

Public Hearing Draft



St. Mary's 2050

*Comprehensive Plan for
St. Mary's County, Maryland*



**Update Prepared for
Commissioners of St.
Mary's County**

August 18, 2026

Comprehensive Planning in Maryland



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State Law Requirements for the **Development and Recommendation** of Comprehensive Plans

- All local jurisdictions must have comprehensive plans (LUA § 3-201)
- Required elements of the plan (LUA § 3-202)
- Planning Commission develops the plan (LUA § 3-202)
- Initial draft must be sent to the State and adjoining jurisdictions (LUA § 3-203)
- Planning Commission must conduct at least one public hearing before providing the recommendation (LUA § 3-203)
- When the draft plan is complete, the Planning Commission provides a recommendation to the legislative body for adoption (LUA § 3-202)
- If a majority of the Planning Commission members recommend approval of the plan, a resolution is prepared and signed by the Chair of the Planning Commission and is transmitted to the local legislative body with an attested copy of the plan (LUA § 3-203)

Required Elements of St. Mary's 2050 Plan

Community facilities

Areas of critical State concern

Housing

Land use

Development regulations

Goals and objectives

Sensitive areas

Transportation

Water resources

Mineral resources

Fisheries

State Law Requirements for the **Adoption** of Comprehensive Plans

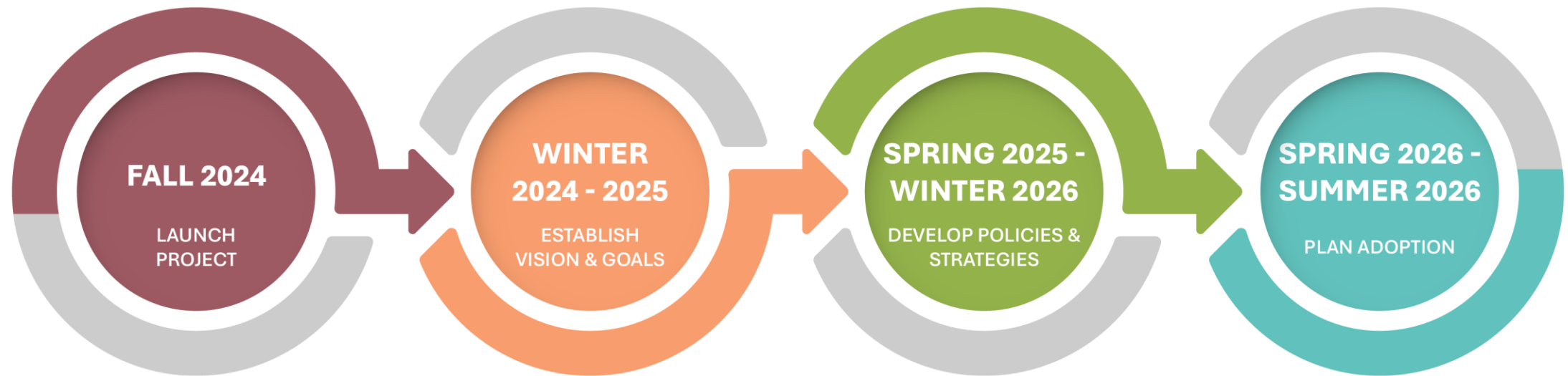
- A local legislative body (**CSMC**) may **adopt, modify, remand or disapprove** the whole plan or part of the plan (LUA § 3-204)
- **Public hearing** prior to CSMC adoption/modification of all/part of the plan (LUA § 3-204)
- If the CSMC remands or disapproves the plan or part of the plan, the Planning Commission must conduct another **public hearing** prior to submitting a new recommendation to the CSMC for adoption (LUA § 3-204)
- The Planning Commission's recommendation shall be considered approved if the CSMC fails to approve, modify, remand, or disapprove the recommended plan **within 90 days** after the Planning Commission's certification of an attested copy to them, unless exigent circumstances exist (one 60-day extension permitted) (LUA § 3-204)
- At least **once every ten years**, the Planning Commission must review the adopted plan and make recommendations for changes, if necessary (LUA § 3-301)

