

2024 Planning Commission Annual Report



Prepared by the Planning Division, Planning and Growth Management Department

CHARLES COUNTY GOVERNMENT 200 Baltimore St., La Plata, MD 20646

July 2025

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Purpose of Report

State law requires the Planning Commission to prepare and file an annual report with the County Commissioners¹. The report is available for public inspection and a copy of the report is provided to the Secretary of Planning for the State of Maryland. The criteria for the content of the report are specified as follows:

"The annual report shall **(a)** index and locate on a map all changes in development patterns including land use, transportation, community facilities patterns, zoning map amendments, and subdivision plats which have occurred during the period covered by the report, and shall state whether these changes are or are not consistent with each other, with the recommendations of the last annual report, with adopted plans of adjoining jurisdictions, and with the adopted plans of all state and local jurisdictions that have the responsibility for financing and constructing public improvements necessary to implement the jurisdiction's plan; **(b)** contain statements and recommendations for improving the planning and development process within the jurisdiction."

The Annual Report for 2024 has been designed to comply with Smart Growth Goals, Measures, and Indicators and Implementation of Planning Visions enumerated in the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland². The Annual Report is not intended to provide a comprehensive account of the activities of the Planning Division or the Planning Commission. Further, it should be noted that this Annual Report does not include data from the Towns of La Plata and Indian Head as these jurisdictions are also required to submit individual Annual Reports to the Maryland Department of Planning.

In compliance with the above-stated provision of the Land Use Article, this Annual Report was adopted by the Charles County Planning Commission on July 7, 2024.

Sources of Additional Information

Detailed information on other endeavors, projects, operations and/or the status of submittals is available directly through the following sources:

Planning and Growth Management: (301) 645-0692 or (301) 645-0627
County Attorney's Office: (301) 645-0555
Transit: (301) 645-0642

Charles County Government Web Site: <www.CharlesCountyMD.gov>

¹ Annotated Code of Maryland, Land Use Article, §1-207, §1-208

² Annotated Code of Maryland, Natural Resources Article §8-1808

Introduction

This Annual Report provides an opportunity for the Charles County Planning Commission to review development approvals for calendar year 2024. Actual development can then be compared to the overall vision for future development as articulated in the 2016 Adopted Charles County Comprehensive Plan (“the Plan”). The general “theme” of the Plan is that the County should continue to grow with a Smart Growth philosophy: balancing growth with strong environmental protection measures by conserving resources within the framework and guidance of the Plan. This Comprehensive Plan makes significant changes from the previous plans by reducing the Development District from 52,200 acres to 22,189 acres (a reduction of 30,011 acres), concentrating growth, protecting our natural resources, promoting historic village revitalization efforts, and supporting light rail transit for long term development. Previous Planning Commission Annual Reports have measured development inside and outside of the Development District. However, as of 2016, Annual Reports focus on the Priority Funding Area (PFA) since the modified Development District now matches the PFA in the northern part of Charles County³. The county’s development includes significant activity in the incorporated town of La Plata. Additionally, the County is committed to protecting 50 percent of its overall acreage in open space.

Planning Commission Functions and Membership

The Planning Commission consists of seven members who are appointed by the County Commissioners. Members serve four-year terms, which are staggered. A chairperson is appointed annually by the Commissioners. The purpose and functions of the Charles County Planning Commission are stated in the Land Use Article, Charles County Code of Public Laws, and the Charles County Zoning Ordinance. Functions include:

- Prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for development of the jurisdiction, including among other things, land use, water and sewerage facilities, and transportation;
- Review and approve the subdivision of land of the jurisdiction;
- Reserve transportation facility rights-of-way;
- Review and approve adequate public facilities studies and mitigation measures;
- Approve and periodically amend the Site Design and Architectural Guidelines;
- Review and provide recommendations on rezoning requests for base zones, overlay zones, and floating zones;
- Review and make recommendations for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Regulations; and
- Adopt rules and regulations governing its procedure and operation consistent with the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

³ The Development District and Priority Funding Area are not contiguous nor singular. The Development District (or Districts) encompasses portions of Indian Head (267 acres), Bryans Road (1,087 acres), and much of Waldorf and St. Charles (20,865 acres). The Priority Funding Area (or Areas) encompasses multiple non-contiguous built-up areas of Charles County totaling 36,000 acres. See Charles County’s GIS Interactive map at (<https://charlescountymd.info/PGMGISINTERACTIVEMAP>) for clarification. Any reference to “Development District” or “Priority Funding Area” singular or plural in this report refers to the entirety of each district unless otherwise noted.

During CY2024, the Charles County Planning Commission conducted twenty-one (21) regularly scheduled meetings. All members of the Planning Commission have completed the Maryland Planning Commissioners Association (MPCA) training course.

Planning Commission Members (Current)

Keving Wedding, Chairman

William Murray, Vice Chairman

Dawud Abdur-Rahman, Secretary

Jeffrey Bossart

Denard Earl

Semia Hackett

Ryan Sekuterski

New Residential Permits issued

This section provides an in-depth look at development that has occurred during calendar year 2024. A map is attached in the Appendix that demonstrates the growth-related changes including preliminary subdivision plans, final plats, site development plans, building permits, and zoning map changes.

Building Permits

In 2024 there were 1178 residential building permits and 28 commercial building permits issued in Charles County. Building permits are issued for a variety of building related activities in Charles County including accessory structures, alterations, additions, pools, signs, etc. However, only new residential or new commercial structures are counted for the purposes of the Annual Report. Figure 1 below provides a breakdown of new residential building permits. Similarly, Figure 2 provides the breakdown of new commercial building permits.

Figure 1: 2024 Residential Building Permits

Building Permit Type	Total Number of New Units	Inside PFA	Outside PFA	Inside PUD
Single Family	323	173	150	131
Town House	483	483	0	381
Apartment*	372	372	0	0
Duplex, Triplex, Quadriplex	0	0	0	0
Total	1178	1028	150	512

* Apartments receive commercial permits and are permitted by building rather than by unit. For clarity, apartment units are included here and not counted below with other Commercial Building Permits.

Figure 2: 2024 Commercial Building Permits

Building Permit Type	Total Number of New Units	Inside PFA	Outside PFA	Inside PUD
New Commercial	28	27	1	3

Other Commercial Building Permit Types:
Commercial Alterations and Additions: 109
Miscellaneous Commercial: 76
Change of Occupancy⁴: 104

⁴A Change of Occupancy permit (formerly known as a Green Card permit) is issued to establish a Use and Occupancy for a commercial space when no construction to the space is proposed. Utilized at the change of ownership or change of tenant, this permit allows for a safety inspection of the proposed space prior to use.

Preliminary Subdivision Plan Approvals

A preliminary subdivision plan is the initial plan of subdivision consisting of drawings and supplementary materials that indicate the proposed layout of a subdivision. Approval of a preliminary subdivision plan establishes general consistency with the Charles County Comprehensive Plan, and compliance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations that are known to be applicable during the preliminary review stages. Lots proposed within a preliminary subdivision plan may be for future residential, commercial, or industrial purposes. Preliminary subdivision plans are approved by the Planning Commission.

Preliminary subdivision plans are required in Charles County for all major subdivisions. A subdivision project is considered to be a major subdivision when the proposed subdivision will result in the creation of more than five (5) lots from a parcel that was in existence on June 15, 1976, or when more than seven (7) lots are proposed from a parcel, residue or remainder in existence on December 31, 2012; provided that any lot resulting from a recorded deed or subdivision plat prior to December 31, 2012, cannot be considered a parcel for purposes of Section 17 of the Charles County Subdivision Regulations.

Figure 3, below, provides a list of the preliminary subdivision plans that were approved in 2024, including revisions. Figure 4, also below, provides a breakdown of preliminary plan housing types.

Figure 3: 2024 Approved Preliminary Subdivision Plans

Subdivision Name	Total Number of New Lots	Acreage	Lots Inside PFA	Lots Inside PUD
Fair Fountain Farm Lots 1-8 PSP Revision #2	0	0	0	0
Waldorf Tech Park Revision #3	0	0	0	0
Scotland Heights PSP Revision #6	-2	0	-2	0
Sunstone Grove Revision #1 (Amenities)	0	0	0	0
Bensville Crossing Revision #4 & MOD 104	0	0	0	0
Middle Business Park Revision #3	0	0	0	0
South Hampton Square Revision #1	24	0	24	0
Net Total	22	0	22	0

Figure 4: 2024 Preliminary Subdivision Plan Residential Housing Types

Preliminary Plan Housing Types	Total
Single Family Detached	-2
Townhouse	24
Apartment	0
Duplex/Triplex/Missing Middle	0
Total	22

Final Plat Approvals

A final subdivision plat establishes the official division of land that is approved by the Planning and Growth Management Department and recorded in the Land Records of Charles County. Final subdivision plats are approved and signed by the Planning Director. Final subdivision plats are prepared for both major and minor subdivisions. As defined in §278-17 of the Charles County Subdivision Regulations, a minor subdivision is a subdivision of land, which does not involve any of the following:

- The creation of more than five (5) lots from a parcel that was in existence on June 15, 1976, or more than seven (7) lots are proposed from a parcel, residue or remainder in existence on December 31, 2012; provided that any lot resulting from a recorded deed or subdivision plat prior to December 31, 2012, cannot be considered a parcel for purposes of Section 17 of the Charles County Subdivision Regulations.
- The extension of a public water or sewer system proposed as a part of a private development.
- The installation of off-site drainage improvements through one or more lots to serve one or more other lots proposed as a part of a private development.

Figure 5 below shows the distribution of final plat types that were recorded in 2024. Minor plats such as lot line adjustments, boundary surveys, forest conservation easement plats, etc. do not record any lots. Figure 6 below tallies lots approved in 2024 by type, area, and location.

Figure 5: 2024 Final Plat Types

Final Plat Type	No. of Plats
Plats Recording No New Lots	14
Residential - Minor Plats	8
Residential - Major Plats	18
Commercial	6
Industrial	0
Total	46

Figure 6: 2024 Approved Final Plat Lots

Final Plat Type	No. of New Lots	Plat Area	Inside PFA	Outside PFA	Inside PUD
Residential Minor Plats	15	213.7 acres	8 lots, 4.2 acres	7 lots, 209.5 acres	0
Residential Major Plats	954	469.9 acres	786 lots, 262.8 acres	168 lots, 207.1 acres	433 lots, 212.7 acres
Commercial	12	47.8 acres	12 lots, 47.8 acres	0	5 lots, 21.7 acres
Industrial	0	0	0	0	0
Total	981	731.4 acres	806 lots, 314.8 acres	175 lots, 416.6 acres	438 lots, 234.4 acres

Measures and Indicators

To address the provisions of HB131 and Land Use Article §7–105 new data is required for calendar year 2024 for jurisdictions reporting more than 50 new residential permits. The four tables below outline data now required by the Maryland Department of Planning and DHCD for annual reports.

