

**Comprehensive Plan 2040**  
Your County. Your Vision. Your Future.

# Chapter 14

## Growth Management & Land Use Element

# GROWTH MANAGEMENT And Land Use Element

## Introduction and Purpose

The Land Use Plan is the core element of the Comprehensive Plan. It is the portion of the document where the policies, strategies and recommendations articulated in the other chapters are interwoven to form a detailed plan of how the community should develop in the future. The Land Use Plan is also the instrument through which growth management policies are primarily implemented and establishes the framework for defining various zoning classifications as well as their location. The Land Use Plan illustrates how development, consistent with the goals and objectives for the County, can be achieved. To be effective, this Land Use Plan is based on the assumption that there will be growth; and, therefore planning for it should be on an integrated, comprehensive manner.

In addition, the Land Use Plan must fit the community's needs by preserving its unique character, protecting the environment and enhancing economic opportunities. Recognition of the key role public facilities play in determining the pattern of development is also a significant factor in the development of the Plan. To accomplish this purpose, this Plan will closely mimic previously adopted Comprehensive Plan Land Use Elements in emphasizing smart growth principles that compliment Washington County's desire to remain a thriving rural community.

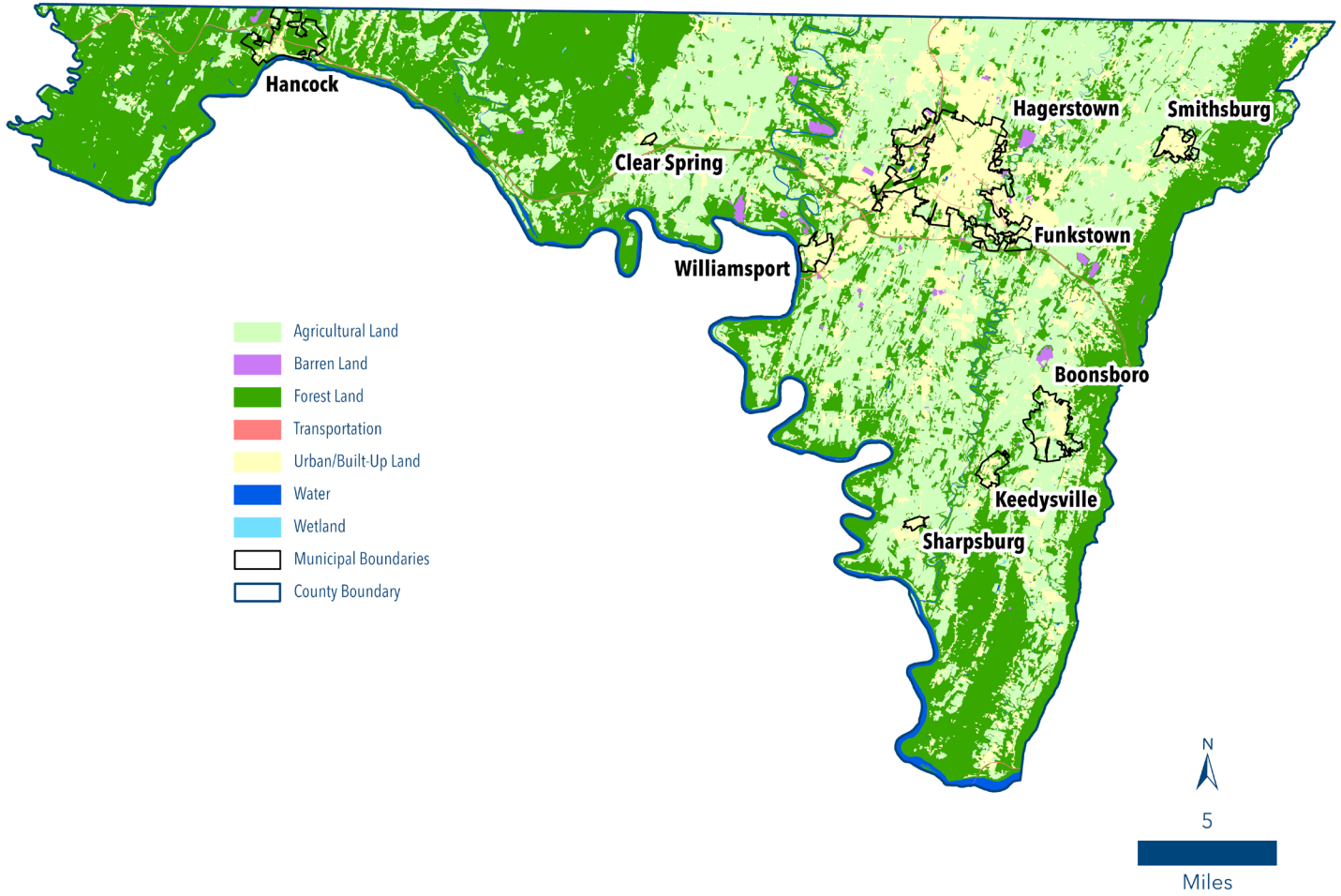
## Existing Conditions

### Land Use/Land Cover

Washington County contains approximately 299,522 acres and is a predominately rural County with over 80% of land use being agricultural or forested. Because of the complexity and multitude of uses existing in the County, seven (7) broad categories are analyzed for long term trends. A listing of the categories and potential uses included follows.

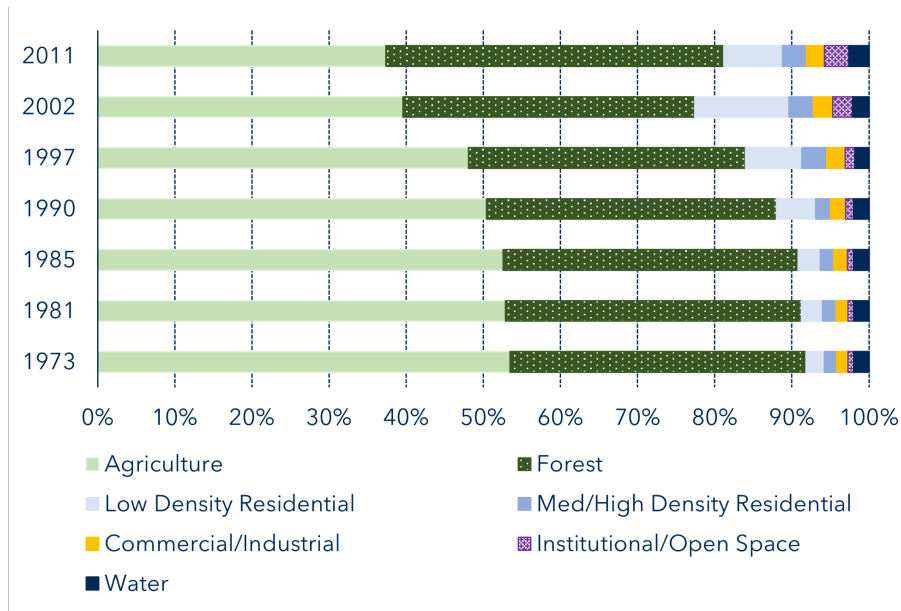
<b>Agriculture</b>	Cropland, pasture, orchards, vineyards, horticulture, feeding operations, agricultural buildings and row/garden crops
<b>Forest</b>	Deciduous, evergreen and mixed forests as well as brush
<b>Low Density Residential</b>	Detached single-family/duplex dwelling units, yards and associated areas.
<b>Medium/ High Density Residential</b>	Attached single row units (townhouses), garden apartments, high-rise apartments, and condominiums.
<b>Commercial/Industrial</b>	Retail businesses, office space, professional services, accommodation buildings, restaurants, manufacturing and industrial parks, mining operations, and associated warehouses, storage yards, and parking areas.
<b>Institutional/ Open Space</b>	Educational facilities, churches, health care facilities, transportation facilities, correctional facilities, military facilities, emergency service facilities, governmental facilities, barren/bare ground, parks and other recreational facilities, and cemeteries.
<b>Water</b>	Rivers, waterways, reservoirs, ponds, lakes, and wetland

Map 14-1: Land Use & Land Cover



As shown in Chart 14-1, the County has experienced increased growth since land use trends were first tracked in the early 1970s. This statistical information includes the areas inside the growth areas including municipalities.

Chart 14-1: Land Use Patterns 1973-2011



This information is broad based and has been compiled by two different sources; therefore, some statistical difference exists in the data. As clarification, information shown for years 1973-2002 has been collected from the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP). In 2011, County planning staff completed an in-depth analysis of land use utilizing existing aerial photography and tax assessment data. The methodology between the two sources differed in the evaluation of 'Low Density Residential' which is evident in the charting of land uses between 2002 and 2011.

The primary reason for this discrepancy is because MDP methodology relating to low density residential areas is through parcel analysis rather than actual land usage. Analyzing data based on a parcel yielded a higher rate of conversion to low density residential due to the significant number of larger residential lots created in the rural areas. For example, prior to 2005 the County had a Conservation zoning district that required new lots of record to be three acres in size. Often these lots were located in sensitive areas of the County with steep slopes or floodplain areas that are wooded. MDP methodology takes into consideration property boundaries that include the entire three acre parcel in the low-density residential category rather than measuring the amount of land that has actually been cleared for the residential development of the lot. County methodology does not acknowledge property boundaries and instead measures the limits of the overall forest stand using aerial photography.

Although the information is broad based, it does highlight several key points in the development patterns in Washington County over the last 40 years. The most significant change in land use has been the decrease in agricultural land; a little more than 15% loss in volume. Conversely, there have been moderate increases in all other urbanized development categories over the same period of time. The largest of the gains is in the 'Low Density Residential' category.

