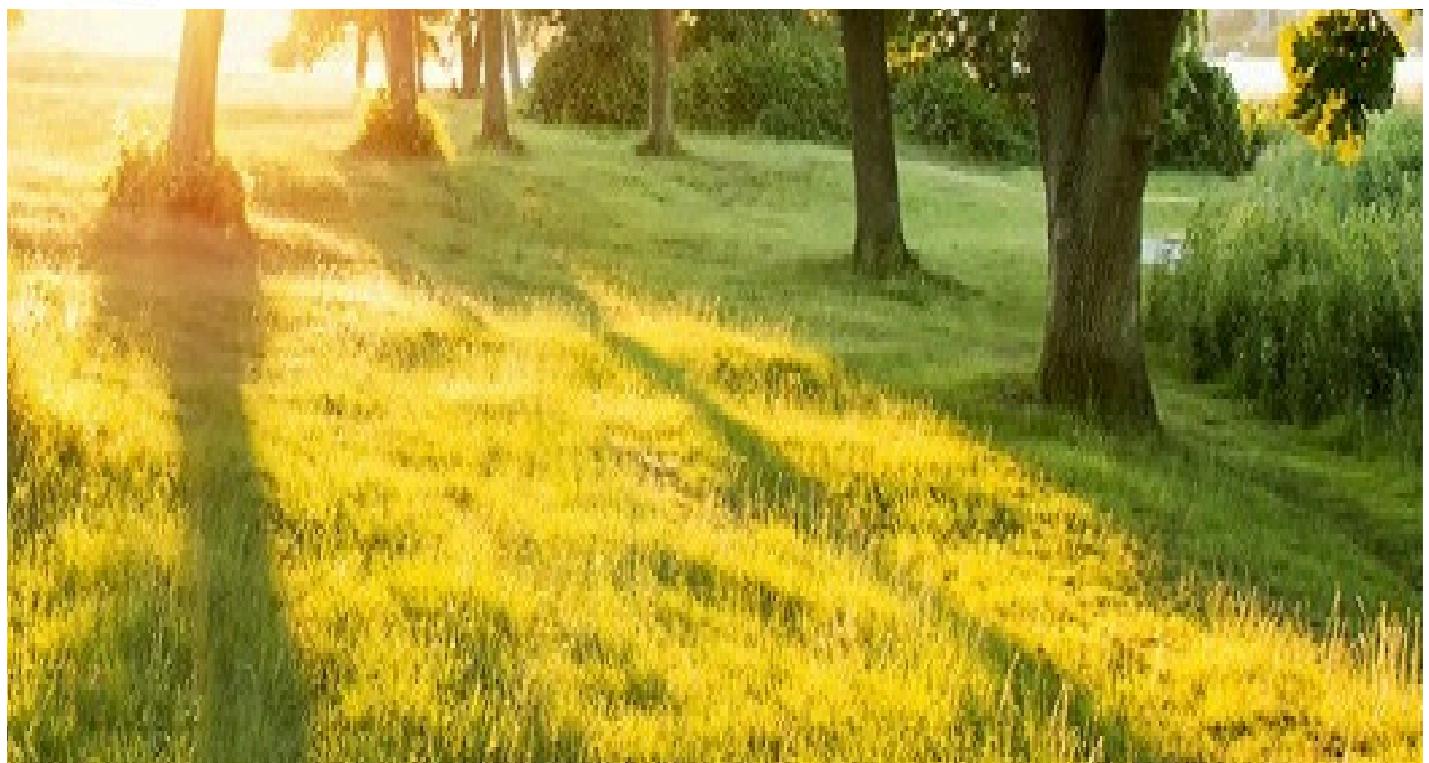




**Resilience Authority**  
*of Charles County, Maryland, Inc.*



# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

**NOVEMBER 2025**

**A LOOK BACK AT THE FIRST TWO YEARS AND  
STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR 2025-2030**



# Message from the Executive Director



Charles County stands at a turning point. As the impacts of climate change intensify, our ability to adapt—equitably, creatively, and collaboratively—will define our future. Across our county, residents are already experiencing hazardous heat, stormwater flooding, and coastal inundation that threaten homes, livelihoods, and health. Building resilience is no longer optional—it is essential.

It is an honor to serve as the first Executive Director of the first Resilience Authority in Maryland. On behalf of the Resilience Authority of Charles County's Board of Directors, I am pleased to present our 2025–2030 Five-Year Strategic Plan—a roadmap that reflects the voices of our community members, partners, and a broad range of experts who share our vision for a more equitable and climate-ready Charles County.

This plan looks back on our first two years of operation (2023–2025) and charts our direction for the next five. It outlines goals, objectives, and strategies that will strengthen our organizational capacity, broaden our reach, and amplify our impact across all Charles County communities.

As we move forward, our commitment remains clear: to enhance Charles County's capacity to respond to climate risks by transforming challenges into opportunities for environmentally just, sustainable, and resilient communities. Together—with our partners, stakeholders, and the people we serve—we can ensure that every community is resilient with cleaner air and water, safer neighborhoods, and equitable access to the physical and mental health benefits of nature.

Thank you to the Board of Directors, our partners, and the many community members who have guided and inspired this work.

With gratitude,

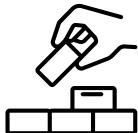
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacy J. Schaefer".

Stacy J. Schaefer, J.D.  
Executive Director  
Resilience Authority of Charles County, Inc.

*"Resilience isn't about bouncing back—it's about bouncing forward, transforming risk into opportunity for every community."*

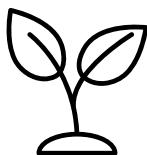
—Stacy J. Schaefer, J.D.

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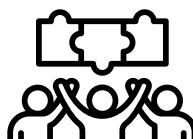
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# From Listening to Launch

## How the Plan Came Together



### Shaping Strategy



### Analyzing Evidence

Findings from the 2025 Climate Adaptation Report Card provided the scientific base for evidence-driven goals.

The 2025 Board Retreat synthesized input, data, and experience into a clear, collaborative roadmap.



