

# Calvert County Comprehensive Plan

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*Summary of Key Outcomes from the Issue Identification Workshops and Surveys  
February – May, 2017*

## Providing an Efficient and Multi-modal Transportation System

Overall, the participants believe that private automobiles will remain the primary mode of travel in the county for the foreseeable future. Sidewalks to serve local communities enjoyed considerable support with interest in improving local bus service also receiving support. Improved bicycle facilities to serve local travel and recreation demands received some interest.

In addition to the discussion of specific travel modes, there were additional themes that emerged from the evening. Many conversations referred to the importance of the destinations points. Participants stated their travel included destinations throughout the county. Major routes for in county travel were: Dunkirk to Prince Frederick, Plum Point to Prince Frederick, and Huntingtown to Prince Frederick.

Some participants said there were few stores to go to and the creation of new shopping destinations were necessary. Other participants argued the idea that since more people are shopping online, trips to stores might slow down and a focus on transportation directed to retail may not be necessary in the future.

Participants place the highest priority on improvements to numerous state and local roads, most notably to MD 2/4. There is considerable expectation that MD 2/4 is to be widened throughout the county, although SHA only has construction funding to support widening for a short distance in Prince Frederick. The need for more sophisticated tools for understanding how traffic flows in the county and what future conditions might look like was clear from the public comment. Available forecasts from SHA were out-of-date and it was not clear that they were responsive to local land use policies.

The *2010 Comprehensive Plan* includes completion of the network of local roads parallel to MD2/4 in Prince Frederick and the charrette report builds the Town Center land use upon these roads. Similar parallel roads systems are in place or should be included in the plans for each designated growth area along MD 2/4.

The participants believe there need to be more safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle connections from housing locations to commercial areas. There is considerable support for pedestrian improvements and continuous sidewalk networks in the communities of Dunkirk, Huntingtown, Prince Frederick, and Lusby. Participants believe walking around Town Centers is dependent upon where one is going and

what one has to do. The participants concluded that having more things to do in Town Centers would enhance walkability and bikeability.

While the existing local transit service is generally not perceived as meeting the needs of the participants, there is support for improving service within the currently designated Town Centers and for travel throughout the county.

The preference for addressing automobile travel also dominated among those responding to the online survey. There were a number of comments supporting improvements for walkers and bicyclists, especially in the Town Centers.

### Supporting Options in Community Character

The paper proposed a range of place-types that might be used in a future land use map for the county. Five types of communities were proposed, based upon the variety of development patterns in Calvert County. The initial list included Town Centers, Villages, Hamlets, Waterfront Communities, and Residential Transition Zones. The intent of the paper was to seek out suggestions for locations that might fit into each category as a means for developing more specific definitions to reflect Calvert County concerns.

Currently, there are seven designated Town Centers with a wide variety of characters, sizes and development potentials. By grouping similar communities together, the county would be able to develop shared sets of zoning standards that could be applied across multiple locations. Similarly, the rural areas of the county contain both areas designated as priority funding areas in recognition of their small lot sizes and potential need for public facilities as well as other areas with large lot zoning and a very different character and appearance.

Interestingly, some participants expressed immediate concern that the effort to categorize communities as particular place-types would encourage additional growth in all such places. The point was clearly made that some place-types are suited for additional growth, while other place-types are not. Town Centers are suitable for the greatest level of growth. Villages are suited for some growth but not as much as Town Centers. The name “Hamlets” is clearly rejected and the future of isolated rural commercial sites is questionable. Waterfront communities are not places for additional growth. Commercial uses, especially along the water, are acceptable in a few of waterfront communities, but not at all in most. There was not much discussion of the Residential Transition Areas, although some attendees expressed disapproval of that place-type as well.

Each breakout group was asked to classify various locations as place-types. Figure 1 below shows the results of those discussions.

Figure 1. Place-type Results, Public Workshop #2

Locations	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Dunkirk	Town Center	Village/Hamlet*	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center/Village
Huntingtown	Village	Village	Village	Town Center	Village	Village
Lusby	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center
Prince Frederick	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center
St. Leonard	Village	Village	Village	Town Center	Village	Village
Solomons	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center	Town Center
Owings						Hamlet
Barstow	Hamlet	Hamlet	No Designation	No Designation	Village	Hamlet
Chaneyville	Hamlet		No Designation	No Designation	Village	Hamlet
Sunderland/Mt. Harmony	Hamlet		No Designation	No Designation	Village	Hamlet
Broomes Island	Waterfront	Waterfront	No Designation	No Designation	Waterfront	Waterfront
Cove Point	Waterfront		No Designation	No Designation	Waterfront	Waterfront
Dares Beach	Waterfront		No Designation	No Designation	Waterfront	Waterfront
Plum Point	Waterfront		No Designation	No Designation	Waterfront	Waterfront
White Sands						Waterfront

\* Village could be an agreed upon designation if sewer is not required under the specifications of a Village place-type

Responses to the online survey were also conflicting. There was a strong consensus in favor of Town Centers and a moderate amount of respondents who were in favor of Villages. However, there was much disagreement on the favorability of Hamlets, Waterfront Communities, and Residential Transition Areas. Many were either confused about the logistics of Hamlets, Waterfront Communities, and Residential Transition Areas or were opposed to them altogether. While some strongly advocated for additional retail, others advocated strongly against adding any areas that could increase retail development. Additionally, there were people who suggested more research be conducted before implementing these place-types. Some research suggestions included environmental impact studies and research on how taxes and property values could be affected. Overall, there was much passion from many sides of the proposal, but little consensus on what should be done.

