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Introduction

This Plan, as an update to the 2002 Queen Anne’s County Comprehensive Plan, continues to reaffirm our land use ethic to *maintain the County as a quintessential rural community*. The theme of this update is to *preserve our connections from the past in order to create the future through sustainability*. A sustainable community consists of strong, attractive and economically thriving neighborhoods supporting all sectors of a community including our agricultural industry, residential neighborhoods, businesses, the government and our natural environment. This Plan builds upon the past ethic to assure the County’s sustainability through enhanced preservation and conservation of agricultural land along with our cultural resources, while also managing growth in order to reduce sprawl by directing growth to locations in existing communities and designated planning areas, promoting economic development and protecting our sensitive natural resources.

This Plan strengthens the County’s long-standing guiding principles, growth management policies and recommendations outlined since 1987. It supports creating sustainable communities consistent with the 2030 vision for the County and Maryland’s *smart growth* goals and objectives. *This Plan strengthens the County’s commitment to sustainable smart growth management in the context of the impact of existing and future land uses on the County’s water resources*. In this Plan *we looked through the “lens of water resources management”* to determine appropriate use of land.



Figure 1: Queen Anne’s County





Overall Community Vision

The overall vision for the future of Queen Anne's County was originally drafted by the County Commissioners and modified based upon community input received throughout the Plan update process. This vision for the County places emphasis on maintaining and enhancing Queen Anne's County character while *maintaining a quintessential rural community*.

Overall Community Vision

The VISION is to continue the ethic that the County remains a quintessential rural community with the overall character of the County preserved as:

- *A predominantly rural county with small towns connected by creeks and county roads through fields and forest – a great place to live;*
- *A county that encourages agriculture, seafood and maritime industries, tourism and outdoor sports, small business and high tech enterprise – a good place to work;*
- *A county that is a faithful steward of its natural and cultural heritage – a good neighbor for the Bay and other Eastern Shore counties;*
- *A county in which development does not impair the quality of life enjoyed by all – a community that protects the expectations and opportunities of all its citizens.*
- *A county that supports the highest quality of education that seeks to fully prepare its citizens for the future.*

Our Unique Heritage and Setting

Located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Queen Anne's County is comprised of approximately 238,337 acres or 373 square miles, with an estimated population of 48,650 people in the year 2010. Its topography is largely level to gently rolling farmland, all close to sea level, and is bounded, in large part, by water - to the north by the Chester River and Kent County, Maryland; to the east by Caroline County, Maryland and Kent County, Delaware; to the south by the Wye River and Talbot County, Maryland and to the west by the Chesapeake Bay. Queen Anne's County is located 34 miles from Baltimore, 48 miles from the nation's capital Washington, D.C., and 66 miles from Philadelphia. Major interstate highways traverse the County, providing easy, overnight access to approximately one third of the United States.

Queen Anne's County is one of the oldest sites of colonial settlement in the nation. Today, traces of history can be found throughout the landscape as noted by hundreds of documented historic sites countywide. The community has been farming the land and harvesting the water since the early 18th century. Over time, farming practices have evolved to the point where farms within the County lead the State in production of corn, wheat and soybean crops.

From the time when vacationers arrived by steamboat and ferry service to Kent Island where they would make rail connections to the bay-side and ocean resorts, and continuing with the construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge so Western Shore vacationers can reach the beach by automobile, Queen



Anne's County has been known as the "Gateway to the Eastern Shore." Due to its location on the Chesapeake Bay, the County offers miles of scenic waterways, accompanied by acres of pastoral rural landscape, and a relaxing environment for working, living and recreation. It is this *exceptional quality of life* that residents and visitors enjoy through a variety of natural resources that support outdoor recreation, such as boating, fishing, golfing, bird watching, biking, hiking and sport shooting.

Background for Comprehensive Planning

This Comprehensive Plan will serve as a guide for future decisions about appropriate land uses. The process of creating the Plan included forecasting what may occur in the future based upon existing land use patterns and anticipated trends. This Plan and supporting documentation address environmental resources, population, demographics, land use, transportation, water and sewer, community facilities, housing, economic development, tourism, historic resources, growth management and inter-jurisdictional coordination between the County, the Towns and neighboring counties.

