedicated use of a portion of the site to public uses that support Island life or serve as attractions that promote visitation by both Island residents and visitors. Such uses may include park facilities, a visitor information center, a cultural heritage/Eastern Shore discovery center, museum(s), sculpture garden and/or facilities to support special events and activities which might include an amphitheater, events plaza or structures designed to accommodate such public use.

Because this location is so prominent, the CAC recommended a design competition as a means of securing the very best treatment of the site that reflects these land uses and design objectives. However, the Planning Commission proposes that design standards should be established to insure the highest possible quality in architecture and landscape treatment of this site.

2. Wastewater and Water Treatment Plant site.

This Area, shown as Area 2 on the Land Use Concepts Plan Map (Map 5-2) includes lands currently owned by the County adjacent to Terrapin Park that house structures and facilities supporting wastewater treatment and water supply treatment functions. These facilities support development both on the Island and at Kent Narrows and Grasonville. This plan recommends limiting the area utilized for wastewater treatment plant functions so that such functions do not encroach on lands zoned Countryside (CS) and established as park facilities at the Terrapin Park site. Enhancement in the quality of wastewater treatment to include enhanced nutrient reduction technologies (ENR) are also recommended for this area.

- **3. Kent Island High School Expansion and Park Site**

Shown as Area number 3 on Map 5-2, this site has been identified for use to support any future expansion of the capacity of Kent Island High School. Total land area of this site is approximately 21 acres. Northern portions of the site which may not be required to support School expansion are proposed for future Park Use and to provide an edge between school activities and structures and existing residential development adjacent to the northern edge of the site.

The plan recommends that the County study acquisition of this site promptly and determine its potential for school and park use. The plan also recommends that, if suitable and provided funding is available, the site be acquired by the County within two (2) years of adoption of the plan. The plan recommends that the identification of the site for school and park use expire if the County has not acquired the site as provided herein.

- **4. Davidson Farm Park Site**

This location, Area 4, is one of the few remaining tracts that is undeveloped or not planned for development that remains in the North Chester/Stevensville designated Community Planning Area. Shown on Map 5-2, its location provides separation and an undeveloped edge between the two communities. The plan recommends reservation of some of these lands at the Davidson Farm for future use as a natural park site to protect environmental resources on those portions of the site located within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. This may also include construction of a trail spur that could ultimately be connected to the Cross-Island trail and provide direct trail system access to the residents of the Cloverfields neighborhood.

Since Old Love Point Park is overcrowded, limited portions of this farm might also be used to support active recreation facilities which would expand recreation offerings to Stevensville and Chester area residents. This plan recommends that the County study the acquisition of the site promptly to protect opportunities for future park use and support natural resource protection objectives. The plan also recommends that, if suitable and funding is available, the site, or portions of it, be acquired within two (2) years of the adoption of the plan. The plan recommends that the identification of the site for park uses expire if the County has not acquired the site as provided herein.

- **5. Chester/Stevensville Separation Greenbelt**

The distinction in definition and edge between the communities of Chester and Stevensville has been impacted by development over the years. As additional development between the communities occurs at their edges, each community loses more and more of their distinct identity in the larger landscape. This plan proposes a greenbelt in area number 5 as represented on Map 5-2. This proposed greenbelt is intended to reinforce the separation between these two communities and enhance their identity as distinct communities or villages.

The location of this proposed greenbelt also furthers this Community Plan's environmental objectives of protecting sensitive resource lands adjacent to Cox Creek. The area of the greenbelt corresponds to lands located within 300 feet of Cox Creek which serve as a buffer within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. Implementation of this concept will require protection of the 300 foot buffer on both sides of Cox Creek as shown on Map 5-2.

- **6. Chester Village Center Extension**

This area, shown as Area 6 on Map 5-2 represents lands remaining in the designated community planning area designed to extend the existing village center and enhance its image. Extension of the existing village can provide a mix of uses that add depth to the current linear form of the community. Chester's existing character reflects a largely automobile-dominated community. Development in this area can be utilized as a tool to foster a walkable village "downtown" character where none currently exists.