Attention to the specific category of Low Density Residential is of particular concern due to its relationship with development in rural areas of the County. This category is typically reflective of larger lot sizes that convert other rural land uses, such as agricultural and forested land. This same pattern was delineated in the 2002 Comprehensive Plan and was highlighted as an area of importance when evaluating land use policies. These patterns, along with other data collected throughout the 2002 Plan, led to a recommendation of reducing residential densities throughout the rural area.

In 2005, these recommendations were implemented as part of the Rural Area Rezoning that reduced residential density from one dwelling unit per one acre in the Agricultural zoning and one dwelling unit per three acres in the Conservation zoning to one dwelling unit per 5, 20, and 30 acres depending on locations of resources in the rural areas. These changes took effect during a tumultuous time in land use planning when housing construction first flourished and then quickly dissipated. These large fluctuations in the housing market have made it difficult to determine the effectiveness of these land uses policies and will take additional time to accurately assess.

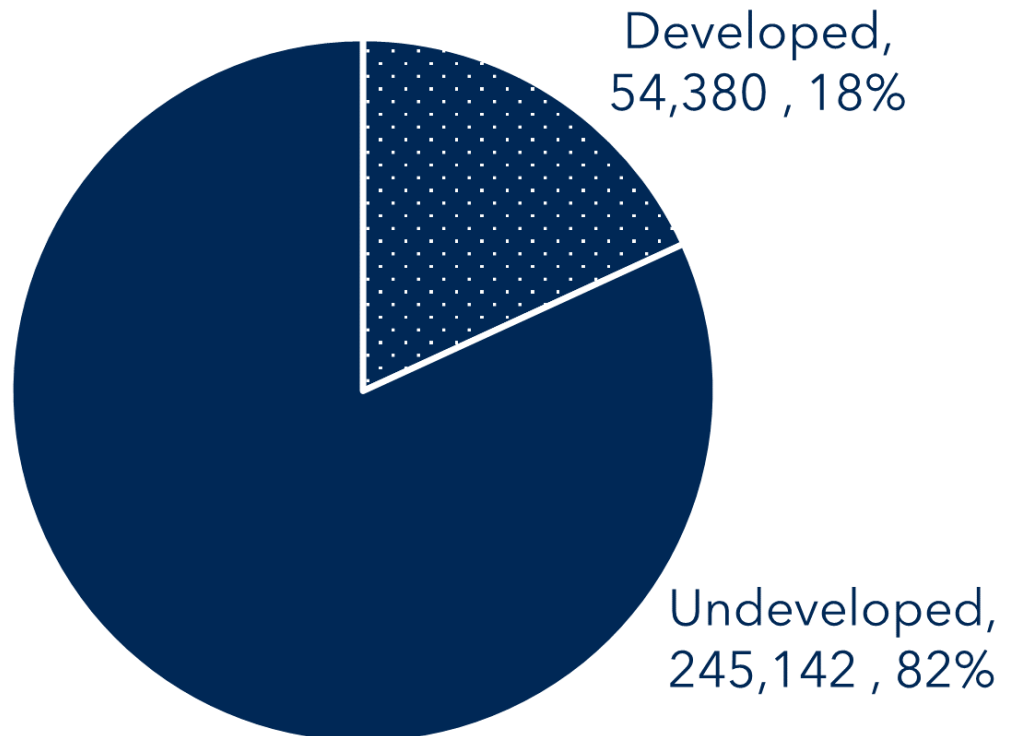
## Developed vs. Undeveloped Land

It is estimated that 54,380 acres, or 18%, of the County (inclusive of municipalities), has been developed. For the purposes of this analysis, the definition of developed land is evaluated on a parcel level basis using Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (MD SDAT) data. For the purpose of this analysis, the definition of “developed” means:

1. A parcel cannot have an agricultural land use assessment; and
2. Must have a current improved assessment value of \$20,000 or more.

If a parcel does not meet both of these criteria, it is considered “undeveloped” as part of this analysis. In comparison, the same analysis completed in the 2002 Comprehensive Plan estimated that approximately 15% of the County was considered developed.

Chart 14-2: Developed vs. Undeveloped Areas  
Washington County, Maryland

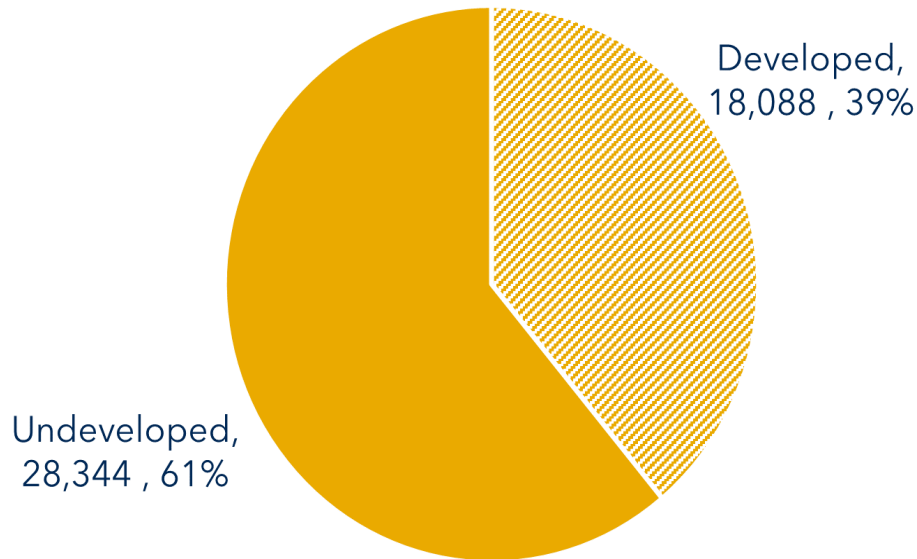


Areas of developed vs. undeveloped lands are further analyzed based upon their location inside or outside of designated growth areas. This metric helps to determine if the County is meeting its intended smart growth goals of guiding development into designated growth areas. As shown in Chart 14-3 below, the total acreage of developed areas outside of designated growth areas currently exceeds those located inside. This can be attributed to the larger lot sizes associated with rural development. However, it is important to note that this does not necessarily indicate more rapid growth in the rural areas. When looked at as an overall percentage of area, the amount of developed land is 14% of the total rural land area. Comparatively, 39% of land in growth areas is considered developed.

Table 14-1: Developed vs. Undeveloped Land

Developed vs. Undeveloped Area within County			
	Total Acreage	Non-Growth Areas	Growth Areas
County Total	299,522	253,090	46,432
Developed	54,380	36,292	18,088
Undeveloped	245,142	216,798	28,344

Chart 14-3: Developed vs. Undeveloped Land in Growth Areas

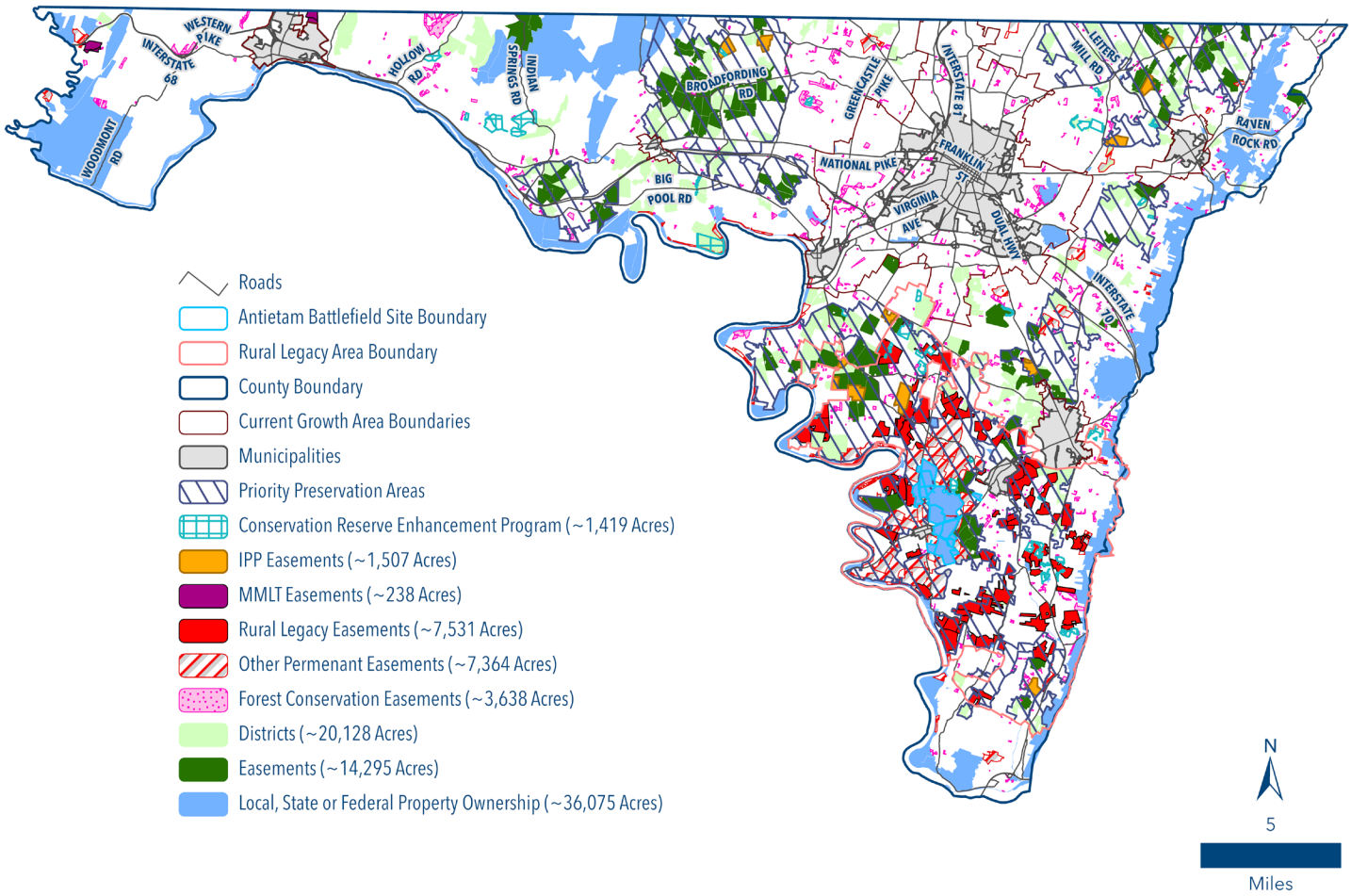


From Charts 14-2 and 14-3, it can readily be seen that Washington County is growing, but that most of the County remains undeveloped. Furthermore, it is clear that the County is maintaining its efforts to appropriately direct growth and that the greatest amount of development is taking place in the growth areas designated for development.