The Plan establishes priorities and a direction to achieve the desired future land use patterns for the County. It identifies goals, objectives and recommendations intended to guide County officials making decisions about future land use issues, prioritizing infrastructure needs and budgeting for capital projects, to achieve the Overall Community Vision.

Planning Objective

The primary objective of comprehensive planning is to anticipate, prepare for and plan for land use patterns over a long-term planning horizon. The emphasis of this planning effort is to *preserve connections to create the future by strengthening guiding principles for planning and growth management*. These guiding principles are: to sustain Queen Anne's County:

- As a predominantly rural agricultural community;
- As good stewards preserving and protecting the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries;
- By reducing the growth in the number of new dwelling units in agricultural and rural areas;
- By improving the overall quality of housing stock;
- By addressing the relative lack of affordable housing;
- By providing adequate public services through aspects of community planning addressing land use, transportation, infrastructure and community design; and
- By encouraging and directing growth to existing communities and within designated Planning Areas.

It is these community values that are reinforced through study, analysis and recommendation in this Plan.

Plan Update Process

The process that crafted this Plan was unprecedented in the history of Queen Anne's County's Comprehensive Planning in that the County Commissioners invested heavily in creating a collaborative approach that actively engaged the community and many citizen participants. Throughout this endeavor there were numerous and varied opportunities for public participation. The collaborative process resulted in the participation of approximately 800 residents who responded to a countywide community survey, 300 persons from the general public that participated in Visioning Workshops, nearly 200 high school students involved in a Student in Government Day and over 100 individuals contributing as members of working committees that included a Citizen Advisory Committee and six Topic Committees.



The public participation process was designed for the purpose of obtaining a variety of community perspectives through:

- distribution of a newsletter to all households in the County;
- responses to a county-wide community survey;
- participation in Visioning Workshops –
 - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis and
 - Visual Preference Survey;
- guidance from a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC);
- input from six Topic Committees (TC);
- technical assistance from a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC);
- committee access to a communications portal to share information and to provide input;
- guidance from State resource agencies such as the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA) and Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE);
- recommendations from CAC and TC Advisory Reports to the Planning Commission;
- recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Panel (BuRP);
- refined recommendations from Planning Commission;
- guidance from the Planning Commission; and
- input from a public review, State agencies and adjoining jurisdictions comment process.

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

The CAC consisted of diverse membership with representation by citizens, business owners and farmers. Representatives from the CAC participated in the TC meetings.

Topic Committees (TC)

The TC consisted of diverse membership with representation by citizens, business owners and farmers on the following topic committees:

- ① Resource Conservation & Environment Protection
- ② Infrastructure
- ③ Town/County
- ④ Business & Economic Development
- ⑤ Agricultural & Rural Preservation
- ⑥ Historic & Cultural Preservation

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC consisted of representatives from all County Departments.

Blue Ribbon Panel (BuRP)