History of the Project



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Project Timeline



▲
We are here

How the Plan was Developed



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Summary of Community Engagement

CEW #1

Jan. 16 – Mar. 3, 2025



CEW #2

May 5 – June 30, 2025



CEW #3

Feb. 9 – Mar. 7, 2026

12 Community Visioning Sessions (10 in person, 2 virtual): Small group discussions, surveys, mapping activities
Results: 9 Key Planning Themes and 3 vision themes

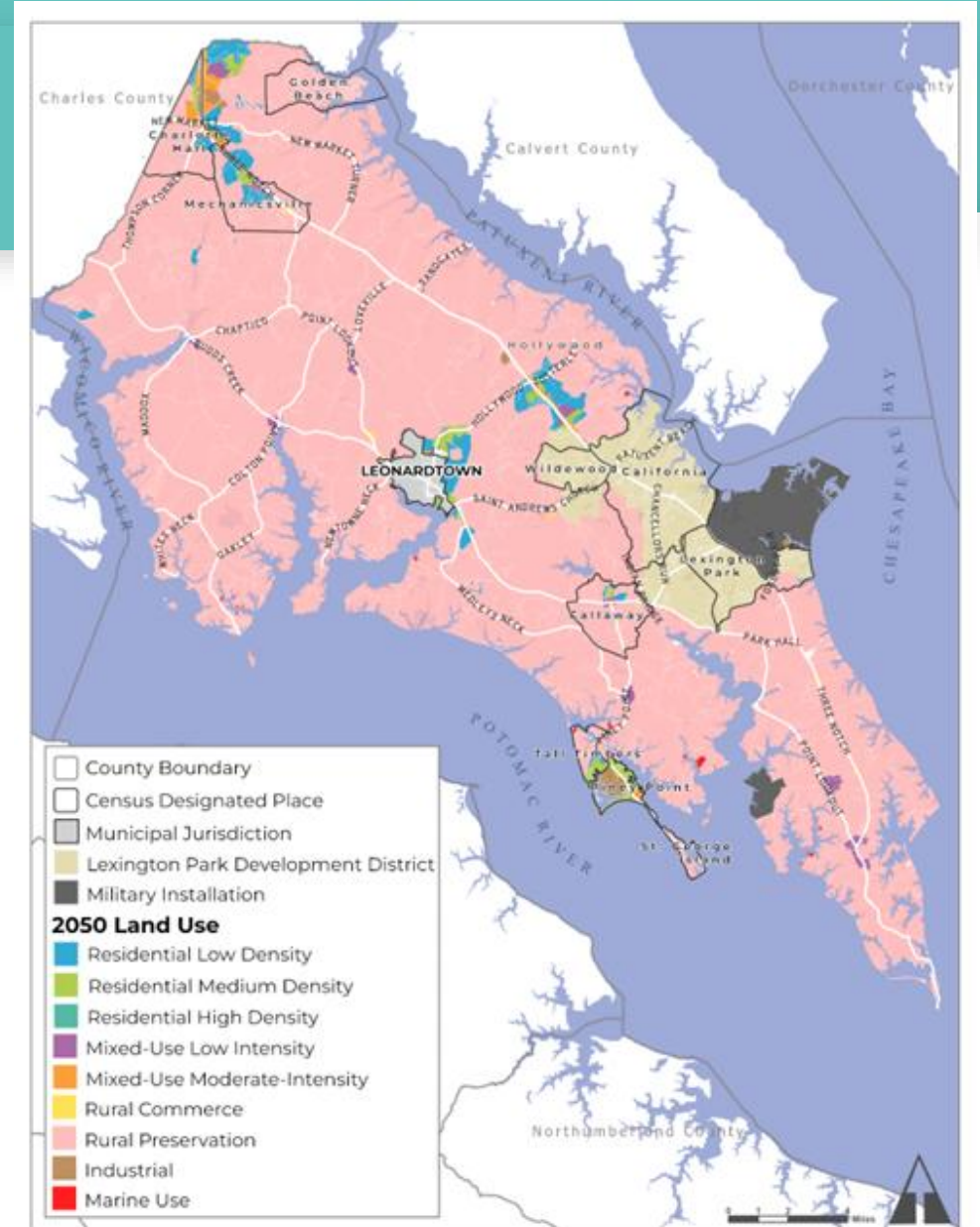
Attendance at **13 Community-Sponsored Events & online surveys**
Content-based surveys on topics
Results: Trends & Projections Report, Framework & Analysis