The land use concept is designed to modify the orientation of commercial uses away from the Route 50 corridor, create a streetscape(s) more in keeping with the character of a traditional village and foster streetlife through greater consideration of pedestrian needs. This is illustrated in Figure 5-1 and described in the following paragraphs. The land use concept attempts to clearly define where and how future development and redevelopment should occur adjacent to the existing community. It also identifies areas within and adjacent to the community which should remain predominantly rural to distinguish the community's identity in the landscape.

Zoning provisions should be revised to facilitate the form and character of development sought for this extension of the Village. Elements of this revised district should be designed to foster a more traditional neighborhood development pattern than is prescribed in the current provisions. This would include modified zoning provisions that foster mixed land uses, grid street patterns that distribute traffic, facilitate pedestrian circulation, foster walkable streetscapes, enhance architectural character, and provide for a series of smaller community greens or commons that are woven into the fabric of development and together reinforce and enhance a strong sense of community.

Area 6 is adjacent to existing development in Chester with good access to roads (Route 18 and Dominion Road) as well as sewer facilities. By allowing for certain compatible nonresidential uses such as office parks, small-scale retail and stores oriented to the needs of the immediate neighborhood, tourism-related uses, and institutional uses on this site the County can improve its tax base and off-set fiscal losses normally associated with most types of purely residential development. By allowing the developer a mix of uses it becomes more cost effective to develop this site vs. rural areas where development costs are significantly lower.

By creating a mixed-use development environment at this site, it will achieve the reorientation of commercial activity toward the Chester Village Center and away from the Route 50 corridor.

**Figure 5-1
Alternative Chester Village Expansion Concept Plan**



Commercial uses can also displace some portion of what would otherwise be exclusively residential development. As such, it would reduce the ultimate residential build-out of Chester since lands currently zoned for housing would be able to develop with nonresidential uses. This could, in turn, channel some of the residential growth pressure off of Kent Island to other community planning areas in accordance with the objectives of the Citizens Advisory Committee and goals of the County's 2002 Comprehensive Plan.

A combination of zoning amendments and innovative approaches to infrastructure financing will likely be required to provide incentives for mixed-use development to locate there versus a continuation of the environmentally harmful and economically inefficient residential sprawl and strip commercial patterns of the past.

Targeting this location to receive the majority of Chester's anticipated growth is entirely consistent with the State's Economic Development, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992 and the Queen Anne's 2002 County Comprehensive Plan.

The general characteristics of growth in the Chester Master - Planned Development Area should be as follows:

- Land uses include: a planned mix of residential development in a variety of housing types, compatible non-residential uses such as office uses, institutional facilities, resort tourism uses, outdoor recreation facilities, open space, and a limited amount of neighborhood-scaled commercial uses in association with residential development.
- Each planned development will be master planned as an integrated project which clearly shows the connections between various land uses, adjacent land uses, and a phasing schedule demonstrating when various components will be developed.
- On-site and off-site streets and pedestrian linkages will be adequate to accommodate the demands generated by existing traffic and the proposed development. Internal streets will be adequate to handle projected traffic, will be properly maintained, and are more appropriate to the overall development design than public streets built under current road standards.
- Overall gross residential density within the Chester Master-Planned Development Area will not exceed four (4) dwelling units per acre. The County Planning Commission should reserve the right to limit density below this amount on a case by case basis if it is determined that higher density would not be compatible with the surrounding area or the environment, or that public facilities would not be adequate.

- Overall impervious coverage should be limited to 75 percent for nonresidential development sites.
- Common or public open space will comprise not less than 20 percent of the total site area. Buildings and parking lots are not to be included in the calculation of open space. An additional 5 percent of the total site area should be dedicated to active recreation sites. Important water views from public ways will be maintained and, where practical, public access to the water should be dedicated.
- Setbacks, lot sizes, height and yard requirements design guidelines, screening and landscaping will be established for each individual project by the Planning Commission. In establishing these requirements the Planning Commission will consider such factors as the proposed intensity of the project and the character of the existing neighborhood.
- As a condition to approval of development plans for the Chester Village Center Extension a greenbelt must be established on the perimeter of Area 6.