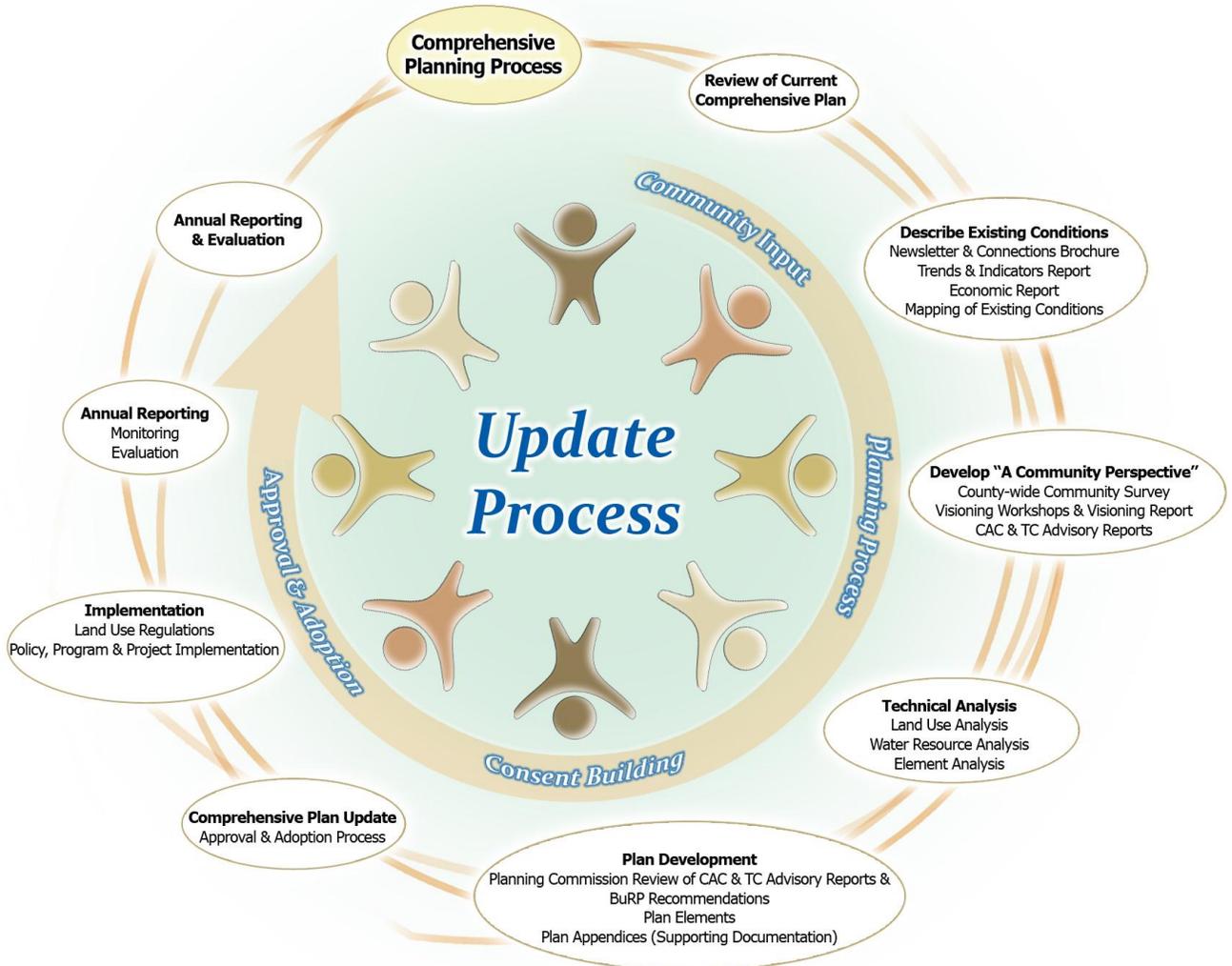
*A panel with diverse membership established by the County Commissioners to study various aspects of **smart growth** and issues associated with rural preservation and development for the purpose of providing recommendations to the Planning Commission.*

Opportunities for public involvement commenced in June of 2008 with the circulation of a newsletter to all citizens and County-wide community survey followed by a series of three Visioning Workshops held late summer of the same year. High school students were engaged during a Student in Government Day in the fall of 2008. The CAC and TC members participated in a kick-off meeting in October of 2008 followed by monthly and bimonthly meetings for various committees from November 2008 through September 2009. Committee Advisory Reports (CAC and TCs) were submitted to the Planning Commission in September 2009.

This collaborative planning process involved identification of community issues, goals and objectives with recommendations based upon a **community's perspective**. The community perspective is detailed in two key documents: the **Visioning Report, 2009** and **A Community Perspective, 2009** (CAC and TC

Advisory Reports). This Plan update process conducted over 24 months also included documentation of existing conditions, technical analysis, drafting of Plan Elements, and formal review and adoption of the County's Comprehensive Plan. Figure 2 below identifies the planning process implemented to allow for meaningful community participation in the update of this Plan while meeting technical requirements outlined by the State for a comprehensive plan.