### Engaging the Community

Workshops, advisory groups, and youth input shaped priorities and ensured community voices led the conversation.

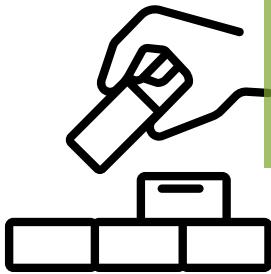


### Setting the Vision

The Board's 2023 Strategic Plan established a foundation for resilience and outlined priorities for growth.

Development of this Strategic Plan was funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust's Capacity Building Initiative, which was funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Chesapeake Bay Program, Chesapeake Bay Funders Network, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). This project has been funded wholly or in part by the EPA under one or more of the following assistance agreements, 96358101 and/or 96358201 to NFWF, and/or 95338501 to the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT). The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document.





# FOUNDATIONS

## Who We Are

The Resilience Authority of Charles County, Inc. (Resilience Authority) was created by state and county legislation and is structured as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

We partner with Charles County government to accelerate equitable, nature-based infrastructure solutions that strengthen community resilience and help mitigate and adapt to the risks of climate change.

## Milestones Achieved in the Resilience Authority's First Two Years of Operation (2023-2025)

↗ \$5.7 million in state, federal, and private grants secured for equitable, nature-based climate resilience projects across Charles County.

↘ Resilience Authority Youth Corps (RAYC) was launched in 2023 and now provides year-round, full-time and part-time paid green jobs and nature-based climate resilience career development for high school students and young adults.

These early milestones reflect the Resilience Authority's commitment to lessen the burden of Charles County taxpayers by securing outside funding to implement cost-effective actions that benefit people and the environment to build community resilience.

## Plan Development

This Strategic Plan was developed by 2nd Nature Consulting and coordinated with the Community Advisory Workgroup, with support from Saltworks Solutions, LLC.

Additional assistance was provided by Molly Ruiz, a Maryland Year of Service Member serving through the Chesapeake Bay Trust's Chesapeake Conservation & Climate Corps.



# Mission

The Resilience Authority operates for the public purpose of responding to the impacts of climate change in communities across Charles County.

# Guiding Principles



**Nature-Based:** We prioritize equitable, environmentally just, and nature-based solutions that deliver multiple benefits.



**Equity:** The risks of climate change are not shared equally; therefore, our projects focus on the communities hurt first and worst.



**Access to Nature:** The Resilience Authority works with Charles County government to finance and implement solutions on public lands, accessible to all residents.

# Vision

The Resilience Authority is dedicated to setting a national example of climate resilience grounded in Environmental Justice.

# Enabling Legislation

The Resilience Authority was established in January 2021, pursuant to the passage of Maryland Senate Bill 457/House Bill 539 (Chapter 236/235 of 2020) and Charles County Bill 2020-07 that is codified in Chapter 299 of the Charles County Code.

## Relevant excerpts from 2020 Maryland Legislation (Senate Bill 457)

Pursuant to creation by local law, a Resilience Authority may exercise all necessary powers to undertake, finance, manage, acquire, own, convey, or support resilience infrastructure projects, including the power to:

- Acquire by purchase, lease, or other legal means, but not by eminent domain, property for resilience infrastructure.
- Establish, construct, alter, improve, equip, repair, maintain, operate, and regulate resilience infrastructure owned by a local government or Resilience Authority.
- Receive money from its incorporating local government, the state, other governmental units, or private organizations.
- Charge and collect fees for its services.
- Subject to local government approval, charge and collect fees to back its bond issuances.
- Have employees and consultants as necessary.
- Use the services of other governmental units.
- Act in a necessary or convenient way to carry out the powers granted to it by law.

## Charles County Local Bill 2020-07 (Chapter 299.01 – 299.15, effective 1-22-2021)

Purpose: The Resilience Authority will undertake and support resilience infrastructure projects that mitigate the effects of climate change by offering a range of financing structures, forms, and techniques. As well as to leverage public and private investment and stimulate demand for resilience infrastructure projects throughout Charles County

### Declaration of Need:

- The impacts from climate change are happening now in communities across the state of Maryland.
- These impacts include rising temperatures, major rain and storm events, sea level rise, and changes in precipitation patterns.
- Those things that Maryland communities depend upon and value—natural resources and ecosystems, energy, transportation, agriculture, cultural and historic resources, human health, and economic growth—are experiencing, and will continue to experience, the effects of climate change.
- Communities in coastal states account for nearly half of the nation's population and economic activity, and that cumulative damage to property in those areas could reach \$3.6 Trillion by 2060.
- Local governments will bear much of the responsibility and cost required to mitigate the impacts of climate change through infrastructure investment.
- A Resilience Authority can work in partnership with Charles County government to accelerate infrastructure financing, reduce the cost of implementation, and mitigate and manage the risk of climate change.

# Our Leadership

A diverse board of local leaders, scientists, and policy experts guiding our mission of equitable resilience.



## **Teresa Ball, Chair**

Environmental advocate and community leader advancing climate justice and sustainable development. Serves on the Sierra Club Maryland Chapter Executive Committee and the Charles County NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, representing the NAACP Environmental Justice Leaders and the Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County.



## **Timothy Wells, Vice Chair**

District Manager of the Charles Soil Conservation District with over a decade of experience in soil conservation and sustainable land management. Board member of Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development, focused on preserving and protecting natural resources.



## **Jacob Dyer, Treasurer**

Director of Fiscal and Administrative Services for Charles County Government, overseeing financial operations, budget management, and fiscal policy. Brings more than 20 years of experience in public financial administration.



## **Ryan Hicks, Secretary**

Town Manager and Chief Executive Officer of the Town of Indian Head, responsible for financial planning, policy implementation, and community governance. Experienced in public administration and strategic leadership.



### **Daniel Donohue**

Local farmer and conservationist engaged in Natural Resources Conservation Service programs. Multi-year finalist for Maryland Aldo Leopold Conservation and Tree Farmer of the Year awards, recognized for advancing sustainable agriculture and stewardship.



### **Charles Glass, Ph.D., P.E.**

Director of the Maryland Environmental Service and former Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation. With 30 years of experience, he has worked in academia and public service on sustainable infrastructure and environmental engineering.



