

## INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the provisions of the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 66B, "Planning and Zoning", the Planning Commission and the Land Use Committee for the Town of Williamsport have reviewed the existing Comprehensive Plan for the Town and promulgated the current document. The statute basically mandates that certain elements must be included in the Plan. They are generally speaking identified as follows:

- 1) Statement of goals, objectives and principles
- 2) Land Use Plan Element
- 3) Transportation Element
- 4) Community Facilities Element
- 5) Current Geographical Information as to Mineral Resources if Available and Applicable
- 6) Water Resources Plan
- 7) Planning Commission Recommendations for Land Development Regulations to Implement for Plan
- 8) Sensitive Area Element

Consideration was given in reference to development and growth to Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances and regulations that were passed by

various municipalities including the Town of Williamsport. The Williamsport Comprehensive Plan is influenced to a great extent by the Washington County Comprehensive Plan and the City of Hagerstown Comprehensive Plan insofar as some of the key elements are intertwined and integral to all three (3) bodies. Many of the factors considered herein in the Elements are controlled by the County and City, Urban Growth Area, Smart Growth, and Water and Sewer Resource Plans.

The Mayor and Council of the Town of Williamsport have a vision and desire to enhance and promote orderly development for the Town both in the present and future. It is the desire of the Mayor and Council to not only provide for orderly development of the community in accordance with the guidelines established by the legislature of the State of Maryland, but also to endeavor to provide a better "quality of life" for the citizens of the community.

**Following is a list of the desired objectives and goals which the Town adopts and will attempt to adopt:**

- **Concentrate development in suitable areas.**

*Providing development opportunities near existing and planned population centers where existing and/or planned water and sewer service exist is important.*

- **Protect sensitive areas.**

*Providing open space to protect streams and stream buffers, steep slopes, 100-year floodplains and habitats of endangered and threatened species is important.*

- **In rural areas, direct growth to existing population centers and protect resource areas.**

*Providing development opportunities within and around Washington County's towns and other concentrations of development such as Williamsport, protecting unique natural resources and retaining rural areas are important.*

- **Demonstrate stewardship of the Bay and the land.**

*Identifying and protecting environmentally sensitive areas that residential or nonresidential development could damage while educating government officials and local residents to the issues and concerns of the Chesapeake Bay are important.*

- **Conserve and reduce the consumption of natural resources.**

*Protecting key parcels of land can help protect larger sections of resource areas.*

- **Encourage economic growth and streamline land use regulatory measures to encourage the achievement of the preceding five visions.**

*Providing economic development opportunities to existing businesses, seeking new businesses and other activities such as tourism are important as well as amending existing land use regulations and providing new provisions that will assist Williamsport to achieve this vision in the State Planning Act.*

- **Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the County or Municipal corporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur.**

*Insuring that public water and sewer facilities are either in place or proposed in conjunction with new development in compliance with the 1997 Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Initiatives.*

- **Address funding mechanisms to achieve the previous policies.**

*Appropriating funds, continuing public and private cooperative ventures, seeking creative financing techniques and promoting volunteerism and cooperation are important.*

### **1997 Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Initiatives**

The 1997 General Assembly adopted several specific programs, which together form the Smart Growth initiatives. Collectively, these initiatives aim to direct State resources to revitalize older developed areas, preserve some of Maryland's valuable resources and open space lands, and discourage the continuation of sprawling development into our rural areas.

The Smart Growth legislation allows the State to direct its programs and funding to support locally designated areas and protect rural areas. This landmark legislation's passage is a significant accomplishment, which will play a major role in Maryland's efforts to better manage land use and growth.

The centerpiece of this new legislative package is the "Priority Funding Areas" legislation, which limits most State infrastructure funding and economic development, housing and other program monies to Smart Growth Areas, which local governments designate for growth. The other bills in the 1997 legislative package also support locally identified development areas. They facilitate the reuse of brownfields and provide tax credits to businesses creating jobs in a Priority Funding Area. A new Live Near Your Work pilot program supports this effort by providing cash contributions to workers buying homes in certain older neighborhoods. And, to spur more preservation of undeveloped land, the new Rural Legacy Program provides financial resources for the protection of farm and forestlands and the conservation of these essential rural resources from development. The Priority Funding Areas legislation builds on the foundation created by Visions adopted as State policy in the 1992 Growth Act. Beginning October 1, 1998 Smart Growth establishes a policy for the use of State funds, which support communities, and influences the location

of development. State funding for projects in Maryland municipalities, other existing communities, industrial areas, and planned growth areas designated by counties will receive priority funding over other projects. Priority Funding Areas are locations where the State and local government want to target their efforts to encourage and support economic development and new growth.