Figure 2: Planning Process Diagram



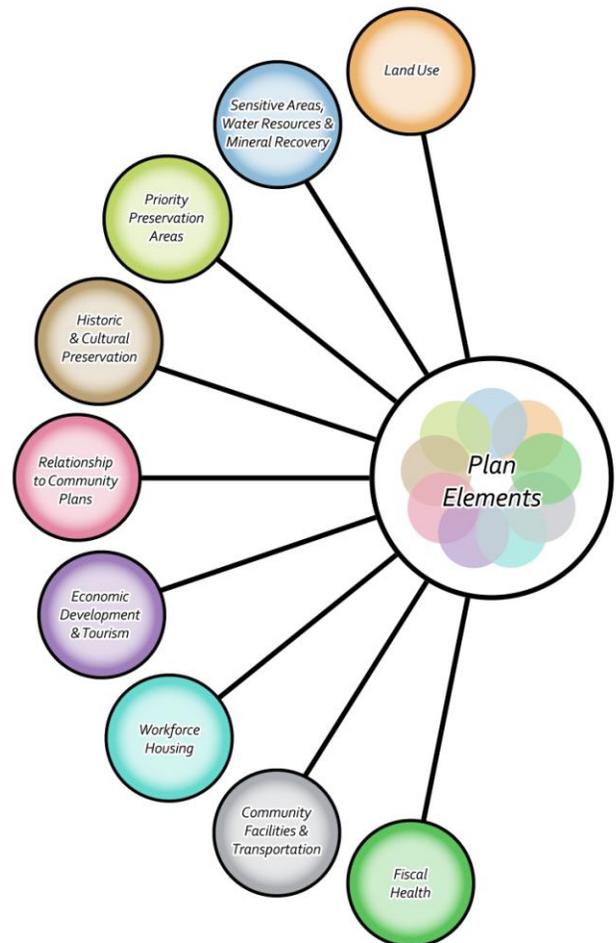
Legend

- CAC – Citizen Advisory Committee
- TC – Technical Advisory Committees
- BuRP – Blue Ribbon Panel

Plan Elements

The Plan outlines goals, objectives, principles, and recommendations to achieve the overall community vision for the future of Queen Anne’s County through implementation of policies, regulations, programs and projects. The Plan provides direction, guidance, goals, strategies and recommendations for land use regulations such as zoning and development standards. This Plan has been prepared in accordance with the State requirement to review and update the Comprehensive Plan every six years. This 2010 Plan contains the following Elements that are outlined in Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland, as amended:

- Section 1.0 Land Use Element;
- Section 2.0 Sensitive Areas, Water Resource Element and Mineral Resource Recovery Element;
- Section 3.0 Priority Preservation Area Element;
- Section 4.0 Historic & Cultural Preservation Element;
- Section 5.0 County/Town Planning Framework Element;
- Section 6.0 Economic Development & Tourism Element;
- Section 7.0 Workforce Housing Element;
- Section 8.0 Community Facilities & Transportation Element; and
- Section 9.0 Fiscal Health Element.



The above Plan Elements are supported by a series of maps, technical analysis documentation contained in the Appendices of this Plan, and reference to the Community and Town Plans.

Plan Element Interrelationship

Planning to preserve connections from the past to create the future for the purpose of maintaining a *quintessential rural community* is the common theme of all Plan Elements. This emphasis is the cornerstone ethic for planning and decision making for the future of Queen Anne’s County. All Plan Elements are focused to achieve this overall community goal, however, Section 1.0 Land Use Element, Section 3.0 Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Element, and Section 2.0 Sensitive Areas, Water Resources and Mineral Recovery Element, collectively provide the core policies and guiding principles for *Sustainable smart growth management strategies* to achieve:

- Directing growth to County and Town Planning Areas using a variety of land use regulations, tools and techniques;
- Preservation of agricultural lands applying a *rural land use preservation strategy* with the goal of preserving 95,203 acres of priority lands; and



- **Preservation of sensitive areas and protection of water resources** through **environmental stewardship** by reducing impacts of development on wetlands, forested lands and wildlife habitats along with reducing non-point source and point-source impacts on waterways.