## Protected Lands

Of Washington County’s nearly 300,000 acres of total land mass, approximately 74,000 acres (about 25%) are public owned or protected property. About 38,000 acres of that are permanently protected through land preservation and conservation easements on agricultural and forested land. Protected lands are projected to increase through land preservation programs such as the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program (MALPP), Rural Legacy, and others. These programs target investment in public-private partnerships to protect the most valuable agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas in the County.

Map 14-2: Protected Lands



## Zoning

Zoning was first established in the unincorporated areas of Washington County in 1973. Of the overall 299,522 acres in Washington County, approximately 285,054 acres are under development and zoning regulation control of the Washington County government. The remaining 14,468 acres are under the jurisdiction of the municipalities who have their own autonomous development and zoning regulations.

Since zoning's inception, there have been numerous piecemeal map amendments that have influenced development patterns throughout the County. As part of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, it was recognized that zoning had become outdated and needed a comprehensive review. Beginning in 2005, the County began to implement the recommendations of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan through Countywide rezoning efforts. This effort was broken up into three major projects; the Rural Area rezoning adopted in 2005, the Urban Growth Area rezoning adopted in 2012 and the Town Growth Area rezoning adopted in 2016.

Following these comprehensive rezoning efforts, the County Zoning Ordinance currently contains 20 Euclidean, three (3) floating, and six (6) overlay zoning districts. The following table 14-2 illustrates the breakdown of total acreage by zone.

Table 14-2: Zoning by Acreage in the County

Euclidean Zoning District	Acreage
Agricultural Rural (AR)	82,422
Airport (AP)	1,039
Business General (BG)	820
Business Local (BL)	491
Environmental Conservation (EC)	88,987
Education, Research & Technology (ERT)	314
Highway Interchange (HI)	5,305
Industrial General (IG)	2,441
Industrial Restricted (IR)	288
Office, Research & Industrial (ORI)	704
Office, Research & Technology (ORT)	87
Preservation (P)	72,150
Planned Business (PB)	146
Planned Industrial (PI)	2,454
Residential, Multi-family (RM)	547
Residential, Suburban (RS)	4,806
Residential, Transition (RT)	9,767
Residential, Urban (RU)	3,470
Rural Village (RV)	8,201
Special Economic District (SED)	616
MUNICIPAL	14,468
<b>Total</b>	<b>299,522</b>

Floating Zone	Acreage
Planned Unit Development (PUD)	921
Mixed Use District (MUD)	0
Rural Business (RB)	1,761

Overlay Zones	Acreage
Historic Preservation (HP)	243
Antietam Overlay (AO-1-3)	4,925
Industrial Mineral (IM)	4,855
Airport Clear Zone (AP/C)	230
Airport Overlay Zone (AP/O)	6,749
Airport Hazardous Wildlife Attractant Management District (AP/HW)	12,437



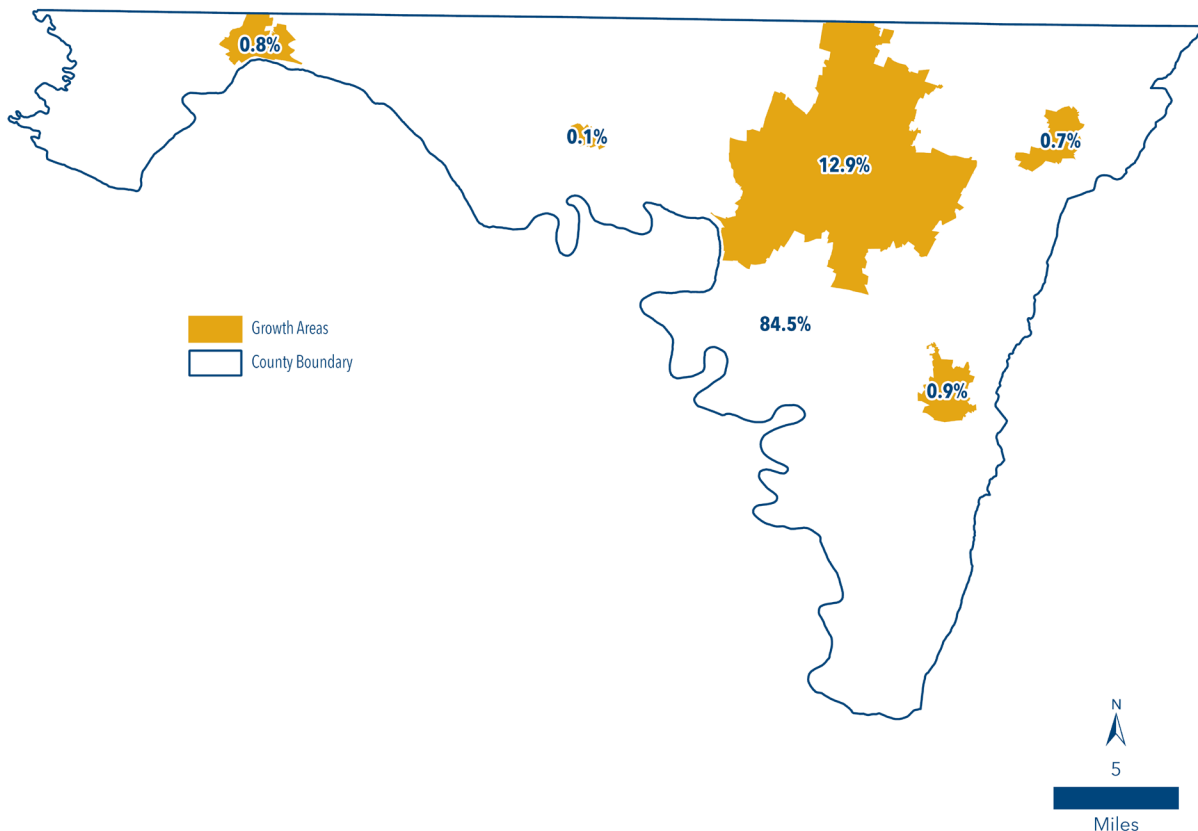
# Growth Management Policies

## Growth Areas

The purpose of establishing growth area boundaries is to identify areas within the County where development is to be encouraged. These areas surround urban locations where the required infrastructure to support intensive development is in existence or planned. These areas are intended to be the most suitable for future development based on the existing built environment and growth patterns. They are also designated to promote economic development and resource protection through proper planning of infrastructure and design. They contain the centers for human activity with future investments in public utilities, facilities and transportation linkages being the most cost effective in these areas. By concentrating development into designated growth areas, this Plan strives to reduce development pressures within rural areas of the County.

In 1981, the County Comprehensive Plan introduced new growth management controls through the adoption of designated growth areas. Over time, these areas have been amended and expanded to help manage growth and development. One large area, designated as the Urban Growth Area (UGA), is delineated around the City of Hagerstown and the Towns of Funkstown and Williamsport. The UGA represents the areas of highest intensity urbanization in the County and is the centralized location for many of the infrastructure needs of the overall population. In addition to the UGA, Town Growth Areas (TGA) were also delineated around several smaller municipalities in the County that also provide necessary infrastructure needs for growth and development. TGAs have been adopted around the Towns of Boonsboro, Clear Spring, Smithsburg, and Hancock.

Map 14-3: Growth Areas as a Percentage of Total County Acreage



The 2002 Comprehensive Plan refined these boundaries to follow property lines and amended various boundaries to expand and retract certain areas. The local comprehensive plan amendments in 2012 (Urban Growth Area) and 2016 (Town Growth Areas) resulted in the growth area boundaries shown in Map 14-3.

Currently, about 46,442 acres or 15.5% of the County land mass (inclusive of municipalities) are within designated growth areas. The UGA contains approximately 38,627 acres while the TGAs contain approximately 7,815 acres. This leaves 253,090 acres, or 84.5%, of the County outside of designated growth areas. To continue support of smart growth efforts, the County maintains its goal of directing at least 85% of new growth within defined growth area boundaries.