### Fostering Vibrant, Walkable Communities with Multi-Generational Opportunities

This meeting offered a second opportunity to discuss how county residents perceive various types of places in the county and to envision how they might look in the future. The paper proposed more

specific definitions for each place-type and a set of characteristics that might be applied to each. Discussion during the evening provided additional insight into how participants view their own communities and other in the county. Following the workshop, residents of Dunkirk and Huntingtown and Lower Marlboro submitted additional thoughts about how their communities should look in the future.

Take-aways from the conversations included:

- Prince Frederick is a Town Center and the recommendations of the charrette should inform the goals for this community in the Comprehensive Plan.
- In general, established waterfront communities are not locations for residential or business growth.
- Hamlets are not a popular concept; continuation of the current rural community designation is preferred.
- Currently there are two-levels of designated growth centers. The 2010 Comprehensive Plan calls them major and minor Town Centers. There is some acceptance of the use of Villages as an alternative to minor Town Center. Some residents from both Huntingtown and Dunkirk prefer this designation for their communities.
- Availability of water and sewer service, building scale and whether multi-family units are permitted are seen as key distinctions between Town Centers and Villages.
- There are some concerns among commercial property owners that restricting the range or intensity of uses in Villages may have a negative effect on their property values.

Place-type Definitions as refined after the workshop:

**Town Center** – These places are designated as Town Centers in the current Comprehensive Plan with a higher intensity and greater variety of commercial and residential development within the plan boundaries. Each has nearby single-family residential development, typically within a one-mile radius of the Town Center.

**Village** – These places are designated as Town Centers in the current Comprehensive Plan but have a lower intensity and more limited variety of commercial and residential development. These locations are suitable for additional commercial development and various forms of single family dwellings. They typically have single-family detached residential development within one mile.

**Waterfront Community** – These mature, built-out residential communities typically pre-date zoning and subdivision regulations. They are not planned for expansion; designation as waterfront communities would preserve the current development pattern and allow redevelopment that complies with

provisions for environmental protection and climate adaptation. Some waterfront communities have had flood mitigation plans prepared.

Figure 2 is a summary of characteristics of place-types based upon discussions at Workshops #2 and #3.

**Figure 2. Characteristics and Potential Features of Place-types in Calvert County**

	Town Center	Village	Waterfront Community
Priority Funding Area	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jobs	Yes	Yes	No
Water service	Yes	Public health only	Public health only
Sewer system	Yes	Public health only	Public health only
Health care facilities	Yes	Yes	No
Public safety station	3 or more	Yes	Yes
Library	Yes	Maybe	No
Schools	Yes	Yes	No
Multi-family units, large (4+ units)	Yes	No	No
Multi-family units, small (less than 4 units)	Yes	Yes	No
Lot sizes for new development	Varies, 1 acre max	Varies, 1 acre max	Use existing lot sizes
Building height (max. stories)	5	3	2 occupied
Places of assembly (community center, churches, etc.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Small commercial building, size to be determined	Yes	Yes	No
Large commercial buildings size to be determined	Yes	No	No
Manufacturing, warehousing, industrial, etc.	Yes	No	No
Central business area	Yes	Yes	No
Sidewalks, pedestrian network	Yes	Yes	No
Waterfront commercial (marinas, restaurants)	Yes	Yes	Existing only

### Preserving Rural Character and Directing Growth to Designated Areas

This paper included a review of the policies outlined in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, recent and projected growth in population and housing, construction approvals, the results of a build-out analysis

and descriptions of the current land preservation programs. At the workshop, staff presented an overview of the county’s planning efforts. Following the presentation, participants developed and ranked proposals for preserving rural character and directing growth by answering two open-ended questions. The ten most popular answers to each question are shown below.

Question 1: Preserving farm and forest land has been a priority of Calvert County for 30 years. What actions would you support the county taking to preserve even more land? How should those actions be paid for?	
Comments	Votes
Commercial TDRs	33
Use TDRs to create greenways (defined greenways)	21
Use TDR to buy more Land, strengthen TDR market	16
Nothing (there is enough preservation)	15
Limit build-out to 37,000 households	14
"Rural" Character – Let’s own that, claim, and communicate it	14
Do not raise taxes	13
Increase lot size in rural areas and decrease inside Town Centers	10
BOCC consistently budget money for the Purchase and Retirement fund (Do not place a limit on the number of TDRs that can be purchased from an individual.)	10
Promote high value crops and help farmers produce products	9
Progressive impact fees	9
Allow opt out of TDR program if farmer cannot sell all TDRs	9

Question 2: One way to protect farm and forest land is to direct growth away from them and into designated areas. What incentives would you support the county providing to encourage/attract/direct growth to designated areas?	
Comments	Votes

Question 2: One way to protect farm and forest land is to direct growth away from them and into designated areas. What incentives would you support the county providing to encourage/attract/direct growth to designated areas?