10 Worksessions Conducted by Planning Commission (Sept. 2025 – Jan. 2026)
Creation of “Public Review Draft”

11 Open Houses & 5 Promotion Events
Provide Feedback on Elements of the Draft Plan
Results: Creation of “Public Hearing Draft”

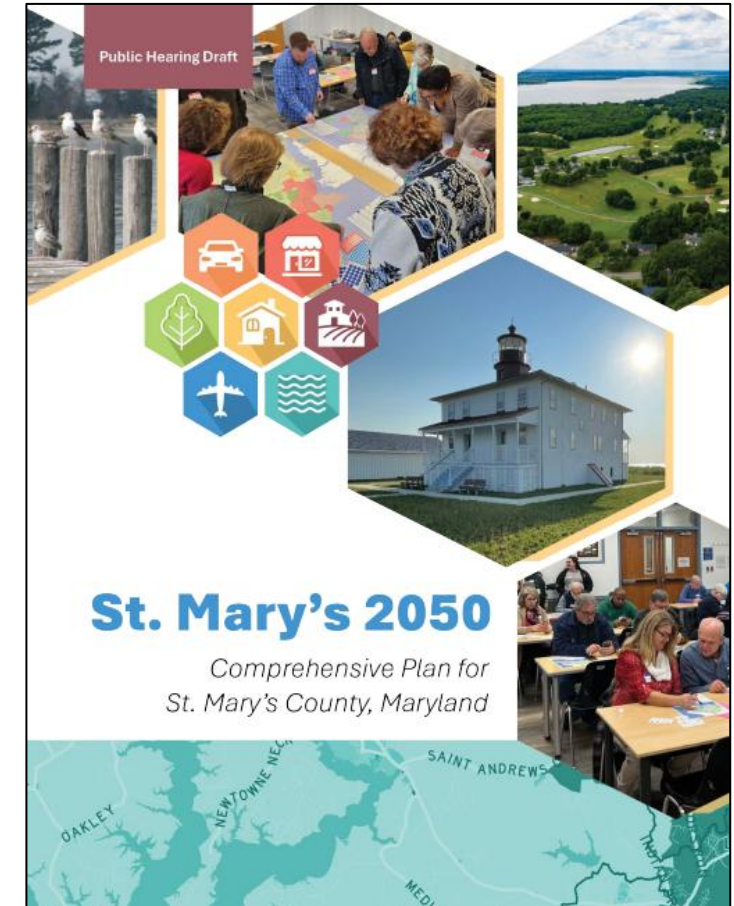
Land Use Designations

- An update to a local jurisdiction's comprehensive plan includes reviewing and updating the Land Use designations, if appropriate
- Land use designations have been consolidated from the 2010 Land Use Map
- The 2050 plan prepared by the Project Team proposes no expansion of the Growth Areas based upon the feedback received from the community
- Requests were received by property owners to change the land use designations of their properties (more information to follow)



Public Hearing Draft

The Public Hearing Draft was sent to MDP and the adjacent jurisdictions in accordance with State law



Topics for Discussion

1. Growth & New Housing
2. Town Centers vs. Village Centers
3. Continued Support for Ferry



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Topic #1: Growth & New Housing



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Connecting Growth with Infrastructure