Figure 7: Amount of Residential Growth (Inside and Outside the PFA)

Residential – Calendar Year 2024	PFA	Non - PFA	Total
1. Total Units Approved on an Existing Lot	996	0	996
2. Gross Acres of Existing Lots in Row 1	148.3	0	148.3
3. Net Acres of Existing Lots in Row 1	48.1	0	48.1
4.Total Minor Subdivisions Approved	3	5	8
5.Total Minor Subdivision Lots Approved	8	7	15
6.Total Residential Units Approved in Minor Subdivisions*	8	7	15
7.Gross Acres of All Approved Minor Subdivisions	4.2	209.5	213.7
8.Net Lot Area** in Acres of All Approved Minor Subdivisions	3.7	147.2	150.9
9.Total Major Subdivisions Approved	12	7	19
10.Total Major Subdivision Lots Approved	786	168	954
11.Total Residential Units Approved in Major Subdivisions	786	168	954
12.Gross Acres of All Approved Major Subdivisions	262.8	207.1	469.9
13.Net Lot Area** in Acres of All Approved Major Subdivisions	63.3	65.9	129.2
14.Total Residential Units Approved (Minor + Major Subdivisions + Existing Lots)	1,790	175	1,965
15.Total Residential Units Constructed (CofO)	631	173	804

* Residential units may be greater than lots if they include duplexes, triplexes, or multifamily

**Net lot area is the sum of all developed lots, minus open spaces and right-of-way, other publicly dedicated land.

Figure 8: Net Density of Residential Growth (Inside and Outside PFAs)

Residential – Calendar Year 2024	PFA	Non – PFA	Total
1.Total Units Approved on an Existing Lot	996	0	996
2.Total Gross Acres of Existing Lots in Row 1	148.3	0	148.3
3.Total Net Acres of Existing Lots in Row 1	48.1	0	48.1
4.Total Residential Units Approved (Major + Minor Subdivisions + Existing Lots)	1,790	175	1,965
5.Total Approved Net Lot Area* (Major + Minor Subdivisions + Existing Lots)	115.1	213.1	328.2

*Net lot area is the sum of all developed lots, minus open spaces and right-of-way, other publicly dedicated land.

Figure 9: Share of Residential Growth (Inside and Outside the PFA)

Residential – Calendar Year 2024	PFA	Non – PFA	Total
1.Total Units Approved on an Existing Lot	996	0	996
2.Gross Acres of Existing Lots in Row 1	148.3	0	148.3
3.Net Acres of Existing Lots in Row 1	48.1	0	48.1
4.Total Units Approved (Major + Minor Subdivisions + Existing Lots + Units in Commercial Site Plans)	1,790	175	1,965
5. % of Total Units (Approved Residential Units)	91%	9%	100%

Figure 10: Amount of Commercial Growth (Inside and Outside the PFA)

Commercial – Calendar Year 2024	PFA	Non - PFA	Total
Site Plans			
Total # of Commercial Site Plans Approved	28	11	39
Gross Acres of All Approved Commercial Site Plans*	78.4	87.4	165.8
Gross Building Area Approved in Square Feet for Commercial Site Plans	957,050	3,812	960,862
Building Permits			
Total Commercial Building Permits Issued	27	1	28
Gross Building Area Constructed in Square Feet for issued Building Permits	245,215	736	245,951
Number of residential units approved as part of a commercial site plan (mixed-use), if any.	0	0	0

*Gross Acres of Commercial SDPs does not include acreage for Wireless Communication projects (cell towers)

Amendments and Growth-Related Changes in Development Patterns

Comprehensive Plan Updates

There are no comprehensive plan updates to report for 2024.

Planned Development Zone Amendments

The following PDZAs were voted on by the Planning Commission in 2024. Effective date refers to the date on which the Charles County Board of Commissioners made a final decision. Unless otherwise noted, the effective date is the approval date.

Amendment No.	Summary	Effective Date
Docket 90 PDZA #24-90(23) Villages of Wooded Glen and Piney Reach	The purpose of this amendment was to eliminate the middle school from what was previously shown as a combined elementary and middle school site within the Highlands Neighborhood along St. Charles Parkway. The associated Master Plan now illustrates the future middle school relocated to Piney Reach Neighborhood 2 along Piney Church Road. Remediation requirements for the vegetated buffer along MD Route 488 were also modified, in addition to other amendments.	October 22, 2024

Zoning Map Amendments

The following ZMAs were voted on by the Planning Commission in 2024. Effective date refers to the date on which the Charles County Board of Commissioners made a final decision. Unless otherwise noted, the effective date is the approval date.

Amendment No.	Summary	Effective Date
Zoning Map Amendment (ZMA) #23-02, Aviation Business Park	The purpose of ZMA #23-02 is to allow development compatible with the Maryland Airport and to support economic development. ZMA #23-02 would amend the Charles County Zoning Maps to rezone certain properties around the airport to the new ABP Zone, with certain properties along Ray Drive being rezoned to Light Industrial. (See below for corresponding Zoning Text Amendment ZTA#23-176)	October 29, 2024
Zoning Map Amendment (ZMA) #23-03, Martin Knapp Properties	The purpose of this zoning map amendment was to rezone Parcel 53 (3755 Leonardtown Road) and Parcel 68 (3640 Moses Way) from Central Business (CB) to High Density Suburban Residential (RH).	May 14, 2024

Zoning Text Amendments

The following ZTAs were voted on by the Planning Commission in 2024. Effective date refers to the date on which the Charles County Board of Commissioners made a final decision. Unless otherwise noted, the effective date is the approval date.

Amendment No.	Summary	Effective Date
ZTA #22-174, Mixed Use Zone Revisions of 297-106 and 297-49	The purpose of this zoning text amendment was to amend certain provisions of the Zoning Ordinance of Charles County pertaining to the Mixed Use (MX) Zone to promote the creation of housing for specific populations which is integrated into a larger residential development, which may include affordable units, accessory dwelling units to single-family units, artist housing/studio, live-work units, age-restricted housing, or housing for veterans.	October 30, 2024
ZTA #23-176, Aviation Business Park	The purpose of ZTA #23-176 is to allow development compatible with the Maryland Airport and to support economic development. ZTA #23-176 would amend certain provisions of the Charles County Zoning Ordinance to establish a new base zoning district, the Aviation Business Park (ABP) Zone. (See above for corresponding Zoning Map Amendment ZMA #23-02)	October 29, 2024
ZTA #23-179, Amendments to the Residential (RO) Zoning District	The purpose of this Zoning Text Amendment was to amend the Charles County Zoning Ordinance to add the Multifamily Residential: Garden Apartment uses and Multifamily Residential: Mid-Rise uses as permitted uses in the Residential Office (RO) Zone. The amendments are meant to facilitate development of infill parcels and to provide affordable housing.	April 8, 2025
ZTA #23-181 Restaurant, Fast Food Drive-in and Drive Through with Direct Access to a Public Road in the Core Employment/Residential (CER) Zone	The purpose of this zoning text amendment was to permit use code 6.02.300 Restaurant, fast-food drive-in, and drive-through and mobile food service facilities with direct access to a public road within the Core Employment/Residential (CER) Zone by Special Exception.	Denied by Board of County Commissioners January 14, 2025
ZTA #24-182 Required Widths of Aisles and Driveways and parking Area Surfaces for Agritourism Projects	The purpose of this zoning text amendment was to amend certain provisions of the Charles County Zoning Ordinance to allow for relief from Section 297-337, which speaks to the required widths of aisles and driveways for Agritourism and Ecotourism.	June 10, 2025

ZTA #24-184 Additional Transition Provisions for the Waldorf Activity Center Zones	The purpose of this zoning text amendment was to new transitional provisions for the Waldorf Central (WC) and Acton Urban Center (AUC) zones to 1) modify specific zoning requirements for an interim period of five years, and 2) clarify the text for certain requirements of these zones to promote more ease of understanding by the development community. The amendments are meant to incentivize and facilitate new development and redevelopment in the Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor (WURC). More specifically, the interim modifications include 1) allowing residential use on the portion of the ground floor of multifamily buildings on major streets that is not visible from the street; and 2) removing the requirement to purchase Transferable Development Rights (TDRs).	October 29, 2024
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Annexations

There were no municipal annexations in Charles County in 2024.

Planning and Process Improvements

The following planning initiatives or process improvements were either initiated in 2024 or continued from a previous year.

Zoning Code Updates

As part of the implementation of the 2016 Charles County Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 297 of the County Code of Ordinances and Resolutions) is being updated. In 2024 work began with an outside consultant to evaluate the existing zoning code and identify areas for consolidation and simplification. Work continues into 2025 and it is hoped the effort will wrap up before the end of the year.

Climate & Resilience Planning

In 2024, the Office of Climate Resilience and Sustainability in the Planning Division continued the County's first Climate Action Planning process, which will identify ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resiliency across government operations and the broader community. Stakeholder interviews with government departments and agencies were completed in early 2024, which aided in the development of draft action strategies for government operations. Community-wide engagement began in the fall of 2024 and has continued into 2025. This included four interactive virtual webinars, five in-person meetings held around the County, and pop-up events such as the Charles County Fair and the La Plata Farmer's Market. Additional stakeholder and community engagement over the summer of 2025 will provide opportunities to review draft community-wide action strategies. The draft Climate Action plan is anticipated in the fall of 2025 prior to undergoing a public review and adoption process with the Resilience Authority of Charles County, the Planning Commission, and the County Commissioners.

Affordable Housing Planning

In 2023 an Affordable Housing Workgroup was formed comprising Planning & Growth Management staff as well as members of the Planning Commission. This group met three times during 2024 to discuss policy recommendations for lowering the cost of housing across the County, and staff provided multiple updates to the entirety of the Planning Commission on policy development throughout 2024. In 2025 it is expected that the workgroup will make recommendations to the Charles County Board of Commissioners on policies to encourage affordable housing development.

Water & Sewer Capacity Upgrades

Project	Update
Hughesville Village Water and Sewer System	Continued preliminary design services to evaluate and select sites for key water and sewer infrastructure facilities in the Hughesville area.
Middletown-Bensville Road Water Main Extension	This project began in July 2024 to design and permit the water main interconnection from Bensville Road to Middletown Road. The new connection will serve communities in the Bensville area on a single distribution main and create a loop to enhance system reliability.
Billingsley Rd Upsize and Water Main Extension	Design work began in September 2024 to upsize and extend the water main along Billingsley Road. This project will improve water service pressure and reliability in the St. Charles and White Plains communities.
Acton Lane Water Main Extension	This project began in September 2024 to design and permit a water main extension along Acton Lane to complete the connection to Hamilton Road and provide a secondary connection to the Wexford Village II subdivision.
Benedict Alternative Sewer Study	This study kicked off in October 2024 to evaluate three sewer collection, treatment, and disposal alternatives for the Benedict Community.
Marshall Hall Rd / Strawberry Hills Waterline	This project aims to enhance fire storage redundancy and ensure adequate water pressure in the Bryans Road area. The extension project began in May 2023, and design was completed in February 2024.
Gleneagles 2MG Water Tower	This project began in October 2022. Design was completed in May 2024 and subsequently handed over to Utilities for construction. The project includes the construction of a new 2-million-gallon water tower and a Line Maintenance Building for operational support.
Bryans Road Water Tower	This project started Early 2024 and is on track for completion in 2025. Currently, Bryans Road is served by a single tower that provides system pressure and fire storage. This additional tower is critical to provide redundancy and enhance reliability in the public water system.
Swan Point Petition Project	All stakeholders have reached a consensus and signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), allowing the project to proceed. The design phase began in late 2024. The goal is to develop engineering plans to repair and improve stormwater infrastructure identified in the Swan Point Drainage Assessment, which included an inventory and inspection of storm drain structures, pipes, and facilities, along with cost estimates for recommended repairs and maintenance.
Residential Drainage Improvement Program (RDIP)	Design for 23 of the 109 identified projects began in early 2024. Of these, 3 have received permits and are ready for construction, 4 are currently under review, and the remainder are either at 90% design or awaiting

	easement acquisition for permit approval. Construction is anticipated to begin in Spring 2025 for several of the projects. RDIP is focused on strategically addressing stormwater deficiencies in prioritized neighborhoods.
Floodplain Analysis Studies	Initiated in late December 2024, this project aims to conduct detailed analyses of streams in Charles County that are not currently mapped by FEMA. The goal is to assess potential flood hazards and delineate the extents of their impacts.
WURC Stormwater Outfall	The project report was completed in July 2024. Its purpose was to identify and design a suitable outfall to support the proposed stormwater management ponds.
WSSC Waldorf Interconnection	Design for the pipeline project began in May 2024. The purpose of the project is to provide a new interconnection pipeline from WSSC to the Waldorf water system and increase supply by up to 5.0 Million Gallons per day (MGD).
Indian Head Manor Waterline Petition	Construction of the waterline was completed in late 2024

Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning

In 2024 PGM staff completed a number of bike & pedestrian projects including data collection, interagency planning, and multiple applications for grant funding. Staff participated in the One Maryland One Centerline program and provided sidewalk data to MDOT to help create a seamless statewide roadway dataset for federal, state, and local stakeholders. PGM staff worked with the Capital Services division to develop a scoring system to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian projects which will go into effect in FY 2026 when projects are suggested for inclusion in the CIP. Finally, staff applied for and was granted \$300,000 by the MD Bikeways program to design the initial phase of an extension to the Indian Head Rail Trail.