Neighborhood Infill Areas

The existing residential neighborhoods in Chester are the fundamental building blocks of the community. Their continued stability and attractiveness are essential to the future of Chester. The land use pattern for most of the existing residential subdivisions and multifamily developments will remain unchanged during the foreseeable future. Infill development of vacant lots and sites within existing developments will occur overtime. This infill should be compatible in density with existing neighborhood development. Expansions of nonresidential uses within the Neighborhood Infill Areas must be sensitive to impacts on surrounding residential uses. Property owners will steadily continue to make improvements to their homes and lots as long as values remain stable or rise.

Chester Village Center

This area covers most of the Route 50/301 and Route 18 corridors through Chester and is the most highly visible portion of the community (See Map 5-2). Existing zoning is comprised of exclusively commercial and exclusively residential zoning districts which often exist side by side. Much of the area is presently developed as older strip-style commercial uses oriented towards the highway. Other areas are predominantly residential but are in the process of transitioning to commercial uses. It is an area with a high potential for land use conflicts. The

construction of Route 50 as a divided highway has brought undesirable ambiguity to the area. Where businesses traditionally had oriented themselves towards Route 18 (Main Street), they increasingly needed to become visible to the through traffic on Route 50. This plan proposes to rebuild Route 18 as a true Main Street.

As re-development occurs along Postal Road in downtown Chester between its intersections with the Route 18 overpass and Cox Neck Road, development standards should require structures to be brought closer to the street to provide a streetscape that offers a sense of enclosure and encourages pedestrian use. Sidewalks, landscaping and parking at the rear of non-residential uses would also further this objective. The notion is to create a more traditional walkable downtown feel that is currently absent in this corridor.

It is also an area with significant opportunities to foster attractive, mixed use, town-scale development and redevelopment. New development and redevelopment should be reoriented back towards Main Street. Mixed use commercial and residential development should be encouraged. Design guidelines and standards should be applied to improve the appearance of new commercial development and public/private partnerships are needed to create improved pedestrian access linked to shared off-street parking. With proper planning, this area has the potential to become the economic and cultural center of the community ô A place that defines the Chester Community.

The general characteristics of development and Village Center redevelopment in these areas should be as follows:

- Mixed-use, õsmall-grainö development and redevelopment oriented towards local roads should be encouraged vs. a continuation of highway-oriented strip-style commercial development.
- Building restriction lines for front setbacks should be reduced to allow structures to locate closer to Main street with parking situated in side and rear yards.
- Zoning regulations should allow for higher amounts of floor area and building coverage to be utilized to intensify development /redevelopment of the site in a manner consistent with small town character.
- A mix of housing types and styles should be encouraged, including second floor and first floor apartments in conjunction with commercial and office uses.
- Shared off-site parking and internal access between adjacent sites should be permitted.
- Design guidelines and standards which discourage strip-style commercial development patterns and encourage pedestrian-oriented mixed use patterns should be incorporated into the zoning regulations.