### **Rural Legacy Program**

The Rural Legacy Program will redirect existing State funds into a focused and dedicated land preservation program specifically designed to limit the adverse impacts of sprawl on our agricultural lands and natural resources. The Program will reallocate State funds to purchase conservation easements for large contiguous tracts of agricultural, forest and natural areas subject to development pressure, and fee interests in open space where public access and use is needed. Local governments and private land trusts will be encouraged to identify Rural Legacy Areas and to competitively apply for funds to complement existing land conservation efforts or create new ones.

### **Brownsfields Legislation**

Maryland's new Brownsfields law limits liability for those redeveloping unused or abandoned properties that are contaminated, or even perceived to be contaminated, unless they exacerbate contamination or

create new pollution. The law creates a voluntary clean-up program through which an eligible developer supplies the State information about environmental conditions, including contamination of the site and proposed clean-up procedures. If approved, the applicant prepared a detailed Response Action Plan that explains all tasks necessary to clean up the site and demonstrates that the project meets applicable public health and environmental protection criteria. This process also provides an opportunity for public participation.

#### **Live Near Your Work Program**

The Live Near Your Work Program encourages employees of Maryland's businesses and institutions to buy homes near their workplace. This initiative will help stabilize the neighborhoods surrounding the State's major employers by stimulating home ownership in targeted communities. In addition to providing resources for programs sponsored by public and private institutions, the State is participating as a major employer.

#### **Job Creation Tax Credit Program**

The Job Creation Tax Credit Program encourages mid-sized and smaller businesses to invest in Smart Growth areas around the State. Small businesses comprise almost eighty (80%) percent of Maryland businesses, and small businesses in particular generate the majority of new job growth in the State. This proposal will encourage small business development and job

growth in areas accessible to available labor pools, and will encourage more efficient use of the new State's existing infrastructure.



**Exhibit 1**  
**Current County, State, and Local Improvement Programs**

Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
Designated Neighborhoods	Provides priority for many types of funding Programs, once an area is approved as a "Designated Neighborhood"	MD Dept of Housing and Community Development
Neighborhood Business Development Program	Provides low-interest loans to small businesses or non-profit organizations for projects in older business areas. Provides up to 50% funding of flexible gap financing for business starting-up or expanding or for reuse of a vacant building. Cannot be used for speculative projects.	MD Dept of Housing and Community Development
Business Tax Credits for Neighborhood Projects	Awards tax credits on a competitive basis to non-profit organizations that sponsor community development projects in designated neighborhoods. The tax credits are then sold to private businesses.	MD Dept of Housing and Community Development
MD Historic Preservation Capital and Non-Capital Grant Programs	Offers grants for capital projects, including the acquisition, rehabilitation or restoration of historic properties. Also Offers grants for non-capital projects, such as research of historic resources. In most cases provides a maximum of 50% of the project cost.	MD Historical Trust
MD Certified Local Government Grant Program	Offers grants to local governments who are certified within a Federal historic preservation program. Funds can be used for research of historic resources, educational programs, technical assistance and other efforts.	MD Historical Trust
MD Historic Preservation Loan Program	Offers low-interest loans to acquire, Rehabilitate or restore properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, in return for an easement Guaranteeing the preservation of the site.	MD Historical Trust
Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area/MD Heritage Area Program	With inclusion of reference to approval Management Plan as guidance documents in Comprehensive Plan, projects that promote heritage area tourism may be eligible to apply for grants, loans and tax credits.	Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area Advisory Board/Md Heritage Area Authority/MD Historical Trust

<b>Name of Program</b>	<b>General Description of Program</b>	<b>Administering Agency</b>
Preservation Tax Credits	Offers State and Federal income tax credits for a percentage of the qualified capital costs to rehabilitate certified historic buildings. The program requires that the work conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Only income-producing properties qualify for the federal program.	State Program: MD Dept. of Housing and Community Development; MD Historic Trust. Federal Program National Park Service.
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Offers grants through a competitive process for a wide variety of activities, provided the applicant proves that the project will benefit 51% low and moderate income persons or eliminate an officially approved "blighted" condition.	MD Dept Housing and Community Development; Allegany County Dept. of Community Services
Program Open Space	Provides up to 100% grant funding for acquisition and up to 75% grant funding for development of public recreation facilities and open space. Projects need to be based upon the County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.	MD Department of Natural Resources; County Parks and Recreation Dept.
Rural Legacy Program	Directs various State and Federal funds towards the coordinated acquisition of key concentrations of natural resources and agricultural areas.	MD Department of Natural Resources
Various State Housing Programs	Provides low-interest loans to for-profits and non-profits for the construction or rehabilitation of housing for low and/or moderate income persons. Individual programs include: Multi-Family Housing Rehabilitation Program, Construction Loan Program and Single-Family Housing Rehabilitation Program.	MD Dept of Housing and Community Development
Reverse Equity Mortgage Program	Offers low-income persons age 65 and older the opportunity to receive income from the equity of their home so they may continue to afford to live within it.	MD Dept of Housing and Community Development

