

# Calvert County Comprehensive Plan Update

## *Supporting Options in Community Character*

### Developing a Place-type Strategy

Calvert County citizens favor directing growth to the designated Town Centers. However, the definition of Town Center means different things to different people, and many residents believe that there are several types of Town Center communities in the county. The categories of major and minor “Town Center” may not be sufficient to address the locations suitable for growth in the county. Nor are all population centers appropriate for additional growth. However, these existing communities need to be recognized. This issue paper examines the county’s various population centers and proposes a range of place-types for these population centers. This approach would preserve and enhance sense of place and community character across Calvert County and within the specific population centers.

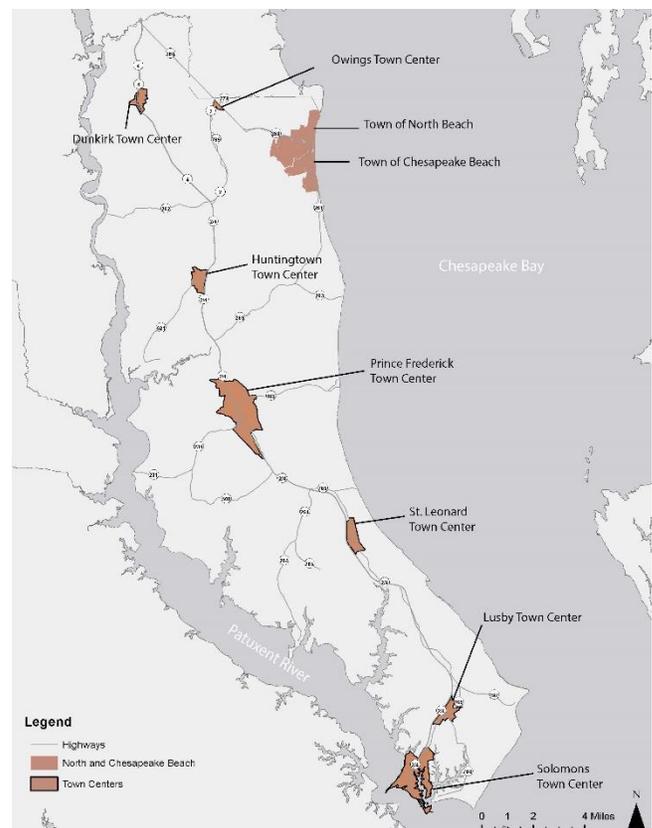
This paper provides an overview of current conditions for the county and for each of the Town Centers and discusses places in the county with strong identities that are not designated as Town Centers. Finally, it proposes using a hierarchy of place types to recognize and categorize the desirable community characters of the county’s various population centers.

### Background

There are nine designated Town Centers in Calvert County. Seven are unincorporated and regulated by the county government: Dunkirk, Huntingtown, Lusby, Owings, Prince Frederick, St. Leonard, and Solomons. Two designated Town Centers are incorporated municipalities with their own regulatory powers: Chesapeake Beach and North Beach.

The Town Centers are where the majority of commercial, civic, and employment activities take place. The county’s *Comprehensive Plan* provides that Town Centers should be attractive, pleasant, and convenient places to live, work, and shop. The *Comprehensive Plan* goals include directing growth to appropriate locations, ensuring a wide range of housing opportunities for all incomes and ages, and maintaining and enhancing the quality of residential communities.

Based on feedback from the community during the Fall 2016 workshops, it appears that the designated Town Centers are not meeting residents’ expectations



and are not providing a range of housing options, commercial and retail amenities, transportation infrastructure, pedestrian connectivity, public facilities, and public space.

## Current Conditions

This section provides a baseline understanding of existing conditions and current extent of growth, and provides the current development “snapshot.” This snapshot is important to determining an appropriate framework for how the county can better adjust its policies for these areas.

## Town Center Master Plans

Each Town Center has an adopted master plan that describes its development goals and objectives. Many of the Town Centers share a similar vision of the future, but there are some notable differences. The following summary presents the main goals and objectives of each of the adopted Town Center master plans and offers an overview of the key points relevant to community character.

### Economic Development

The Town Center master plans focus on attracting appropriate types of retail and designating adequate areas for commercial use. Most Town Center master plans promote a broad mix of commercial, office, and public and institutional uses. Commercial development has the potential to shape the aesthetics and community character of an area. The Town Center master plans encourage commercial and economic development that is compatible with the environmental, cultural, historical, and aesthetic character of each specific Town Center.

### Preserve and Expand Residential Areas

Overall, the Town Center master plans focus on protecting existing residential neighborhoods, while encouraging new residential development in appropriate locations. They recommend a variety of housing types to meet the needs of a diverse population. For example, the Prince Frederick Master Plan seeks to retain the residential character of existing neighborhoods through adaptive reuse of existing residential buildings. The Prince Frederick Master Plan also promotes higher density residential development adjacent to existing neighborhoods and good design to ensure privacy and space. The Owings Town Center Master Plan calls for providing the necessary zoning and infrastructure for single-family and multi-family development, including low-to moderate-income and senior housing.

### Community Character

Accommodating future growth within Town Centers while maintaining community character is central to many Town Center master plans. The Huntingtown Town Center and Solomons Town Center master plans focus on promoting community character. Huntingtown’s master plan promotes a distinctive identity through the establishment of a community focal point and preservation of visual integrity. The Solomons Town Center Master Plan focuses on water-based activities and enhancing “*a mix of uses in the Solomons Island Village Core that are family-friendly, encourage year round activity, and are visually compatible with Solomons architectural heritage.*”<sup>1</sup> Solomons could be used as a reference for envisioning the potential for future Town Centers as denser, pedestrian-oriented places.