Stevensville Village Center

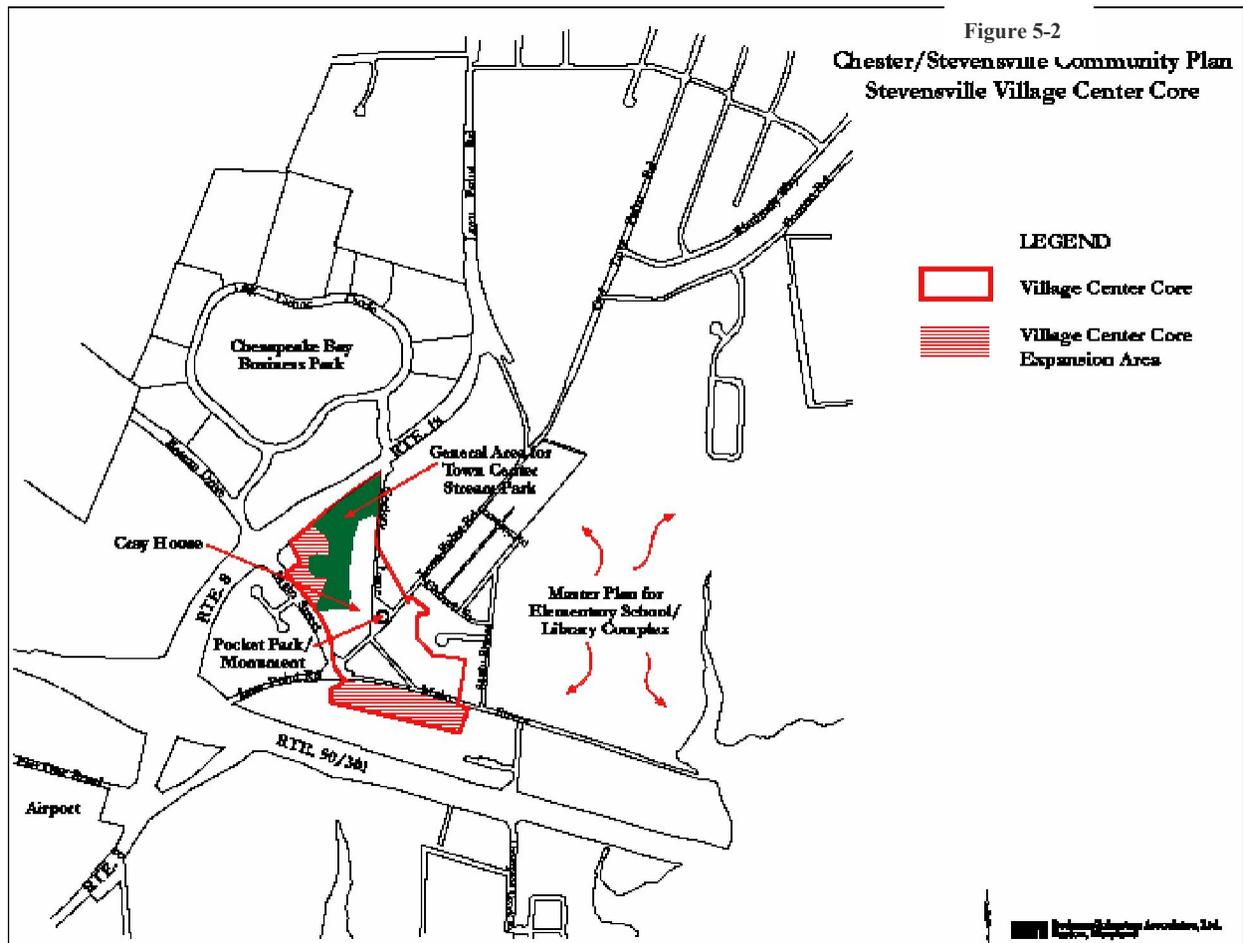
The Stevensville Village Center reflects both charm and history. The street environment has walkable streetscapes and a diversity of uses supporting both residents and visitor needs. Recent public street improvements have improved access to parking behind the rear of structures, improved safety and enhanced the pedestrian environment. The following recommendations are intended to nurture infill and re-development to enhance the current character of the Stevensville Village Center Core area.

- Current zoning within the downtown should be evaluated and revised when appropriate to preserve and reinforce the small town, historic and pedestrian-scale character of the Village Center Core.
- Establish Historic District Zoning within the Village Center Core area. The generalized boundaries of the proposed district are shown on Figure 5-2 as the Village Center Core. The exact boundaries should be established with a comprehensive inventory of the area and with significant input from local property owners.
- Uses permitted should be limited to most types of residential, and low intensity non-residential, uses that are currently permissible in the Village Center (VC) zoning district, such as office, service (banks, insurance etc.) lodging, restaurant, commercial retail, and commercial services. This includes permitting 2nd floor residential uses above commercial uses.
- Incorporate design guidelines to direct the Planning Commission's review of development/redevelopment within the Village Center Core. These guidelines should be developed with input from the Kent Island Heritage Society and the Maryland Historical Trust. General guidelines would include the following:
 - Avoid demolishing buildings whenever possible. Build on the existing character of the downtown. Respect and reinforce the existing architectural and historic character.
 - Encourage compatibility of new construction with nearby buildings in terms of building height, width, proportion, bulk, setback, roof form, etc.
 - Encourage the use of architectural features that characterize the historic district: building, roof and siding material, building projections, window types and patterns, doors, etc. Cupolas, such as the one on the old school house and several other newer developments, could remain a common design motif for the Stevensville area.
 - Minimize the impact of mechanical equipment (such as HVAC equipment, antennas, heat pumps, etc.) on the building appearance through screening, such as locating the equipment to the rear, etc.