### **Martin Harris**

Director of the Charles County Department of Public Works with over 27 years of experience in transportation and infrastructure management. Formerly served in senior leadership roles with Prince George's County and the Maryland Department of Transportation.



### **Dave Nemazie**

Chief of Staff at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and Interim Vice President for Administration and Finance. Expert in watershed management, marine ecology, and policy development, with extensive experience fostering partnerships across the public and nonprofit sectors.



### **Bonnie Norman**

Co-Founder and President of E3 International, LLC, leading sustainable energy and financial solutions that have delivered over \$500 million in clean energy investment. Board Chair for Montgomery County Greenbank and advocate for environmental education.



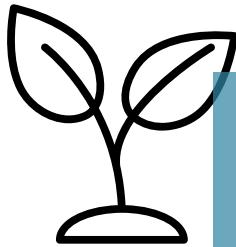
### **Karen Price**

Vice President of Development and Programs at the Eno Center for Transportation. Nonprofit executive with 16 years of experience in governance, fundraising, and sustainable infrastructure development, committed to environmentally responsible community advancement.



### **David Wood**

Executive Director of the Chesapeake Stormwater Network, leading regional initiatives in sustainable stormwater management across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Brings deep experience in environmental policy and technical coordination.



# COMMITMENTS

These commitments capture how we work: listening, planning, building, and learning in constant motion. Each depends on the others, forming a cycle of collaboration and accountability that keeps the Resilience Authority's work connected to the community it serves.

1

## Coordination and Review

We collaborate regularly with Charles County government to align priorities, identify needs, and ensure actions are grounded in current data and planning tools at the county, state, and federal levels.

2

## Purpose and Vision

Our direction is defined by the Board of Directors, ensuring every effort advances a mission of climate resilience rooted in environmental justice and community impact.

3

## Dialogue and Engagement

We seek active partnerships with Community Champions across all communities to sustain inclusive, ongoing dialogue that shapes and refines our work.

4

## Equity and Nature-Based Solutions

We prioritize equitable, nature-based projects that provide multiple benefits—including access to green spaces, and protecting and restoring ecosystems which mitigate heat islands, stormwater and coastal flooding.

5

## Funding and Growth

We sustain and grow our work through steady funding and strategic partnerships. Government and philanthropic grants, along with innovative private-sector collaborations, provide the foundation that allows the Resilience Authority to evolve and expand its impact over time.

# Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

The Resilience Authority is committed to advancing ideals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ). To fulfill its mission and in pursuit of its vision, the Resilience Authority expressly recognizes that historically marginalized groups—including people of color, immigrants, and lower-income populations—experience heightened exposure and sensitivity to climate risks due to a legacy of disinvestment. The Resilience Authority therefore prioritizes equity and focuses projects in underserved and overburdened communities, so no one is left behind.

The Resilience Authority is also committed to increasing diversity within its staff and board, recognizing that having diverse viewpoints and perspectives has inherent benefits. The Resilience Authority goes beyond building visible diversity, working to ensure partners, collaborators, and stakeholders engaged include people with a range of socioeconomic situations, industry expertise, education, and abilities. All voices need to be included in conversations about how to improve social and environmental conditions for true climate resilience. The Resilience Authority is guided by the Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE) Community Engagement Toolkit, the Chesapeake Bay DEIJ in Action, and the Charles County Office of Equity and Access.



# Resilience, Climate Challenges, and Opportunities

## Redefining Resilience

Resilience has traditionally been defined as “the ability to bounce back to the status quo”.

The Resilience Authority, however, redefines resilience as an opportunity to progress past the current status quo. Guided by the Kresge Foundation’s Bounce Forward framework, we view resilience not as bouncing back to what was, but as bouncing forward—toward a stronger, more equitable future.

Because climate risks are not shared equally, our work focuses on addressing the disparities created by disinvestment and unequal exposure to climate risks. We turn those challenges into opportunities to build lasting, community-based resilience for everyone.

## Climate Challenges

Building resilience begins with understanding the local forces shaping our region’s risk and opportunity. The Resilience Authority’s work in Charles County centers on four interconnected challenges:



### Rising Temperatures

Urban heat and lack of tree canopy raise health risks and energy costs.



### Increasing Precipitation and Severe Storm Events

Heavier rain and impervious surfaces cause flooding and strain local drainage.



### Rising Sea Levels

Erosion and flooding threaten homes, habitats, and coastal infrastructure.



### The “Nature Gap”

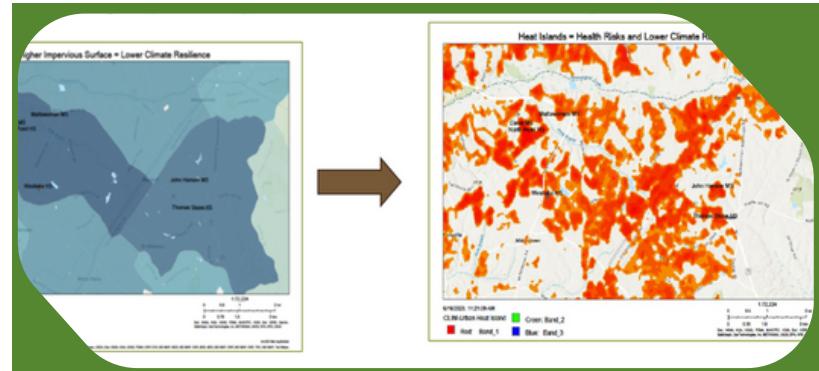
Unequal access to green space limits community and social resilience.

# The Local Picture: Climate Challenges in Charles County

The Resilience Authority's work in Charles County focuses on interconnected challenges that shape local risks and opportunities.

## Rising Temperatures

Rising temperatures and limited tree cover create urban heat islands, leaving residents in concrete-dominated areas facing higher heat, greater health risks, poorer air quality, and higher cooling costs.