- **Update Adequate Public Facilities in the Zoning Ordinance** (Growth Management Action 1.1.4)
- **Require developers to provide needed infrastructure** (water, sewer, traffic, transit, sidewalks, school bus stops) (Housing Goal 5)
- **Align school capacity and sites with planned growth** (Public Facilities and Infrastructure Goal 7)
- **Only expand water and sewer in growth areas, and concentrate development in areas with existing water and sewer** (Growth Management Goal 9, Growth Management Policy 1.2, Public Facilities and Infrastructure Goal 1)

Housing Affordability

- At the state level, a shortage of homes and the resulting high prices have led to younger and lower- and middle-income residents leaving the state for more affordable areas
- High housing prices:
 - Reduce the workforce
 - Limit economic development potential
 - Constrain government revenues needed to cover increasing costs to provide public services



Addressing Attainable Housing

Attainable housing: *A wide variety of housing options that reflect the **needs of county residents**, including those that struggle to afford market-rate housing without the use of subsidies.*

The draft plan supports attainable housing in a variety of ways, including:

- Creation of an **Attainable Housing Work Group and Housing Study** to determine the optimum mix of housing types (Housing Actions 1.1.1 and 1.1.2)
- Awarding **bonus densities** for workforce or affordable housing (Housing Action 1.1.4)
- **Expediting the review process** for housing affordable to median-income households (Housing Action 1.2.1)
- **Encouraging accessory dwelling units** in appropriate locations (Housing Policy 1.5)

Keeping Appropriate Density

The plan maintains low levels of residential density in the rural areas of the County:

- Rural Preservation: 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres
- Residential Low-Density: 1-5 dwelling units per acre (with Transferrable Development Rights)



Adaptive Reuse and Revitalization

The plan supports revitalization of aging commercial areas and adaptive reuse of existing structures:

- **Update the Zoning Ordinance** to support adaptive reuse and revitalization (Growth Management Policy 6.1, Economic Development Action 1.6.1, Economic Development Action 5.2.4)
- **Inform landowners of resources for adaptive reuse** of significant historic structures (Economic Development Action 5.1.8)
- **Promote redevelopment of commercial centers** in Growth Areas (Economic Development Policy 1.6)