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<sup>1</sup> *Solomons Town Center Master Plan. (2009) Master Plan Goals & Objectives.*

### Transportation and Connectivity

Generally, the master plans promote balanced, complete transportation systems that reduce dependency on personal automobiles and enhance mobility. In addition, Town Center master plans aim for a well-connected, safe, and functional road system to improve traffic safety. The Prince Frederick Master Plan outlines two specific transportation-focused objectives that have county-wide impacts: (1) stage the development of a transportation system to complement the overall development of the county, and (2) maintain MD 2/4 as the main transportation corridor providing for safe and efficient travel.<sup>2</sup> These two objectives complement a more comprehensive transportation vision for the county by developing connections within and between population and employment centers. Mobility connections, such as better public transit within and between communities, sustain and promote development and growth.

### Undesignated Population Centers

In addition to the policies and recommendations made in the Calvert County Comprehensive Plan, there are county, state and federal government policies that recognize specific population and employment centers in the county. Maryland's Priority Funding Areas (PFA) are designated by local governments as places for future growth. Being designated as a PFA makes the areas eligible for state investment including highways, sewer and water construction, economic development assistance, and state leases or construction of new state office facilities.<sup>3</sup>

In Calvert County there are many areas outside the Town Centers that are designated as Priority Funding Areas. These population centers are mostly areas with clustered residential uses and some commercial, civic, and/or other uses. Examples of these areas include Broomes Island, Barstow, and the area around the Chaneyville Road/MD 4 intersection. As discussed in the *Potential Strategies* section, "place-type" designations for these population centers would help preserve and enhance the unique qualities of these centers based on their established community character.

The federal government maps Census Designated Places (CDP) for which data from the decennial census is reported and interim forecasts of population are developed as part of the American Community Survey. Calvert County's unincorporated Town Centers are included with CDPs. However, the CDP boundaries do not necessarily match the Town Center boundaries and can include areas outside the Town Centers. For example, the CDP that includes the Owings Town Center includes a larger area than just the Owings Town Center. Chesapeake Ranch Estates and Drum Point are well-established residential areas outside Lusby Town Center. These communities are designated as a CDP, but are not a Town Center. From 2000 to 2009, the population of this CDP has increased from approximately 11,500 to 13,030 or 13 percent.<sup>4</sup>

### Land Use and Current Development Patterns

Development within Calvert County is largely dispersed. In general, residential development occurs along the major roads and corridors rather than clustered in and around Town Centers.

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<sup>2</sup> *Prince Frederick Master Plan. (1989)*

<sup>3</sup> *Maryland Department of Planning. (2017) Priority Funding Areas. (<http://www.mdp.state.md.us/OurProducts/pfamap.shtml>)*

<sup>4</sup> *U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey and Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data*

Much of Calvert County’s residential development is located north of Prince Frederick, and approximately 20 percent of existing residential land uses in the county is concentrated within one-mile of the Town Centers. Residential development in the south is more concentrated whereas residential development in the north is more dispersed. In addition, 85 percent of residential development is categorized as low or very low density.

Commercial development is mainly focused inside Town Centers with some additional commercial development located in Rural Commercial Zoning Districts, most of which are located along the main roadways: MD 2, MD 4, MD 2/4, MD 231, MD 260 and MD 765. The Calvert County Comprehensive Plan promotes a broad mix of commercial, office, residential, public, and quasi-public development within Town Centers. However, based on observations of the area and community input, the Town Centers have not developed into compact areas as envisioned. Solomons is the only Town Center that that has a pedestrian-oriented street network and a diverse array of smaller shops and uses. This historic core of Solomons was developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Population Growth

Calvert County has gone from one of the fastest growing counties in Maryland to one of the slowest growing. This dramatic shift in Calvert County’s growth rate is a response to a downturn in the national economy, changing preferences in the housing market, and the county’s policies and stated goals. Some portion of the change could be attributed to the long-term effects of the transfer of development rights program in combination with the two downzonings that took place in 1999 and 2003. Another contributing factor is Maryland’s Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 (also known as the “Growth Tiers” or “Septic Bill” Act). Calvert County has not yet adopted a Growth Tier map, so the subdivision activity in many parts of the county is restricted.

The following table represents the growth, and in some cases, decline of population in Calvert County’s CDPs that contain Town Centers.

**Table 1: Population Change in Census Designated Places that contain Town Centers**

Population Averages	Town Centers						
	Dunkirk	Huntingtown	Lusby	Owings	Prince Frederick	St. Leonard	Solomons
2005 to 2009	2,782	3,412	2,859	1,846	1,834	986	1,736
2010 to 2014	2,334	3,840	1,504	2,745	3,213	574	1,822
<b>Population Change</b>	<b>- 448</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>- 1,355</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>1,379</b>	<b>- 412</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Percent Change</b>	<b>- 16.1%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>- 47.4%</b>	<b>48.7%</b>	<b>75.2%</b>	<b>- 41.8%</b>	<b>5%</b>

Notes: Population data is provided for Census-Designated Places (CDP); the Town Center boundaries, as provided by the county, are slightly smaller than the CDPs. Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey

### Connectivity

Limited growth within Calvert County and within some of the Town Centers could be attributed to the lack of sufficient connectivity both within and between Town Centers. Public transportation is necessary in order to provide a means of access into central commercial and employment districts for populations that may not have access to a personal automobile. Although the county is served by seven public transit routes in and between Town Centers, the predominate mode is auto-oriented, with a lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and public transit service gaps, such as limited hours and frequency.