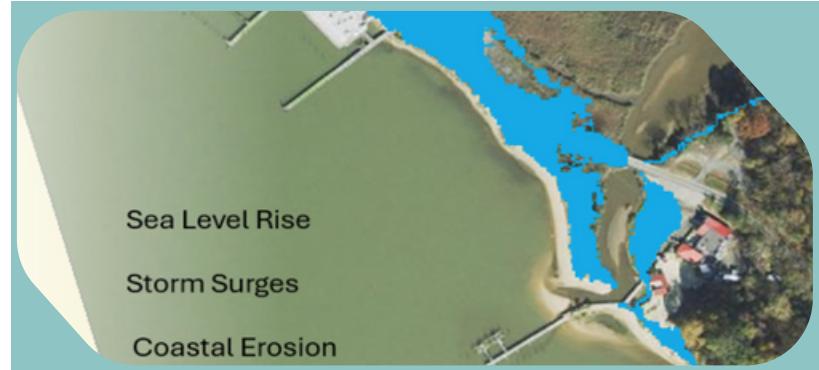
## Increasing Precipitation and Severe Storm Events

Heavier rainfall and severe storms cause flooding and property damage, worsened by impervious surfaces and poor drainage.



## Rising Sea Levels

Rising sea levels contribute to flooding, erosion, and habitat loss along our coastline.



## The “Nature Gap”

There exists a well-documented nationwide “Nature Gap” for underserved communities, and Charles County is no exception. This Nature Gap reflects a lack of access to nature and its health and climate resilience benefits.



# Bouncing Forward

## How We're Turning Local Challenges into Lasting Resilience

Each of these actions directly addresses the climate challenges outlined on the previous page—linking planning to measurable community impact.



### Expanding Urban Tree Canopies

Planting urban tree canopies in heat-island areas to reduce the impacts of rising temperatures.



### Nature-Based Stormwater Solutions

Using green infrastructure to reduce flooding, manage runoff, and improve water quality.



### Building Living Shorelines

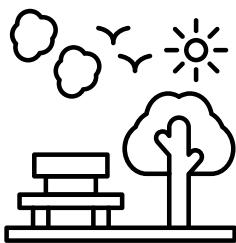
Building living shorelines along our coast to reduce erosion and flooding while restoring vital habitat.



### Expanding Access to Parks and Green Spaces

Increasing access to nature and its health and climate resilience benefits.



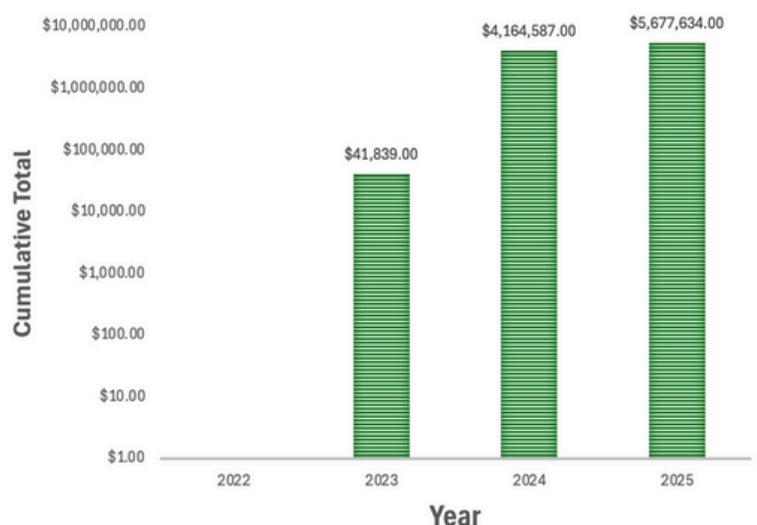


# PROGRESS

Since 2023, the Resilience Authority moved from planning to measurable action. We've expanded our project portfolio, secured millions in funding for nature-based solutions, and focused investments in communities most affected by climate risks.

Between **2023 and 2025**, these efforts established over **twenty project sites**, planted hundreds of trees, and launched the region's first year-round Youth Corps dedicated to building resilience on the ground.

## RESILIENCE AUTHORITY GRANT FUNDING 2023-2025



## Impact By Numbers

**22**

Project Sites Established

**2**

Stormwater Pocket Parks Created

**9**

School Tree Planting Locations

**5**

Green Infrastructure Trainings

**600**

Trees Planted

**5**

Stormwater Design Projects

**2**

Living Shoreline Initiatives

**3**

Years of the RAYC

# Concrete to Green

## Targeting Urban Heat Islands and Stormwater Flooding in Public Spaces

In collaboration with the Charles County government, the Resilience Authority secured over \$1.3 million in funding to implement innovative nature-based stormwater solutions in multiple public parks and community spaces that help prevent flooding, reduce dangerous heat levels, absorb pollution, improve air and water quality, and beautify communities. These projects have been used as National Recreation and Parks Association case studies in building community resilience.

- Elite Gymnastics Stormwater Pocket Park.
- Waldorf Senior and Recreation Center Pocket Park.
- Town of Indian Head Tree Equity Program.
- Bensenville County Park Restoration, Demonstration, and Training Site and Nature Trail.
- Urban Reforestation at Charles County Public Schools: The Resilience Authority, Resiliency Authority Youth Corps, and school students planted and continue to maintain 600 native trees at 9 Charles County Public Schools impacted by the urban heat island effect.