Topic #2: Town Centers vs. Village Centers



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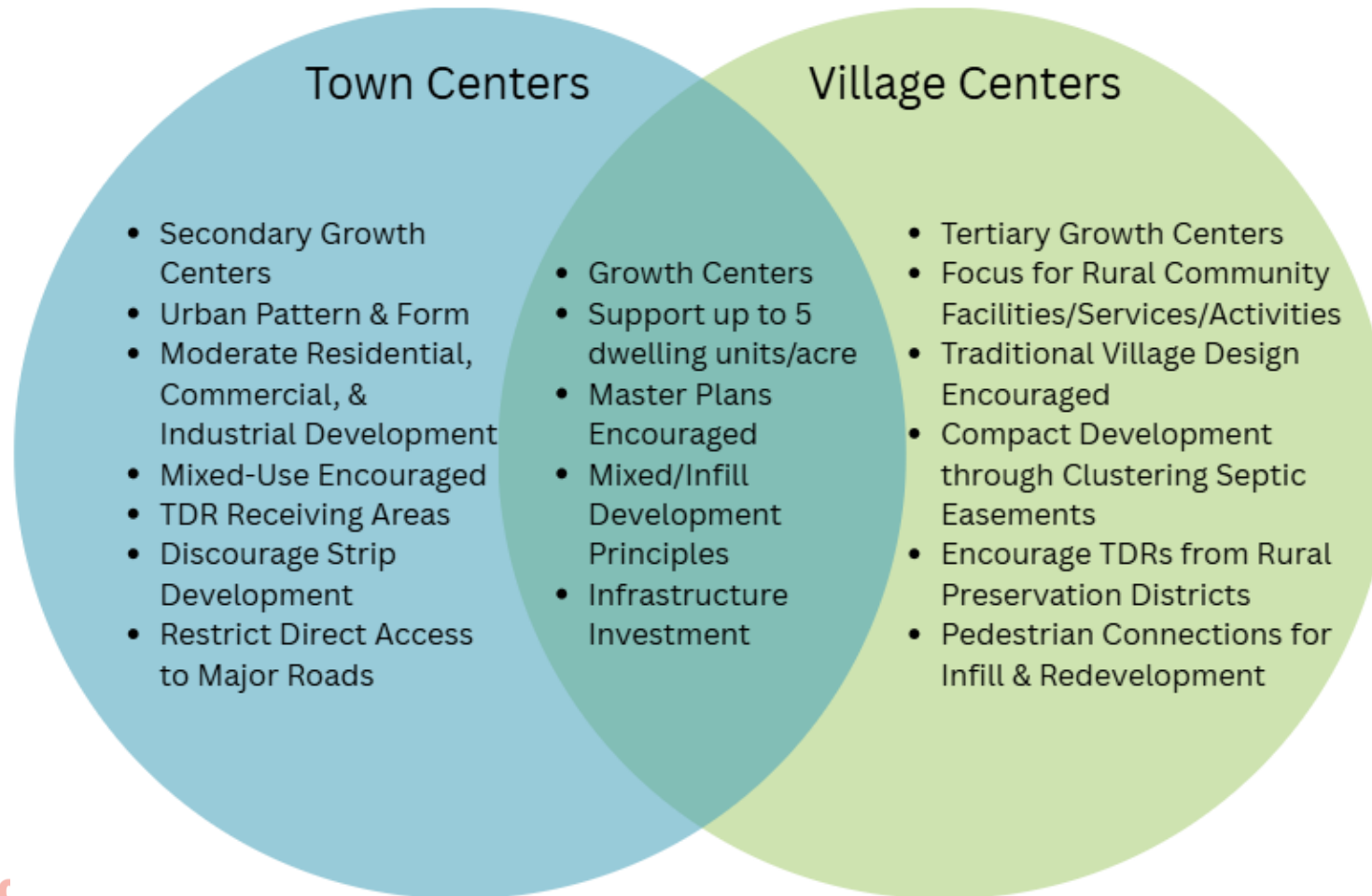
History of Town Centers & Village Centers

Year	Town Centers	Village Centers
1988	“...intended to be secondary growth areas to be provided with community facilities as needs evolve...” “...expected to absorb some of the growth due in the next twenty years, sufficient areas as to be planned for additional residential, commercial, and light industrial development in and around each center...” ...Not to encroach into surrounding rural preservation or neighborhood conservation areas...” Charlotte Hall, New Market, Mechanicsville, Hollywood, Piney Point	“...cluster of houses and stores located at a highway intersection. The houses are usually few in number and the stores are intended for a very localized market.” “Common to all Village Centers are a post office and a grocery store” “...typical activities include churches, fire halls, taverns, and gas stations...” “The small population usually means the Village Centers are unserved by central sewer and water facilities.” Callaway, Chaptico, Clements, Loveville, St. Inigoes, Ridge, Valley Lee *Bushwood was included in 1988; subsequently removed

History of Town Centers & Village Centers

Year	Town Centers	Village Centers
1999 & 2002 & 2010 & 2050 Draft plan	• “Secondary growth centers...urban in pattern and form, designated for moderately intense residential, commercial, and industrial development supported by provision of community facilities and services.” • “Foster town development patterns and design...” • “Encourage creative and carefully designed commercial areas...” • Provide entry signage to articulate town limits Charlotte Hall, New Market, Mechanicsville, Hollywood, Piney Point	• “Third order growth centers...intended to serve as the focus for rural community facilities, services, and activities...” • “Encourage expansion of rural services and moderate residential growth...” • “Foster traditional village development patterns and design...” • “...encourage expansion of rural services in village centers.” Callaway, Chaptico, Clements, Loveville, St. Inigoes, Ridge, Valley Lee