Comments	Votes
Build a “Center” in the Town Center; focus on building a sense of community that is walkable and bike-able; high quality amenities	36
Mixed use residential on top of retail in Town Center; affordable and denser housing in Town Center; density bonus (More density in Town Center)	30
Resurrect the charrette (increase attractiveness of Town Centers)	30
Strengthen public process before BOCC can take action - zoning changes transparency	23
Use a cost/benefit analysis for comprehensive review to guide decisions (Target county's spending)	20
Build infrastructure before overcrowding	18
Non-retail employment	15
Expand sewer in Town Centers (subsidizing utilities)	14
Take existing enterprise zones and ease regulations to encourage growth there. Streamline review process	13
Incentives to build in Town Centers and disincentives outside of Town Centers	12

In addition to attending the workshop, people had the option to respond to the questions online. In these responses, there was a large consensus over the importance of preserving the county’s rural character and directing growth to designated areas. Many of the respondents voiced suggestions for preserving land. Some suggested increasing the amount of preservation districts, while others suggested deflecting development from rural areas by attracting the development to Town Centers. It was also suggested to have a farmers market in each Town Center farming and direct growth to Town Centers. In regards to directing growth to designated areas, many suggested making the Town Centers more pedestrian and biker friendly, either through the layout of the Town Center or by adding a bypass. Many suggestions also included improving or adding infrastructure in the Town Centers. While there was not a consensus on how to pay for incentivizing the preservation of land, there was agreement throughout

the responses that advocated for preserving the county’s rural character and directing growth to designated areas.

### Strengthening Economic Vitality

This paper provided information on commuting patterns, large employers, county tax base, tourism, lost retail and service sales, and household income. Following a summary presentation on the paper, participants responded to two open-ended questions about their hopes and concerns for future economic growth in the county. The ten most popular answers to each question are shown below.

Question 1: What are the best actions Calvert County could take to increase the number of well-paying jobs in the county?	
Comments	Votes
Improve internet access throughout the county, especially to support telecommuting	11
Economy should be based on natural assets (e.g. Bay, river, agriculture, fisheries, etc.)	9
Attract small tech companies and green energy jobs	7
Attract more technical training and trade skills in high schools and colleges	7
Educate public officials about the importance of small businesses	6
Increase tourism in Calvert County, focusing specifically on agri-tourism and ecotourism	6
Use local models to inform economic development (e.g. Leonardtown)	6
Develop Patuxent Business Park Plan to encourage businesses, especially research + development, to come to Calvert County	4
Support creation of more mid-level \$30-50,000 jobs, instead of solely high-paying jobs. (“Based on population median salary of \$95,000, do we need more high paying jobs?”)	4
Support local agriculture: increase smaller/cooperative types of farms and farm business/agribusiness	4
Food hubs for distribution	4
Food-based tourism: Local food, fine dining, casual seafood (MD charm)	4

**Question 1: What are the best actions Calvert County could take to increase the number of well-paying jobs in the county?**

Comments	Votes
Build a conference center with lodging	4
Simplify and speed up building permit process and assign one person to assist through entire process	4

**Question 2: What concerns you most about proposals to expand Calvert County's economy?**

Comments	Votes
Lack of infrastructure/Infrastructure is not suitable	15
Too many variances to zoning laws	13
Development should not occur at the expense of the environment	11
"Pleasant Peninsula"	11
Progress has been made but need more attention to water quality, water access, boat rentals, and marine pump out	10
The county should focus on small business development, not expansion of large retail companies	8
Do not lump Town Centers together in the Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance so as to avoid cookie cutter towns	8
BOCC and government officials should adhere to guidelines instead of changing them. BOCC needs to be accessible and accountable and respond to residents' concerns	8
Developers are still focused on building more shopping centers, which haven't worked in the past. Why will they work now?	6
Liquefied Natural Gas should not be expanded	6

Question 2: What concerns you most about proposals to expand Calvert County’s economy?	
Comments	Votes
Need to think about quality vs. quantity of business type, especially industrial	6
Economic growth seems to conflict with "Keep Calvert Country" theme and residents will not embrace business risk for ROI (return on investment)	6
Based on the charrette, the public wants creative, unique, and ecofriendly community design, while builders want generic design	6

The county also provided an opportunity to respond to the same questions online. Many of those respondents expressed concern about the long-term viability of retail businesses, especially “big box” stores, in light of the ease of online shopping. They generally favored smaller, local businesses including farm-based enterprises.