## Community Character

Every population center has unique physical features. Residential areas are developed in ways that respond to the surrounding environment, whether that be the waterfront, farmland, or a nearby Town Center. The Town Centers contain most of the county's commercial and employment activity. Prince Frederick is the largest Town Center and the location of state and county government offices, Calvert Memorial Hospital and adjacent private medical offices, and large retail shopping centers. In general, Lusby, Solomons, and Dunkirk are made up of large commercial centers set back from main roadways in strip centers. Solomons contains a cluster of local retail shops and restaurants on Solomons Island that creates a small waterfront village character. Huntingtown, St. Leonard, and Owings are Town Centers that have the least commercial or employment activity.

## Documented Opinions

Based on feedback during recent public workshops, commercial centers within the county are generally not meeting the needs of residents and visitors. The common perception is that the Town Centers are not developed to their full potential in terms of economy, housing and affordability, street network, pedestrian connectivity, recreational opportunities, or population. Many county residents complain that the Town Centers lack specific uses and amenities. These include a walkable center with a variety of places, parks, plazas, and pedestrian and bicycle connections. There is also concern that the Town Centers do not have enough local retail. There is an interest in living and working in well-connected mixed-use, commercial centers, but residents do not perceive the Town Centers as having these features. The community has a vision for the way Town Centers and other place-types should be developed, which is not being achieved.

## Desired Outcomes

During the public workshops, residents of Calvert County demonstrated a consensus on focusing growth in currently-designated Town Centers. The public envisions more walkable, developed, mixed-use central commercial and employment centers. They seek additional public spaces, parks, and community amenities that would improve quality of life. Residents would like more attention paid to streetscape design and walking paths, and they requested additional opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle connections between commercial establishments. In addition, they wanted site design standards to improve commercial development in the Town Centers. Furthermore, the community would like Town Centers to include additional employment opportunities beyond the larger retail establishments in shopping centers along the major roadways.

Housing is a key issue that the community would like addressed. There is strong support for creating additional housing options in Town Centers that serve a diversifying population: attracting a younger population and accommodating the existing senior population.

The lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure disconnects residents from recreational opportunities and services. It poses a challenge to linking future housing in population centers to the county's recreational resources.

Finally, it remains important to the community to identify where new development should and should not be concentrated. There is a consensus to limit sprawl, direct growth to Town Centers, and support mixed-use, infill development, and necessary infrastructure improvements.

## Potential Strategies

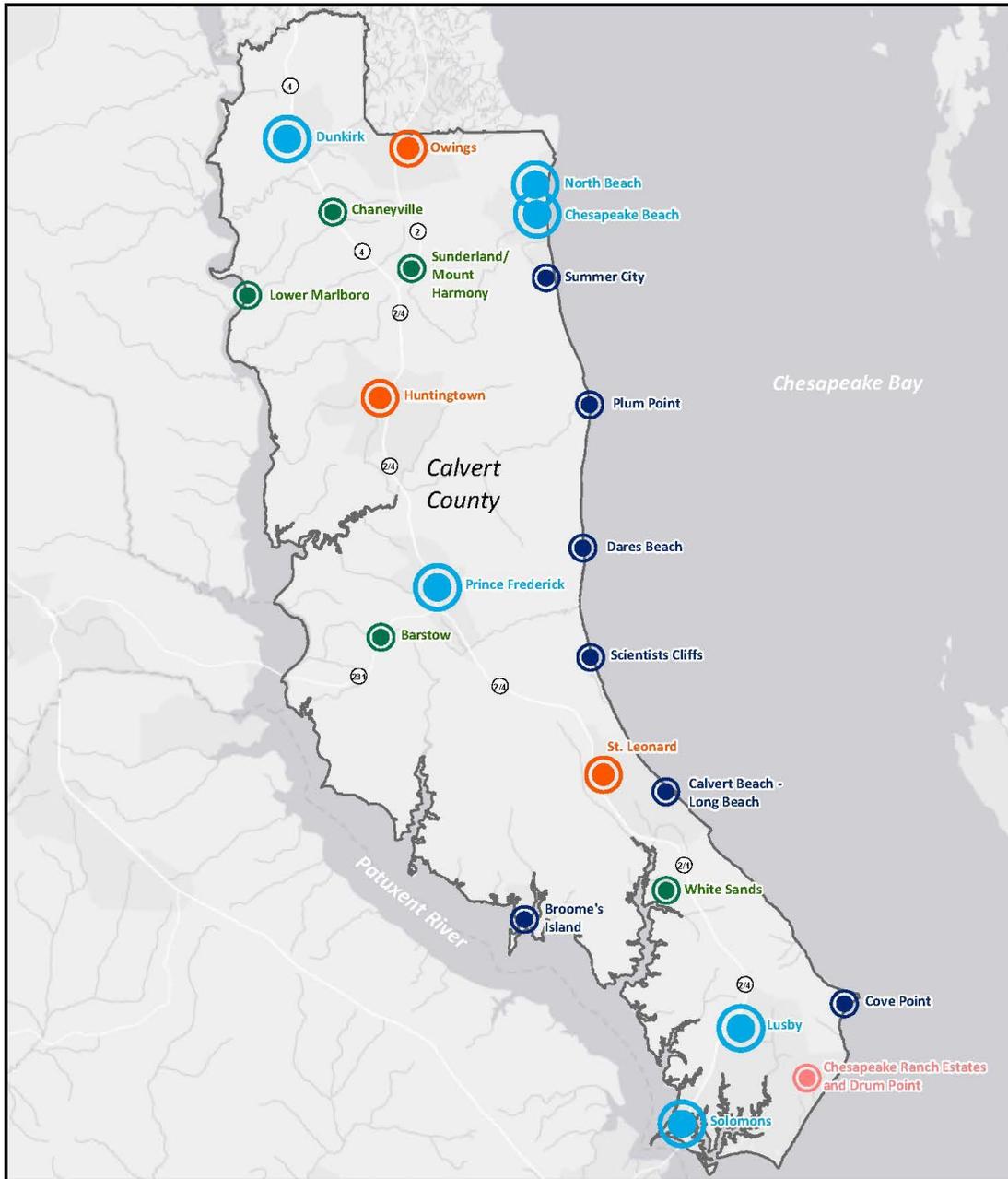
Since the same development intensity is not appropriate for all population centers, the updates to the new Calvert County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance should preserve the on-the-ground conditions and, if desirable, develop population centers through the establishment of a hierarchical system of place-types. The strategies proposed below would preserve and strengthen the unique community character in Town Centers and other population centers throughout the county. The strategies are proposed as ways to ensure that future development in the county's population centers is reflective of the surrounding area and the community's aspirations and vision.