Town Centers vs. Village Centers



Concerns with Piney Point's Designation

- A consistent theme expressed: the viability of Piney Point as a Town Center due to limited public water/sewer, high flooding risk, sea-level rise risk, and limited ingress/egress
- Project Team suggested re-designating Piney Point from a Town Center to a Village Center
- There was a consensus from the Planning Commission that no change was needed; this decision is subject to CSMC review and ratification

Open-Ended Feedback

Some common themes from the open-ended comments on Growth Management:

- Keep rural areas rural
 - Expand **agricultural conservation** tools
 - Commit to **preserving existing open space**
 - Avoid fragmentation of agriculture and open space
 - Maintain rural TDR tools
- **Change Piney Point's designation** from Town Center to Village Center due to access, environmental, and water supply constraints
- Thoughtful growth in Growth Areas
 - Ensure growth matches **infrastructure capacity**
 - Roads and traffic
 - Water and sewer
 - Schools
 - Healthcare
 - Public safety
 - **Support redevelopment**, infill, rehabilitating existing buildings, and walkable town centers over sprawl
 - Support for more services in Town Centers and Village Centers
 - Ensure new high-density development is **transit-ready**
 - Some prefer to slow or **limit growth**



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Piney Point

- Numerous comments requested changing Piney Point from a Town Center to a Village Center for a variety of reasons:
 - Transportation access (which impacts emergency safety)
 - Environmental effects (critical area, flooding risk)
 - Water supply constraints
 - Lower levels of existing development than other Town Centers (Charlotte Hall, Hollywood, Mechanicsville, New Market)
- Recommendation: Change Piney Point from a Town Center to a Village Center



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Redesignation of Piney Point



Changing Piney Point from a Town Center to a Village Center:

- Change **Land Use Designation** from Mixed-Use Moderate Intensity to Mixed-Use Low Intensity *
- Change in **Zoning Districts** from Town Center Mixed Use (TMX) to Village Center Mixed Use (VMX)
- Change in **Zoning Districts** from Residential Mixed Use (RMX) to Village Center Mixed Use (VMX) or Residential Low Density (RL) zoning*

* If the properties in the Town Center are to remain in the RL Zoning District, then the Land Use Designations should be changed to Residential Low Density

Topic #3: Continued Support for Ferry



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Public Review Draft

- Original Ferry Language was included in the Transportation Element under the “Water Access”
- Goal 16: Leverage Potential Passenger Ferry to Drive Economic Growth and Tourism had 3 policies and 2 action items
- Goal 17: Foster Regional Connectivity Through Inter-County Collaboration had 3 policies and 3 action items
- Goal 18: Promote the Successful and Sustainable Implementation of Ferry Service had 3 policies and 3 action items

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Transportation Element

In This Section

Charting a Connected Tomorrow

Biking, Walking, Hiking

Roads

Transit

NAS PAX and St. Mary's County Regional Airport



Original Ferry Language

WATER ACCESS

GOAL 16: LEVERAGE POTENTIAL PASSENGER FERRY TO DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TOURISM

Establish St. Mary's County as a key destination on the Chesapeake Bay by using a new passenger ferry service to attract tourists, support local businesses, and generate sustainable economic activity.

Policy 16.1: Prioritize the Ferry Service as an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

Prioritize the ferry service as a central component of the county's tourism and economic development strategy.

Policy 16.2: Encourage the Development of New and Existing Businesses Catering to Ferry Passengers

Encourage the development of new and existing businesses that cater to ferry passengers, such as recreational opportunities, restaurants, retail shops, and lodging.

Policy 16.3: Ensure Ferry Landing Sites are Integrated with Local Business Districts and Cultural Attractions

Ensure that ferry landing sites are integrated with local business districts and cultural attractions to maximize visitor spending in the community.

Action 16.3.1: Develop Targeted Marketing Campaigns Bundling Transportation with Local Accommodations

Develop targeted marketing campaigns promoting "ferry and stay" packages that bundle transportation with local accommodations, dining, and attractions.