- Encourage small (6 to 9 square feet), simple signs, typically located no higher than 10 to 12 feet. Flat wall signs and projecting signs are preferred. Freestanding signs would be generally inappropriate. Illumination should be subtle and understated.
- Allow shared parking to count towards meeting parking requirements. Public parking could also be allowed to count towards meeting a portion of the parking requirements for the adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings when there is insufficient on-site land to provide the required parking.

Additional recommendations for the Stevensville Village Center (see Map 5-2) and particularly the Village Core area include:

- Expand the Village Center with a mix of commercial and residential development. The expansion area (See Figure 5-2) will allow the Village Center to grow in a logical way and allow for a village center of sufficient size that will increase the vitality and available mix of uses.



- Maintain Suburban Industrial (SI) zoning for the existing industrial neighborhood along State Street and Old Love Point Road. There are several older industrial sites and public facility uses along State Street and Old Love Point Road south of Love Point Park and the High School. This area is adjacent to existing and planned residential areas, a public park and school facilities. The area may have better long-term potential as a residential neighborhood designed to be compatible with the street and housing pattern of older Stevensville neighborhoods. However, this is an established industrial area that is currently needed in Stevensville to accommodate a number of important local businesses. This area should retain its existing Suburban Industrial (SI) zoning. In order to improve the compatibility of this area with existing and future development, basic design guidelines should be adopted for new development and redevelopment within this SI district. The primary objective of these design guidelines will be to ensure adequate landscaping and screening to protect adjacent residential uses. The geographic boundaries of the Suburban Industrial zoned land should not expand. Over time, if property owners wish to seek residential rezoning within this neighborhood, the County should evaluate each case and, if practical, recommend favorably for the rezoning.

- Create a master plan for the elementary school complex. Factor in future school expansion plans, improved automobile and pedestrian-bicycle circulation patterns, and potential relocation of the fire station. Improve the signage and appearance of the site entrances from Route 18. Provide a trail system spur to connect the complex of school facilities and nearby downtown areas to the Cross-Island Trail.

- Adopt a design concept for Parcels 250, 333, 334. These parcels comprise the undeveloped, wooded site with frontage on US 50/301 between Duke Street and Love Point Road. In developing this high visibility site the following design principles should be considered to help integrate site development into the existing community fabric:
 - Create facades that form a visible presence from US 50/301. Avoid large expanses of parking up against the highway.
 - Create building pods with parking between buildings, extending the quasi-grid pattern of the Village Center streets. Avoid large expanses of parking and long unbroken facades.
 - Establish paths and walkways that assure pedestrian connections between new development in this area and the village core area
 - Retain as many trees as possible. Create a suitable buffer from residential parcels that front on Route 18. Wetland areas and their associated buffers will have to be accommodated in any future development of these sites.

- Encourage redevelopment and aesthetic clean up of marginal or obsolete land uses. Alternative solutions to clean up such properties should be explored, and could include considering condemnation proceedings for sites if clean-up or demolition agreements cannot be negotiated with the property owner.

Stevensville Village Center Commercial Environment

The Stevensville Merchants Association is dedicated to the future improvement and economic revitalization of Stevensville. The County should coordinate with these local stakeholders to plan and implement the following actions to improve the commercial environment in the Village Center Core:

- Erect directional signs for the Village Center Core on US 50/301, Routes 8 and 18. The Stevensville Village Center is easy to miss from almost any of the major State routes. In order for the Town Center Core to continue and expand its revitalization, visitors need to have clear directions. If the trip is not convenient, the vast majority of US 50/301 through traffic will not even consider leaving the highway.
- Erect landmark or monument signs at gateway entrances to the Village Center.
- Continue to develop Village Center merchants' promotions and special events.
- Continue to coordinate business signage and develop interpretive signage for historic buildings.
- Add street furniture to improve Village Center environment: benches, trash cans, bicycle racks, and planters.
- Coordinate street light design (historic theme) and pursue any opportunities to consolidate and/or bury overhead utility lines.
- Work with the Kent Island Heritage Society to develop a visitors kiosk and/or a historical museum.
- Consider establishing a special tax district for the Village Center Core commercial area. A special tax district would provide funding for physical improvements that would benefit the area, raise property values and increase sales.
- Apply for various State and Federal grants and loans to provide funding for economic revitalization and historic preservation (i.e. Maryland Main Street program and Neighborhood Business Revitalization Program).
- The Kent Island Volunteer Fire Department will re-locate to a site that has been acquired for new facilities adjacent to the Chester Overpass. The existing Fire House should be evaluated for adaptive re-use or for multiple uses. Uses such as a youth center, medical facilities, expansion of nearby school uses or as a museum could be considered.