Placemaking

Charles County has made strides with several placemaking projects in the Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor (WURC) to activate and beautify the corridor, which will further catalyze development and redevelopment. The county is working with a local artist to install public art and park amenities at a county gymnastics facility. The installation is anticipated to take place in summer 2025. The county also received a \$200,000 grant from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to fund the WURC Façade Improvement Program. Businesses will be invited to apply for the funding to rehabilitate their facades, which will help improve the aesthetics of the corridor.

Expedited Projects

A number of major development projects have requested expedited review status in recent years to streamline the permitting process with PGM. In 2024 there were no new projects that applied for expedited status, but staff did review and issue permits for various phases of previously expedited projects such as the townhouses at Waldorf Station, multi-family residential development at Waldorf Technology Park, and commercial flex space at Berry Pointe business park.

New Schools or School Additions

Charles County Public Schools will expand to 39 school facilities, with the opening of Margaret Jamieson Thornton Elementary School in August 2025. The new school is projected to have a rated capacity of 778 students. CCBOE completed the redistricting for Thornton Elementary school in June 2024, and it will become effective for the 2025-2026 school year. The La Plata High School modernization and addition project, which would increase its capacity by approximately 250-350 students, has received IAC approval but has not yet been approved by the Maryland Stadium Authority.

Public Engagement

In 2024, Charles County implemented a countywide web-based community engagement tool known as Stay Engaged, Charles County. The Department of Planning and Growth Management has used this platform to expand its community education and outreach efforts. The platform allows the use of several forms of media to communicate and to seek feedback from the community including surveys, videos, and text. This was used extensively for the Affordable Housing Work Group and the Zoning Ordinance update.

Development Capacity Analysis

A Development Capacity Analysis was last reported in 2022 using data from 2021. Under normal circumstances the DCA would be updated in this report on the regular three-year cycle. However, due to Charles County’s impending Comprehensive Plan update which will include a full Development Capacity Analysis in 2026, staff has elected not to conduct a duplicate analysis this year. The data below is from the 2022 Development Capacity Analysis.

Figure 11: 2021 Residential Development Capacity (inside and Outside the PFA)

Parcels & Lots w/ Residential Capacity	PFA	Non – PFA	Total
Residentially Zoned Acres w/ Capacity	6,415	113,097	119,512
Residential Parcel & Lots w/Capacity	1,653	4,883	6,536
Residential Capacity (Units)	13,971	14,389	28,360

Land Preservation

Land preservation programs continue to be very active in Charles County with growing landowner interest in preserving their farm and forest properties. The amount of land protected in the calendar year 2024 reflects this trend, with a net increase of 1,240 acres. The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and the Rural Legacy Program contributed 839.93 preserved acres in 2024. These two programs rely heavily on a strong partnership with the County Government that includes staff time and local matching fund contributions. The County's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program and Forest Conservation Act requirements contributed 222.53 acres of protected land in 2024. Figure 12 below provides a detailed breakdown of protected lands in Charles County from all sources.

Figure 12: Protected Lands in Charles County through December 2024 (in acres)

	Type of Protection	Protected through 2023	2024 Data	Protected Through 2024
Regulatory	Resource Protection Zone (RPZ)	25,595	-180 ¹	25,415
	Forest Conservation Easements	9,936	39.79	9,976
	Stream Buffers in the Critical Area/Critical Area Buffer outside of the RPZ (IDZ and LDZ)	612		612
Federal	Federal Properties	1,674	31.38 ³	1,705
State	State Owned Resource Land	21,913	358.21 ²	22,271
	State and Federal Owned Easements	3,657		3,657
	Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Easements (MALPF)	15,043	839.39	15,883
	Maryland Historical Trust (MHT)	257		257
	Maryland Environmental Trust (MET)	5,604		5,604
State/Local	Rural Legacy Easement Properties	6,105		6,105
	Transfer of Development Rights Program	7,532	182.74	7,715
	County and Town Parks	3,437		3,437
Other	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	2,677	-31.38 ³	2,645
	Conservancy for Charles County (CCC)	342		342
	Joint MET & CCC Properties	1,501		1,501
Total Acres Protected		105,885	+1,240	107,125
Total Acres of Projected Open Space from Preliminary Plans for 2024			0	

(1) Acreage decrease is due to overlap with some of the new 2024 protected lands.

(2) State of MD DNR purchases omitted from prior years. (2021 = 246.39 Acres, 2022 = 111.82 Acres)

(3) TNC transferred land to Southern MD Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge Federal program.

Local Land Use Goal & Comprehensive Plan Goals

Local Land Use Goal:

With continued adherence to the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and the 2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan⁵, several significant sustained efforts were made, including downzoning measures to protect the County's natural resources, and increasing the size of Priority Preservation Areas (PPA). The PPA contains 132,741 acres and includes three major rural parts of the county: the Cobb Neck area, the Nanjemoy Peninsula, and much of the Mattawoman Creek Watershed. Within the County's long-term goal to preserve 50% of county land, a key strategy is the protection of 80% of the remaining undeveloped lands within the PPA for agricultural and forestry uses. The adoption of the Tier Map in 2014, designated the PPA as Tier IV, which enabled the County to stabilize the land base in this area by limiting subdivisions on septic systems within the PPA to minor subdivisions.

In 2017 Charles County adopted the Watershed Conservation District zone and reduced the size of the development district considerably. This change allowed the County to limit the development of subdivisions dependent on on-site septic systems within priority preservation areas. The County has also taken steps to limit development density within the Watershed Conservation District, which contains the Mattawoman priority preservation area. Since 2017, a new Purchase of Development Rights program, which targets conservation easement funding opportunities within priority preservation areas, was adopted by the County. Following on from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, voluntary interest in agriculture and forest land conservation programs has been high. Through the preservation programs of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Rural Legacy Program, local transfer of development rights, and local purchase of development rights, the County estimates that an average of 800 acres of farm and forest land is currently being protected in priority preservation areas annually. Charles County's agricultural land preservation program has been certified by the Maryland Department of Planning since 2021 which allows the County to keep more locally-generated agricultural land transfer tax in exchange for creating effective local land preservation programs and continually evaluating and improving them.

Timeframe for achieving the goal:

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan is a ten-year planning guidance document. A Work Program is in place to prioritize implementation goals and set realistic timeframes to achieve changes to policies and regulations.

Resources necessary:

Resource needs are reviewed on an annual basis as a part of the County budget process.

Charles County Open Space Goal Acreage Analysis

Charles County has an open space preservation goal of 50 percent. Figure 13 below provides a summary of the County's preservation efforts through 2024 to meet this open space goal.

Charles County has utilized, and should continue to utilize, Program Open Space funds for regular improvements to County parks and recreation amenities, and strategic acquisition of land for future parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces. Additional recreation amenities at these sites will depend on further assistance from Program Open Space funding and will significantly contribute to satisfying long-standing recreation and land conservation goals of the state and county.

⁵ In 2022, the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan was updated from its last version from 2017.

The County's current Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) clearly states that the demand for active recreation facilities continues to grow and that there is an immediate need to plan and develop such facilities. Athletic playing fields and hiking/biking trails have not kept pace with the County's rapid population growth. Additionally, the LPPRP calls for more open space acquisition and recreational facilities throughout the County. Recreational demands continue to grow in our area, specifically in the greater Waldorf and La Plata communities. Water access amenities continue to be a priority as well. The strategic enhancements of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces that utilized Program Open Space funds are planned to help the County work toward achieving the goals of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, as well as those of the County Comprehensive Plan, and State of Maryland.

Figure 13: Open Space Goal Acreage Analysis

Category	Acres	Comments
Total County land area	294,404	
50% overall open space protection goal	147,202	
Protected through December 2024	107,125	73% of goal, 36% of County total Land area
Additional needed to meet goal	40,077	

Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance Restrictions

Charles County adopted an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) in 1992, which has been amended as needed since that time. Primarily, the APFO governs the approval of development based on the status of public infrastructure, which includes water supply, rural fire suppression resources, roadways, and schools. Through the APFO and related subdivision regulations, the County requires commercial and residential developments to provide necessary improvements to infrastructure (specifically roads and fire suppression water supplies) when the impact of the development is shown to degrade the level of service of the surrounding infrastructure. For schools, a residential development project must be granted an allocation of school capacity for each proposed lot or dwelling unit in order to receive approval of a record plat of subdivision.

Due to recent legislative updates and requirements under §7-104 of the Land Use Article, jurisdictions with adopted APFOs must submit a biennial APFO report. The APFO report is due by July 1 of each even year and covers the reporting period for the previous two calendar years. APFO reports for 2023 and 2024 are due July 1, 2025. However, jurisdictions are encouraged to submit an APFO report on an annual basis. The following information is provided to satisfy state requirements.

