



## Charles County Comprehensive Plan Comprehensive Plan Merged Scenario

December 2011

### Scenarios and the Comprehensive Plan

Charles County has been using a scenarios approach as a means of developing a preferred scenario, which will become the basis for the full draft Comprehensive Plan. Three *Preliminary Scenarios* were presented at the Regional Design Charrettes in July and August 2011. Based on public comments at and following the Charrettes, two *Comprehensive Plan Scenarios* were developed and presented at the Comprehensive Plan Open House on October 19, 2011. Again, substantial public comments were received.

After reviewing, responding to, and working with all of the comments received during the Comprehensive Plan process, the County's consultant ERM and the Planning and Growth Management staff developed a single Merged Scenario. The Merged Scenario, described in detail in this packet, addresses the major issues raised during the Comprehensive Plan process by blending and adjusting elements of the earlier candidate scenarios.

**Comments on the Comprehensive Plan Merged Scenario will be accepted through January 6, 2012,** and may be submitted in the following ways:

- The Message Board portion of the Comprehensive Plan website, accessible via [www.charlescounty.org](http://www.charlescounty.org) (**strongly encouraged**, so others can see your comments and ideas).
- Individual comments to Amy Blessinger, 301-645-0650, [blessinga@charlescounty.org](mailto:blessinga@charlescounty.org).

Based on these comments, the Merged Scenario will be refined and presented to the Planning Commission sometime in early 2012.

## Comprehensive Plan Merged Scenario

### Summary

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The Merged Scenario emphasizes concentrated, mixed-use development in the Waldorf urban core and in the County's incorporated municipalities, as well as new development in enhanced rural villages and two village cluster areas. The County's natural resources (especially water bodies, stream valleys, and areas of contiguous forest) help to frame the development pattern; new development and associated infrastructure are concentrated to reduce impacts to the natural environment. Working farm and forest lands are preserved through a proposed Priority Preservation Area (PPA). The County's existing commercial and employment lands continue to be the focus for economic development, supplemented by new mixed-use areas, especially the Waldorf-White Plains transit corridor. Transportation infrastructure is upgraded in appropriate locations to facilitate regional mobility and local accessibility. Figure 1 illustrates the Merged Scenario.

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### Key Features

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#### *Development Pattern*

1. New development is concentrated primarily in an urban core, St. Charles, La Plata, Indian Head, and mixed-use villages. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is envisioned at key light rail transit stations.
2. Most of the Deferred Development District (DDD) is permanently made part of the rural area (i.e., no longer designated for potential future development, as in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan). A small area to the west of White Plains that was in the DDD has been designated Mixed Residential Low in the Merged Scenario.
3. The Mattawoman Creek stream valley<sup>1</sup> is recommended for residential density of one unit per 20 acres.
4. The portions of other stream valleys outside of Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs – see “Rural Areas” below), including the Port Tobacco River and portions of Zekiah Swamp Run, Nanjemoy Creek (and tributaries), Allen's Fresh, Gilbert Swamp Creek, and the Patuxent River/Swanson Creek are recommended for residential density of one unit per 10 acres.
5. Grandfathering of older development approvals which have not advanced in the development process is reviewed and reduced as legally permissible and consistent with this scenario (e.g., with some previous Preliminary Plans losing grandfathered status, and requiring re-application to proceed with development).
6. Expansion of the Town of La Plata beyond its existing boundaries (as proposed in the Town's 2009 Comprehensive Plan) is supported in the area along the proposed Quailwood Parkway (northwest of the Town) and the area between Clark Run and King's Grant. Additional expansions are not generally supported, but would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
7. Expansion of the Town of Indian Head beyond its existing boundaries (as proposed in the Town's 2009 Comprehensive Plan) is supported.
8. Bryans Road is re-envisioned as a village (different from the vision contained in the Bryans Road sub Area Plan). There is little new residential development, and the focus is on enhancement of existing development, and better road and pedestrian connectivity. An area between Billingsley Road and the Prince George's County line is made part of the Rural Conservation Area.
9. The following existing villages<sup>2</sup> are enhanced and/or expanded with additional local-serving commercial, public facilities, residential (including affordable housing), and urban design improvements. Some new development is required to use Transferrable Development Rights (TDRs):

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<sup>1</sup> These areas are depicted in a manner consistent with the Mattawoman Creek stream valley delineated by Maryland DNR. This area is wider than the current Resource Protection Zone. Scenario 1 assumes that all major stream valleys in Charles County, including the shoreline of the Potomac and Wicomico Rivers would be formally delineated in a similar manner.