The Land Conservation Plan

Conservation of natural resources and protection of environmental features on Kent Island is a key objective of this Community Plan. Homeowners can contribute towards the conservation of the natural resources and minimize environmental impacts by limiting the conversion of forests to lawns, leaving the remaining land fallow, planting open lands with native species, ensuring that forests on their property connect directly with forests on adjacent properties, and by preventing land disturbances near waterways.

Concerns regarding the development that has taken place in recent years have highlighted the need to protect environmental resources, which has also extended to the role these resources play in also defining the Island's rural character. As undeveloped lands dwindle, the need to identify those remaining sites and institute measures to insure they remain rural and that environmental resources are protected has become paramount in the minds of Citizen Advisory Committee members. Map 5-3 identifies three categories and their respective locations where conservation of lands is recommended. They include:

- A three hundred foot buffer from tidal waters within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.
- Lands designated as Greenbelt.
- Existing and proposed parklands to provide public waterfront access and interpretive facilities to support environmental education.

Measures to protect these lands include:

- Implementation of protection measures prescribed by the County's Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program and protection of a 300 foot buffer for all lands located in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. Within these areas implementation strategies should be designed to:
 - Maintain Critical Area Program development criteria to protect water quality and wildlife habitat.
 - Maintain a 300 foot buffer requirement unless the buffer encompasses a substantial portion of any property such that reasonable use is impracticable, or if such buffer prohibits any additional development landward of existing structures on an already improved lot, which the Planning Commission recognizes may warrant granting a reduction on a case-by-case basis. Any reduction to the 300-foot buffer shall be the minimum necessary to allow practical use of the site provided that there are mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts related to the reduction.

Even though the CAC recommended that no future award of growth allocation or buffer reductions should be granted to any area of Kent Island in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, nevertheless, the Planning Commission recognizes that in order to

achieve the County's goals it may be necessary for very careful limited use in the award of Growth Allocation in the future in the Chester and Stevensville Community Planning Area.

- Designation of lands as "Greenbelts" to better define the edges of the Community Planning Area boundaries and distinguish areas appropriate for development and areas to remain undeveloped or limited to rural residential densities. These lands are located both within and outside the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. Lands designated greenbelt are designed to maintain rural and open character and establish a "Green Edge" definition along the community planning boundary. These areas will also serve to protect substantial portions of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and sensitive environmental resources by re-directing growth away from such areas that were formerly designated for growth. Within these areas recommended implementation strategies include:
 - Maintenance of the 300 foot shoreline buffer wherein no disturbance would be permitted, except for bona fide water dependent facilities, unless the buffer encompasses a substantial portion of any property such that reasonable use is impracticable, or if such buffer prohibits any additional development landward of existing structures on an already improved lot, which may warrant granting a reduction on a case-by-case basis, and where buffer management standards would require restoration of the natural state of the shoreline to the maximum extent practicable.
 - Use of design standards that emphasize protecting open fields, rural vistas and farm/rural character appearance along roadways and at gateways into the Community Planning Areas. Such standards should be mandatory within greenbelts and to the extent possible protect farmscapes, tree-lined lanes, hedgerows and similar features that manifest rural character.
 - Re-designate the lands to a zoning district such as Suburban Residential (SR) and require 85% of the site to remain open space if development occurs.
 - Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). PDR programs require funding. Current organizations engaged in purchase of development rights or acquisition of easements like the Maryland Environmental Trust and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy could be solicited to support this initiative. Given the support of Island residents for land preservation efforts, the formation of a Kent Island Land Conservancy as a new non-profit organization might provide additional funding to further land stewardship initiatives.
 - Transferable Development Rights (TDR) "sending area" designation, if adequate and appropriate receiving areas can be identified for use of transferred rights.
 - Use of easement mechanisms in association with PDR or TDR that ensure the terms of an easement are not revertible and that any open spaces set-aside are preserved in perpetuity.