**Elite Gymnastics Before**



*Thank-you to our Project Partners*



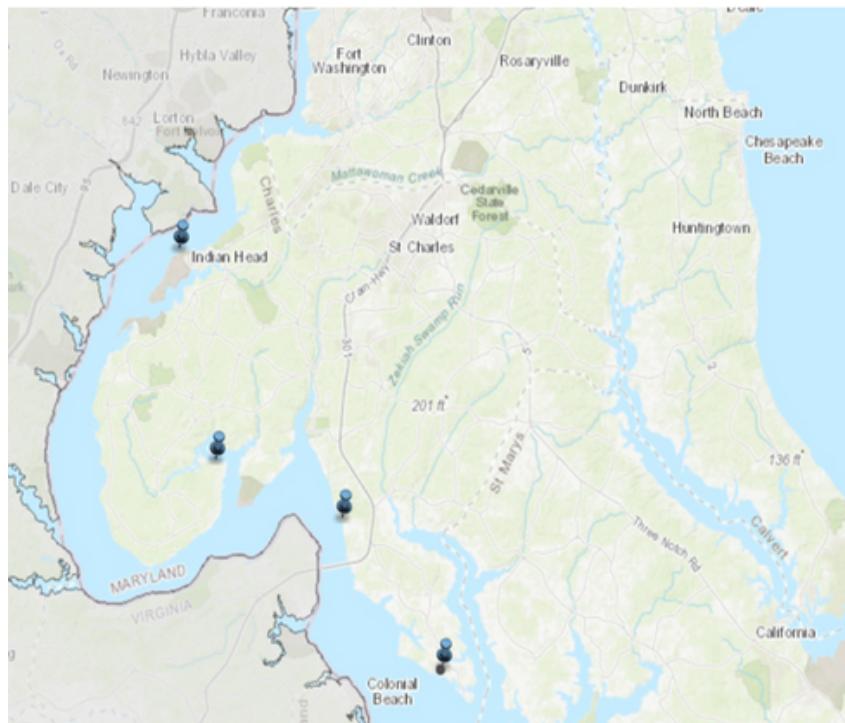
This project was funded completely or in part by Maryland's Chesapeake & Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund. For more information visit <http://dnr.maryland.gov/ccs/Pages/funding/trust-fund.aspx>.

**Elite Gymnastics Plan**



# Living Shorelines

## Coastal Flooding Resilience, Public Water Access



In response to rising sea levels and coastal flooding, the Resilience Authority secured over \$3.7 million to design and build living shorelines on county and municipal lands in Charles County. These shorelines will absorb flooding, prevent erosion, and promote equitable climate resilience by connecting biodiverse ecosystems with healthy communities.

- Town of Indian Head Living Shoreline Public-Private-Partnership.
- Popes Creek Waterfront Park Living Shoreline.

In addition, the Resilience Authority worked with the University of Maryland Climate Resilience Network to place near real-time water level sensors and weather stations.



# Resilience Forward-RAYC Ahead

## Education, Youth Employment, and Workforce Development

The Resilience Authority, in partnership with the Student Conservation Association, implements the Resilience Authority Youth Corps (RAYC) program that provides local high school students and young adults year-round employment and career development opportunities in natural resources management and urban forestry.

The Resilience Authority has secured over \$600,000 in grant funding for this program to date, resulting in workforce development and employment for local high school students and young adults since 2023, and the planting and maintenance of 600 native trees that mitigate urban heat islands. In 2025 alone, the Resilience Authority secured grant funding to support the RAYC program through 2027.

In addition to our RAYC, the Resilience Authority hosted Jewel Lester, a Chesapeake Bay Trust Conservation and Climate Corps member for the 2024-2025 session and is hosting Molly Ruiz for the 2025-2026 session.



# Community Engagement, Strategic Studies, and Planning Efforts

## Partnership with New Hope Community Outreach Services, Inc.

Building on the food gardens established by Waldorf's New Hope Community Outreach Services, the Resilience Authority partnered with New Hope to expand the gardens and grow an Urban Food Forest at New Hope's facilities in Waldorf.



## NEW HOPE GARDENS





# LOOKING AHEAD

Development of a Framework: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis to Guide Strategic Planning Decisions



## Strengths

- A committed and engaged Board of Directors, supported by a strong partnership with Charles County government.
- Dedicated staff with close connections to state and federal agencies.
- Access to essential scientific data through the UM CES Charles County Climate Adaptation Report Card.
- Active engagement with youth and collaboration with local partner organizations.



## Weaknesses

- Limited number of staff results in limited capacity.
- Heavy reliance on grant funding, which can be time-intensive and unpredictable.
- Philanthropic funders often prioritize larger urban centers like Washington, D.C. and Baltimore.
- As a new organization, public awareness and understanding of our role are still growing.



## Opportunities

- The Executive Director's role on the County's leadership team enables collaboration across departments.
- Partnership with Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism expands public nature-based projects.
- Board and staff bring decades of experience and strong Maryland networks.
- Partnership with the Charles Soil Conservation District expands access to youth programs and land conservation opportunities.
- The Youth Corps provides a consistent platform for community connection.
- Dual structure as both a government instrumentality and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, enabling access to diverse funding sources.



## Threats

- Far reaching changes and adjustments to federal grant funding.
- Current dependence on grant funding.
- Outreach and fundraising are challenging with limited resources and staff.
- The Resilience Authority is still new and building its reputation.
- Shifting political priorities that override science-backed information that can affect public opinion and support.

# 2025 Charles County Climate Adaptation Report Card

## UMCES Climate Adaptation Report Card for Charles County

The Resilience Authority and Charles County government completed its work with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences (UMCES) to assess the preparedness of Charles County communities for climate change and sea level rise events.

Modeled after the first-ever Coastal Adaptation Report Card for the State of Maryland, this local effort provides a simple, straightforward, and thoughtful method of communicating with the public about climate resilience.

Charles County is the first county in the U.S. and internationally to look at both vulnerability and resilience together in a Climate Report Card.

The Climate Report Card results are an integral part of this Strategic Plan. This project was funded by the Resilience Authority and supported by the Charles County government Office of Climate Resilience and Sustainability.



