



# Cecil County Comprehensive Plan

Citizens Oversight Committee Recommended Plan  
October 2009





# Acknowledgements

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*Citizens' Oversight Committee members contributed countless hours to the Comprehensive Plan project. Their contributions to the Plan were significant and should be recognized.*

**County Commissioners Resolution**  
**Planning Commission Resolution**





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## Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning		
APFO	Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance	ESD	Environmentally Sensitive Design
ATK	Alliant Techsystems	GPD	Gallons per Day
BI	Business – Intensive zoning district	LPPRP	Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan
BAT	Best Available Technology	M1/M2	Light/Heavy Industrial zoning districts
BMPs	Best Management Practices		
BRAC	Base Reallocation and Closure	MALPF	Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation
BTRC	Business Training Resource Center	MDA	Maryland Department of Agriculture
CCDES	Cecil County Department of Emergency Services	MDE	Maryland Department of the Environment
CCEMS	Cecil County Emergency Medical Services	MDP	Maryland Department of Planning
CCPL	Cecil County Public Library	MGD	Millions of Gallons Per Day
CCPS	Cecil County Public Schools	MGE	Municipal Growth Element
C&D	Chesapeake and Delaware Canal	MGS	Maryland Geological Survey
COC	Citizen Oversight Committee	MHT	Maryland Historical Trust
COG	Council of Governments	MRA	Maryland Recycling Act
COMAR	Code of Maryland Regulations	MSBDC	Maryland Small Business Development Center Network
CSSC	Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor	NAR	Northern Agricultural Residential zoning district
DBED	Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development	NHA	National Heritage Areas
DNR	Maryland Department of Natural Resources	OS	Open Space zoning district
DPW	Cecil County Department of Public Works	OSDS	Onsite Sewage Disposal Systems
EDU	Equivalent Dwelling Unit	PDR	Purchase of Development Rights
EMS	Emergency Medical Services	PFA	Priority Funding Area
ENR	Enhanced Nutrient Removal	PPA	Priority Preservation Area
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan	PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	PUD	Planned Unit Development
		RLA	Rural Legacy Areas
		RTE	Rare, Threatened, and Endangered (species)

**DRAFT**

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SAR	Southern Agricultural Residential zoning district	TDR	Transfer of Development Rights
SBDC	Small Business Development Center	TIF	Tax Increment Financing
SCBA	Self Contained Breathing Apparatus	TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
SFLA	Strategic Forest Lands Assessment	TN	Total Nitrogen
SR	Suburban Residential zoning district	TP	Total Phosphorus
SRBC	Susquehanna River Basin Commission	USGS	US Geological Survey
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (programs)	WILMAPCO	Wilmington Area Planning Council
		WMA	Wildlife Management Area
		WRE	Water Resources Element
		WSSC	Wetlands of Special State Concern
		WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant

# 1 Introduction

This 2010 Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) serves as the policy guide and framework for future growth and development in Cecil County. The Plan examines land use, water resources (including drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater), transportation, public facilities (including police, emergency services, schools, parks, and libraries), economic development, housing, environmentally sensitive areas, mineral resources, and other natural resources.

The Plan's "horizon" is the year 2030, meaning that the Plan looks at growth and development out over the next 20 years. Amendments to the Plan can be made at any time. However, under state law, the County must review the Plan at least every six years. The next review should begin in 2016 and may result in adjustments or changes to the Plan.

This Comprehensive Plan replaces the current County Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 1990 and amended in 2006. Each chapter of the Plan contains goals and objectives, a review of background and trends, a discussion of issues, and recommended policies and actions.

## 1.1 Legal Requirements

This Plan has been prepared pursuant to State enabling legislation and the requirements for Maryland counties contained in Article 66-B of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Article 66-B has been amended several times in recent years to include new requirements for comprehensive plans, including a water resources element, a priority preservation area element and a workforce housing element. This Plan has been prepared to meet these requirements.