- Use of existing parks and acquisition of additional lands (such as a portion of the Davidson Farm) for passive park use, and the use of some sites for interpretive facilities to support environmental education or to provide public access to key waterfront locations. These locations serve a number of important functions. They provide opportunity for increased public waterfront access at locations north and south of Route 50/301. Their strategic location will help to define the community edges and support the function and role of proposed greenbelts. In some locations they can help satisfy the demand for active recreation facilities (when appropriate). These park locations can also support interpretive facilities that promote environmental education and appreciation of natural resources to both residents and visitors to the area. Implementation strategies to secure these areas for park use and enhance opportunities for public access include:
 - Public acquisition.
 - Private dedication for public use as a condition of development approval.
 - Use of mandatory standards for parkland dedication or collection of a fee-in-lieu of dedication that supports public acquisition.
 - High quality design and development of park and interpretive facilities.
 - Integrating these implementation measures and initiatives with the objectives and implementation strategies established in the *Queen Anne's County Land Preservation, Recreation and Open Space Plan*.

The Gateways and Scenic Corridors/Viewsheds Protection Plan

The communities of Chester and Stevensville are blessed with an abundance of natural beauty by virtue of the Island landscape. This scenery should be considered an important component to the overall quality of both communities. Emphasis in this plan on defining gateways and protecting scenic corridors and views (see Map 5-4) reflects a growing trend toward placemaking--creating identifying landmarks, or protecting existing views, that, in a national landscape have grown increasingly homogenous over time. The concept of identifying gateways and scenic views has been included in this plan to help the traveler to distinguish one place from another, and give residents and businesses a renewed senses of civic pride. When one approaches Kent Island, Chester or Stevensville by car, the sequence of views from the road determines one's first impressions of the place. Since gateways are essentially entrance corridors, then gateway planning means linking this sequence of views together with common elements that give the corridor its own identity. Although the scenery of Kent Island is highly valued by residents, scenic vistas and viewsheds are often destroyed during rapid change, both in the natural and built environments. Therefore, identification and protection of these assets is an important component of this plan and integral stewardship of both communities.

Gateways

Map 5-4 identifies a number of Gateway locations identified through visual survey during the preparation of this plan. Gateway, as the term is used herein, is defined as, an entrance corridor that heralds the approach of a new landscape and defines the arrival point as a destination. The goal of planning for treatment of gateways is to arrange this landscape so that it rewards the viewer with a sense of arrival and positive image of the place. Some of the six gateway locations identified on Map 5-4 represent opportunities to provide a distinct visual transition from rural to village landscape; from developed to undeveloped conditions or from man-built to natural environments. Others, particularly those at each approach to Kent Island along the Route 50/301 corridor provide a transition from open water to land dominated landscapes. Regardless of type, each can be threatened by development.

Each gateway is also unique. The appropriate treatment for gateways may be a real gate at the entrance to a country estate, a landscaped sign at the entrance to the communities of Chester or Stevensville, a park or monument feature at a Route 50 interchange location, or an entrance corridor into either village with its own distinctive sequence of signs, lighting, and landscaping.

Several of the identified gateways are located along approaches to Stevensville and Chester along State highways through interchanges along the Route 50/301 corridor. They have attracted, and tend to continue to attract commercial travel services-- gas stations, fast food, motels-- usually in a uniform franchise architecture style. As these uses have proliferated especially in additional strip-style commercial centers, not only does traffic congestion increase, but it eclipses and hides the real downtowns within Chester and Stevensville. Each of these locations, to the extent possible, should be planned and designed to minimize this impact on the downtown areas by utilizing landscaping, signage, monument features, open space, or similar features to present a "front door" to the community.

Therefore, this plan recommends the County development of design standards, possibly through the use of a Highway Corridor District Overlay Zone District, that insure portions of the corridor are accorded careful treatment to protect or enhance these gateway locations. These design standards should be applied in the process of review of any proposed development in or near identified gateways. Standards should address site layout, architecture, landscaping, parking, signage, any proposed site amenities (like monuments walls, or fences) and storm water management facilities. These standards should also be used to encourage design and development treatment that signals to the motorist that they are entering a place with a strong sense of its historical roots and architectural heritage.