### Potential Strategy #1: Establish a hierarchical system of "place-types" that better define the character of various population centers and provide a clear policy direction for their preservation and growth.

Calvert County could adopt a place-type community planning strategy that defines various types of population centers and creates development strategies that are more precisely calibrated to their community characters. A place-type designation is a community design tool used to guide building design and function as well as land use and development patterns. To that end, the following five place types are proposed and are reflective of the current distinct character types found the county:

1. Town Center
2. Village
3. Hamlet
4. Waterfront Community
5. Residential Transition Area

The following map illustrates where each place-type designation would be designated throughout Calvert County. Descriptions following the county overview map outline the identifying characteristics of each place type and begin to assign the designations to existing population centers within Calvert County.



**PROPOSED PLACE TYPE DESIGNATIONS**



### Town Centers

Town Centers contain a mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. The main role of Town Centers is to accommodate the most intense development in the county, mixing and blending housing, public facilities, employment, and commercial uses together. The most prominent Town Centers are along MD 4 and MD 2/4. These Town Centers would serve a community of all ages, with special attention given to senior citizens and young adults. A traditional plan radiates out from a central point with streets lined with sidewalks and a pedestrian-oriented design of blocks that maintains short walking distances.<sup>5</sup>

Town Centers typically have an associated residential area on the outskirts that provides the market for the core commercial development.

Of the seven currently-designated Town Centers controlled by the Calvert County Government, four are large enough to support this type of development.

Population centers proposed as a Town Center place-type include:

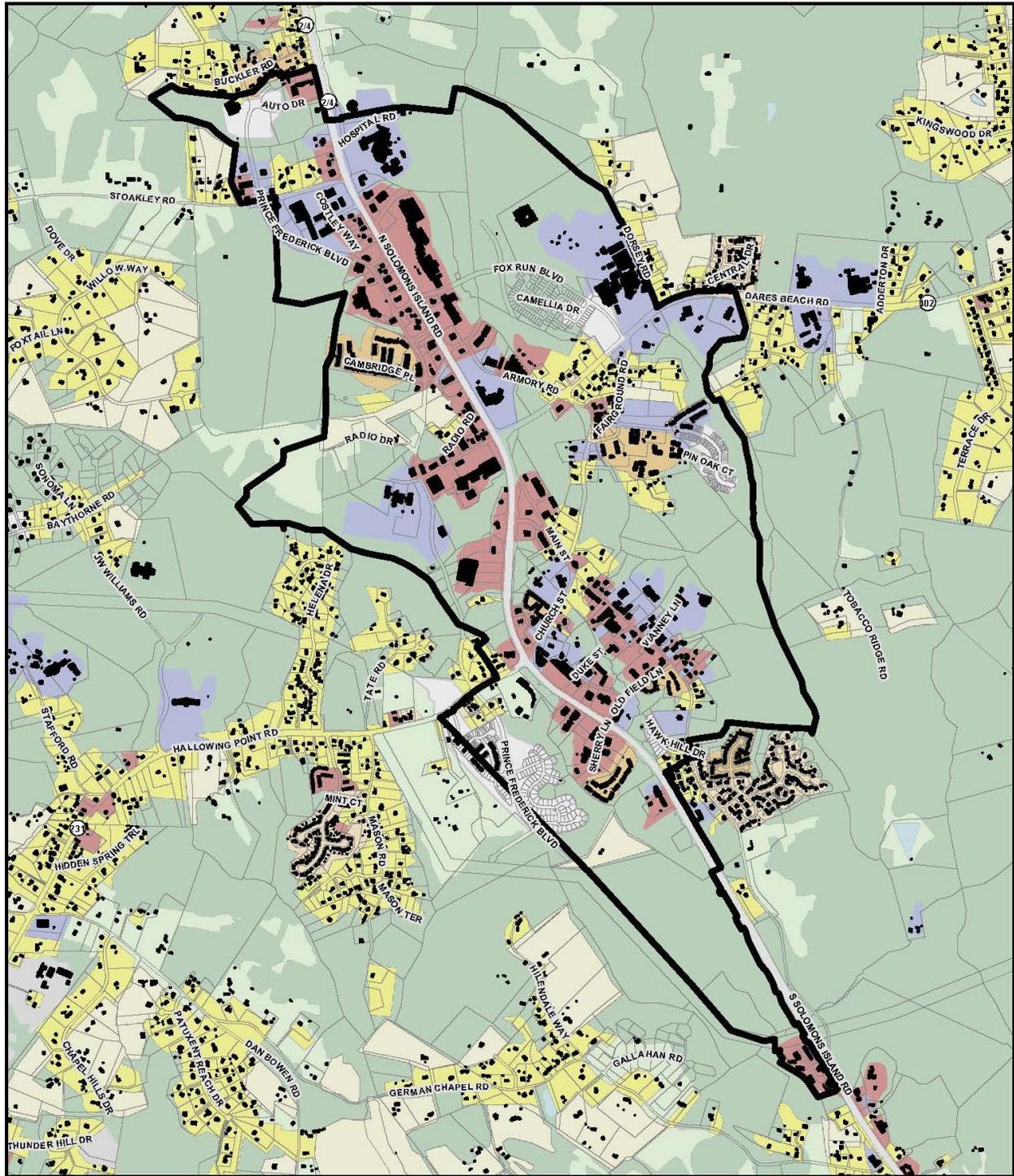
1. Prince Frederick
2. Lusby
3. Solomons
4. Dunkirk
5. Chesapeake Beach
6. North Beach

