Baltimore County
Smart Growth Successes

Baltimore County began incorporating Smart Growth management policies in the late 1960s. The urban rural demarcation line (URDL) established in 1967 identified the areas of the County that had or would receive public water and sewer infrastructure, and therefore would accommodate urban residential, commercial and industrial development. In the rural areas, reliance on private well and septic systems limited the amount of development that could be accommodated. That helped ensure the area’s continued use for agriculture, natural resource protection, and low-density rural residential uses.
Baltimore County
Priority Funding Areas & Protected Lands

The map above illustrates the promotion of Smart Growth in Priority Funding Areas and the protection of land outside of Priority Funding Areas. It illustrates where to grow and where not to grow to adhere to environmentally sound Smart Growth principles.

The map is indexed to examples in this booklet:

1. WaterView
2. The Plan For The Valleys
3. Urban/Rural Demarcation Line - URDL
4. Walkable Towson
5. Owings Mills Metro Station TOD
6. Renaissance Redevelopment Pilot Project: Kingsley Park
7. Land Conservation and Habitat Protection
8. Master Plan update
The community features rear-loaded parking, so garages don’t dominate the streetscape.

1. WaterView

WaterView is a planned neighborhood of 175 single-family, detached homes, a 96,000-square foot commercial component (WaterView Town Center), a large community park and several smaller neighborhood parks. Incorporated into the overall redevelopment plan was the existing, four-acre Riverdale Village Shopping Center in Middle River.

WaterView is a large revitalization project, investing more than $50 million in private dollars to help Baltimore County’s efforts to bring new energy to an area that had seen its economy decline since the 1970s.
2. The Plan for the Valleys

The Plan for the Green Spring and Worthington Valleys in Baltimore County has been widely recognized as a seminal model for sustainable growth management.

Baltimore County was one of the first jurisdictions in the country to use urban growth boundaries and conservation design as a method for controlling sprawl and directing growth away from sensitive landscapes. The results include resource conservation zones designed to protect farmland and natural resources, more than 50,000 acres of land in permanent protection under conservation easements, and the creation of an urban-rural demarcation line restricting water and sewer service to urban areas.

The plan by Wallace-McHarg Associates (now WRT) received a National Planning Landmark Award from the American Planning Association last month, but the county deserves recognition for sustained implementation efforts.
The URDL is used in growth management plans, community plans, master plans and zoning maps.

3. Urban/Rural Demarcation Line - URDL

The URDL is the primary administrative boundary used for setting regulations on the types of development allowed in Baltimore County’s urban and rural areas. Today, 90 percent of Baltimore County’s population lives inside the growth boundary, which is served by water and sewer, occupying a third of the land. The remaining 10 percent of the population resides outside the boundary in the rural area with no public water and sewer and occupying two-thirds of the land area.
The first phase of a new streetscape project for Washington Avenue in downtown Towson began in January 2010 as part of an overall three-phase project called Walkable Towson. It will make the entire length of Washington Avenue between Towsontown Boulevard and York Road more pedestrian-friendly, along with more projects that will be announced in the coming months.

The street will have repaved and widened sidewalks, decorative brickwork, new lighting similar to the lantern street lights on York Road and new plantings and trees, according to the plan.

Subsequent phases will involve work on Washington Avenue from Pennsylvania Avenue to York and creation of a plaza for gatherings in the 400 block in front of the Courthouse Gardens.
This 46-acre site offers a unique development opportunity.

5. Owings Mills Metro Station TOD

A long-term lease agreement for a transit-oriented development. With a proposed mix of retail, office, restaurant, hotel, community college, library and 500 residential units, this project is emerging as one of the signature transit-oriented developments of the Baltimore region.

The first Class A single or multi-tenant office building on the south side of the Metro Station is designed for a total of 300,000 square feet in 10 stories with high visibility adjacent to Interstate 795 and the Metro. Another 280,000 square feet of loft style office space will be developed along Main Street over first floor retail space.

The north side of the Metro station will be developed with four Class A office buildings in a corporate campus setting. The north campus office park will support a total of 680,000 square feet of office space with adjacent garage parking and 13,500 square feet of supporting retail space.
Baltimore County’s Renaissance initiative is a golden opportunity to turn underused or neglected parcels of land into community assets. This involves properties within Priority Funding Areas where community residents want such redevelopment to take place. A collaborative design process involves full community participation in order to ensure that what is planned is what will be built, thus strengthening all of our communities.

To date, nine pilot project areas have been identified. This example highlights the County’s process of creating a new vision for the Old Kingsley Park apartment site in Essex-Middle River, which included community input and exploring various design ideas.
Baltimore County is in many ways a model for local governments everywhere when it comes to protecting nature and biodiversity.

7. Land Conservation and Habitat Protection

Baltimore County has one of the most ambitious and successful land management and environmental protection programs in the country. An impressive combination of tools and strategies—land use regulations, land acquisition, an urban growth boundary, education, partnerships with private land trusts, and infill development initiatives—has been employed to preserve thousands of acres throughout the county and protect critical wildlife habitat.

Agricultural land preservation and protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay have been rallying points for continuing citizen support of these resource protection strategies.
The Baltimore County Charter requires a master plan to be updated at least every 10 years.

8. Master Plan update

Baltimore County is in the process of updating its Master Plan. Master Plan 2010 considers the inter-relationships between land use and a broad spectrum of other planning elements such as education, public safety, transportation, social services, community conservation, rural preservation, natural conservation, historic preservation and community stewardship. These elements are all intertwined, and each plays an important part in making communities successful.

Major Master Plan 2010 Goals include:

• Ensure residents’ safety and security
• Strive for excellent public education
• Strengthen and retain a skilled work force
• Ensure an adequate supply of diverse jobs
• Reinvest in established communities
• Maintain the Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL)
• Protect environmental resources
• Provide quality parks and recreational opportunities
• Preserve historic resources
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