## Priority Funding Areas

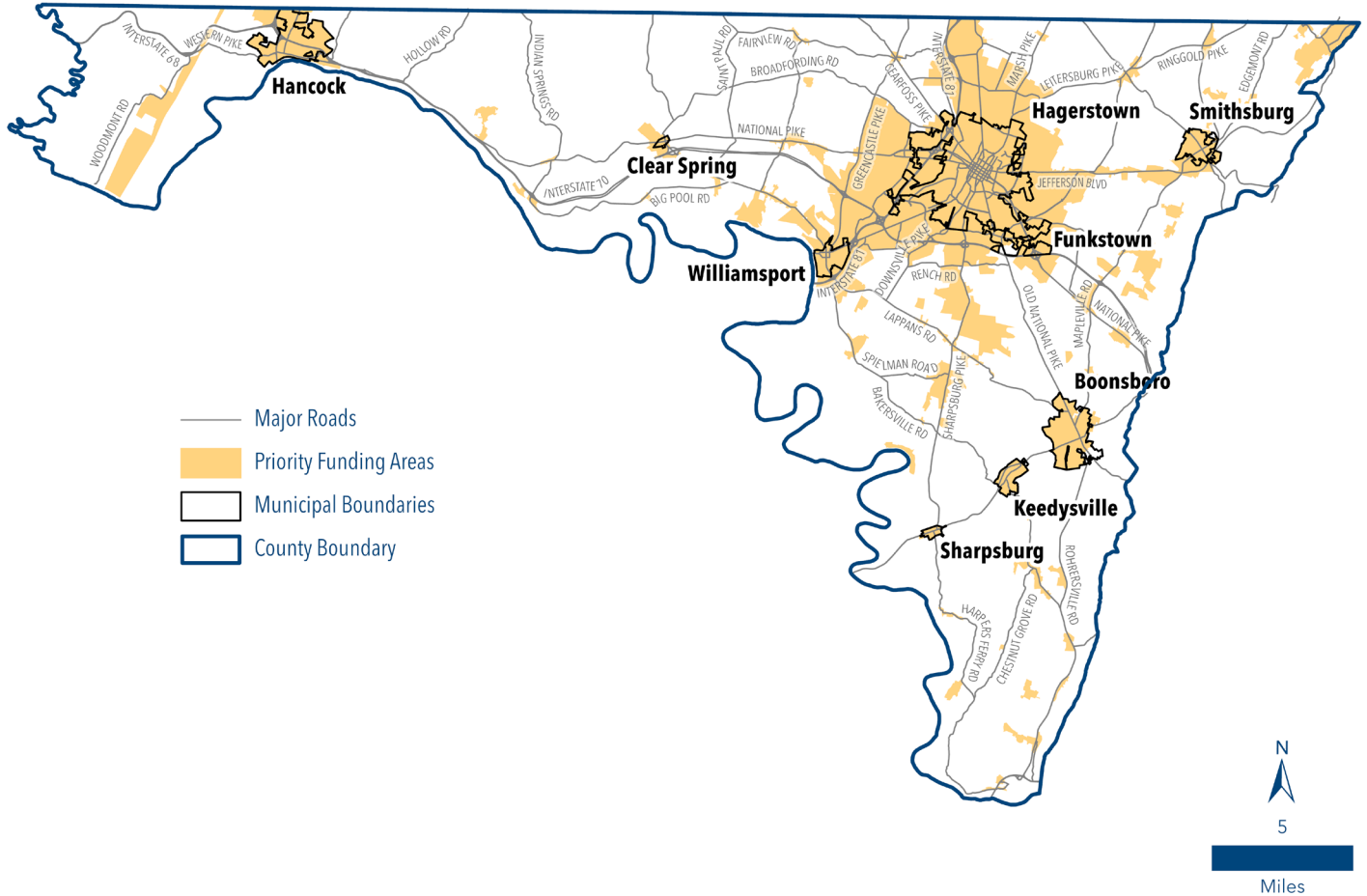
Priority Funding Areas (PFAs), as mentioned in other chapters of this document, are existing communities and places where the County wants to direct State investment—in the form of loans and grants for highways, sewer and water infrastructure, and economic development—to support future growth. According to State law, the standard requirements for an area to be designated as a PFA are as follows:

<b>ZONING</b>	If residentially zoned, the area must have a minimum density of 3.5 dwelling units per acre. The zoning also qualifies if the area is zoned for employment uses, such as commercial, industrial, or institutional.
<b>WATER AND SEWER PLAN</b>	The area must be planned for sewer service in the 10-year water and sewer plan.
<b>GROWTH AREAS</b>	The area must be within a locally designated growth area.

Map 14-4 shows the location of PFAs in Washington County. In addition to having centralized PFAs around the nine (9) incorporated municipalities in the County, numerous rural villages have been defined as well. They are definable on the landscape and contribute to the unique character of Washington County.

Many of these villages are settlements near junctions in roads or along creeks and railroads. They usually include a small core of a residential neighborhood associated with a retail establishment (present or historic) or an institution such as a post office, elementary school, church or fire station. A few are close enough to be associated with the Urban or Town Growth areas delineated throughout the County. Many have vacant lots suitable for infill development. No new rural villages are being recommended at this time.

Map 14-4: Priority Funding Areas



## Land Preservation Programs

Efforts to conserve and protect land resources also plays a significant role in growth management policies. As mentioned in numerous chapters of this document, there are many ways that resource protection and conservation programs are used to mitigate impact from new growth.

Specific to the rural areas of the county, multiple land use preservation programs are used to protect agricultural and environmental resources from succumbing to new growth. The dual benefit of supporting our agricultural industry and reducing the amount of new development that would need additional infrastructure bolsters the tenets of Smart Growth planning; to condense development to areas where growth can be supported by existing infrastructure. Therefore, land use policy areas applied in rural areas of the County should continue to promote conservation and protection and deter significant advancement of new growth.

While the continued promotion of preservation is an important part of our land management policies, careful consideration of locations for easements needs to be addressed. Areas adjacent to designated growth areas would not be recommended as a tool to define the limits of development. History has proven that growth will continue to occur. With growth comes expansion of areas not previously developed. Restricting areas adjacent to existing growth areas could cause a 'leapfrog' effect of development pushing to areas that are beyond permanent easements and further away from services and infrastructure.

## State Smart Growth Policies

### Agricultural Preservation and Sustainable Growth Act of 2012: Growth Tier Map

In 2012, the State of Maryland adopted the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act (the "Act") to limit creation of new residential subdivisions served by on-site sewage disposal systems. The Act, also known as the "Septic Tiers Law," was adopted to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency limits on Chesapeake Bay nutrient and sediment pollution. The Act establishes four tiers to identify the type and intensity of residential subdivision that may occur (minor or major) and the type of sewage disposal system to serve them.

<b>TIER I</b>	Areas already served by public sewerage systems and mapped as a locally designated growth area or in a municipality that is a Priority Funding Area served by public sewerage systems. In Tier I, a residential subdivision plat may not be approved unless all lots are to be served by public sewer.
<b>TIER II</b>	Areas proposed to be served by public sewerage systems or mapped within locally designated growth areas.
<b>TIER III</b>	Areas planned and zoned for large lot or rural development. These areas are not planned for sewerage service and are not dominated by agricultural or forest land. They are also not planned or zoned for land, agricultural, or resource protection, preservation, or conservation.
<b>TIER IV</b>	Areas not planned for sewerage service but are planned or zoned for land, agricultural, or resource protection, preservation or conservation; areas dominated by agricultural lands, forest lands or other natural areas; Rural Legacy Areas, Priority Preservation Areas or areas subject to covenants, restrictions, conditions or conservation easements for the benefit of, or held by, a State agency or local jurisdiction for the purpose of conserving natural resources or agricultural land.

Between 2012 and 2013, the County drafted several versions of a Tiers map that were reviewed by MDP. After failing to find a compromise acceptable by both the State and the County, efforts to develop a Tiers map were abandoned by the County. In accordance with the Act and the County's failure to adopt an approved Tiers map, the State has deemed all development in areas without access to public water and sewerage facilities as tier 4 areas thereby limiting development to minor subdivisions only. It is recommended that the County again pursue analysis and adoption of a septic tiers map to allow for more flexibility in housing options.

## Growth Projections and Scenarios

### Projected Growth Trends

To analyze projected growth trends, data from the 2020 census was used as a base year starting point. While newer census data in the form of estimates is currently available, the margin of error for the data is significantly higher than that of a decennial census. In addition, census estimates through 2023 show a less than 0.07% increase between 2020 and 2023. For these reasons, it was decided to use the more accurate 2020 census data.

After significant levels of growth in the middle part of the last century, Washington County's population growth has leveled out to a more modest growth rate just under 1% per year for the last several decades. According to the Maryland Department of Planning, Washington County is projected to increase by another 24,745 people (or 16%) between 2020 and 2040. Historically, state projections for Washington County have been slightly lower than those compiled by the local Planning Department. As shown below, the County is projecting an increase of about 30,800 people (or 19.9%) over the next 20 years. These projections are based upon long-term historic trends and evaluation of variables such as birth and death rates, migration patterns and the influence of group quarters. The methodology for this analysis is included in the Appendix for this Plan.

Table 14-3: Population Projections

Population Projections for Washington County (2020-2040)					
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Washington County	154,705	160,197	165,884	175,422	185,509
MDP	154,705	157,440	164,900	172,600	179,540

To understand the land use impacts of population growth, this data is extrapolated into household data so that the amount of land needed for residential use can be readily calculated. Similar to the population data, the County has slightly higher projections than the State for household projections.

Table 14-4: Household Projections

Household Projections for Washington County (2020-2040)					
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Washington County	58,640	60,726	62,833	66,472	70,322
MDP	58,640	59,500	62,275	65,200	67,675

### Growth Scenarios

For the purpose of projecting population and household growth in the County over the next 20 years, two different scenarios are being evaluated. One projection is considered a moderate growth scenario to represent historic growth trends in the County while the other is a high growth scenario to represent a quicker pace of development.

### Moderate Growth Scenario

The Moderate Growth Scenario assumes that population and household growth will follow historic trends in population and group quarters. Long term historic growth trends have shown that the County has typically grown at a rate near 1% per year. Prior to 2020, effects of the economic recession caused unusually low rates of growth and the County slightly adjusted estimates to account for this anomaly. This adjustment estimated that the impacts of the recession slowed growth to approximately 0.88% per year through 2020. After 2020, the County is predicting a return to historic average gains. As shown in Table 14-5, the County is projecting approximately 11,680 new households between 2020 and 2040. Using the County's growth ratio goals with regard to urban vs. rural development (85% urban, 15% rural), that would mean that the County would expect about 9,340 new households in the urbanized areas.