The municipalities of Chesapeake Beach and North Beach are proposed to continue to be designated Town Centers, under their own planning and zoning authority.

The following map of Prince Frederick has been chosen to illustrate the current land use conditions that make this an appropriate population center for Town Center designation. Prince Frederick is the largest master plan-designated Town Center in the county and contains a mix of commercial and institutional uses concentrated along North Solomons Road and Dares Beach Road. Prince Frederick could support the level and intensity of development proposed under the Town Center place type. Through the Town Center place-type designation it is anticipated that Prince Frederick could potentially expand and through infill development, be more commercially dense in the core.

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<sup>5</sup> Duany, A. and Plater-Zyberk, E. (1991) *Towns and Town-Making Principles*.



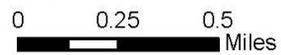
**PRINCE FREDERICK**

- Existing Town Center Boundary
- Building Footprints

**Land Use**

- |             |                          |                              |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Agriculture | High Density Residential | Medium Density Residential   |
| Barren Land | Industrial               | Other Developed Lands        |
| Commercial  | Institutional            | Transportation               |
| Forest      | Low Density Residential  | Very Low Density Residential |

- Water
- Wetlands



### Villages

Villages are residential communities with less development intensity than Town Centers. Villages contain a mix of uses, with concentrations of commercial, retail, and civic and/or community uses. Villages, like Town Centers, have a central point from which development extends. However, villages have more local commercial uses whereas Town Centers may serve a larger geography and contain greater opportunities for employment. Similar to the minor town center designation in the Calvert County Comprehensive Plan, the village place-type would serve as a local convenience center. Villages typically have an associated residential area on the outskirts that provides the market for the core commercial development.

Population centers proposed as a Village place-type include:

1. Huntingtown
2. Owings
3. St. Leonard

Based on a comparison of developed areas within the county, three of the currently-designated Town Centers, Huntingtown, Owings, and St. Leonard, could be reclassified as a Village place-type. These places contain smaller developable areas, which would be better served by smaller scale development.

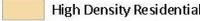
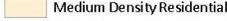
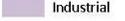
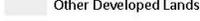
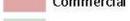
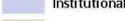
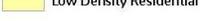
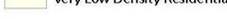
The following map of St. Leonard has been chosen to illustrate the current conditions that make this an appropriate area for a Village place-type designation. St. Leonard is currently designated as a minor Town Center by the current Calvert County Comprehensive Plan. Based on the current level of commercial and institutional development, St. Leonard has the potential to be developed into a village place-type with additional commercial uses that serve the local community. The street network allows for a concentrated commercial area surrounded by varying levels of residential density.



**ST. LEONARD**

-  Existing Town Center Boundary
-  Building Footprints

**Land Use**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  Agriculture |  High Density Residential |  Medium Density Residential   |
|  Barren Land |  Industrial               |  Other Developed Lands         |
|  Commercial  |  Institutional            |  Transportation                |
|  Forest      |  Low Density Residential  |  Very Low Density Residential |