In 2009, as part of Smart, Green and Growing Legislation, the General Assembly replaced the State's eight planning visions with 12 new ones. These new visions are the State's land use policy, and local jurisdictions are required to incorporate the visions into their comprehensive plans and implement them through the zoning ordinance and other regulations:

1. Quality of Life and Sustainability: A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water and air, resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment;
2. Public Participation: Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to the 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 sensitive manner;
6. Transportation: A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, and efficient movement of people, goods and services within and between population and business centers;
7. Housing: A range of housing densities, types and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes;

8. Economic Development: Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities, are encouraged;
9. Environmental Protection: Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems and living resources;
10. Resource Conservation: Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved;
11. Stewardship: Government, business entities and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection; and
12. Implementation: Strategies, policies, programs and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state and interstate level to achieve these visions.

## 1.2 The Plan's Relationship with the Towns in Cecil County

Cecil County contains the incorporated towns of Cecilton, Charlestown, Chesapeake City, Elkton, North East, Perryville, Port Deposit and Rising Sun. Under state law, the towns have their own planning authority and adopt their own comprehensive plans. In that sense the County Plan does not apply to the towns. However, interjurisdictional coordination is important, and the County coordinated the development of the Plan with the towns, most of which have been updating their own comprehensive plans concurrent with the County Plan.

The 2006 amendments to Article 66-B require coordination between the County and the towns over the towns' municipal growth elements.

## 1.3 Plan Preparation

The Plan was prepared for the Cecil County Board of County Commissioners by the Cecil County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission was assisted by staff from the Cecil County Office of Planning and Zoning and several other County departments and agencies. The Maryland Departments of Planning (MDP), Transportation (MDOT), Natural Resources (DNR), and the Environment (MDE) each provided technical assistance and contributed data used in the Plan. Staff from the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) and the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland also contributed to the process.

To assist the Planning Commission, the Board of County Commissioners appointed a 41-member Citizens' Oversight Committee (COC), representing varied elements of the County's general population, to work with the Office of Planning and Zoning. The Board of County Commissioners charged the COC with the responsibilities to select a consulting firm to help develop and draft the Plan, provide ongoing feedback to staff and the consultant to ensure that the views and perspectives of Cecil County's citizens were represented in the Plan, and to submit a recommended plan to the Planning Commission. Individual COC members are listed on the inside cover of this document.



The COC was made up of 41 representatives.

Between December 2007 and October 2009, the COC met as a full committee and in seven subcommittees (Agriculture Preservation and Minerals, Economic Development, Housing, Land Use, Public Services, Infrastructure and Transportation, and Water Resources) at dozens of meetings, developing goals and objectives and contributing to, discussing and refining the Plan's policies and action items. The COC sponsored two forums early in the process to discuss regional and local issues with representatives of adjacent jurisdictions and the towns. The subcommittees gathered information and met with representatives of County, state and regional agencies to understand the planning issues facing the County. The COC also hosted a countywide public forum in July 2009 on a Concept Plan containing the Comprehensive Plan's major recommendations. In all, COC members contributed countless hours to the project. Their contributions to this Plan were significant and should be recognized.

Minutes of COC meetings and plan-related materials are included as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan.

#### **1.4 Note on Plan Content, Recommendations and Appendix**

The Comprehensive Plan contains goals, objectives, policies and action items that the County will consider as it works to implement the plan. In this context, these terms are defined as follows:

*Goals* define a set of broad desired outcomes that the County wants to achieve through this plan;

*Objectives* are more specific desired outcomes and/or ways to measure them;

*Policies* describe the County's position on planning issues. Policies help guide the County's decision makers on how to achieve the Plan's goals and objectives; and

*Action items* are the specific steps that should be undertaken to implement the goals, objectives, and policies.

Because the distinction between goals and objectives can be subtle, they have been combined in each plan chapter. Policies and actions also are combined.

The Comprehensive Plan is not law in the same sense, for example, as the zoning ordinance. The Comprehensive Plan is adopted by resolution and not by ordinance, and, as stated above, it is a policy *guide*. Nevertheless, the Plan does carry significant weight. The basic objective of the Zoning Ordinance, for example is to implement the Comprehensive Plan. A number of related plans and programs such as the Master Water and Sewer Plan, and the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

A large volume of data and information was used to prepare this Plan. To keep the Plan to a manageable length and size, the main text contains the key points, data, maps, figures, conclusions, policies and recommendations.

Supporting documents, reports, data and memoranda are in the appendix to this plan which is available in electronic format from the Cecil County Office of Planning and Zoning, which also has paper copies.