Action 16.3.2: Partner with the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce and Local Businesses to Create a Business Certification Program

Partner with the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to create a "Ferry Friendly" business certification program.

Action 16.3.3: Install Effective Wayfinding to Direct Ferry Passengers to Key Sites

Install clear and attractive wayfinding signage directing ferry passengers from landing sites to key points of interest, including historic St. Mary's City and Leonardtown.

GOAL 17: FOSTER REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY THROUGH INTER-COUNTY COLLABORATION

Strengthen regional partnerships and enhance mobility across the Chesapeake Bay by actively participating in the five-county consortium and ensuring the successful integration of St. Mary's County into a bay-wide ferry network.

Policy 17.1: Commit to Being an Active Partner in the Chesapeake Bay Passenger Ferry Consortium

Commit to being an active and collaborative partner within the Chesapeake Bay Passenger Ferry Consortium.

Policy 17.2: Align the County's Transportation and Land Use Planning with the Regional Ferry System

Align the county's transportation and land-use planning with the operational needs and schedules of the regional ferry system.

Policy 17.3: Support the Pursuit of Joint Funding and Shared Operational Models

Support the pursuit of joint funding and shared operational models to ensure the long-term success of the multi-county initiative.

Action 17.3.1: Appoint a Dedicated County Representative as a Primary Liaison to the Ferry Consortium

Appoint a dedicated county representative to serve as the primary liaison to the ferry consortium and report progress to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County.

Action 17.3.2: Work with Partners to Develop a Unified Ferry Network Branding and Ticketing System

Work with consortium partners to develop a unified branding and ticketing system for the entire ferry network.

Action 17.3.3: Participate in Joint Applications for Federal and State Transportation Grants

Participate in joint applications for federal and state transportation grants to fund vessel acquisition, infrastructure, and operational costs.

GOAL 18: PROMOTE THE SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE IMPLEMENTATION OF FERRY SERVICE

Develop the necessary infrastructure, secure stable funding, and establish a viable operational plan to launch and maintain a reliable and efficient passenger ferry service in St. Mary's County.

Policy 18.1: Pursue a Diversified Funding Strategy

Pursue a diversified funding strategy that combines public grants with private investment to cover both capital and operational costs.

Policy 18.2: Ensure Environmentally Sustainable Design of Ferry Landing Infrastructure

Ensure that the design and construction of ferry landing infrastructure are environmentally sustainable and resilient.

Policy 18.3: Commit to Selecting a Qualified Ferry Operator

Commit to selecting a qualified and experienced ferry operator through a transparent and competitive process.

Action 18.3.1: Conduct Detailed Studies for Proposed Ferry Landings

Conduct detailed site-planning and engineering studies for the proposed ferry landings in St. Mary's City and/or Leonardtown.

Action 18.3.2: Create a Capital Improvement Plan

Create a capital improvement plan that outlines the phased development of necessary infrastructure, including piers, ramps, restrooms, and parking.

Action 18.3.3: Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Professional Ferry Operator

Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify and contract with a professional ferry operator for the St. Mary's County routes.

Public Hearing Draft

- As the result from feedback received during a briefing to CSMC in April 2026, the detailed text regarding the ferry was marked for deletion
- Memo of changes proposed by the Project Team included the inclusion of a new Policy and Action Item to Goal 5 Heritage & Outdoor Recreation Tourism of the Economic Development Element

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Economic Development Element

In This Section

Planning for Economic Development

Diverse Economy

Heritage and Outdoor Recreation Tourism

Working Lands

Mineral Resources

Fisheries



Revised Ferry Language

- New Policy 5.6
- New Action Item 5.6.1

Policy 5.6: Support Regional Transportation Opportunities that Enhance Tourism

Support tourism initiatives that improve visitor access, strengthen regional partnerships, and enhance the visitor experience, including the continue evaluation of regional passenger ferry opportunities, where appropriate and consistent with future County priorities.