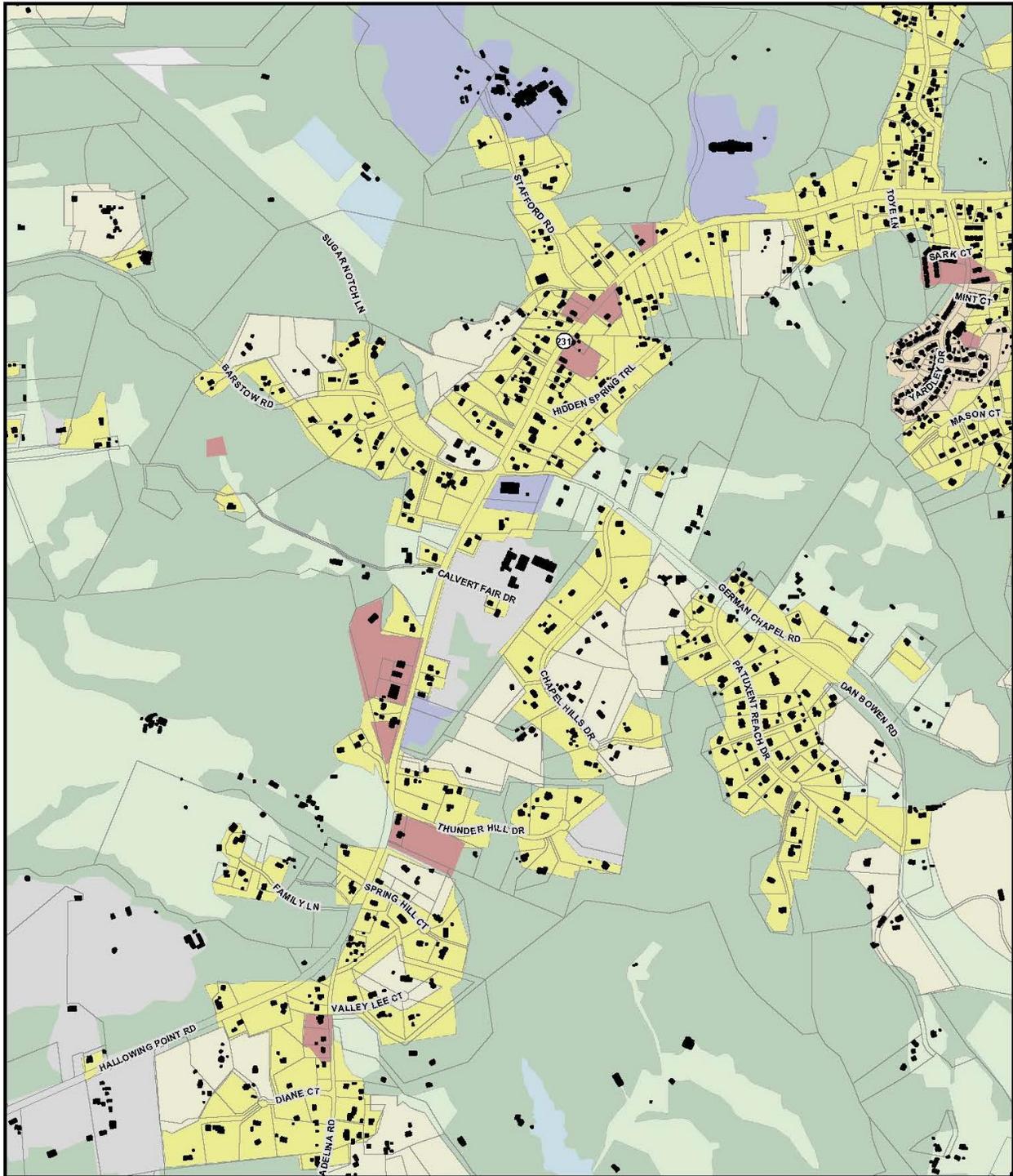
### Hamlets

Hamlets are smaller than villages and are categorized as clustered communities that contain several significant commercial or civic uses; the remainder of development is low-to-mid density residential. It is not anticipated that these hamlets would undergo much development or future growth.

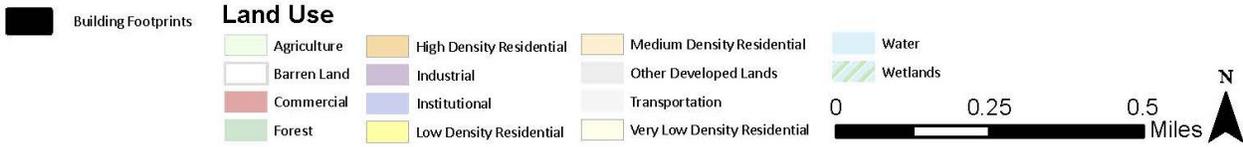
Population centers proposed as a Hamlet place-type include:

1. Sunderland/Mount Harmony
2. Chaneyville
3. Barstow
4. Lower Marlboro
5. White Sands

The following map of Barstow has been chosen to illustrate the current conditions that make this an appropriate area for a hamlet place-type designation. Barstow is an undesignated population center south west of Prince Frederick. Barstow represents a smaller clustered community of low-density residential uses and select commercial and institutional uses along Hallowing Point Road. Based on Barstow's proximity to Prince Frederick, there does not seem to be a demand or need for much more commercial development in this population center.