Figure 14: APFO Report for 2024

APFO Reporting Questions	Charles County Responses
Does your jurisdiction have an adopted APFO?	Yes
What type of infrastructure is monitored and may trigger development approval restrictions or require a developer to address deficiencies?	Roads Schools Water Supply Fire Suppression for Rural Areas
Has APFO impacted development approvals within the PFA?	Yes
If APFO has delayed, limited, or denied development, defined here as a “restriction”, are there infrastructure or service facility deficiencies that have triggered denials of development requests, or held up development approvals?	Yes
If APFO has delayed, limited, or denied development, defined here as a “restriction”, can the impact area of facility deficiencies/ development restrictions, which temporarily delay development approvals, be mapped?	Yes School capacity generally limits development when demand exceeds 110% of capacity.
Describe what is causing each restriction.	Scotland Heights, XPN-030016 & Linden Grove, Revision #3, PLREV-200004: These Preliminary Subdivision Plans were on the School Allocation Eligibility Wait List (“Wait List”) in 2024 but did not receive an offer of allocations due to the lack of necessary capacity in one school serving each of the

	developments. In accordance with Section 4.III.C of the Charles County Adequate Public Facilities Manual, projects may only be eligible for allocations from the Wait List when capacity exists in all three school levels (elementary, middle, and high); therefore, these two projects were delayed in receiving the allocations required to record new plats.
If applicable, what is the proposed resolution of each restriction?	The School Allocation Policy includes multiple provisions limiting the amount of time a project must wait for capacity before receiving the allocations necessary to continue development. Section 4.VI.B (referred to as the “Sunset Provisions”) states that development projects that have remained on the Wait List will receive 50% of their remaining allocations on the 6th anniversary of their initial approval, followed by the remaining 50% of the allocations on the 7th anniversary. Section 4.VI.D (referred to as the “Grandfathering Provisions”) states that development projects that have been on the Wait List for at least 6 years as of December 15, 2020 will be granted allocations in accordance with the criteria in this section.
If applicable, what is the estimated date to resolve each restriction?	Scotland Heights, XPN #030016 was eligible for the Grandfathering Provisions and subsequently received the remainder of allocations needed. This project is no longer on the Wait List; therefore, this restriction has been addressed. Linden Grove, Revision #3, PLREV-200004 will be eligible for the Sunset Provisions on March 15, 2027. If it remains on the Wait List, it will receive 50% of its remaining allocations in 2027, and the final 50% in 2028.
If a development restriction has been addressed, what was the resolution that lifted each restriction?	The School Allocation Policy performed as intended and resolved the restriction by awarding allocations to the eligible project.
If a development restriction has been addressed, when was each restriction lifted?	January 9, 2025

Affordable Housing

The Planning Division, in cooperation with the American Planning Association’s Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT), completed a housing study in 2018 that provided several recommendations to facilitate the implementation of affordable housing in Charles County. According to the study, the County will need 1,823 additional affordable housing units serving households earning between 30 percent and 80 percent of the area median income by the year 2025, or 228 units per year for each of the next eight years. While no new affordable housing units were approved in 2024, staff is aware of a number of projects that are in the initial stages of development. Approximately 280 units are currently moving forward in the development process or have reached out to Charles County about incentives.

Figure 15: Affordable Housing Units Approved in 2024

Development Name	Total Number of New Units	Target Income %AMI	Rental or Owner-Occupied	Incentive Program
N/A				

Article XV of the Charles County Zoning Regulations outlines Moderately Priced Dwelling requirements, otherwise known as “inclusionary zoning” that would require developers to provide a certain percentage of affordable units in any residential development of a certain size. The 2016 Charles County Comprehensive Plan (as well as the CPAT report) recommends this portion of the code be changed to a mandatory instead of voluntary program, but as of the writing of this report the program is still voluntary.

Growth Trends

Growth in Charles Count is strongly influenced by its proximity to Washington, D.C., making it a desirable location for commuters seeking more affordable suburban living. This geographic advantage contributes to steady population growth and increased housing demand, as families and individuals look for cost-effective alternatives to more urbanized areas, including those in Prince George’s County, Maryland and Northern Virginia.

While market conditions will always play a role, growth is also affected by current policies and regulations that are in place. In 2012, as part of the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act, a Tier Map was adopted countywide that restricts growth in the rural areas of the county to minor subdivisions. In 2016, the Comprehensive Plan was updated, which now calls for a target growth rate of approximately one percent, or less, per year. The years since the 2016 plan was adopted, the growth rates have been mostly on target with the 2016 Comprehensive Plan. There was a slight increase in growth rates in 2020 and 2021, which may be attributable to pandemic-related housing market trends, but growth between 2021 and 2022 slowed to less than 1%.

When considering growth in Charles County, and especially in the Development District, St. Charles accounts for a significant portion of development approvals. The Zoning Indenture known as Docket #90 authorized the Planned Unit Development (PUD) of St. Charles. Through village master plans, St. Charles is allowed to build more than 20,000 total units including single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments. In 2024, final plat approvals in the St. Charles PUD accounted for 54 percent of the final plats approved inside the PFA, and 47 percent of the total final plat approvals.

Development within the Towns of La Plata and Indian Head must also be considered in the County’s overall growth rate. The two municipalities account for less than 10% of Charles County’s overall population, but in recent years La Plata has expanded its boundary through annexation, is developing hundreds of new housing units with new subdivisions and apartments, and has increased its population by 12% between 2020 and 2024. Indian Head has grown less rapidly, but the US Navy’s \$1.1 billion investment in NSWC Indian Head⁶ over the next 10 years will affect not just the Naval facility, but also the Charles County community, especially those in the Western Charles County Technology Corridor⁷. While the towns’ citizens and students are counted in Charles County’s overall population and school enrollment figures, recent construction – plats, plans, and building permits – are not captured in Charles County’s data. Each municipality prepares its own Annual Report for the Maryland Department of Planning with town-specific building statistics. Figure 16 below shows the most recent population estimates for La Plata and Indian Head.

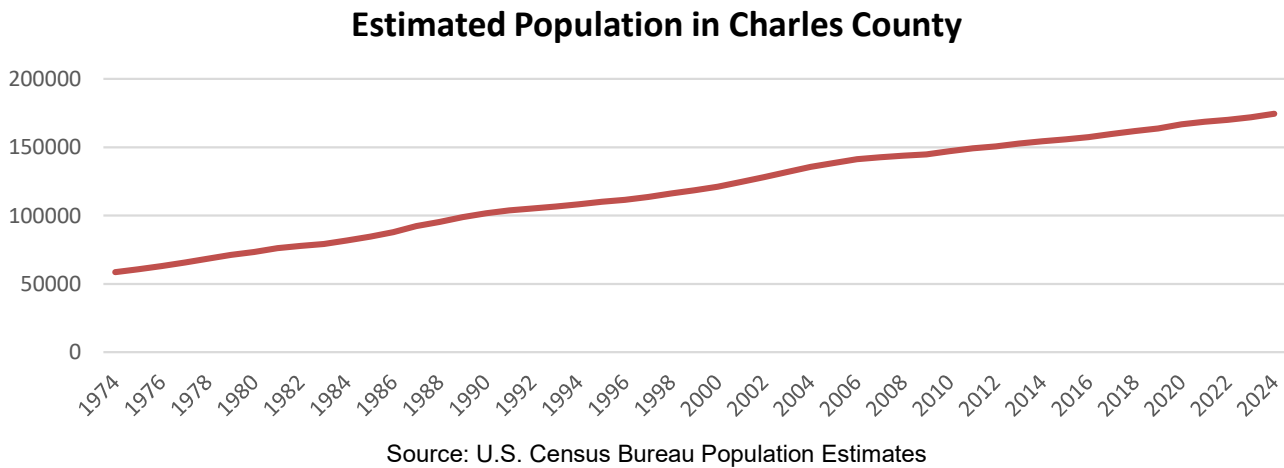
Figure 16: 2024 Population Estimates for Charles County’s Largest Municipalities

Town of Indian Head Population	Town of La Plata Population	Charles County Population	Municipal Share of Charles County Population
4,170	11,374	174,478	8.9%

⁶ <https://www.meetcharlescounty.com/blog/2024/07/30/default/navy-s-investment-in-nswc-indian-head-spells-opportunity-for-charles-county/>

⁷ <https://www.meetcharlescounty.com/western-charles-technology-corridor>

Figure 17: Estimated Population Growth in Charles County since 1974



According to Figure 17 above, the population of Charles County is steadily increasing. While the County's annual growth rate has declined substantially since the 1970s it still remains, on average, slightly higher than 1% annually. This steady growth in tandem with other jurisdictions around Maryland experiencing population loss or stagnation keeps Charles County near the top of the state's ranking of fastest growing counties. Between 2020 and 2024 only Frederick County (10.2%) and Queen Anne's County (7.6%) grew a faster rate than Charles County (4.6%) according to the Census Bureau. The current year's population growth rate of 1.46% exceeds the 2016 Comprehensive Plan's target of 1% annual growth.

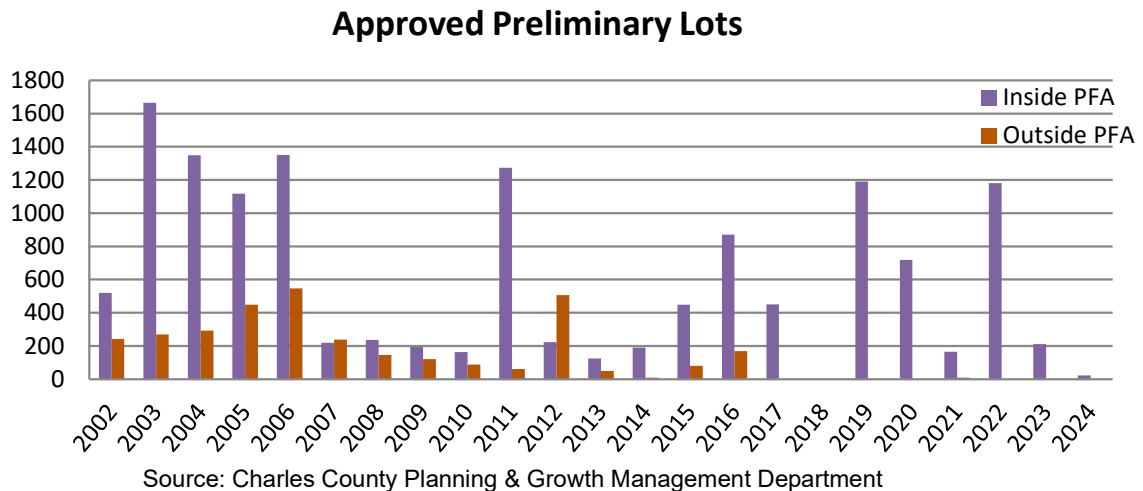
While population is one way to look at growth, there are other factors to consider that will have a direct effect on growth such as the approval of preliminary subdivision plans, final subdivision plats, and building permits. Trends for each of these will be considered in the following pages.

Preliminary Subdivision Plans

Preliminary subdivision plans are required for projects with more than seven (7) proposed lots. PSPs should only be considered as an indicator of *potential* growth as they may not be built for several years, and some preliminary plans are voided before moving to the final plat stage. Therefore, while there is some value in tracking preliminary plan trends for forecasting purposes, final plats and building permits provide a more accurate picture of development in Charles County.

Figure 18 below indicates some clear trends in preliminary plans over the last twenty years, one of which is the ongoing diminishment in the number of planned subdivision lots outside of the Priority Funding Area. The number of annual preliminary plat lots has been inconsistent since the start of the mortgage and financial crisis in 2007, but the number of lots outside the PFA has steadily decreased over the same time span (except for the outlier of 2012). Further, with the adoption of the tier map in 2012, there have been fewer preliminary plans in general, especially in the rural areas. The number of preliminary lots approved (22) in 2024 is significantly lower than in recent years, and the lowest since zero PSP lots were approved in 2018.

Figure 18: Approved Preliminary Lots Inside and Outside the Priority Funding Area

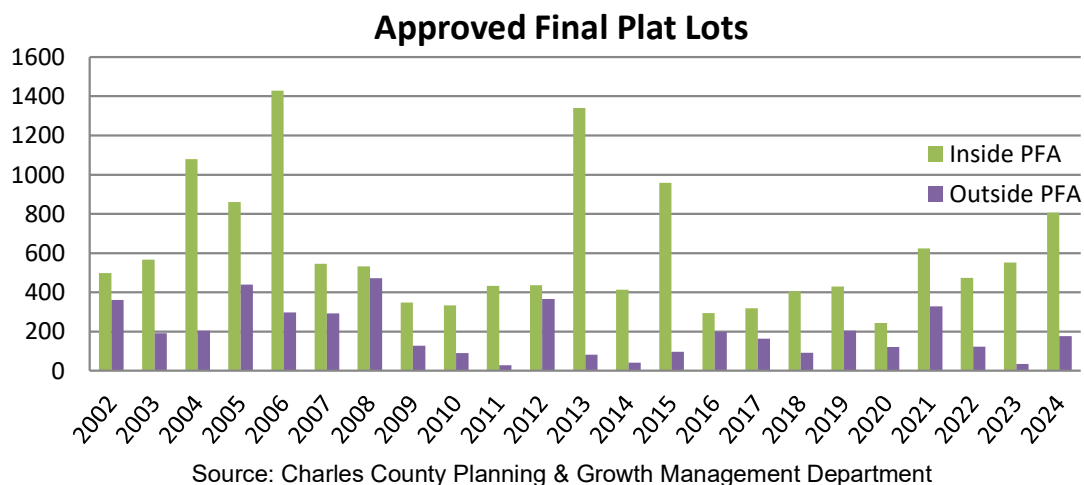


Final Plats

In looking at trends for final plats in Charles County since 2002 in Figure 19 below, it should be noted that more final plat lots are being recorded inside of the Development District/Priority Funding Area than outside overall. Since the financial crisis that began in 2007/2008, final plat lots have shown steady growth, especially when only considering lots recorded inside the PFA.