Table 14-5: Moderate Growth Scenario

Year	Number of Households County Projection	Population County Projection
2020	58,640	154,705
2025	60,726	160,197
2030	62,833	165,884
2035	66,472	175,422
2040	70,322	185,509

### High Growth Scenario

While the County feels confident that the moderate growth scenario will likely be how future growth occurs, it is also important to plan for unforeseeable variables that could cause faster growth in the County as was the case in the early 2000s. The high growth scenario assumes growth occurring about 50% above the moderate growth scenario. As shown in Table 14-6, if the high growth scenario would occur, it would add approximately 26,200 new households between 2020 and 2040. Using the County's growth ratio goals with regard to urban vs. rural development (80% urban, 20% rural) that would mean that we would expect about 20,960 new households in the urbanized areas.

Table 14-6: High Growth Scenario

Year	Number of Households County Projection	Population County Projection
2020	58,640	154,705
2025	60,744	162,943
2030	64,957	171,619
2035	70,601	171,619
2040	76,735	202,500

## Residential Development Capacity Analysis

A residential development capacity analysis is intended to estimate the potential amount of new residential units that may be built in a defined area. These estimates are based on a set of assumptions related to local land use policies such as average unit yields, infrastructure requirements and environmental constraints.

An analysis was completed for both the currently assigned land use categories and for proposed land use categories discussed under the Future Land Use Plan. It should be noted that the land use categories assigned under the future land use plan went through multiple iterations and refinement to determine the appropriate recommended changes to meet the needs and goals of our community. Recommended categories and proposed densities are discussed later in the chapter.

Capacities have been calculated based on Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT) data and average residential densities of land use categories for both our current 2002 Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the 2024 Land Use Plan proposed as part of this document. The analysis was completed for three (3) distinctly defined areas of the county that reflect our broad goals of directing growth to urbanized centers, protection of resources, and preservation of our rural heritage. These areas are defined as urban areas, rural areas, and the special economic district associated with the former Fort Ritchie army base. A detailed description of this methodology is contained in the Growth Management and Land Use Appendix.

### Urbanized Areas

The development capacity analysis for urbanized areas within the County are limited to the boundaries of each defined growth area. The first step in this analysis is to remove any land that is associated with government ownership, or which is protected/restricted through a permanent easement that disallows development. A vacant land analysis is then completed to determine the area available for new development by excluding existing development. "Existing development" for the purpose of this analysis, is defined as only calculating yield on parcels that:

1. Have existing improvements valued over \$20,000 per state tax assessment records; and
2. Are of a size that could be further subdivided.

This analysis was conducted for both the current adopted land use plan as well as the proposed 2024 land use plan to determine the affect of changing growth area boundaries and land use categories. Further discussion of changes to growth area boundaries and land use categories are included later in the chapter. A comparison of these analyses is shown in Tables 14-7 And Table 14-8.

Table 14-7: Residential Capacity of Current 2002 Land Use Plan by Growth Area

Estimated Residential Capacity by Growth Area - Current 2002 Land Use Plan						
Growth Area	Low Density		Medium/High Density		Total	
	Vacant Land (Acres)	Yield (in units)	Vacant Land (Acres)	Yield (In units)	Vacant Land (Acres)	Yield (in units)
Urban (Hagerstown, Funkstown & Williamsport)	5,018	13,355	403	1,816	5,421	15,171
Boonsboro	414	1,195	0	0	414	1,196
Clear Spring	88	242	0	0	88	242
Hancock	278	719	0	0	278	719
Smithsburg	631	1,782	0	0	631	1,782
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6,429</b>	<b>17,292</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>1,816</b>	<b>6,832</b>	<b>19,108</b>

Table 14-8: Residential Capacity of Proposed 2024 Land Use Plan by Growth Area

Estimated Residential Capacity by Growth Area - Current 2002 Land Use Plan								
Growth Area	Low Density		Medium Density		High Density		Total	
	Vacant & Underutilized Land (in acres)	Yield (in units)	Vacant & Underutilized Land (in acres)	Yield (In units)	Vacant & Underutilized Land (in acres)	Yield (in units)	Vacant & Underutilized Land (in acres)	Yield (in units)
Urban (Hagerstown, Funkstown & Williamsport)	1,796	7,860	1,132	7,032	259	2,278	3,187	17,169
Boonsboro	180	825	0	0	0	0	180	825
Clear Spring	88	403	0	0	0	0	88	403
Hancock	258	1,118	0	0	0	0	258	1,118
Smithsburg	603	2,838	20	131	0	0	623	2,969
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,925</b>	<b>13,043</b>	<b>1,152</b>	<b>7,136</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>2,278</b>	<b>4,336</b>	<b>22,483</b>

## Rural Areas

The development capacity analysis of the rural areas of the county uses the same methodology that is used for the urbanized areas. Currently, there are five land use categories that cover the rural areas of the County: Agricultural, Rural (AR), Environmental Conservation (EC), Preservation (P), Rural Village (RV) and Special Economic Development (SED). Three of the districts (AR, EC, & P) have regulations that limit residential development to a unit per number of acres in the parent parcel ratio but also permit the use of exemption lots to allow large landowners the opportunity to subdivide up to three (3) lots before zoning density is implemented. The RV and SED districts residential densities are similar to the urbanized residential districts in that density is based on the minimum lot size. It should be noted that the proposed land use plan seeks to remove Preservation as a land use category and change the density requirement of the Agriculture Rural category. Further explanation will be given in later text. Table 14-9 And 14-10 Show the comparison of current vs. Future residential yields.



Table 14-9: Residential Capacity Analysis - Rural Areas - Current 2002 Land Use Plan

<b>Estimated Residential Capacity by Land Use - Current 2002 Plan</b>		
	<b>Vacant/ Underutilized Acres</b>	<b>Yield (In units)*</b>
Agricultural Rural	49,661	12,446
Environmental Conservation	53,464	4,986
Preservation	10,703	1,113
Rural Village	1,205	462
SED	531	500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>115,564</b>	<b>19,507</b>

\*Yield (in units) for Agricultural Rural, Environmental Conservation and Preservation include an estimated calculation for exemption lots. See Land Use Appendix for methodology.

Table 14-10: Residential Capacity Analysis - Rural Areas -Proposed 2024 Land Use Plan

<b>Estimated Residential Capacity by Land Use - Proposed 2024 Plan</b>		
	<b>Vacant/ Underutilized Acres</b>	<b>Yield (In units)*</b>
Agricultural Rural	61,698	10,212
Environmental Conservation	55,279	5,336
Rural Village	1,269	489
SED	531	500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>118,777</b>	<b>16,537</b>

\*Yield (in units) for Agricultural Rural, Environmental Conservation include an estimated calculation for exemption lots. See Land Use Appendix for methodology.

## Special Economic Development District (SED)

As part of the 1998 Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC), the US Army base known as Ft. Ritchie located in Cascade was closed and handed over to civilian authority. The Fort has been through many iterations of development plans for the last 25 years; however, in August 2021, it was officially transferred to a private civilian entity. The current property owner has created an overall master plan that includes renovation and rehabilitation of the numerous structures remaining on the property as well as plans to establish new residential and commercial uses.

From a residential perspective, the new owners of the property have already rehabilitated existing housing units and are actively renting them. New sections of residential units have been proposed in concept but are awaiting necessary infrastructure upgrades to begin formal planning. Preliminary estimates made as part of the overall concept delineate up to 500 new units that would be generated on the property. Zoning allows for residential uses that range from single family dwellings up to, and including, multi-family units. These estimated units are included in the estimated rural area residential capacity in Tables 14-9 And 14-10 above.

## Conclusions of Development Capacity Analysis

### Urbanized Areas

Analysis of the Urban and Town Growth Area residential development capacity for the 2002 Land Use Plan shows an overwhelming abundance of potential development in comparison to historic growth rates for the County. This proliferation of capacity is beginning to cause issues with “leapfrogging” within the Urban Growth Areas, especially where land closer to municipal limits is being overlooked to seek properties that may be easier with respect to regulatory processes to develop. To help reverse the progress of this issue, there is a proposed reduction of all but one of the defined growth areas in the county.

The largest reduction in growth area size in terms of area is the Urban Growth Area. The future land use plan proposes to reduce the UGA by nearly 3,500 acres. Several other growth areas are also proposed for reduction but to a lesser extent than that of the UGA. A comparison of land within existing vs. proposed growth areas is shown in Table 14-11. While there is a modest percentage of change between existing and proposed growth areas, the overall percentage of land within growth areas vs. rural areas has not significantly changed.

Table 14-11: Comparison of Existing vs. Proposed Growth Areas

Growth Area	Current 2002 Land Use Plan	Proposed 2024 Land Use Plan	Change (in acres)	% Change
Urban (Hagerstown, Funkstown & Williamsport)	38,627	35,178	-3449	-8.93%
Boonsboro	2,603	2,305	-253	-9.72%
Clear Spring	455	455	0	0.00%
Hancock	2,513	2,428	-85	-3.38%
Smithsburg	2,244	2,217	-27	-1.20%

### Rural Areas

With regard to the rural areas of the County, significant changes were made as part of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan update that included a plan to downzone nearly all of the rural areas of the County. The purpose of those changes was to reduce sprawl into areas of the county that do not have adequate infrastructure in place to serve large areas of development. It is the intent of this plan to maintain this approach with some modifications.

Feedback provided during the first draft comment period noted that the labeling of a Preservation land use category depicted a misconception about land preservation efforts of the county. This designation gave the impression that those were the only areas where the county was focusing its land preservation efforts. It was also mentioned that using the defined rural legacy area as the boundaries of the policy area, we were assigning a regulatory directive to a voluntary program. Further, similar limitations were not applied to other areas, such as priority preservation areas, that are targeted by the county for preservation efforts.