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Charles County Government  
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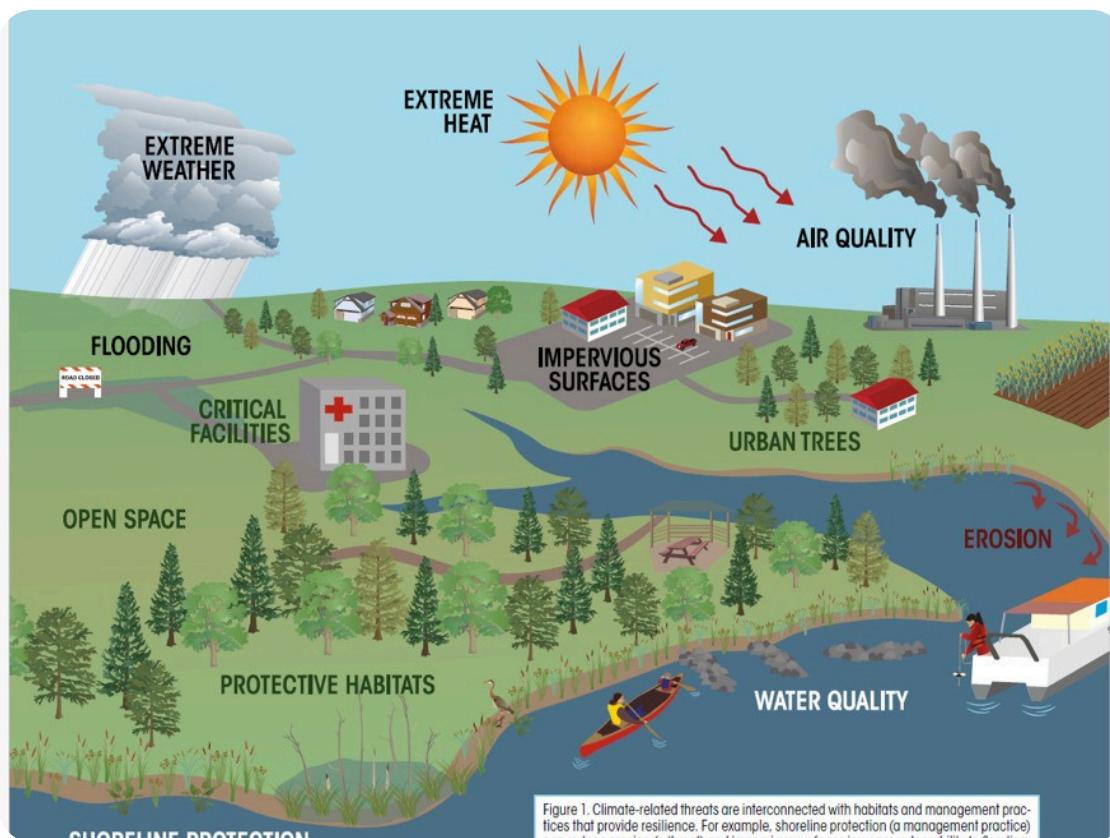


University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science  
2020 Horns Point Road, Cambridge, MD  
410-221-2046 • [www.IAN.umces.edu](http://www.IAN.umces.edu)

# Charles County, MD Climate Adaptation Report Card



The 2025 Charles County Climate Adaptation Report Card offers an overview of both the climate related risks facing Charles County and the capacity of its communities to adapt to those challenges.



It provides a guide for this Strategic Plan by helping the Resilience Authority identify goals for ongoing activities and measure progress toward those goals. The Charles County Climate Adaptation Report Card can be viewed [here](#).

# Findings of the Charles County Climate Adaptation Report Card

Three of the six Human Well-Being categories score a C or D, and PARK EQUITY — access to high-quality parks that provide respite from heat — scores most poorly.

## Charles County Shows Moderate Resilience to Climate

Overall resilience in **Charles County** scores a **B-**.

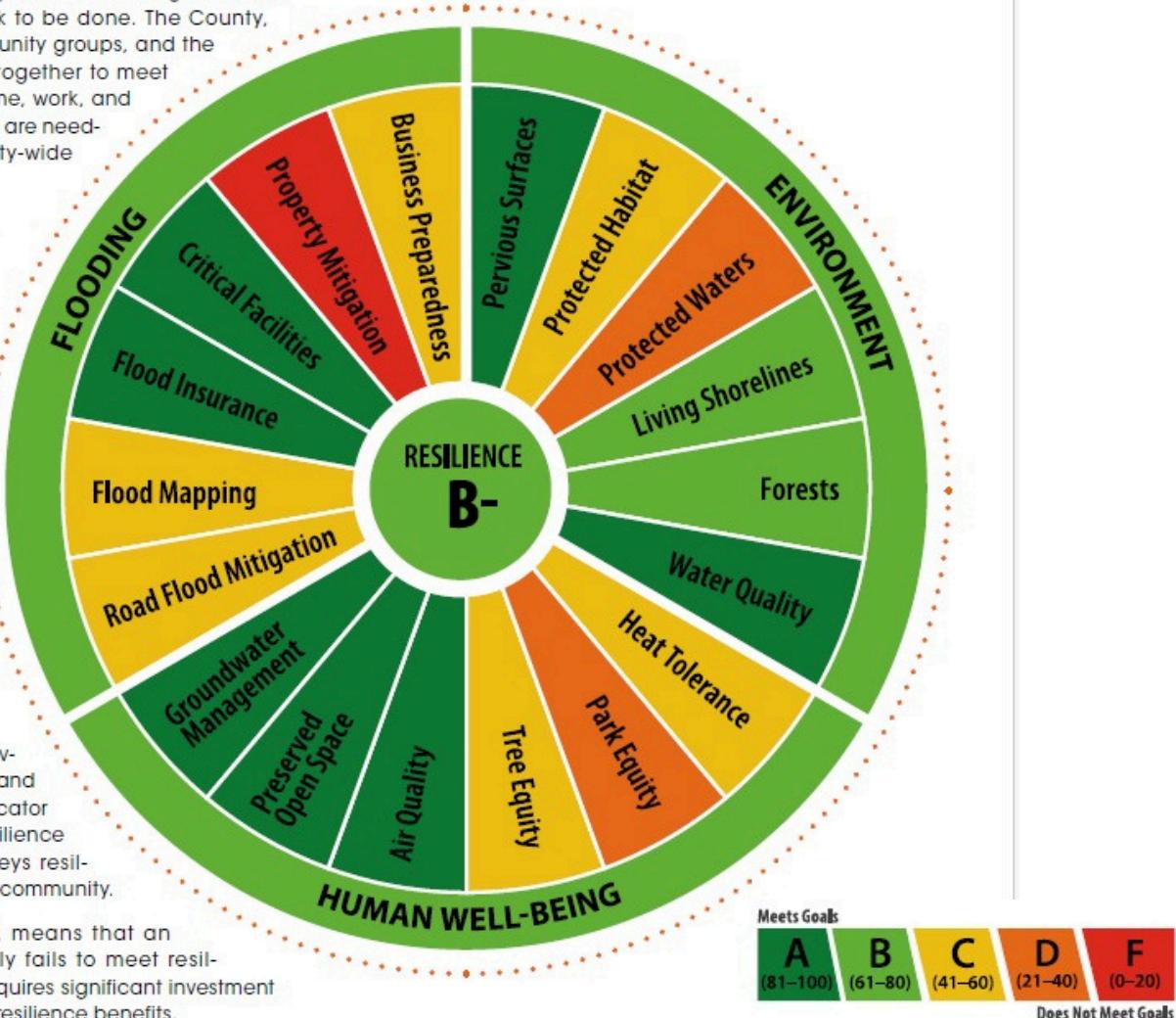
The County is working toward achieving resilience, but there is still work to be done. The County, communities, community groups, and the State must all work together to meet resilience targets. Time, work, and financial investments are needed to achieve county-wide resilience.