<b>Name of Program</b>	<b>General Description of Program</b>	<b>Administering Agency</b>
State Homeownership Programs	Offer favorable financing to qualified Persons to purchase their own home. Programs include the Settlement Expense Loan Fund, and the Preferred Interest Rate Loan Program.	MD Dept. of Housing and Community Development
Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit	Offers Federal income tax credits to non-profit and for-profit developers of housing for low-income persons. Non-profits can then sell their credits to investors.	MD Dept. of Housing and Community Development
Rural Economic Development Programs (formerly Farmers Home Administration)	Offers a variety of programs to finance economic development, community facilities and low-income housing in rural areas.	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Rural Development Administration
Neighborhood Conservation Program	Provides funding in Priority Funding Areas and "designated neighborhoods" approved by the MD Dept. of Housing and Community Development. Can be used for sidewalks, streetscaping, curbs, drainage, repaving and lighting.	MD Dept. of Transportation
Street and Sidewalk Program	Provides 100% funding for improvements For new sidewalks and related improvements along State roads in "designated neighborhoods" approved by the MD Dept. of Housing and Community Development.	MD Dept. of Transportation
Day Care Financing Programs	Offers low-interest loans and loan Guarantees for development of child or Senior day care facilities	MD Dept. of Business and Economic Development
Community Development Block Grant Funds for Economic Development	Offers low-interest gap financing for up to 50% of project cost. Financing is provided to municipality, which then makes loans to businesses. Emphasizes creation of low and moderate income jobs. Can be used for downtown revitalization, infrastructure, property acquisition, building construction and market studies.	MD Dept. of Housing and Community Development

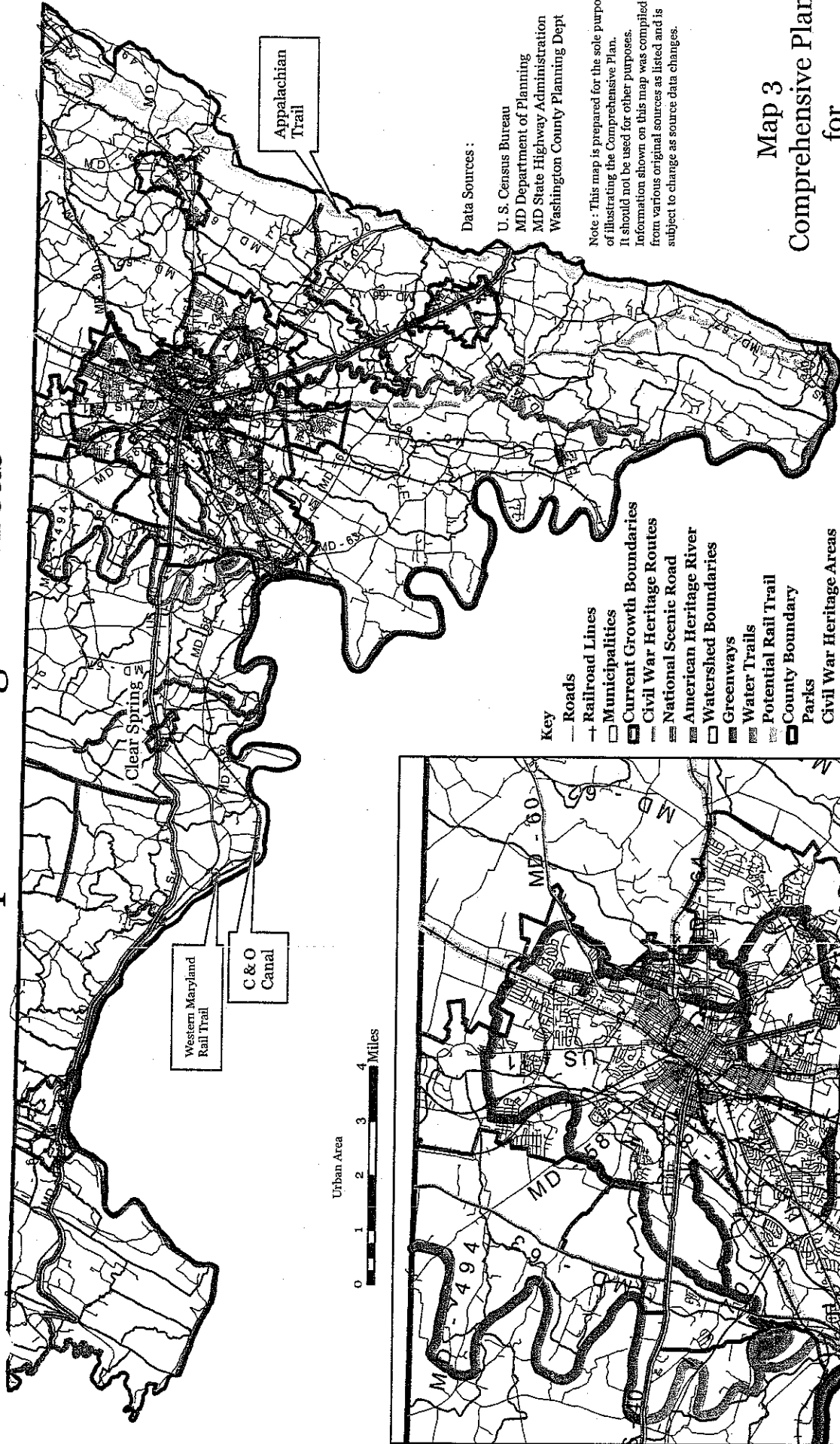
Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
Maryland Industrial Land Act	Offers low-interest loans to counties and municipalities working to develop or redevelop industrial space. Can be used for acquisition, utilities, access roads, site improvements and shell building construction. Can also be used to rehabilitate existing buildings as "incubators" for new businesses.	MD Dept. of Business and Economic Development
Job Creation Tax Credit	Offers income tax credits to companies Creating 60 or more jobs which pay at least 150% of the minimum wage.	MD. Dept. of Business and Economic Development
MD Industrial and Commercial Redevelopment Fund	Offers low-interest loans to municipalities working to develop or redevelop commercial or industrial businesses. Provides up to 90% of funding need. Can be used for land, buildings, infrastructure and technical studies. The municipality can then loan the funds to businesses, provide the municipality guarantees the loans.	MD Dept. of Business and Economic Development
MD Industrial Development Financing Authority Program	Makes available low-interest financing for business development and expansion, except for certain types of retail uses. Better terms are possible for industrial development funded through tax-exempt bonds.	MD Dept. of Business and Economic Development; Plus Industrial Revenue Bonds issued through the County
MD Small Business Development Financing Authority Programs	Makes available low-interest financing for development and expansion of small businesses. Includes a Long-term Guarantee Program, a Surety Bond Program and an Equity Participation Investment Program. Most programs emphasize businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged persons.	MD Dept. of Business and Economic Development
Investment Financing Programs	Offers financing through the Challenge Investment Program and the Enterprise Investment Fund.	MD Dept. of Business and Economic Development