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- a. Newburg Cluster (including Aqualand and portions of MD 257);
  - b. Bel Alton;
  - c. Hughesville (as envisioned in the adopted plan);
  - d. Benedict (as envisioned in ongoing plans); and
  - e. Cobb Island
10. The following rural residential Hamlets maintain their existing configurations with a limited amount of new residential development and some urban design enhancements:
- a. Nanjemoy (with limited additional commercial and public uses);
  - b. Bryantown;
  - c. Port Tobacco Hamlet (west bank of Port Tobacco River); and
  - d. Malcolm
11. Other locations previously designated “Villages” in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan (along with Marbury and Pisgah) are redesignated “Crossroads Commercial” locations. Commercially-zoned properties would retain commercial zoning as long as the commercial land use remained active.
12. Aqualand is redeveloped as a waterfront-oriented center, focused on water-based tourism and recreation, as part of a broader village cluster/revitalization area centered around Newburg.
13. The Mount Vernon Viewshed in northern Charles County is protected through development regulations.
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### *Rural Areas*

14. A Priority Preservation Area (PPA) is established. Within the PPA, the goal is to preserve 80 percent of the remaining undeveloped land. The PPA is implemented through the Managed Growth approach currently proposed (June 2011). This requires preservation to be in place concurrent with development, based on established ratios, to meet the 80 percent preservation goal.
15. Stream valleys (as described in items 3 and 4) within the PPA would be high-priority locations for land preservation.
16. Within the PPA consideration is given to allowing landowners not in Agricultural Districts to sell TDRs. However, qualifying criteria based on acreage and soil types would remain.
17. Amendments to the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program are considered:
- a. Requiring TDR credits for commercial and employment development above a square footage threshold (likely 2,500 square feet).
  - b. A “Fee in Lieu” alternative to the TDR process for development projects.
18. Transit-Oriented Development, Mixed Use, and areas near transit stops would not be required to use TDRs, at least for base densities. The County may increase its dedicated fund for land preservation and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), potentially using an increased Environmental Services Fee as a funding source.
19. Rural Conservation areas are zoned at one unit per five acres.
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### *Transportation*

20. Pursue the following specific transportation system improvements, including:
- a. US 301 upgrade through La Plata;
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<sup>2</sup> In the Merged Scenario, a “village” is envisioned as a medium to large rural settlement (generally 100 acres or more) with a mix of residential and local-serving commercial land uses and some community services (e.g., schools). Villages (or clusters of villages) are service centers for larger rural areas, but also have their own identity. Hamlets are smaller, predominantly residential places that are rural population centers, but are not large enough to serve the same function as a village.

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- b. Implementation of the US 301 transit corridor;
  - c. Additional or upgraded roads to improve north-south connectivity, generally between Waldorf and Bel Alton;
  - d. Two study corridors for new road connections: extension of Middletown Road south to US 301; and MD 6 to Old Stagecoach Road. Potential impacts of new roads on existing neighborhoods would be considered.
  - e. A new Harry Nice Bridge (as envisioned by the State of Maryland); and
  - f. Safety and geometric improvements to Billingsley Road (remains a two lane road).
21. The US 301 Western and Eastern Bypass and Cross-County Connector are no longer planned but road upgrades in other locations are planned as shown on the map
22. Implement a more complete street grid system in the Urban Core.
23. Promote bicycle and pedestrian systems, particularly in Waldorf, Bryans Road, and rural villages.
24. Identify scenic and historic roads and characteristics of these facilities in the Comprehensive Plan.
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### *Economic Development*