After further review and analysis, staff and planning commission members agreed that the policy area created confusion but also raised concern that the development capacity of the rural area would significantly increase with the removal of our most restrictive residential density limitations (one dwelling unit per 30 acres). As a way to mitigate these conflicting views, it is proposed that the preservation land use policy area be removed and that the Agricultural Rural and Environmental Conservation land use policy areas be used to replace it. Furthermore, to address the issue of increased density, it is recommended that the Agricultural Rural policy area increase its residential density from one dwelling unit per 5 acres to 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres. This recommendation has been included within the development capacity analysis included previously in this chapter. These changes would result in a near even capacity between existing and proposed plans.

## Future Land Use Plan

### Development Capacity Analysis

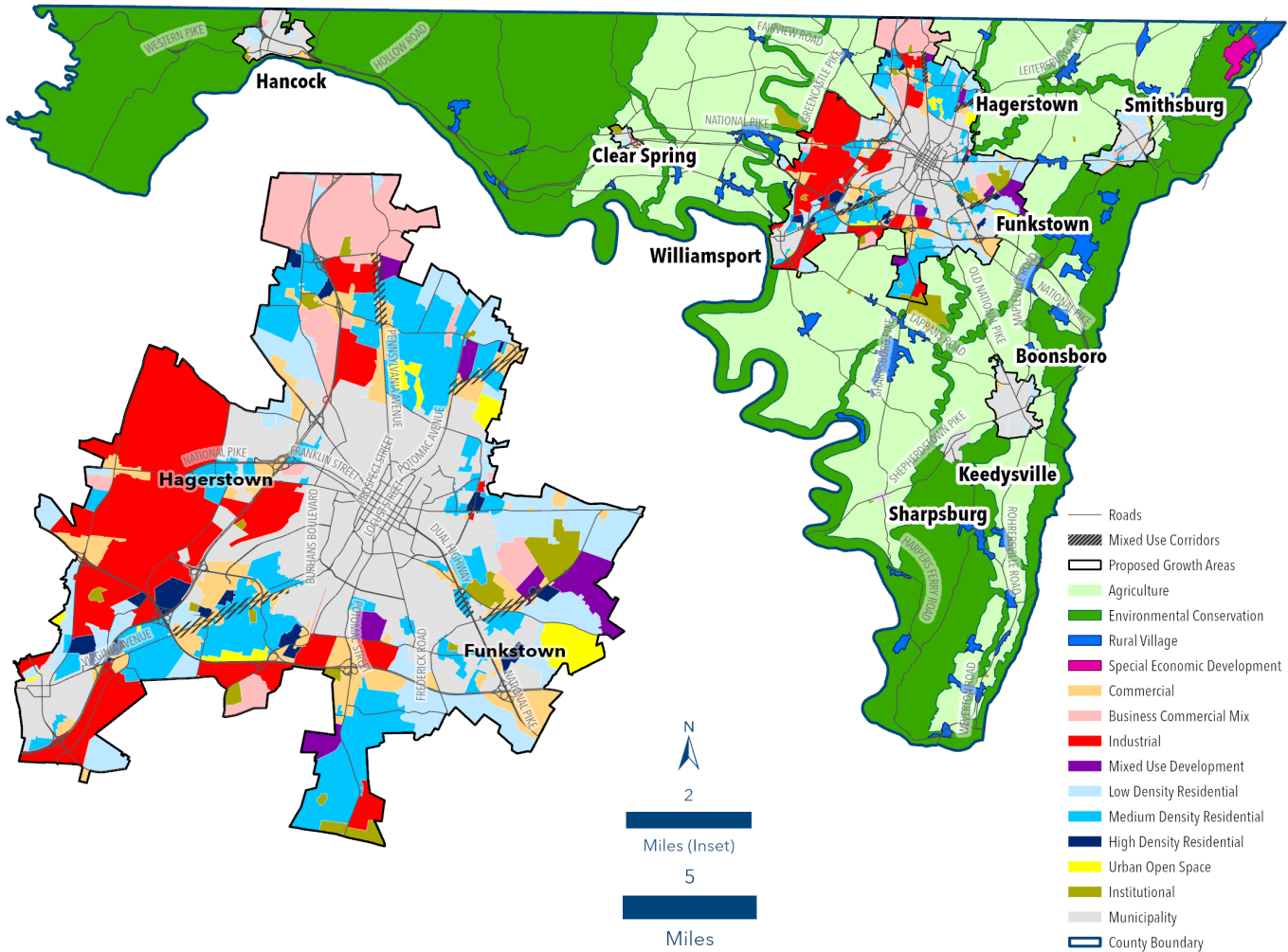
As part of the planning process and development of the Plan, discussion revolved primarily around the concept of how much growth the County both wanted and could support. These are important questions when trying to evaluate short-term development impacts that have long-term consequences such as planning for infrastructure and utilities as well as impacts on environmental resources. It is also important to recognize that some policies need to be put in place during the life of this Plan even though the facilities may not be needed until after 2040.

The future land use map has several purposes:

- It is a policy map that provides the basis for a more refined classification of land into zoning districts that regulate the use and development of land.
- It serves as a guide to the County's future desires and interests for land development, preservation and conservation.
- It serves as a guide to decision makers regarding public facilities—primarily water and sewer—as well as schools, economic development, transportation, and parks.

Efforts to develop this plan included the collaboration of Staff, Planning Commission members, and the Board of County Commissioners. The process involved review of existing land use and zoning maps, calculating potential and needed capacity, and determining impacts of development on future infrastructure and utilities such as roads, schools, water and sewer. Results of these discussions and analyses can be found in the various chapters of the Plan including the Transportation, Community Facilities, and Water Resources Elements. The result of this work is the proposed Land Use Plan shown on the following page.

Map 14-5: Future Land Use



In developing the Land Use Plan to meet goals of the overall Comprehensive Plan, there were two significant components that were evaluated -- growth area boundaries and land use policy areas.

## Growth Areas

As stated previously in this chapter growth areas have long been a growth management tool of the County to define areas to encourage growth. Over time these boundaries have been refined as data collection and analysis provide more accurate assessments of growth and its impacts. In analyzing the growth area boundaries as part of this Plan one of the primary influences in the proposed changes were related to legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly related to new elements required to be included in municipal and/or county Comprehensive Plan.

House Bill 1141 (2006) set forth regulations that required additional mandatory elements to be included in Comprehensive Plans statewide. The first mandatory element that was included in the legislation requires municipalities to include a Municipal Growth Element (MGE) into their Plans. The element requires that municipalities delineate areas for future growth that identify their need for land and infrastructure based on projected growth patterns.

The other element mandated by the legislation requires both counties and municipalities to include a Water Resources Element (WRE) into their respective Plans. The purpose of the WRE is to assess water resources as it relates to quantity and quality.

In response to this legislation, most municipalities updated their Plans to include a MGE and WRE and the county updated their Plan to include a WRE. While most of the municipalities that included these elements found their growth areas to be reasonably sufficient to handle their projected growth, the City of Hagerstown found significant deficiencies. Their analysis showed that the designated Urban Growth Area boundary was too large and there was not sufficient capacity within the water plant to service the entire area.

Known as the Medium Range Growth Area boundary (MRGA), the City has restricted access to the public water supply to only those areas within their MRGA based upon analysis required by the state in their Municipal Growth Element and contained within their Comprehensive Plan. Because the City of Hagerstown is the sole provider of public water within the primary urbanized area of the county, this creates a potentially competitive situation between the two jurisdictions related to new growth opportunities.

As a result of the city reducing their growth area based on the analysis in their municipal growth element, the County has been forced to, as part of this Plan, reevaluate and amend the size of the UGA by retracting a significant amount of delineated residential land use areas and some commercial and employment areas. Map 14-6 Shows the changes between the existing and proposed growth area boundaries. A comparison of the growth areas are shown in Table 14-12.

Map 14-6: Growth Area Changes for Future Land Use Plan

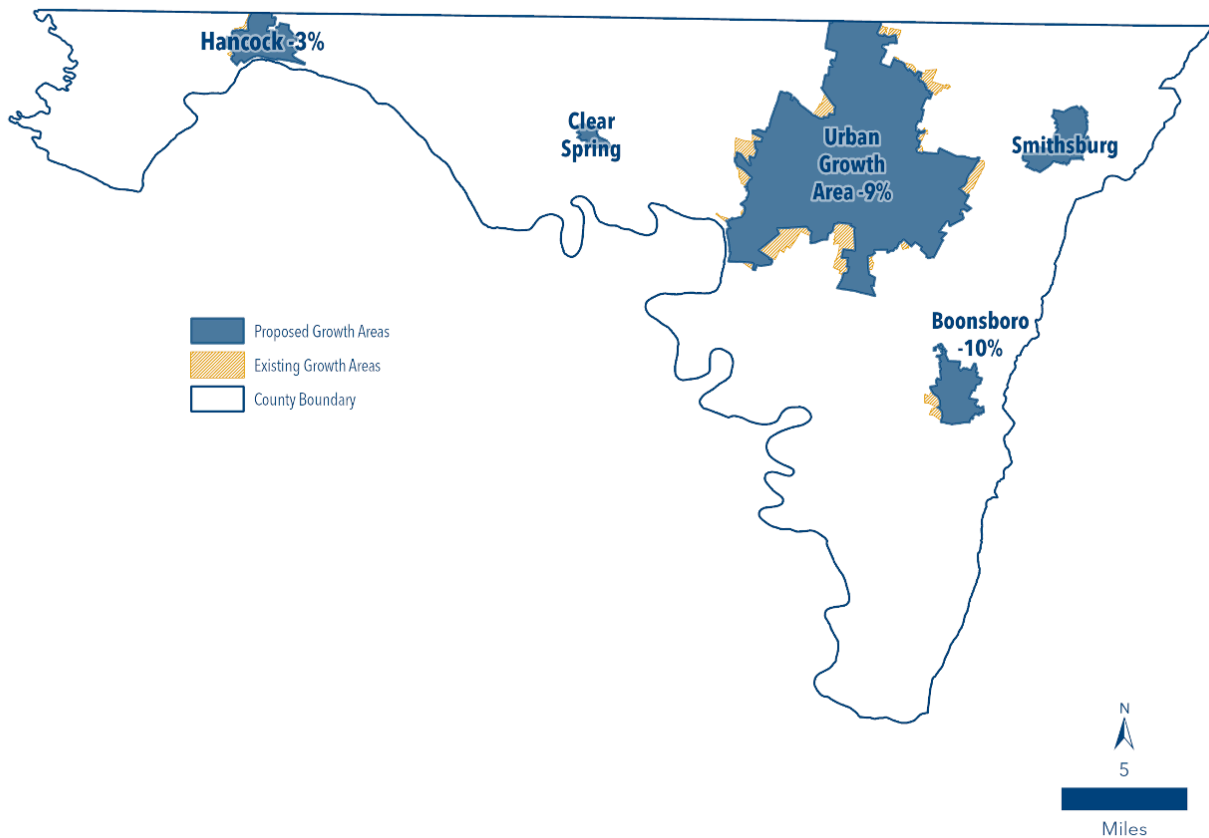


Table 14-12: Comparison of Land in Growth Areas between Existing and Future Land Use Plans