Action 5.6.1: Promote Destination-Based Transportation Partnerships

Encourage collaborative marketing initiatives that connect transportation options, including, but not limited to passenger ferry service where available, with waterfront communities, historic destinations, museums, parks, lodging, restaurants, recreational opportunities, agritourism destinations, and local businesses to strengthen St. Mary's County tourism economy.

Status of draft St. Mary's 2050 plan



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Planning Commission Action on Public Hearing Draft

Date	Topic
June 29	Public Hearing on text of Public Hearing Draft
July 7	Public Hearing on Land Use Designation Requests
July 13	Deliberation/Decision on Land Use Designation Requests – Part 1
August 3	Deliberation/Decision on Land Use Designation Requests – Part 2 Deliberation/Decision on text of Public Hearing Draft as amended by Memoranda from the Project Team
August 10	Ratification of Minutes from August 3 meeting and signature of Resolution from Planning Commission

Planning Commission's Recommendation

Draft of St. Mary's 2050 Plan

- Memorandum 1: Requested Changes Memo – Voted in favor of **approval**, 7-0
- Memorandum 2: State Review Memo – Voted in favor of **approval**, 7-0
- Memorandum 3: Public Comment Review Memo – Voted in favor of **approval**, 7-0
- Memorandum 4: Responses to PC Questions and Comments – Voted in favor of **approval**, 7-0
- St. Mary's 2050 Draft Plan – Voted in favor of **approval**, 5-2

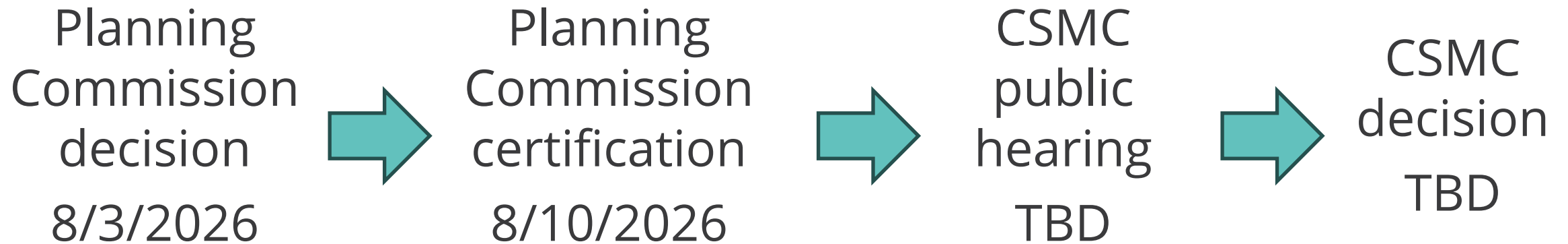
These are recommendations by the Planning Commission and are subject to a public hearing and a final decision by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County

Planning Commission's Recommendation Changes to Land Use Designations

- Seaforth Partnership, LLP – **Withdrawn**
- Stanley Martin Companies, LLC – Voted in favor of **approval**, 4-3
- Medina Partnership – Voted in favor of **approval**, 5-2
- Bumpy Oak Corp. Retirement Plan Trust – Voted in favor of **approval**, 6-1
- Family Tree Ventures II LLC – Voted in favor of **approval**, 7-0
- LMZ, LLC – Voted in favor of **denial**, 7-0
- Lloyd – Voted in favor of **denial**, 7-0
- Tommy's Truck Service II Inc. – Voted in favor of **denial**, 4-3 and 7-0

These are recommendations by the Planning Commission and are subject to a public hearing and a final decision by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County

Next Steps for draft plan



Note: The Planning Commission's recommendation shall be considered approved if the CSMC fail to approve, modify, remand, or disapprove the recommended plan within 90 days after the Planning Commission's certification of an attested copy to them, unless exigent circumstances exist (one 60-day extension permitted)

Review & Approval of Schedule

See attached memorandum
for scheduling options

For More Information

To learn more about the St. Mary's
2050 Plan please visit:

[https://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/
StMarys2050/](https://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/StMarys2050/)