25. Develop a diverse economy, with the following economic development focus areas:
- a. Office and industrial development that supports the Indian Head Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) and other Department of Defense (DoD) activities;
  - b. The medical services industry;
  - c. “Green technology” (e.g., carbon sequestration, alternative energy); and
  - d. Rural enterprises—including farming and forestry, along with environmental offsets such as forest mitigation banking and carbon sequestration—and heritage/recreation/eco-tourism are promoted as a new economic development focus, with some rural villages and hamlets serving as support areas (e.g., supplies and amenities) for these enterprises.
26. Existing designated employment areas as shown on the map are promoted (including the Indian Head Science and Technology Park).
27. Encourage redevelopment in Indian Head to provide services for local residents.
28. Pursue opportunities for public water access and waterfront development opportunities in selected waterfront areas (to be defined through a separate process).
29. Promote the Waldorf Urban Design Study area (Downtown Waldorf), and the County’s business and industrial areas as locations for significant new employment and business.
30. Promote the expansion of broadband access for rural areas.
31. Create new entertainment venues (i.e., in the Waldorf Urban Design Study area (WUDS) and in incorporated towns), including encouraging redevelopment
32. Develop a Newburg Sub-Area Plan based on Traditional Neighborhood Development principles, to identify opportunities for future mixed use, residential, and commercial development, with the goal of establishing a South County regional activity center. Bel Alton would also require further study for potential new and re-development.
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### *Water Resources*

33. Identify long-term sources of water (including groundwater and water from the Potomac River) to support projected population growth.
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34. Implement wide ranging water reuse and water conservation techniques to make better use of available potable water.
  35. Define and target specific sites for water quality project improvements. Use as mitigation areas for offset requirements of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and Watershed Improvement Plans (WIP)
  36. The Water Resources Element will be based on the preferred Comprehensive Plan scenario, and will address water quality goals (e.g., the TMDL and WIP).
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### *Natural Resources*

37. Sensitive environmental resources are protected through environmental regulations such as the RPZ and Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. The County's major stream valleys are protected (see items 3 & 4).
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### *Public Facilities/Recreation*

38. Investment in schools, parks, water and sewer, police, fire etc. support the development pattern. Emphasis is on investments in existing growth areas.
  39. Develop (or upgrade) public water and sewer systems (e.g., package treatment plants with land application; or state of the art septic systems) for villages. This also includes the following initiatives:
    - a. WWTP upgrades of and nutrient trading between the County and La Plata, to provide adequate sewer capacity for the US 301 corridor.
    - b. Consider a unified water system, to include the incorporated towns.
  40. The County will continue to manage its water system to minimize impacts on aquifers.
  41. Public waterfront access is enhanced through waterfront trails, car-top launches, and boat ramps, consistent with Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan.
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### *Affordable Housing*