Growth Area	2002 Land Use Plan	2024 Land Use Plan	Change (ac)	% Change
Urban (Hagerstown, Funkstown & Williamsport)	38,627	35,178	-3449	-8.93%
Boonsboro	2,603	2,305	-253	-9.72%
Clear Spring	455	455	0	0.00%
Hancock	2,513	2,428	-85	-3.38%
Smithsburg	2,244	2,217	-27	-1.20%

Even with the reduction of the UGA, the projected demand for new residential growth can be accommodated with the amount of land remaining in the Urban and Town Growth Areas. However, the demand for public water from both residential and non-residential uses could exceed capacity and treatment capabilities at some facilities within the life of this Plan (see Water and Sewer Plan). It is imperative that alternative solutions to increasing capacity of public water supply be evaluated and planned sooner rather than later.

## Land Use Policy Areas and Descriptions

Land use policy areas designated zones that generally guide the development and management of land within a community. By establishing these policy areas, the plan aims to balance growth, preserve natural resources, and enhance community character. The policies also address issues such as infrastructure development, environmental protection, and public services, ensuring that land use aligns with the community's long-term vision and goals. Through careful planning, these areas help foster sustainable development and improve the overall quality of life for residents.

This plan organizes policy areas into urban vs. rural categories. This division further emphasizes Plan goals directing growth toward existing population centers and away from resource protection areas. The Future Land Use Map does not apply to the County's nine (9) incorporated municipalities. Those jurisdictions have their own planning authority and adopt their own comprehensive plans and land use regulations. However, the county has coordinated the development of this Plan with the municipalities to create consistency among plans to the degree possible.

A comparison of changes to policy areas between the current 2002 land use plan and proposed 2024 land use plan are shown in Table 14-13. Changes to commercial, industrial and industrial flex properties have not significantly changed as a whole. The shift in individual policy areas reflect the county's desire to attract more industrial type industries to the area. As noted previously in the element, a significant decrease has been made in the residential policy areas as a result of reducing the growth area. The reduction has now shifted more acres into the rural policy areas. No other significant changes exist between the two plans.

Table 14-13: Area per Land Use Policy

Land Use Policy Area	Existing 2002 Plan (acres)	Proposed 2024 Plan (acres)
Industrial	2,630	6,806
Industrial Flex [Business Commercial Mix]	7,793	3,017
Commercial	2,501	3,415
Mixed Use Developments	606	918
High Density Residential	1,192	626
Medium Density Residential		5,883
Low Density Residential	15,824	6,052
Community Facilities [Institutional]	1,578	2,155
Urban Open Space	949	754
Special Economic Development	618	618
Rural Village	8,032	8,197
Preservation	68,269	
Environmental Conservation [Resource Conservation]	90,964	132,937
Agriculture	83,716	113,185

## Urban Policy Areas

### Business Commercial Mix

This policy area, scattered around the Urban Growth Area, is intended to provide potential areas for mixed employment and commercial uses. They include suitable locations for uses that facilitate access by a large number of employees and the receipt or shipment of goods by highway vehicles. Existing and anticipated land uses associated with this policy area include light industrial, office parks, research and development facilities, communication and technology facilities, and minor commercial uses that support employment centers. Zoning districts could include HI, ORT, ERT, and AP.

### Commercial

Commercial policy areas are located primarily along significant transportation corridors such as the Interstates and State highways. Uses should be generally associated with retail sales and services for local and/or regional consumers. Opportunities should also be sought in this district to allow for mixed use buildings with residential uses. By offering opportunities for mixed use, retail income in mixed use buildings could help offset the need for higher residential income and provide options for more affordable housing.

In order to narrow the focus of this district, it is recommended that the HI zoning district be re-evaluated to shift industrial type uses from the zoning category into more appropriate industrial districts. These policy areas should be devoted to the needs and demands of the travelling public. Zoning districts could include BL, BG, and HI.

## Industrial

Industrial land uses are located primarily along the western side of the UGA due to its proximity to Interstate 81. As noted in the Transportation Element, freight movement has increased dramatically on I-81 and is projected to increase over the life of this Plan. Most of the designated industrial parks are included in these policy areas and expected uses will primarily focus on manufacturing, processing, and freight movement land uses. Zoning districts that will be associated with these areas include PI, IR, IG, HI and ORI.

## Institutional

This land use category is intended to recognize land uses that serve the community's educational, social, healthcare, and public safety needs. They include uses such as schools, hospitals, correctional facilities, public safety facilities, and the sanitary landfill. They are typically governmentally or quasi-governmentally owned or managed facilities.

## Residential

The current 2002 Land Use Plan for the county delineates two different residential land use areas labeled as Low Density and High Density. As part of this update, the county is proposing to add a third residential classification of Medium Density Residential. In addition to adding this new category, this Plan recommends increasing density within the residential areas to accommodate more diverse and affordable housing options. As part of the deliberations on where to apply the various density areas, municipal comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances were reviewed to provide as much compatibility as possible along adjacent boundaries. Proximity of land to each urban core was also considered as recommended by Smart Growth tenets.

### **Low Density Residential**

Low Density Residential areas are generally associated with traditional low-density subdivision developments. Vacant lands classified as low density residential are located along the edges of the designated growth areas to provide transitional areas between urban and rural residential densities. These areas may be served by public water and sewer systems or by individual septic systems and private wells. Proposed residential densities within these areas are recommended to achieve 4 to 6 units per acre and allow for uses that include single-family & two-family residences, triplexes and quadplexes. Zoning districts likely to be associated with these areas are Residential, Transition and Residential, Suburban.

### **Medium Density Residential**

Medium Density Residential areas are primarily associated with existing developments that have a slightly higher average density than low density areas. Vacant lands classified as medium density residential are located near or between existing medium and high density developments and where lands are either currently served or will be served with public water and/or sewer facilities in the near future. Proposed residential densities within these areas are recommended to achieve 6 to 8 units per acres and allow for residential uses that include single-family & two-family residences, triplexes, quadplexes, and townhouses. Zoning districts likely to be associated with these areas are Residential, Suburban and Residential, Urban.



### **High Density Residential**

High Density Residential areas are located in close proximity to existing urban cores. They consist of areas where high density development exists or logical extension to adjacent vacant lands would be logical. Lands with this designation shall be served by public water and sewer facilities or are within immediate proximity of existing service where extension is imminent. The intent of this area is to provide locations for more diverse and affordable housing options and are recommended to achieve residential densities of 8 or more units per acre. Due to the compact nature of this type of development, additional design requirements should be incorporated in new designs that promote sustainability, walkability, and appropriate amenities. Residential uses associated with this area include single-family & two-family residences, triplexes, quadplexes, townhouses, and multi-family structures. The zoning district likely to be associated with this area would be Residential, Multi-family.

### **Mixed Use Development**

This policy area is associated with previously approved Planned Unit Developments (PUD) or Mixed-Use Developments (MUD). The County no longer accepts applications for PUD floating zones. Instead, the county provides the opportunity for establishing MUD floating zones. The MUD zones allow for more flexible and creative mixtures of residential, commercial, and employment type uses. These areas are delineated as floating zone districts and require public input prior to establishment.

The purpose of both PUD and MUD mixed use areas are to promote a more comprehensive and harmonious development that promotes sustainable, walkable, and integrated design. Ideal locations for these types of development would be in areas where services such as public transit would be readily available. They would mimic the traits of high-density residential areas as far as public water and sewer service, recommended minimum residential density, and housing types.

### **Urban Open Space**

Urban open space is typically defined as areas reserved for parks and other “green spaces” that are accessible to the public. These areas consist of regional parks located within designated growth areas.

### **Mixed Use Corridors**

Mixed use corridors are specifically designated along US Route 11, MD Route 62, US Route 40, Robinwood Drive and the intersection of MD Route 64 and Eastern Boulevard as anticipated areas of long-term transition. These corridors have been, and continue to be, influenced by development and economic factors such as transportation, proximity to employment, market fluctuations, and proximity to infrastructure. As a result, these corridors have experienced a high level of transition from generally residential uses to commercial and mixed uses.

These corridors are established as being 1,000 feet wide (500 ft from centerline on either side of the road or intersection radius). Defining these corridors reflects an acknowledgement of transitional areas that will likely continue to shift to more commercial uses while also anticipating that existing residential uses will likely still exist over the life of this Plan.