These Elements are supported by a **County/Town Planning Framework** contained in Section 5.0. This framework is built around:

- Joint Planning Agreements;
- Encouraging Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances (APFOs) for the Towns;
- Municipal Growth Elements (MGE) to plan collaboratively and comprehensively for growth;
- Enhancing the County's Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) program so that TDRs are directed to Community Planning Areas, which are designated as State Priority Funding Areas (PFAs) wherein development will meet the minimum density requirements for PFAs, accompanied by creating strategies for funding public facilities with an emphasis on water and wastewater systems, schools and educational facilities;
- Establishing a Town Fringe for short-term and long-term annexations; and
- Protecting of sensitive lands and Critical Areas.

The County's **sustainable smart growth management strategies** are further supported in Section 8 Community Facilities and Transportation Element and Section 6 Economic Development & Tourism Element by providing:

- Adequate **community facilities and transportation system** that address schools, water, wastewater, solid waste, emergency services, park and recreational facilities and available modes of transportation to meet the needs of current and future populations to ensure:
 - Facilities are designed and improved to meet current needs with the ability to be easily expanded to meet future needs as planned;
 - Facilities are appropriately designed and located to serve concentrated populations of today and tomorrow within County and Town Planning Areas;
 - Facilities utilize innovative technology and sustainable design to minimize impacts on the environment as well as to minimize fiscal impacts associated with long-term maintenance; and
 - Facilities are improved through public-private partnerships as well as public-public partnerships between the County and Towns.
- **Economic development and tourism strategies** to:
 - Create and sustain a balanced tax base;
 - Maintain an employed and trained workforce;
 - Understand the County's role in the context of a regional economy;
 - Address opportunities for retail, service and the hospitality industry;
 - Increase the supply of workforce housing based upon needs.

The **Historic and Cultural Preservation Element** emphasizes completing inventories of significant structures, properties and districts as well as creating an organizational structure to review projects and to pursue preservation funds.

All Plan Elements are evaluated through the **Fiscal Health Element** to ensure both **short-term and long-term sustainability** of the County."



History of Comprehensive Planning in Queen Anne's County

The County has a history of over 40 years of planning for its future starting as early as the 1965 Comprehensive Plan. The following provides brief highlights for each planning effort of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

History
1965 Comprehensive Plan
Establish Guiding Principles

1965 Comprehensive Plan (Establish Guiding Principles) – In 1965, it was recognized that the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries were an important factor in attracting people to live and play in the County. At that time, it was determined that these areas in particular would require close watch and careful planning. The vision for the future was one of maintaining a predominantly rural agricultural community.

1987 Comprehensive Plan (Define Guiding Principles) – In 1987, the primary goals and objectives of the Plan were to preserve and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and to maintain the rural character and protect large areas of the County for agricultural uses. This Plan proposed to meet those objectives by reducing the number of dwelling units in the agricultural and rural areas, improving the overall quality of housing stock and addressing the relative lack of affordable housing. This Plan also included a growth management component intended to limit urban sprawl by directing new growth into areas designated as growth nodes where adequate public facilities could be provided, thus protecting environmentally sensitive and rural areas.

1993 Comprehensive Plan (Confirm Guiding Principles) – The 1993 Plan was a major update confirming the guiding principles of the 1987 Plan and add policies to comply with the Maryland State 1992 Planning Act. This Plan recommended that specific plans should be prepared for the County's six designated Growth Areas. These Plans were required to address land use, transportation, infrastructure, and community design issues. Once adopted, these Community Plans became a part of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan.

2002 Comprehensive Plan (Enhance Guiding Principles) – The 2002 Comprehensive Plan continued to address and resolve two key themes, which enhanced the County's long-standing growth management policies and recommendations in effect since the 1987 Plan. Those themes included encouraging and directing growth to existing communities within Designated Growth Areas, discouraged development of rural areas, and encouraged the preservation of agricultural lands.

2010 Comprehensive Plan (Strengthen Guiding Principles) – This Plan strengthens the County's long-standing guiding principles, growth management policies and recommendations outlined since 1987 through creating sustainable communities consistent with the 2030 vision for the County and Maryland's *smart growth* goals and objectives.