Three categories of resilience indicators were assessed: Environment, Human Well-being, and Flooding indicators.

Each indicator was scored on a 0% to 100% scale, corresponding to letter grades from A to F.

A score of 100% is equivalent to a score of A, and means that that indicator meets targets for resilience and therefore conveys resilience benefits to the community.

A score of 0%, or F, means that an indicator completely fails to meet resilience targets and requires significant investment to capture potential resilience benefits.



## Why Park Equity is Important for Climate Resilience

Public parks are vital to community health and climate resilience. They cool urban areas, absorb stormwater, and bring people together to connect and find relief from heat.

However, access to quality parks is uneven. Low-income and marginalized neighborhoods have fewer green spaces, contributing to greater climate and health risks. Charles County's Park Equity score of 32 out of 100 highlights this disparity.

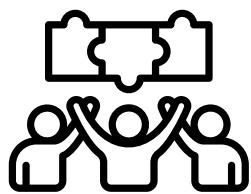
The Resilience Authority is working with the Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism to close this gap by improving park access and advancing nature-based equity across the county.

# Project Footprint: Present and Planned Initiatives



Thank you to our sponsors who made all these projects possible:





# STRATEGIES

## Goals and Objectives

**1. Projects Goal:** Identify, encourage, finance, and implement projects that enhance the capacity of communities to adapt and respond to the impacts of climate change

### Project Objectives:

- Align with Charles County government efforts to accelerate pace and scale of climate resilience.
- Apply an equity lens to all actions and prioritize projects that enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities.
- Turn climate challenges into opportunities to address environmental justice issues and to create more equitable and environmentally sustainable communities.
- Pursue Nature-based Solutions that have multiple co-benefits. When nature is healthy and resilient, communities are healthier and more resilient.

**2. Public Engagement and Education Goal:** Build awareness and solicit diverse and inclusive community engagement while advancing climate resilience and sustainability education

### Engagement and Education Objectives:

- Work with a variety of educational organizations, including the Charles County Board of Education and the Charles Soil Conservation District, to implement projects that educate and raise awareness about climate resilience.
- Host inclusive public events and seek out conferences and speaking engagements to increase awareness of the risks of climate change and how to build resilience.
- Work with Community Champions in underserved areas to extend and sustain diverse and inclusive community involvement.
- Create accessible Quarterly Newsletters and enhance online public presence.

### **3. Sustainable Funding and Project Financing Goal:** Establish a multi-prong strategy for funding the Resilience Authority operations and projects.

#### **Funding and Financing Objectives:**

- Create tools and implement programs that allow businesses and individuals to engage with the Resilience Authority and support its work.
- Develop relationships with regional and national foundations that lead to private grants for nature-based climate resilience projects.
- Work with Charles County government to identify consistent and sustainable funding sources for resilience projects in the county.
- Develop a fundraising and climate response financing plan that diversifies the Resilience Authority's revenue sources.

### **4. Partnerships Goal:** Create a network of coordinating partners.

#### **Partnership Objectives:**

- Engage regularly and consistently with Charles County government.
- Engage and partner with the Charles Soil Conservation District.
- Engage and partner with the Chesapeake Stormwater Network.
- Engage and partner with municipal, state, and federal government bodies.
- Engage, support, and collaborate with nonprofit, philanthropic, academic, and community-based organizations, and Resilience Authorities.
- Engage and partner with the private sector.

# Strategies to Achieve Goals and Objectives

## Strategy 1: Pursue Nature-Based Restoration of Charles County Parks and Community Spaces

Nature-Based Restoration—such as rain gardens, soil restoration, bioretention areas, and urban tree planting—reduces flooding, improves water quality, cools urban heat islands, and creates vital wildlife habitat. By implementing resilience projects at parks and community spaces, the Resilience Authority is also increasing public access to nature and its health and resilience benefits. These projects foster community awareness and engagement and demonstrate the nature-based solutions to adapt to climate change.

### Actions for Success

- 1.1 Continue the working partnership with Charles County government to accomplish projects in publicly accessible county parks and recreation centers including Bensville County Park, Stethem Memorial Sports Complex, Elite Gymnastics and Recreation Center, Indian Head Rail Trail, the Waldorf Senior and Recreation Center, and the developing Popes Creek Waterfront Park and La Plata Farm Park.
- 1.2 Continue close coordination with Charles County government to address sustainability and climate resilience as part of the design and development process of new public facilities.
- 1.3 Use branded signs at completed project sites to raise awareness of what climate resilience is, and how our projects build community climate resilience.
- 1.4 Continue to work closely with Charles County government to promote outreach and public exposure of climate resilience projects.
- 1.5 Build out and adapt Standard Operating Procedures for items such as best management practices in procurement, tree care and tracking, and maintenance of all projects.