Even with the recent increase in interest rates final plat lot approvals should be steady over the next few years within the Priority Funding Area as the approved and revised preliminary subdivisions of the last few years are developed. However, as the St. Charles PUD continues to build out, the pipeline of large subdivisions with final plats to approve will begin to dry up and it's unclear whether the steady increase in annual lots will continue much longer.

Figure 19: Number of Final Plat Lots Approved Inside and Outside of the Priority Funding Area⁸



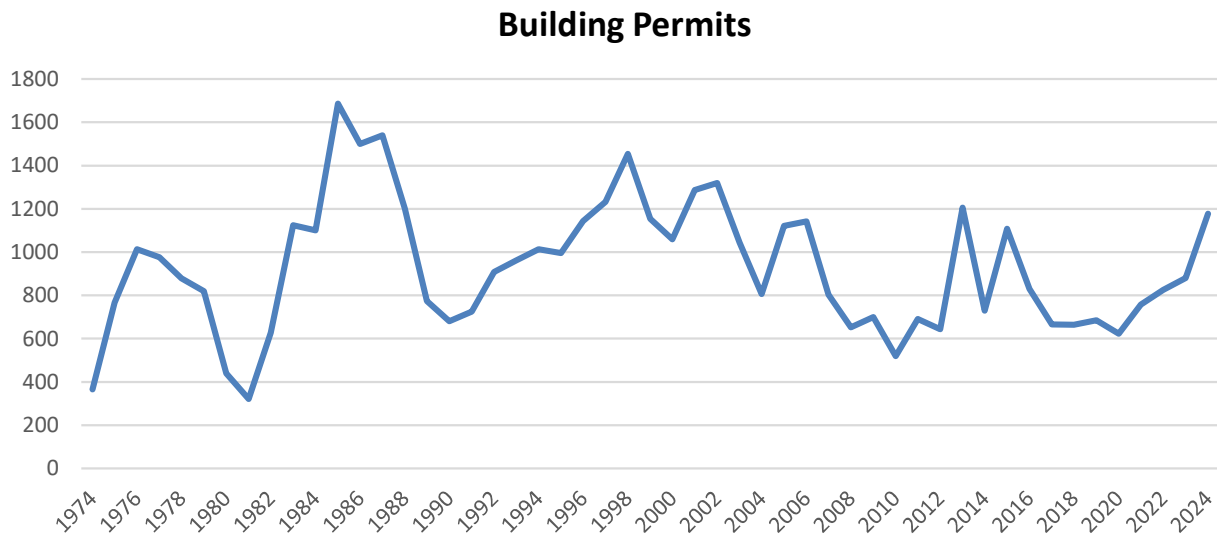
⁸ Final plat lot numbers in Figure 19 include apartment and multi-family (duplex, triplex, quadriplex) units, if applicable. Apartment units are not counted as individual lots on final plats; therefore, this information was extracted from building permit data and added to the appropriate plat year.

Building Permits

Building permit data is very important to track as it represents actual development that may have been in process for many years. Figure 20 below shows the distribution of building permits over the last 50+ years. Between 1981 and 1986 there was a significant building boom in the county, with 1985 being the year with the highest number of building permit approvals since 1969 at almost 1,700 permits. The fifty-year building permit average is 940 permits per year. However, the average number of residential building permits approved in the last ten years is 822.

An analysis of building permits since 1974 shows that the average annual growth rate over this 50-year period is 2.73 percent. This growth rate is understandable when considering that there were several years since 1973 where more than 1,000 building permits were approved, especially during the 1980’s. However, the average annual growth rate for building permits over the last ten years between 2015 and 2024 is 1.4 percent. Further, the annual growth rate for building permits for 2024 is 1.89 percent.

Figure 20: Charles County Residential Building Permits since 1974



Source: Charles County Planning & Growth Management Department

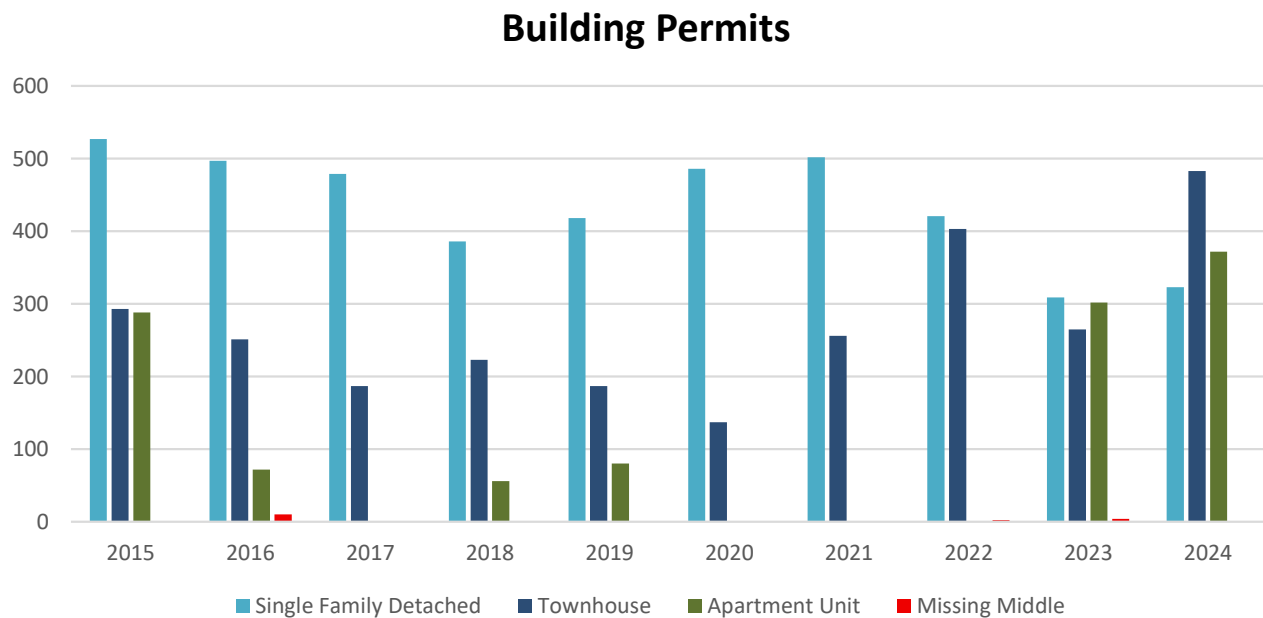
Figures 21 and 22 below show ten years’ worth of total residential building permits and permits by housing type since 2015. Single-family dwellings have been slowly decreasing as the dominant form of residential construction over the last ten years, losing ground to townhomes. Apartment approvals have been somewhat inconsistent, but with housing affordability a post-pandemic concern there have been a recent influx of apartment units constructed as well as interest from the development community.

“Missing Middle” housing types, consisting of duplexes, triplexes, cottage court apartments, live-work units, and other varieties beyond the “big three” housing types, have seen little development for a number of years. With the promotion of affordable housing policies that aim to expand the supply of housing and variety of housing typologies, staff will track these figures to see if numbers increase over the next decade.

Figure 21: Charles County Residential Building Permits

	SFD's	Townhomes	Apartments	"Missing Middle"	Total
2015	527	293	288	0	1,108
2016	497	251	72	10	830
2017	479	187	0	0	666
2018	386	223	56	0	665
2019	418	187	80	0	685
2020	486	137	0	0	623
2021	502	256	0	0	758
2022	421	403	0	2	826
2023	309	265	302	4	880
2024	323	483	372	0	1178
Total	4,348	2,685	1,170	16	

Figure 22: Charles County Residential Building Permits by Housing Types



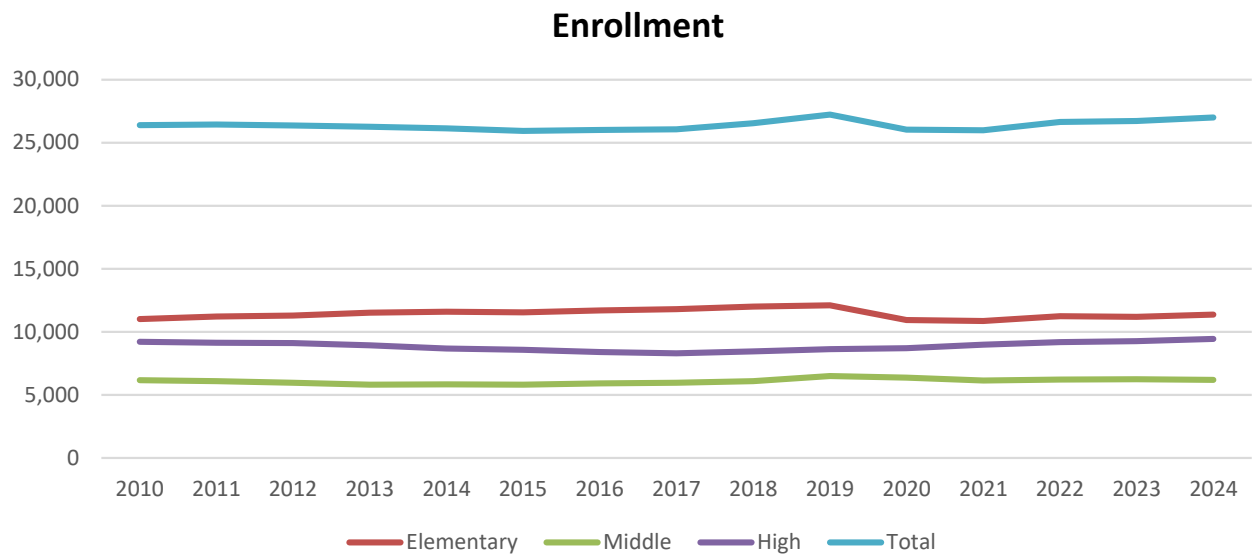
Source: Charles County Planning & Growth Management Department

School Enrollment

A key indicator of the impact of residential growth on public facilities is the effect on student population in the public schools. This indicator is a good way to measure how the increase in residential dwelling units translates into a secondary impact on the services provided by the state and local governments. Since 2010, residential dwelling units have increased by 22% in Charles County while the overall public school enrollment has been relatively flat according to Figure 23 below. Total enrollment has been

between approximately 26,000 and 27,000 students since 2010, including a period of growth prior to and decrease after the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020. Elementary, Middle, and High School enrollment figures for the 2024/2025 school year (27,005) have nearly reached their pre-pandemic highs (27,225), and annual increases in enrollment since 2020 are much closer to the overall rate of population growth in the county.