<b>Name of Program</b>	<b>General Description of Program</b>	<b>Administering Agency</b>
Appalachian Regional Commission Programs	Provides grants and loans through the Tri-County Council, including a revolving low-interest loan fund for businesses for gap financing.	Tri-County Council of Western Maryland
Rural Utilities Service Financing	Offers low-interest loans for water and sewage projects.	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service
Army Corps Programs; NRCS Watershed Programs	Various types of projects to manage flooding.	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District; U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service
Hazard Mitigation Grant Program	Provides 75% funding to relieve imminent hazards from flooding.	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Small Creeks and Estuaries Water Quality Restoration	Offers 50% funding to restore and improve stream channels.	MD Dept. of the Environment, Water Management Administration
Water Quality State Revolving Loan Fund	Provides low-interest loans to local governments for projects that will improve water quality, such as stream restoration projects or efforts to reduce non-point source pollution.	MD Dept. of the Environment, Water Management Administration
Water Supply Financial Assistance Program; Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund	Provides low-interest and grants for water supply system repairs and upgrades.	MD Dept. of the Environment, Water Management Administration

Sources: Publications and internet sites of various agencies; Report of the Governors Flood Mitigation Task Force for Western Maryland.

**Note:** The following Maps are intended to graphically clarify and demonstrate the information set forth in the preceding text in this Chapter.

# Special Program Areas



**Data Sources:**

- U. S. Census Bureau
- MD Department of Planning
- MD State Highway Administration
- Washington County Planning Dept

Note: This map is prepared for the sole purpose of illustrating the Comprehensive Plan. It should not be used for other purposes. Information shown on this map was compiled from various original sources as listed and is subject to change as source data changes.

## Map 3 Comprehensive Plan for Williamsport, Maryland 2010

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6-23-2010

As illustrated on Map 52 of the Comprehensive Plan for  
Washington County, Maryland.

Adopted 8-27-2002  
Amended 7-12-2005

Prepared by the  
Washington County  
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Geographic Information System