"Any part of a town--large or small--which is to be identified by its inhabitants as a precinct of some kind, will be reinforced, helped in its distinctness, marked and made more vivid, if the paths which enter it are marked by gateways where they cross the boundary."

"Many parts of a town have boundaries drawn around them. These boundaries are usually in people's minds. They mark the end of one kind of place, and the beginning of another. In many cases, the activities themselves are made more sharp, more vivid, more alive, if the boundary which exists in people's minds is also present physically in the world".

– From Christopher Alexander, et.al, *A Pattern Language: Towns-Buildings-Construction*, 1977

Scenic Vistas and Corridors

Several identified gateways on Map 5-4, correspond to three specific locations along the Route 50/301 corridor. They include areas at bridge crossings to the Island from the east and west and the Route 18 and Route 50/301 crossing over Cox Creek. When one approaches the Island by car, the sequence of views from the road determines one's first impression of the Island. These same views are a source of daily inspiration and pride to Island residents. In these locations landscaping is typically the most frequently used element to define or reinforce views. A continuous row of shade trees, a planted median, a landscape buffer composed of native plant materials, or the absence of planting to facilitate long views over land to open water, can all help define or frame views. Landscaping can also be used to provide a sense of enclosure which accentuates the transition between the openness of the surrounding landscape and the development along the corridor.

The objectives for Scenic Vistas and Corridors are to:

- Protect existing views of natural areas and open water that are evocative of Island tradition (e.g. farmland, land/water interface, open fields, farm structures).
- Maintain a rural open character and "Green Edge" to the Community Planning Areas regardless of development options permitted.
- Protect the Critical Area and sensitive environmental resources where they co-occur with scenic viewsheds.

Strategies to implement these objectives which correspond to a number of those identified to protect designated greenbelts include:

- Maintenance of the 300 foot shoreline buffer wherein no disturbance would be permitted, except for bona fide water dependent facilities, unless the buffer encompasses a substantial portion of any property such that reasonable use is impracticable, or if such buffer prohibits any additional development landward of existing structures on an already improved lot, which may warrant granting a reduction on a case-by-case basis, and where buffer management standards would require restoration of the natural state of the shoreline to the maximum extent practicable.
- The use of design standards that emphasize the protection of open fields, rural vistas and farm/rural character appearance along roadways and at gateways into developed areas. Such standards should be mandatory within scenic corridors and, to the extent possible, protect farmscapes, tree-lined lanes, hedgerows and similar features that manifest rural character or permit open views to water.
- Re-designate the lands to a zoning district such as Suburban Residential (SR) and require 85% of the site to remain open space if development occurs.

- Purchase of Development Rights (PDR).
- Transferable Development Rights (TDR) "sending area" designation, if adequate and appropriate receiving areas can be identified for use of transferred rights.
- Use of easement mechanisms in association with PDR or TDR that insure the terms of an easement are not revertible and that any open spaces set-aside are preserved in perpetuity.
- Locate scenic overlooks where people can stop, park, and appreciate the view.

Rural areas essentially border all of the existing developed and planned growth areas in Chester and Stevensville. Waterways naturally separate the two communities. The views and access afforded by the water are important if both Chester and Stevensville are to maintain their unique identity within the greater Kent Island area. Without this separation, development will eventually form a continuous strip from the Bay Bridge to Grasonville with few, if any, dominant views of the natural setting remaining as reminders of the Islands sense of place.

This chapter has outlined the major plan recommendations based on the discussion of issues in Chapter 3. Recommendations are designed to move in the direction of achieving the CAC's Vision, as articulated in the Forward, for the Chester and Stevensville communities over time. These recommendations include that clear and objective methodologies are used to assess the transportation, environmental and fiscal impacts of development proposals. It should be noted that this is a long range plan and many of the recommendations contained in this Chapter will require more detailed study and may take many years to implement as funding and priorities warrant. Implementation of recommendations for physical improvements will ultimately be evaluated in the context of the County's long-range capital improvements programming and may require public/private partnerships for future development, and/or innovative finance mechanisms in order to be realized. Therefore, the Planning Commission will continue to seek and utilize citizen participation regarding the implementation of this Community Plan.