**BARSTOW**



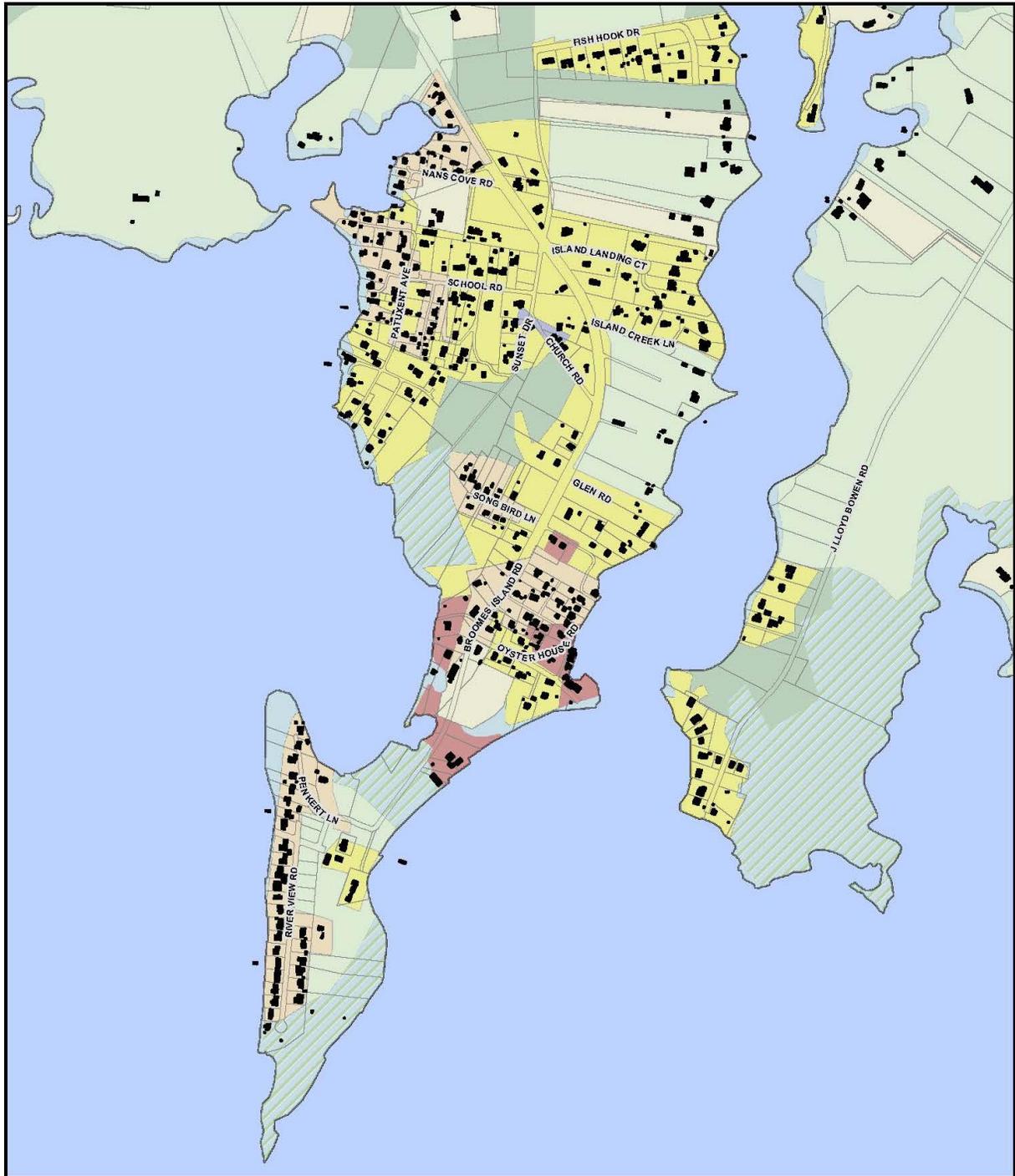
### Waterfront Communities

Waterfront communities are clustered small population centers located along Calvert County's waterfront. This place type recognizes these population centers as unique places within the county. Future development within these population centers would be limited.

Population centers proposed as a Waterfront Communities place type include:

1. Plum Point
2. Dares Beach
3. Cove Point
4. Summer City
5. Scientists Cliffs
6. Calvert Beach - Long Beach
7. Broomes Island

The following map of Broomes Island has been chosen to illustrate the current conditions that make this an appropriate area for a Waterfront Community place-type. Broomes Island is an undesignated population center that contains water-focused commercial uses that are typical of other waterfront communities along the county's Chesapeake Bay shoreline.



**BROOME'S ISLAND**

Building Footprints

**Land Use**

- |             |                          |                              |          |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| Agriculture | High Density Residential | Medium Density Residential   | Water    |
| Barren Land | Industrial               | Other Developed Lands        | Wetlands |
| Commercial  | Institutional            | Transportation               |          |
| Forest      | Low Density Residential  | Very Low Density Residential |          |