Figure 23: Charles County School District Enrollment Since 2010



Source: Charles County Public Schools

Housing Supply

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan estimates that between 2010 and 2040 Charles County will add approximately 30,000 households as well as 32,200 housing units. Using historical building permit data we can estimate how much progress Charles County has made to supplying the number of housing units needed to accommodate its expected population growth. Figure 24 below shows that since 2010 the number of units per year added to the housing stock has been below the rate needed to achieve the Comprehensive Plan’s target. As of 2024 only 11,489 additional units have been added, which is approximately 24% less than what is needed.

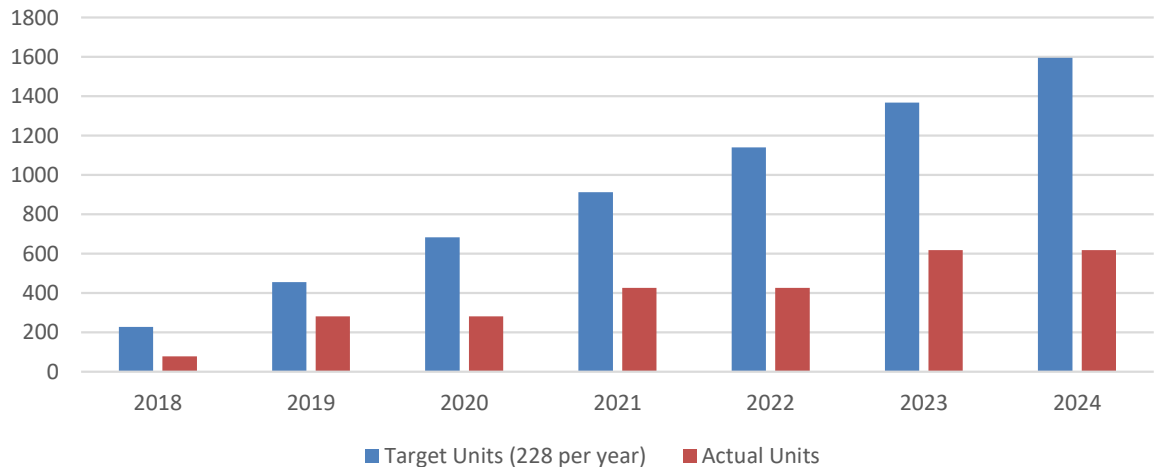
Figure 24 – 2016 Comprehensive Plan Estimates for Housing Units Needed by 2040

Additional Housing Units Needed by 2040	Units Needed per Year to Achieve Target	Units Needed by End of 2024 to Achieve Target
	1,073	15,026
	Average Units Per Year Since 2010	Total Units Delivered Since 2010
32,200	821	11,489

Affordable Housing

Starting in 2018 Planning staff has tracked affordable housing development in Charles County, which is defined as housing that is affordable to households earning less than 80% of the Area Median Income. Figure 25 below highlights the progress that has been made to the overall goal of 1823 additional affordable housing units by the year 2025. Since 2018 Charles County has seen a total of 618 affordable housing units reach an advanced stage of development, all of which were developed for rental housing. No housing has been specifically developed for fee-simple purchase by lower income homeowners. On average 100 new units of affordable housing have come online annually since 2018, which is below the target of 228 annual units developed as part of the 2018 CPAT housing study. Following the report by the Affordable Housing Workgroup to the Board of County Commissioners in 2025, new targets will be developed that staff will track beginning in the next annual report.

Figure 25: Charles County Affordable Housing Units Since 2018
Total Affordable Housing Units - CPAT Target Vs Actual



Source: Charles County Planning & Growth Management Department

What does this all mean?

When looking at growth in Charles County, there are multiple indicators to consider. Previous Planning Commission Annual Reports have calculated the average annual growth rate strictly on population estimates provided by the Census Bureau. The Comprehensive Plan also calculates the average annual growth rate based on Census estimated population data. When the Census Bureau updates their population estimates, they use current data on deaths, births, and migration. Staff also considers actual residential development approvals, and specifically building permits, as a way of considering the average annual rate of growth. Unlike population data, building permit approvals reflect actual development on the ground, which is a direct result of economic market conditions, as well as current policies and regulations that are in place. The annual growth rate for population for 2024 is 1.46 percent. In comparison, when using cumulative building permit data, the average annual growth rate is 1.89 percent.

It is important to note that building permit data does not include information on the number of persons per household. According to Census 2020, the number of persons per household is 2.79, and over the next several decades this number is expected to decrease nationwide. While building permit data does not capture how many people will be living in new households that are built in the county, this is a more accurate way to capture actual residential growth in Charles County in any given year, which is also driven by economic market trends, as well as current policies and regulations. Further, it is important to point out that school enrollment figures have remained relatively constant at just over two percent growth since 2010, and this trend is expected to continue.

Figure 25: Growth Rate Comparisons in Charles County over 10 Years

Year	Population Growth Rate	Housing Unit Growth Rate	School Enrollment Growth Rate
2015	0.86%	2.00%	-0.76%
2016	1.09%	1.47%	0.32%
2017	1.42%	1.16%	0.16%
2018	1.35%	1.15%	1.87%
2019	1.15%	1.17%	2.57%
2020	1.80%	1.05%	-4.36%
2021	1.21%	1.27%	-0.19%
2022	0.83%	1.36%	2.50%
2023	1.10%	1.43%	0.34%
2024	1.46%	1.89%	1.03%
10 Year Average	1.23%	1.4%	0.35%

Despite the significant changes made by the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, including downzoning measures to protect the County's natural resources, and increasing the size of the Priority Preservation Areas, it is anticipated that the annual rate of growth will remain slightly above 1 percent for the foreseeable future. Data from final plats, building permits, and *recent* school enrollment provide a more accurate indication of growth and development trends. These measures would appear to reflect a steady or low rate of growth.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Due to the significant changes made in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, and the fact that 65 percent of the County is mapped as Tier IV and limited to minor subdivisions, it is anticipated that the growth rate will remain near, but slightly above, 1 percent per year. Despite ongoing challenges with affordability in Charles County, it remains relatively less expensive than other regional counties closer to Washington DC, and therefore offers an attractive location for relocation. However, growth control mechanisms, especially zoning, water and sewer policies, and adequate public facility regulations, will likely continue to result in at least 70 to 75 percent of new growth occurring in the Development District and the incorporated towns – minimizing impact on Charles County's natural and protected environments.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

One of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan goals is to direct 75 percent of future residential growth to the Development District and to the Towns of Indian Head and La Plata as these areas will provide infrastructure to support growth, including water and sewer, schools and roads. As noted previously, the 2016 Comprehensive Plan reduced the size of the Development District from 52,200 acres to 22,189 acres for a total reduction of 30,011 acres. Figure 26 below demonstrates how Charles County's development activity is generally consistent with the 2016 Comprehensive Plan goals.

Figure 26: Development Consistency with Comprehensive Plan Goals

	Comprehensive Plan Goals	2024	5-Year Average	10-Year Average
% Preliminary Plan Lots Inside PFA:	75%	100%	99.6%	95%
% Final Plat Lots Inside PFA:	75%	82%	78%	77%
Housing: Single Family	80%	27%	48%	53%
Housing: Townhomes	15%	41%	36%	33%
Housing: Apartments	5%	32%	16%	14%
Housing: Total Units (target of 32,200 by 2040)	1,073	1,178	853	822

In 2024, 100 percent of preliminary plan lots were located in the Priority Funding Area. An analysis of preliminary plan lots inside the Development District/PFA from 2015 through 2024 demonstrates that the County is exceeding Comprehensive Plan goals, averaging 95 percent over the ten-year period.

In 2024, 82 percent of the final plat lots were located inside the PFA. Further, an analysis of final plat lots inside the Development District/PFA from 2015 through 2024 demonstrates that the County is consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals, averaging 77 percent over the ten-year period.

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan identifies a goal for housing mix of approximately 80 percent single-family detached units, 15 percent townhouses and condominiums, and 5 percent apartments. Using building permit data for 2024 as an indicator, the County continues to exceed the goal for townhouses and apartment units, while coming in below the goal for single-family dwellings. While 2022 saw zero apartment permit approvals 2023 and 2024 numbers exceeded Comprehensive Plan goals thanks to a large number of multi-family units coming online in Waldorf, St. Charles, and La Plata. It is expected that apartment numbers should achieve a higher share of permit approvals in the coming years as the County continues to promote higher density residential development along the Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor.

In terms of total housing production, Charles County's 1,178 newly permitted housing units in 2024 exceeded the annual target of 1,073 for the first time since 2015. However, the 10-year average for annual housing units added is below the level needed to reach the Comprehensive Plan's estimate for 2040.

Charles County's affordable housing development has fallen short of the goals in the 2018 housing study partly because county policies neither mandate nor expressly incentivize this type of development. That will change in coming years as a new comprehensive plan is developed by 2026 and the Affordable Housing Workgroup's suggested policies begin to be implemented.

Per the state Smart, Green and Growing legislation, jurisdictions are to establish a goal toward increasing the percentage of growth within their PFAs while decreasing the percentage of growth outside. Priority Funding Areas are existing communities and places where State and local governments want to target their efforts to encourage and support economic development and new growth. Further, these locations are also where local governments want State investment to support future growth. The 2024 Annual Report map in the appendix includes the Priority Funding Areas.

The current growth policy of Charles County is aligned with the principles of the State legislation by encouraging, as a matter of policy, the majority of development into the Development District and the PFAs. Charles County has been supporting smart growth as a policy and concept as reflected in the Planned Unit Development (PUD) of St. Charles Communities for well over three decades. Additionally, the County is committed to having 50 percent of its overall acreage in open space. A large Priority Preservation Area has been established with an aggressive goal of preserving 80 percent of the remaining undeveloped land within these areas. The County's commitment to land preservation has resulted in over 1,000 acres protected annually since 2016, including the more than 1,200 net acres preserved in 2024.

Currently, the trend lines indicate development is within the level of tolerance. The County is currently preparing to begin the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan which was last approved in 2016. While overall development targets are in line with the existing plan it is anticipated that the new plan will focus on affordable housing and how to increase the number of housing units and types available in order to bring down overall prices and meet the previous Comprehensive Plan's 30 year goal. Additional supply coupled with upcoming changes to County policies and regulations by the Affordable Housing Workgroup could see some significant changes in the development trends of the past decade in Charles County.

Appendix

- 1) Development Activity Map with Priority Funding Areas
- 2) Land Use Map from the Comprehensive Plan
- 3) Protected Lands Map
- 4) Tier Map
- 5) Priority Preservation Areas Map

IMPORTANT PLEASE NOTE: All publications located within the Planning and Growth Management section of the web site are believed to be accurate as of their posting date. However, they may not be accurate on the day you view them. To verify whether these documents are the most current official document, please contact the division associated with the document in question.