Underlying land use categories will reflect the existing conditions of land use that exist currently. However, the Overlay provides a slightly more streamlined opportunity for mixed uses or adaptive reuse. These corridors are intended to support alternative housing options in accordance with the Housing Element. By offering opportunities for mixed use, retail income in mixed use buildings could help offset the need for higher residential income. These corridors are highly specific and should not be applied without careful examination of influencing factors.

## Rural Policy Areas

The “Rural Area” of Washington County is characterized by farms, forests, historical sites, villages and scattered residential development. It is also the primary location for the mineral resource, agricultural and tourism industries in the County. The challenge of the Land Use Plan dealing with the Rural Area, is to preserve the rural character through policies that will not promote significant development but will maintain a productive environment for the existing industries located there.

With the previous adoption of growth areas and the continuation of that policy in this document, the growth management provision of limiting the expansion of public facilities in order to direct growth to areas where public facilities exist is well established. In particular, the principal of not encouraging growth in the rural area through the extension of public water and sewer facilities is a fundamental tenet in the development policy for the rural section of the County. Without the necessary infrastructure in the rural areas to support increased development, residential development at densities that may require public facilities to address health and safety issues, should be limited. Avoidance of taxpayer provision of public facilities to address health and safety issues is a priority.

Currently, the three (3) primary zoning districts (Agricultural Rural, Environmental Conservation, and Preservation) associated with the rural area strictly limits new residential development to densities of one dwelling unit per 5, 20, or 30 acres respectively. There are also provisions in the Zoning Ordinance for “exemption lots” for these districts. The purpose of the exemption lot provision is to provide a transitional period whereby property owners of smaller lots that would lose all development rights could still have a few rights for estate or financial planning purposes.

### Agriculture

This policy area is primarily associated with sections of the County in the Great Hagerstown Valley. It extends from the foot of Fairview Mountain, around most of the Urban Growth Area, and east to the foot of South Mountain. This area also extends to the southern portions of the County from Boonsboro through Pleasant Valley. The Agricultural policy area has been purposely drawn to enclose large blocks of the best soils for intensive agricultural production as well as gently rolling topography for farming. Most of the operating farms as well as the largest blocks of farmland preserved through land preservation programs are in this area.

It is anticipated that the existing Agriculture Rural zoning district will be amended to coincide with the Agriculture policy area. It is recommended that residential density within this policy area and coinciding zoning would be set at one dwelling unit per 10 acres.

### Environmental Conservation

This policy area is associated with locations in the County where environmental sensitivity issues are prominent enough to warrant constraints on development. A weighted analysis was completed using County GIS to determine overlying areas of environmental concern. The methodology for the analysis is included in the Appendix for this element. The Environmental Conservation Policy area has been applied to areas of the County that contain multiple sensitive areas including steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, streams, habitats of threatened and endangered species, forested areas, and wellhead protection areas.

This policy area covers the remainder of the rural areas of the County including areas west of Fairview Mountain, South Mountain, Red Hill, Elk Ridge and stream buffers of significant waterways in the County including Little Conococheague Creek, Conococheague Creek, Antietam Creek, Marsh Run, and Israel Creek. It is anticipated that the existing Environmental Conservation zoning district will be amended to coincide with the new Environmental Conservation policy area. It is recommended that residential density within this policy area and coinciding zoning district be set at one dwelling unit per 20 acres.

### Rural Village

The formal designation of "Rural Villages" is an outgrowth of Maryland's Smart Growth Act of 1997. By law, a designated Rural Village is considered a "Priority Funding Area" (PFA). Many such villages have existed in Washington County since colonial times while newer urban settlements at junctions in roads or along creeks and railroads have evolved in the recent past. Rural Villages are defined by something other than incorporation or governing structure.

They are definable on the landscape and contribute to the unique character of Washington County. They usually include a small core of a residential neighborhood associated with a retail establishment or an institution such as a post office, elementary school, church or fire station. Most are located in the rural areas some distance from other Towns or facilities. A few are close enough to an urban center to be associated with the Urban Growth Area or a Town Growth Area. Many have vacant lots that are suitable for infill development. No new Rural Villages are being recommended at this time.

Because Rural Villages are an integral part in defining the evolution of the County's growth, it is recommended that the Villages continue to be reviewed for their historical potential so that "historical sub-areas" may be further delineated within the boundary of the villages. The intent is to create historical sub-areas within the Rural Villages so that additional emphasis can be placed on design criteria thereby preserving the historical nature of the area in terms of scale and compatibility.

Development should be limited to infill development in accordance with the defined boundaries for the Rural Village. Therefore, major public investment by the County in public facilities and services to encourage substantial new development should not be made in Rural Villages. Instead, priority should be given to correcting existing public health and safety problems that result from failing septic systems or contaminated wells.

### Special Economic Development

This policy area is in Cascade in the northeastern corner of the County and encompasses properties formerly part of the Fort Ritchie military base. The area contains a mixture of housing and supporting commercial uses utilizing the existing built environment of the former base as well as reuse plans. The policy area should be devoted to the continuation of the mixed-use development in the existing built environment as well as the redevelopment plans for the properties. The Special Economic Development zoning designation associated with this land use should continue in order to facilitate the redevelopment of the properties. Revisions to the zoning classification to align with future reuse plans may be required in the future.

## Rural Commercial

Numerous commercial uses exist in scattered locations along roadways and, in many cases, in locations that have been commercial for decades. These uses are currently zoned as Rural Business Floating Zone and are largely owned and managed by local businesspeople who provide valuable services to the community. At the same time, many of these sites have substantial redevelopment and expansion potential, which can attract commercial uses away from the town and urban centers.

While there is no specific land use category established on the Land Use Map, it is recommended that few businesses be allowed by right in the rural policy area and that those principal uses be associated with or support the agricultural industry. Non-agricultural commercial uses in the rural areas should be limited to uses that serve the needs of the rural residential population, provide for recreation and tourism opportunities, and that support, complement, and promote the farming, forestry, and heritage tourism industries. These types of uses should require implementation of a Rural Business Overlay as directed in the Zoning Ordinance. In addition, commercial uses in the rural areas should be strictly limited to help avoid drawing traffic onto rural roads and creating conflicts with existing residential communities

## Overlay Policy Areas

### Airport Overlay Area

The Airport Overlay Area is located within the immediate vicinity of the Hagerstown Regional Airport. It corresponds to the flight lines airplanes use when circling the runway to align their approach. The policy area includes land within and outside of the Urban Growth Area.

As part of the last comprehensive plan, recommendations were made to significantly reduce residential development encroachment upon the airport area. These recommendations include reduction of new residential subdivision in the areas of the overlay that are outside of the UGA to one dwelling unit per fifty acres. Also, high density developments such as Planned Unit Developments and Mixed-Use Developments were recommended to be prohibited within the overlay area. These recommendations were amended into the zoning ordinance shortly after adoption of the last comprehensive plan.

To further protect the future development and expansion of airport services it would also be pertinent to prohibit land preservation easements within the overlay area. While it may seem counter intuitive to not promote protection of land, and thereby limit residential development, permanent easements will thwart future efforts to expand airport operations. Effectively, the airport could be boxed out of further opportunities for expansion.



## LAND USE & GROWTH RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ Analyze and develop a septic tiers map for the County to take advantage of opportunities for additional housing resources.
- ★ Complete a comprehensive rezoning of the areas affected by Growth Area amendments recommended in this chapter.
- ★ Update and revise the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance regulations to incorporate appropriate zoning districts and development standards recommended in this chapter.
  - Minimum lot sizes should promote densities that meet PFA standards of at least 3.5 dwelling units per acre.
  - Assign residential uses to districts based on the descriptions of the land use map and allow more intense uses as properties get closer to core sections of designated growth areas.
  - Update the overall Zoning Ordinance to reflect new uses and trends that have occurred within the 50 years since the Ordinance was first adopted.
  - Review and update definitions of rural business zoning to incorporate an emphasis on retaining scale and compatibility with surrounding properties.
  - Review and potentially reduce the number of commercial land uses permitted by right in the Rural Business floating zone to ensure they are meeting the intended purpose of the district. Particular emphasis should be put on intensity of use, appearance in context of the rural area, and potential design standards.
  - Remove the Preservation zoning district and replace with Agriculture Rural and Environmental conservation districts that correlate to the adopted land use plan, under the condition that the residential density of land zoned Agriculture Rural decrease from 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres, to 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres
  - Incorporate language into urban zoning districts to implement the mixed-use corridor policy area.
  - Add language to the airport overlay district that prohibits the establishment of permanent land preservation easements in the established overlay.
- ★ Work with the municipalities to incorporate ways to achieve the County's goal to pursue policies that facilitate development in appropriate areas, including the designated growth areas, when updating the community comprehensive plans..
- ★ Coordinate with the municipalities to plan for future annexation areas, and for compatible land uses along common boundaries.
- ★ Improve Community Design Standards
  - New Interior Streets – Continue to promote new street construction to provide access to the highway network instead of using existing high order highways in order to reduce potential points of conflict.
  - Landscaping – Criteria should be developed to promote both aesthetic and functional landscaping especially for non-residential uses.
  - Pedestrian systems – Continue to develop a comprehensive and cohesive pedestrian system in designated growth areas to promote connectivity and sustainable living environments.
  - Open space and community facilities – Develop criteria to require dedication of land for open space, parks, and/or community facilities necessary to provide service to a growing population.

- Parking – Evaluate parking regulations to determine if reductions can be made to large impervious surfaces. For example, review off street parking requirements for large non-residential uses such as shopping centers. Also develop new policies for on-street parking facilities.
  - Develop standards for infill development that account for context sensitive design such as lot size, lot width, and building setbacks.
  - Where feasible, county design standards should try to align with municipal design standards in areas where annexation is anticipated.
- ★ Continue to use the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance to manage the location and timing of new development and its effects on schools, roads, and other public facilities.