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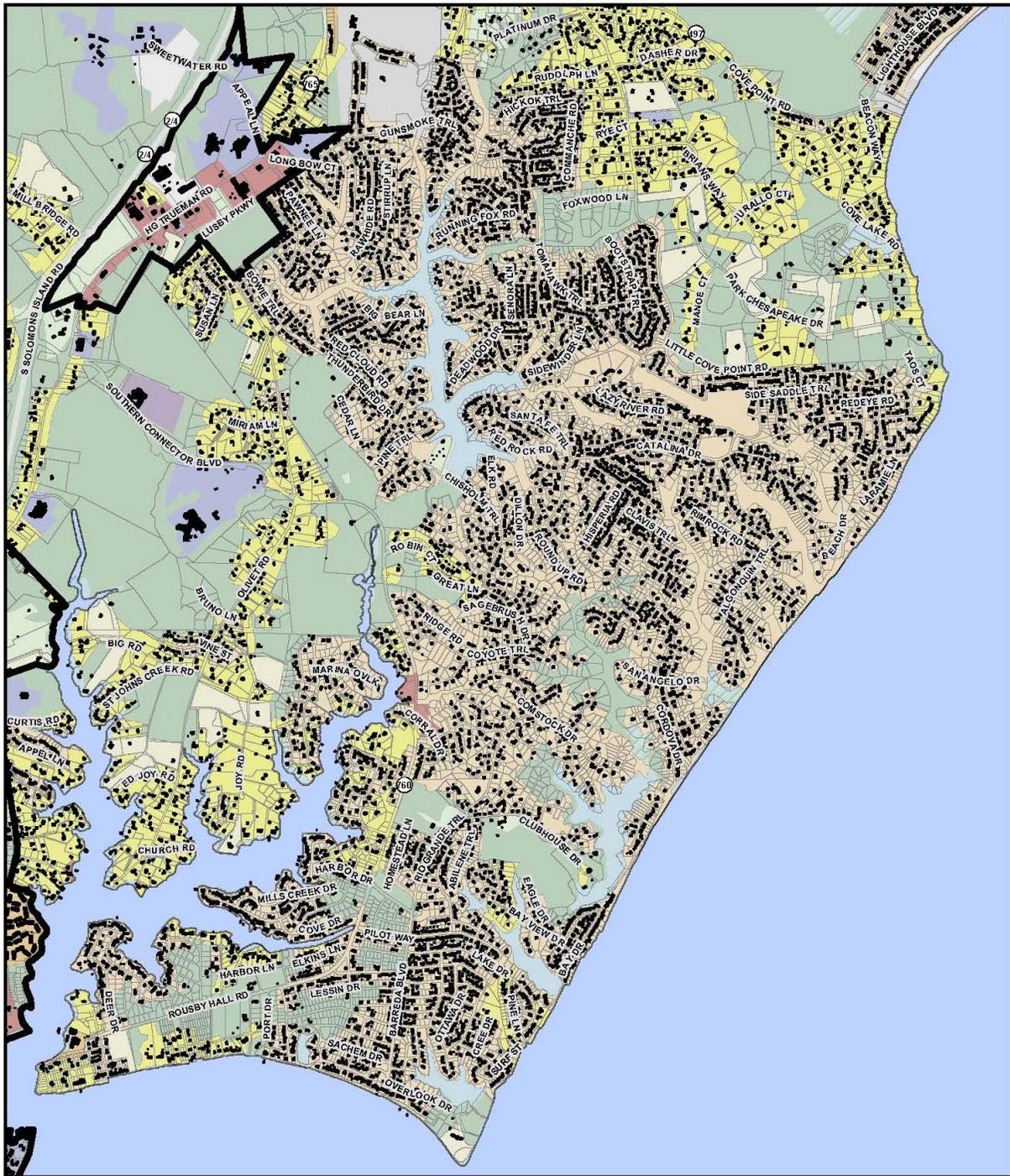


### [Residential Transition Area](#)

Residential Transition Areas are intended to ensure that the physical transition from higher intensity population centers outward to rural areas is of an appropriate and graduated scale. These areas would be more clearly defined by a step down of residential density from the Town Center or village to agricultural land. The proposed Residential Transition Areas would be defined and regulated as zoning districts in the Zoning Ordinance, would have use and dimensional standards, and be mapped along the periphery of the Town Centers and villages.

Specific locations for proposed Residential Transition Areas have not be identified. However, Chesapeake Ranch Estates and Drum Point are a good illustration of a population center appropriate for this designation. The area is dominated by low-density residential uses, is directly adjacent to the Town Center of Lusby, and supports the more intense commercial development there.

The following map of the Chesapeake Ranch Estates and Drum Point area shows its adjacency to the Lusby Town Center and the character of the residential development that make this an appropriate area for a Residential Transition Area place-type designation.

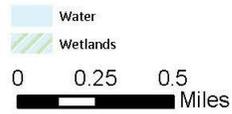


**CHESAPEAKE RANCH ESTATES AND DRUM POINT**

- Existing Town Center Boundary
- Building Footprints

**Land Use**

- |             |                          |                              |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Agriculture | High Density Residential | Medium Density Residential   |
| Barren Land | Industrial               | Other Developed Lands        |
| Commercial  | Institutional            | Transportation               |
| Forest      | Low Density Residential  | Very Low Density Residential |



## Potential Strategy #2: Develop land use and design guidelines for each place type and incorporate in the *Calvert County Comprehensive Plan* and Zoning Ordinance.

The revised comprehensive plan would set out principles for each place-type to guide development and to foster community character. These principles would be translated into regulations in the zoning ordinance.

In the future, it may be appropriate to develop more detailed small areas plans for those places selected to accommodate future growth. These small area plans could provide land use and design guidelines concerning the location of uses and site design, and the relationship between residential, commercial, civic, and institutional development. In addition, land use and design guidelines could be responsive to the surrounding rural nature of the county and the vision of the community. The land use and design guidelines could describe the kind of development, its placement on a lot, and its relationship to surrounding uses and include illustrations.

### Conclusion

The potential strategies outlined above would create a framework for targeting future growth and development into more concentrated areas within the county. In combination, these strategies would provide more precise tools to preserve, enhance, and maintain community character and appearance within and around Calvert County's population centers.

### Share Your Ideas

- Do you agree with the place types proposed: Town Centers, Villages, Hamlets, Waterfront Communities, and Residential Transition Areas? What are your thoughts on these types? If not, what place-types would you suggest?
- Do you agree with the places proposed for each place-type?
  - Town Centers: Dunkirk, Prince Frederick, Lusby and Solomons
  - Villages: Huntingtown, Owings, and St. Leonard
  - Hamlets: Sunderland/Mount Harmony, Barstow, Chaneyville, Lower Marlboro, and White Sands
  - Waterfront Communities: Plum Point, Dares Beach, Cove Point, Summer City, Scientists Cliffs, Calvert Beach, Long Beach, and Broomes Island
- What changes would you make to the proposed designations?
- What characteristics would a Town Center or Village need to have for you to live and/or work there?
- What areas would you suggest for the Residential Transition Area?