42. Promote affordable housing as a component in mixed use projects with higher densities in Waldorf.
  43. Encourage affordable housing for rural areas as part of Village development and redevelopment.
  44. Promote repair and renovation of existing homes for affordable housing.
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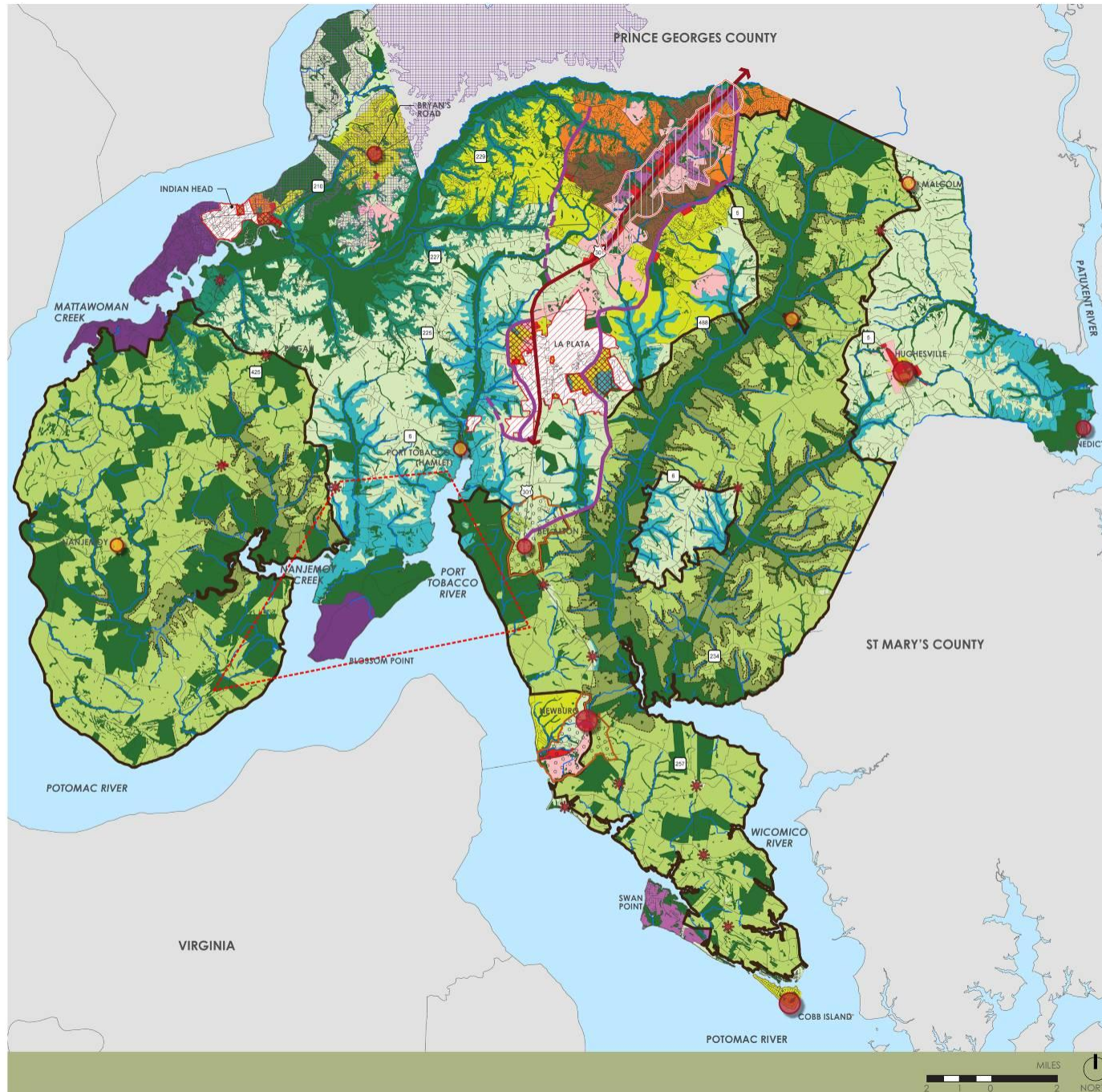
### *Natural Resources*

45. Development that would significantly impact forestland is strongly discouraged.
  46. Nutrient offset strategies will be developed for rural areas in accordance with Watershed Implementation Plan requirements.
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### *Energy*

47. Pursue policies that increase energy conservation and efficiency. An Energy Conservation Element will be included in the plan to establish a baseline energy consumption level to enable the county to measure progress towards meeting goals.
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# Comprehensive Plan Merged Scenario



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Quality Places  
Natural Spaces

### CHARLES COUNTY MARYLAND

#### LEGEND

- Urban Core/Transit Station Area
- Employment and Industrial Parks
- Commercial and Business
- Mixed Use District
- Mixed Residential High
- Mixed Residential Medium
- Mixed Residential Low
- Mattawoman Stream Valley (1/20)
- Other Stream Valleys Outside PPA (1/10)
- PPA (80% Preserved)
- Stream Valleys in PPA (Preservation Focus)
- Rural Conservation (1/5)  
May include some isolated rural non-residential land
- Protected Lands
- Incorporated Towns
- Incorporated Towns Growth Area
- Military or Federally Owned Lands
- Blossom Point JLU Study Area
- Mount Vernon Viewshed

#### Transportation

- US 301 Upgrade-in-Place
- N-S Connectors (Upgrade of Existing Roads)
- N-S Connectors (Study Corridors)

#### Villages and Village Clusters

- Village/Village Cluster Study Area
- Mixed Use Village
- Residential Hamlet with Limited Commercial
- Crossroads Commercial

**Figure 1**  
**MERGED SCENARIO DRAFT 1**

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