Past
1987 Comprehensive Plan
Define Guiding Principles

Yesterday
1993 Comprehensive Plan
Confirm Guiding Principles

Today
2002 Comprehensive Plan
Enhance Guiding Principles

Tomorrow
2010 Comprehensive Plan
Strengthening Guiding Principles

Preserving Connections from the Past to the Future through Sustainability

A sustainable Queen Anne’s County may be achieved if the County’s short and long-term planning and decisions are based upon an understanding of the past and current conditions as well as assumptions about the future.

Utilizing a variety of trends and indicators an assessment of the County’s sustainability was conducted as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. The diagram below identifies various Community Sustainability Indicators (CSIs) that were used to evaluate the health, safety and welfare of the County.

Tracking and evaluating these Community Sustainability Indicators will provide a quantitative and qualitative measure to determine how well the County is meeting **smart growth** goals and objectives contained within each Plan Element. These indicators can also be used to measure how the County is meeting State mandated **smart growth** goals.

Trends and Indicators

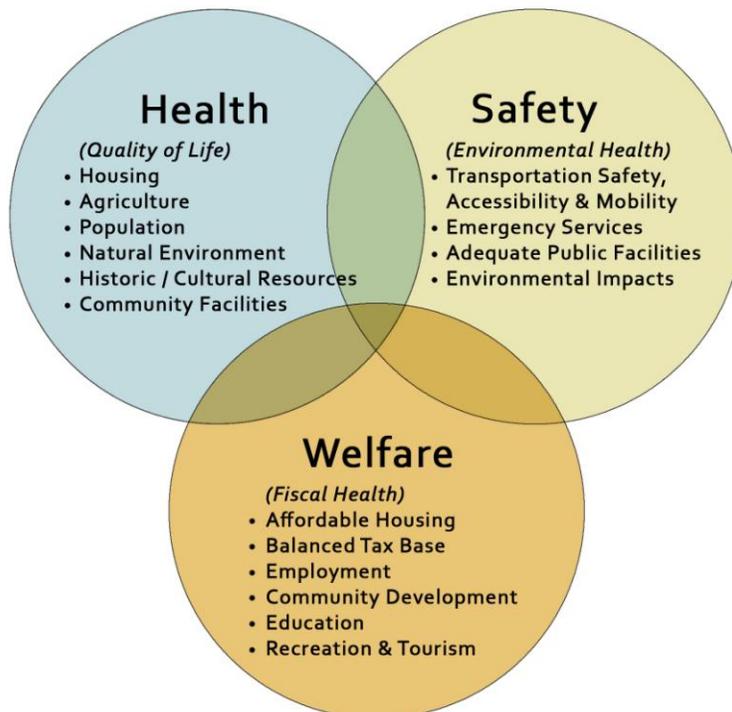
*Trends and indicators provide data, information and statistics to measure the progress the County is making toward achieving community goals and objectives with respect to desired levels of quality of life and sustainability as well as with respect to meeting statewide **smart growth** land use goals and objectives.*

***Indicators** are a tool for community assessment used as measurement of various aspects or factors of health, safety and welfare of our community.*

***Trends** track indicators by using past performance or conditions to predict the future.*

Refer to Trends & Indicators Report, 2010 and Economic Report, 2010.

Figure 3: Community Sustainability Indicators Diagram





Community Sustainability indicators identified on the diagram are described in this Plan and reference documents. Key reference documents include: the Trends & Indicators Report, 2010; the Economic Report, 2010; and the County's 2006 Housing Study prepared by the Louis Berger Group, Inc.

The Community Sustainability Indicators and measures identified in various elements of this Plan will be utilized to evaluate the success of implementation of policies, goals, objectives and recommendations with respect to achieving the overall community vision for the County and the Twelve Visions of Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the State's *smart growth* goals and objectives and other applicable State legislation.

Policy & Guiding Principles

Queen Anne's County manages growth using a variety of land use regulations, tools and techniques based upon Article 66B, judicial precedent, past and present planning policies and decisions. Historically, the following State of Maryland planning directives have shaped planning goals and have provided a framework for developing and implementing growth management policies and regulations for the County.

