

## Chapter VI - Summary: Synthesis of Three Elements

The goals and objectives of County programs closely resemble those of the State for all three elements. The County has – through revisions to its Master Plan, comprehensive plans, zoning, and development regulations – affirmed its commitment to implementing the 1992 Planning Act, its Eight Visions, and the concept of Smart Growth in general.

- Development is directed towards existing growth areas through planning and zoning practices and capital projects to serve these concentrated populations
- Resources are directed towards land preservation in the rural areas and are supported by appropriate zoning and development regulations
- Sensitive environmental areas are protected through zoning and development regulations

The funding and implementation tools necessary to achieve the goals of both the State and County have, for the most part, been made available. The County has taken advantage of nearly all possible programs and practices available to meet the goals, and in particular has used its long-range planning and development regulations to achieve them. In some instances, the County even has developed its own programs or practices and funded them when the State has not had similar programs available or the funding necessary to implement them. Examples include:

- Continued funding for recreational projects despite sharp decreases in POS funding levels
- The development of multi-purpose recreational facilities to maximize State and local investments in recreation
- The development of a Critical Farms Program and an Installment Purchase Agreement program to meet the needs of farmers in ways that the State program doesn't or can't
- Substantial County contributions for easements when MALPF funds have been little to none
- A \$34 million local bond initiative implemented to accelerate land preservation in the county
- The complete overhaul of the County's environmental ordinances
- A required soil erosion and sediment control plan and a grading permit for all forest harvest operations (one of the few counties in the state requiring this)
- One of the highest rates of reforestation and forest retention in the state

With significant budget constraints at both the State and County levels, it is important to recognize the strides that have been made to reach the goals and objectives with limited resources. Yet it is also important to acknowledge the ongoing need to continue, or in some cases restore, funding for programs that help implement State and local goals for land preservation, parks, and recreation.

The program development strategies outlined in Chapters III, IV and V are reiterated below because they contain specific recommendations about initiatives that will require the support of State and local policies and budgets in order to meet the goals and objectives of this plan.

### ***Recreation, Parks and Open Space***

1. The County will continue to use the County Master Plan, community comprehensive plans, and capital budget as the primary tools for achieving its parks and recreation goals and priorities. Each of these tools are reviewed on a regular basis, and adjustments made accordingly based upon county priorities.
2. The County will continue to maximize its return on investment by incorporating full-sized gymnasiums and activity rooms into new schools and senior centers and constructing trails in conjunction with the development of new parks and playing fields.
3. The County will seek certification under the Natural Resources Article §5-905 c (1)(ii) as qualifying to use more than 50% of its POS allocation for development projects. This will better enable the County to develop the facilities it has identified as priority projects, while at the same time still allow it to pursue land acquisition for future projects.
4. The County has projected gradual increases in POS funding over the next several years despite the sharp decrease in funding experienced recently due to budgetary constraints. The State will need to work towards returning POS funding to previous levels if the County is to have any prospect of achieving its short-, mid-, and long-range goals for parks and recreation.

### ***Agricultural Land Preservation***

1. In order to achieve the 100,000 acre goal, Carroll County must acquire easements on 60 percent of the 89,000 acres of unprotected land that is in parcels greater than 20 acres. The best strategy to accomplish this is to make as many easement offers as possible to the owners who apply. For the past three years, offers have been made to all applicants in the MALPF, Rural Legacy, and County easement programs. Restoring the Program Open Space funding and implementing the funding recommendations of the MALPF Task Force are essential for this strategy to continue.
2. Designated preservation areas in Carroll County are the Little Pipe Creek Rural Legacy Area and the Upper Patapsco Rural Legacy Area. The strategy is to promote easement acquisition within these areas and to provide County matching

funds for State Rural Legacy grants to acquire as many easements as possible within these areas.

3. The County Critical Farms Program is best described as a “fast-track preservation program that guarantees at least minimum easement funding and enables a preservation buyer to acquire the farm”. Farms being marketed are at the greatest risk of development, and it is the County’s strategy to continue allocating a portion of preservation funding to this program.
4. The County recently strengthened the clustering provisions of the Rural Development Guides and Standards by adopting them as a County ordinance rather than operating under guidance. The strategy of clustering lots to preserve the maximum tillable ground will continue.
5. The County has adopted a strategy to contain easement costs by adopting maximum easement values as a percent of the appraised fair market value. Currently, the County does not offer more than 70 percent of fair market value for an easement in the County and Rural Legacy Programs, and for MALPF easements with 100 percent County funding. To date, the competitive bidding has held the State-funded MALPF offers to less than 70 percent of fair market value but this may not always be the case. The MALPF law should be amended to allow counties to establish a maximum value for all offers.

### ***Natural Resource Conservation***

1. Carroll County is doing a number of things to achieve State and County resource conservation goals. Its primary methods of achieving these goals are and will remain the County Master Plan, community comprehensive plans, capital funding of land preservation and other natural resource-related projects, and development regulations. Each of these are reviewed on a regular basis (some more frequently than others), and adjustments made accordingly based upon county priorities.
2. At the same time, a number of improvements can be made to make achievement of the goals more feasible more quickly. State funding for the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation and Rural Legacy programs can be increased to bolster the number of acres in any given year that have the potential to be preserved. Because resource conservation plans are requirements of these programs, the more landowners who participate the more conservation measures are implemented.
3. Along the same lines, continued state and federal funding for the Maryland Agricultural Cost Share Program, USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and other environmental enhancement programs used by farmers in the county will ensure that effective resource conservation measures continue to be within the financial reach of the agricultural community.

4. County staff and other resources could be directed towards working with landowners, business owners, environmental groups, outdoor sportsmen, and tourism professionals to develop a cohesive, marketable eco-tourism and eco-education program for the county.