PLANNING COMMISSION OF CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND

BE IT RESOLVED, this 21st day of July 2025, by the Planning Commission of Charles County that the document consisting of text, maps, and charts, entitled “2024 Planning Commission Annual Report” and dated July 2025, is hereby adopted in accordance with the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

Kevin Wedding

Kevin Wedding (Jul 31, 2025 12:57:29 EDT)

Kevin Wedding, Chairman

ATTEST:

Amy Brackett

Amy Brackett, Clerk






Adopted 2024 Planning Commission Annual Report

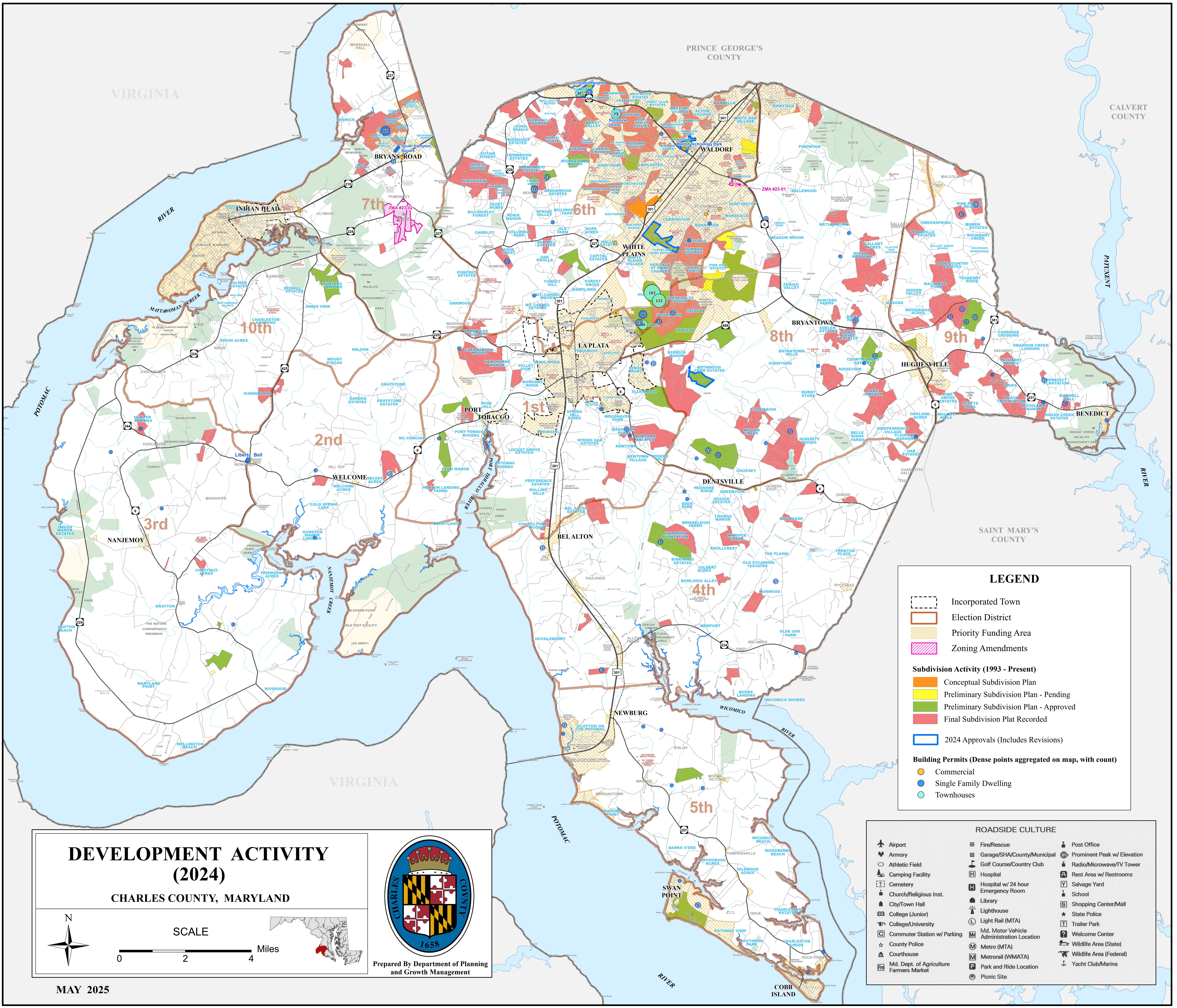
Final Audit Report

2025-07-31

Created:	2025-07-31 (Eastern Daylight Time)
By:	Amy Brackett (BracketA@charlescountymd.gov)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAwIDSYp-xRXoYzrLL5XNoYQ_9gX5CVDFr

"Adopted 2024 Planning Commission Annual Report" History

-  Document created by Amy Brackett (BracketA@charlescountymd.gov)
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-  Document emailed to Kevin Wedding (kevwedding@aol.com) for signature
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2025-07-31 - 12:56:53 PM EDT
-  Document e-signed by Kevin Wedding (kevwedding@aol.com)
Signature Date: 2025-07-31 - 12:57:29 PM EDT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.
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DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

(2024)

CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND

N

SCALE

Miles

Prepared By Department of Planning and Growth Management

LEGEND

Incorporated Town

Election District

Priority Funding Area

Zoning Amendments

Subdivision Activity (1993 - Present)

Conceptual Subdivision Plan

Preliminary Subdivision Plan - Pending

Preliminary Subdivision Plan - Approved

Final Subdivision Plat Recorded

2024 Approvals (Includes Revisions)

Building Permits (Dense points aggregated on map, with count)

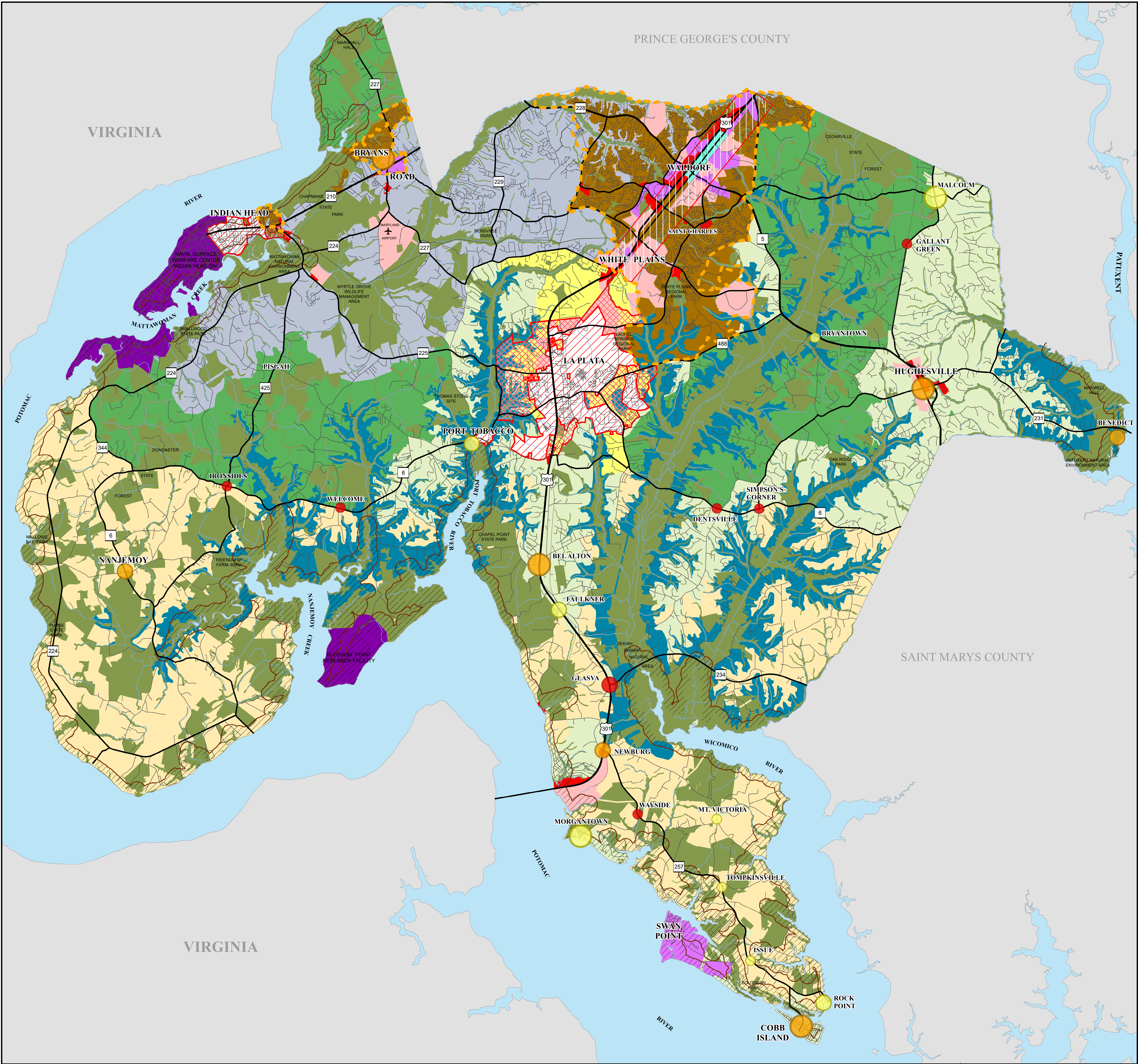
Commercial

Single Family Dwelling

Townhouses

ROADSIDE CULTURE

Airport	Fire/Rescue	Post Office
Armory	Garage/SHA/County/Municipal	Prominent Peak w/ Elevation
Athletic Field	Golf Course/Country Club	Radio/Microwave/TV Tower
Camping Facility	Hospital	Rest Area w/ Restrooms
Cemetery	Hospital w/ 24 hour Emergency Room	Salvage Yard
Church/Religious Inst.	Library	School
City/Town Hall	Lighthouse	Shopping Center/Mall
College (Junior)	Light Rail (MTA)	State Police
College/University	Md. Motor Vehicle Administration Location	Trailer Park
Commuter Station w/ Parking	Metro (MTA)	Welcome Center
County Police	Metrorail (WMATA)	Wildlife Area (State)
Courthouse	Park and Ride Location	Wildlife Area (Federal)
Md. Dept. of Agriculture Farmers Market	Picnic Site	Yacht Club/Marina



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CHARLES COUNTY
MARYLAND

LEGEND

- Development District
- Residential
- Watershed Conservation District
- Employment & Industrial Park Districts
- Commercial & Business Districts
- Mixed Use Districts
- Redevelopment District
- Suburban Large Lot District
- Rural Residential
- Agriculture Conservation District
- Rural Conservation District
- Incorporated Towns
- Incorporated Town Growth Areas
- Transit Corridor
- Protected Lands
- Major Stream Valleys
- Military or Federally Owned Lands
- Chesapeake Bay Critical Area

Villages

- Residential
- Commercial
- Mixed Residential & Commercial

> 150 Acres
50 - 100 Acres
< 50 Acres

LAND USE PLAN

OCTOBER 19, 2021



CHARLES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

0 1 2 Miles



VIRGINIA

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

CALVERT
COUNTY

RIVER

INDIAN HEAD

BRYANS ROAD

WALDORF

WHITE PLAINS

BRYANTOWN

HUGHESVILLE

BENEDICT

LEGEND

- MD AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION DISTRICT (5 YEARS)
- FEDERAL PROPERTIES
- STATE OWNED RESOURCE LANDS
- STATE / FEDERAL EASEMENT
- MD AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION EASEMENT (MALPF)
- MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST (MHT)
- MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST (MET)
- RURAL LEGACY
- TRANSFERRABLE DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDR)
- COUNTY PARKS
- TOWN PARKS
- THE NATURE CONSERVANCY
- CONSERVANCY FOR CHARLES COUNTY (CCC)
- JOINT MET / CCC
- FOREST CONSERVATION EASEMENTS
- RESOURCE PROTECTION ZONE
- DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS (2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN)
- RURAL LEGACY PROGRAM AREAS