- **1992 Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act** – In 1992, the Maryland General Assembly adopted the Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act (the 1992 Planning Act) as an amendment to Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland. This Act required the County and other local governments across the State to reduce sprawl, concentrate growth in and around existing development areas, promote economic development and protect sensitive natural resources.
- **1997 Maryland's Smart Growth Initiative** – In 1997, the State of Maryland enacted *Smart Growth* legislation. This legislation gave the State programmatic and fiscal authority to encourage local jurisdictions to implement "*smart growth*" planning. This was accomplished through the State's directed programs and funding to support locally-designated growth areas and to protect rural areas. Subsequent to this legislation there were several initiatives defined by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) and various State agencies to provide resources, incentives and programs for the County and the development community to achieve *Smart Growth*.
- **2009 Smart, Green & Growing Planning Legislation** – The *Smart, Green & Growing* planning legislation was designed to protect the environment and natural resources and to promote sustainable growth across Maryland. As part of this package of legislation, three planning bills were passed and signed into law on May 7, 2009. Details of this legislation include:

Article 66B of Annotated Code of Maryland – Amended 2009

Article 66B of Annotated Code of Maryland, as amended, sets the standards for local jurisdictions that choose to exercise the authority to plan for the future of the community as well as regulate land use through zoning. While Article 66B delegates certain planning and zoning powers to the County, it also mandates specific items to be included in the County's Plans and ordinances. The Smart, Green & Growing legislation of 2009 amended Article 66B and its Visions, which were increased from eight to twelve, and also redefined the vision statements. These Twelve Visions provide guiding principles for the development of goals and objectives for the County's Comprehensive Plan. Those Visions include:



- 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, multi-modal transportation system facilitates 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.
- ⑨ **Environmental Protection** – Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake Bay, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems and living resources.
- ⑩ **Resource Conservation** – Waterways, forest, 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 environmental protection.
- 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.

These Visions are addressed by Queen Anne's County through the various Plan Elements contained in this Plan.

Implementation of State Planning Visions through Local Smart Growth Goals

Because the Twelve Planning Visions are not likely to be realized unless local jurisdictions set their own goals, the General Assembly requires local jurisdictions to develop a percentage goal towards achieving the statewide goal. Effective July 1, 2009, the following annual reporting requirements must be met:

- The County Planning Commission is required to submit an Annual Report to the County Commissioners, which is then forwarded to the State.
- The Annual Report must identify which ordinances or regulations were adopted to implement the State's Planning Visions, as well as document changes in development patterns.



- The Annual Report must include smart growth information on growth and net density of growth both inside and outside PFAs, newly-created lots, residential and commercial building permits, development capacity analysis and the amount of preserved acreage using local agricultural preservation funding.
- The Annual Report must also include local goals to increase growth within the PFAs and decrease growth outside the PFAs, a timeframe for reaching that goal, and any incremental progress towards the local goal.
- Effective July 1, 2011, local jurisdictions are required to include uniform smart growth measures and indicators and identify a local growth goal in the Annual Report.

Other Planning Legislation

Since the County's adoption of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, additional State legislation was passed that impacts local planning. House Bills 1141, 1160 and HB 2 from the 2006 session of the Maryland General Assembly identify requirements that significantly affect comprehensive plans, annexations and land preservation programs. The following briefly describes each of these Plan Elements.

- **Water Resource Element** – HB 1141 requires the County include a Water Resource Element (WRE) that addresses the relationship of planned growth to water resources for the following: wastewater treatment and disposal, safe drinking water, and non-point source pollution as it relates to nitrogen and phosphorus.
- **Municipal Growth Element** – HB 1141 requires each of the Towns to prepare a Municipal Growth Element (MGE) as part of their comprehensive plan. This element identifies areas for future Town growth through annexation as well as allows for the coordination of growth around the Town boundaries. The Municipal Growth Elements are used to assist with the development of the Water Resource Element in this Plan. This Plan references the Towns' Municipal Growth Elements.
- **Priority Preservation Area Element** – The Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006, HB 2, added a Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Element to the list of additional plan elements that the County may include in the Comprehensive Plan. This element is required for the County to maintain its certified status through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program.
- **Workforce Housing Element**– HB 1160 established a Workforce Housing Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Housing and Community development. In order to participate in this program the County must develop and adopt a Workforce Housing Element that contains an assessment of needs, goals, objectives and policies that preserve or develop workforce housing.



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