## **Strategy 2: Develop a “SPACES” Program**

Special Property Acquisitions for Conservation, Equity, and Sustainability (SPACES): In partnership with Charles County government, foster acquisition of conservation easements to conserve forest and natural spaces that are already providing climate resilience benefits. Acquire and restore vacant urban lots to pocket parks to transform underused spaces into vibrant green assets that build community climate resilience. Forests and green spaces improve air and water quality, reduce urban heat, and support local biodiversity, while also offering nearby residents safe, accessible places for recreation and relaxation. Conserving and restoring natural resources is a powerful, low-cost strategy for building climate resilience.

### **Actions for Success**

- 2.1 Work closely with Charles County government to identify and map potential properties that would be good candidates for the SPACES Program.
- 2.2 Ensure that any proposed acquisition can be managed and maintained by Charles County government.
- 2.3 Promote forest cover through the Maryland Department of Environment’s Forest Conservation program by working closely with Charles County government, Charles Soil Conservation District, and private property owners to implement forest conservation easements to be held by Charles County government.
- 2.4 Develop and implement best practice protocols for conservation of existing forests, site restoration, and creation of pocket parks.

## **Strategy 3: Pursue Living Shorelines on Public Lands**

Appropriately sited living shoreline projects are vital for enhancing climate resilience by providing natural buffers that reduce erosion and protect against rising seas and storm surges. Living shorelines can improve water quality by filtering runoff, and support biodiversity by creating critical habitat for fish and wildlife. They also provide opportunities to enhance public access to coastal areas, connecting communities to healthy, resilient shorelines.

### **Actions for Success**

- 3.1 Continue to work collaboratively with Charles County government to complete the design and construction of the living shoreline at Popes Creek Waterfront Park.
- 3.2 Continue spearheading the Clean Water Commerce Act Public Private Partnership Project for shoreline restoration in collaboration with the Town of Indian Head.
- 3.3 Work closely with Charles County government to support future living shoreline project planning, design, and construction.
- 3.4 Participate in educational events and workshops to build capacity related to assessing, designing, and planning living shoreline projects.

## **Strategy 4: Facilitate Integration of Climate Resilience in Planning and Development Projects**

By working collaboratively with Charles County government, we can ensure new development and redevelopment projects address key climate challenges such as flooding, heat islands, and the loss of natural buffers. Prioritizing habitat protection, tree equity, park equity, and living shorelines in planning decisions helps to create healthier, more resilient communities that are better equipped to withstand climate impacts while promoting environmental justice and long-term sustainability.

### **Actions for Success**

- 4.1 Continue close collaboration and partnership with the Charles County government Office of Climate Resilience and Sustainability.
- 4.2 Serve on the County's Comprehensive Plan Project Team, and support plans and programs that improve county-wide equitable climate resilience.
- 4.3 Serve on the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund Workgroup to provide input on the equitable allocation of the cannabis tax revenue to strengthen community partnerships and support initiatives that improve health, development, education, and housing in Charles County.
- 4.4 Incorporate climate resilience design principles into "value engineering" practices for development projects on public lands to ensure that impervious surfaces are minimized, heat island effects are considered, and landscaping is sustainable in terms of species, water needs, and maintenance.
- 4.5 Provide Green Infrastructure training to promote awareness, education, and facilitate tree plantings, "no mow" practices, and pollinator plantings where appropriate.

## **Strategy 5: Outreach, Engagement, and Education**

Training programs, workshops, and educational events are essential for building broad community understanding and support for climate resilience and the importance of mitigating its effects through nature-based solutions. By engaging diverse audiences, the Resilience Authority can help raise community awareness about the importance of green stormwater infrastructure, tree health, living shorelines, conservation landscaping, and habitat protection. Education empowers individuals, communities, and professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to take action, foster stewardship, and ensure that climate solutions are inclusive, effective, and designed to address local needs.

### **Actions for Success**

- 5.1 Update the Resilience Authority website monthly and develop and distribute a quarterly newsletter.
- 5.2 Assist Charles County with planning and hosting an annual Earth Day Event in Charles County.
- 5.3 Build on existing, and explore new, opportunities to coordinate with the Charles County Public Schools to provide educational programs about climate resilience.
- 5.4 Partner with the Chesapeake Stormwater Network and private sector tree companies to provide an annual public training event on climate resilience and nature.
- 5.5 Sponsor and host an annual “educational hike” that includes education on a climate resilience related topic and work toward hosting similar events seasonally.
- 5.6 Develop educational signage and a self-guided tour at Bensville County Park Nodes of Nature Trail and restoration demonstration sites along the trail that focuses on the benefits of natural ecosystems health, green stormwater infrastructure practices, and trees.

## **Strategy 6: Build and Diversify Fundraising and Financing**

A comprehensive, multi-year fundraising and climate response financing plan that diversifies the Resilience Authority's revenue sources and project portfolio will help ensure its future success. A financing plan will empower the Resilience Authority to move beyond reliance on traditional government grants and foster the financial resilience that reflects its core mission.

### **Actions for Success**

- 6.1 Develop a Plan: Develop a detailed, multi-year financing plan that establishes a strategic roadmap outlining specific goals, strategies, timelines, responsible parties, and measurable outcomes for identified revenue streams.
- 6.2 Improve Tools: Enhance the Resilience Authority's fundraising management system to track interactions and progress.
- 6.3 Secure Private Foundation Support: Identify regional and national private foundations whose missions align with the Resilience Authority's climate resilience efforts and develop compelling project proposals.
- 6.4 Secure Business Support: Identify and connect with national, regional, and local businesses that may want to support Resilience Authority projects.
- 6.5 Secure General Support: Develop an annual recognition program for different types and levels of business donors.

## **Strategy 7: Collaborate with Charles County Government to Identify Existing Revenue Sources that Could Directly Support Projects**

This partnership can help Charles County streamline project implementation to meet county environmental goals. It also reinforces a shared commitment to long-term community resilience, sustainability, and equitable adaptation planning.

### **Actions for Success**

- 7.1 In concert with Charles County government, identify opportunities to use the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund to support resilience projects in Waldorf.
- 7.2 In collaboration with Charles County government, identify ways in which the Resilience Authority could implement Watershed Protection and Restoration Funded projects to support the county in reaching its environmental goals while also building community climate resilience.



## RESILIENCE AUTHORITY OF CHARLES COUNTY, INC.

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