SAINT MARY'S
COUNTY

VIRGINIA

POTOMAC

WICOMICO RIVER

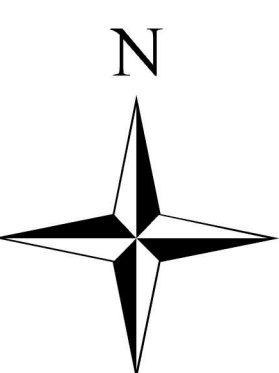
SWAN POINT

COBB ISLAND

2025

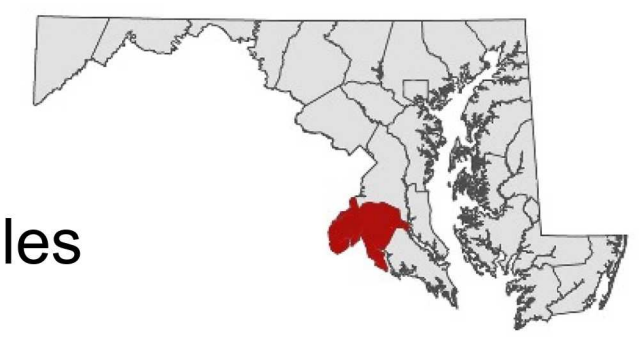
PROTECTED LANDS MAP

CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND



SCALE

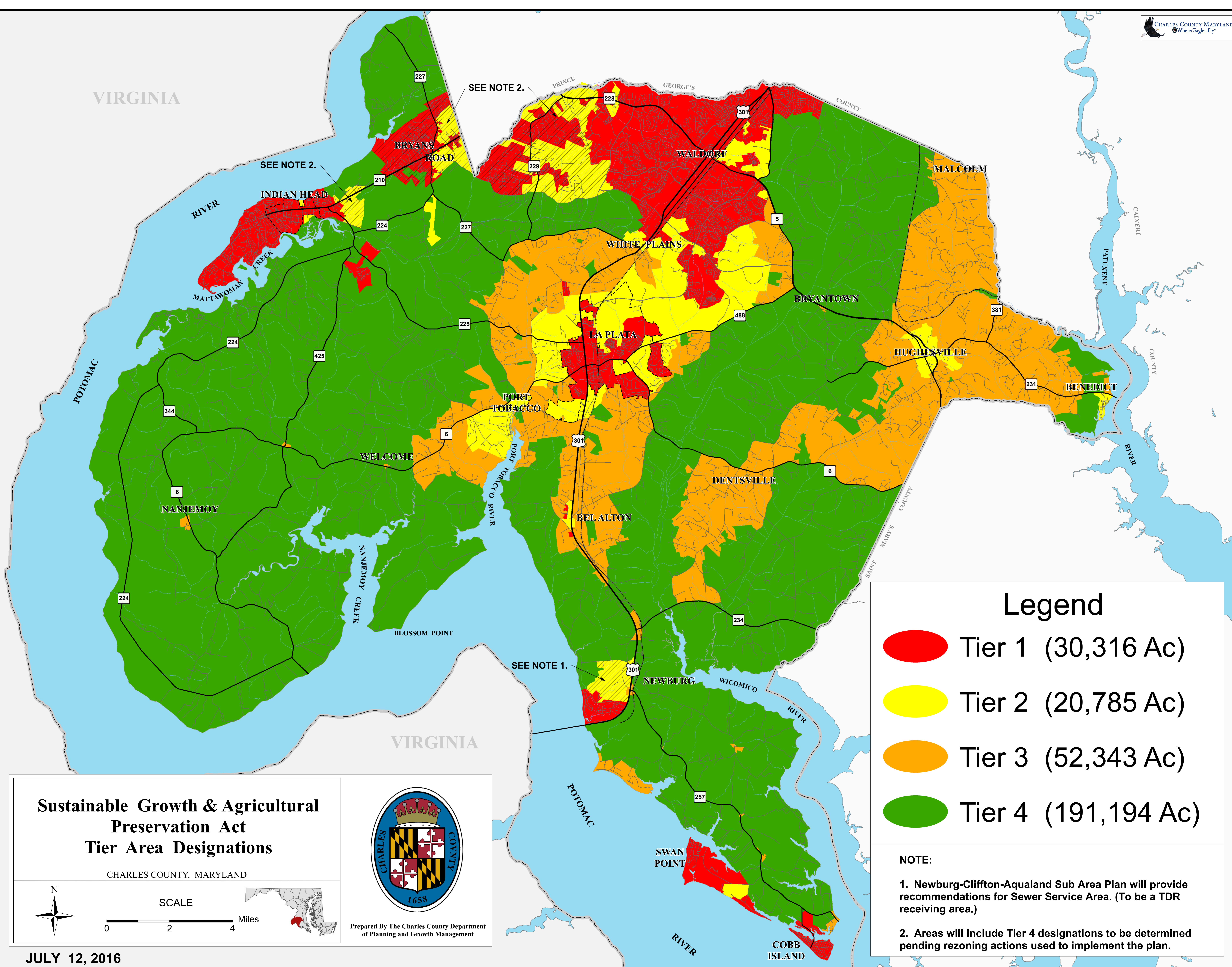
0 1 2 3 4 Miles



Prepared By Department of Planning
and Growth Management

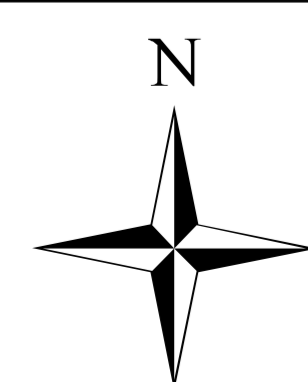
Category	Type	Total Acres
Regulatory *	Resource Protection zone (RPZ)	25,415
	Forest Conservation Easements	9,976
	Stream buffers in Critical Area	612
Federal State	Federal	1,705
	State Owned Resource Lands	22,271
	State Owned Easements	3,657
	Maryland Agricultural Land	0
	Preservation Easements (MALPF)	15,883
	Maryland Historical Trust (MHT)	257
	Maryland Environmental Trust (MET)	5,604
	Rural Legacy Easement Properties	6,105
	Transferable Development Rights (TDR)	7,715
Local	County Parks	3,246
	Town Parks	191
	Nature Conservancy	2,645
	Conservancy for Charles County (CCC)	342
Other	Joint MET and CCC Properties	1,501
	TOTAL	107,125

NOTE: Acres protected represent the best available data for the number of acres under protection in each respective category through December 2024. Some categories are subject to change as better technology and data become available to quantify lands protected through regulation.
* The resource protection zone, forest conservation easements, and stream buffers in the Critical Area have been reduced by the amount of overlap with other categories of protected lands. For forest conservation easements, an overlap of 10% for on-site easements and 90% for off-site easements has been deducted from the total acreage. For all other categories, overlap was assessed through GIS mapping.



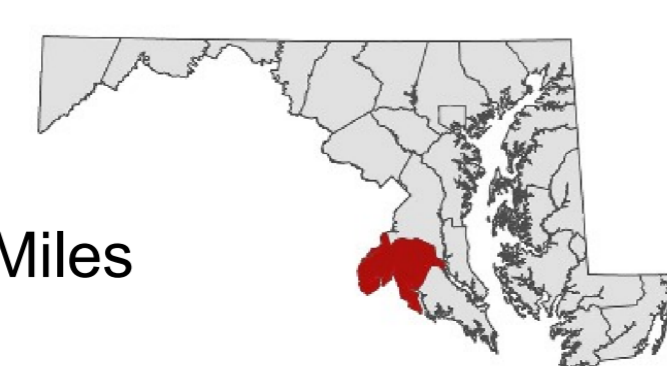
Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act Tier Area Designations

CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND



SCALE

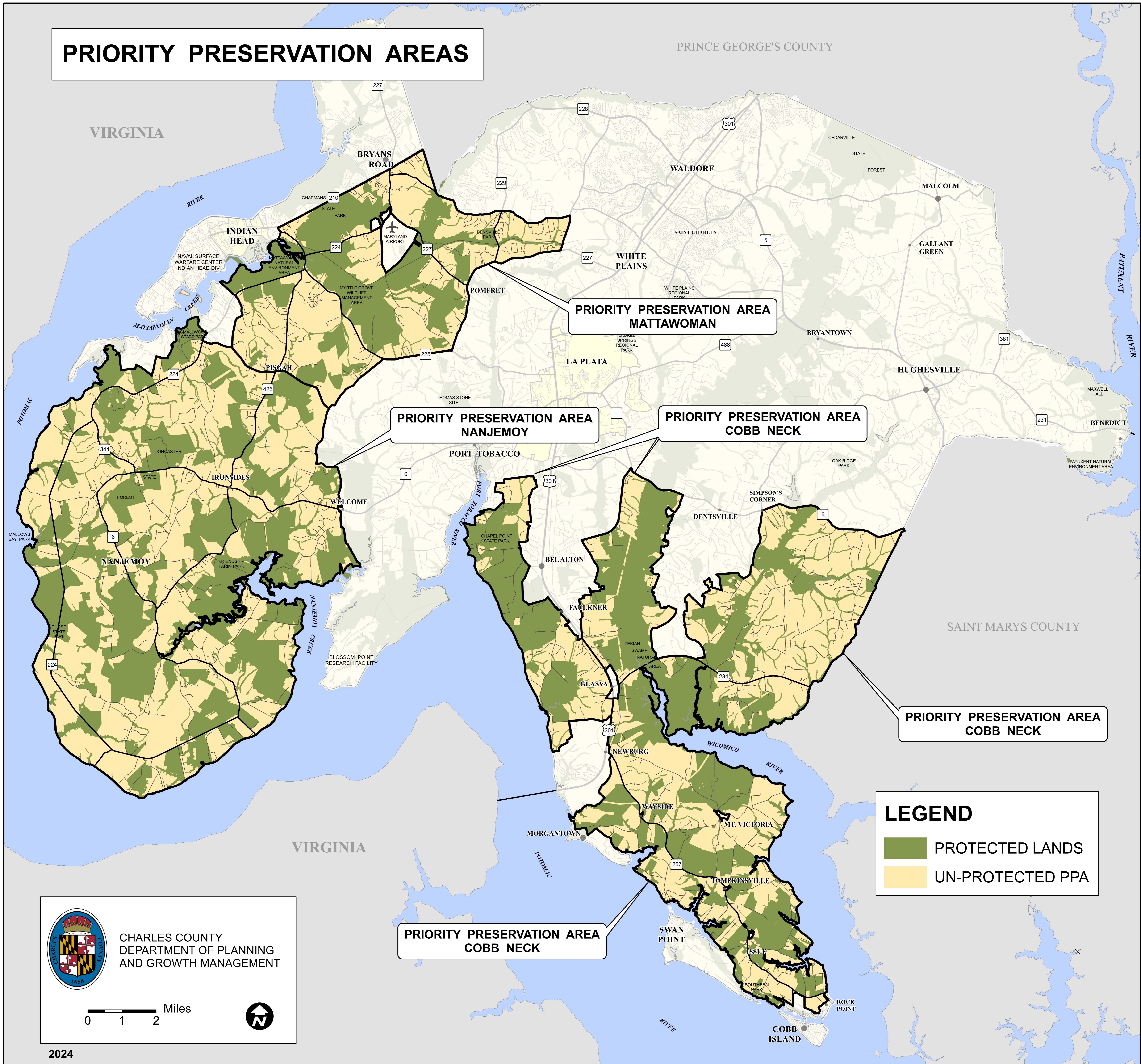
0 2 4 Miles




Prepared By The Charles County Department
of Planning and Growth Management

JULY 12, 2016

PRIORITY PRESERVATION AREAS





CHARLES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

0 1 2 Miles

