

# Sustainability in the Comprehensive Plan

## Sustainability

At its core, sustainability is the process of balancing environmental concerns with social equity and economics. The intersection of these “three E’s” (equity, economics, and environment) is where the quality of life is best obtained. Creating a balance in the “three E’s” requires framing the approach to planning and development differently and use the following six principles to achieve an outcome of sustainable community design.

- **Oriented to Future Generations** – being concerned with planning for future generations as well as with planning for the present generation.
- **Bounded by community growth limits** – approaching development with a consciousness of limits to a community’s local development and population potential; the community’s carrying capacity.
- **Natural and geographic boundaries** – approaching matters based on their natural and geographic characteristics, not artificial and political units.
- **Means to sustainability** – approaches the functional areas of planning (such as transportation, housing and economic development) not as ends in themselves, but rather as means to an end – the end being a sustainable community.
- **Holistic and interconnected thinking** – abandons thinking about functional areas as separate from one another.
- **Public participation** – focus on the desired outcomes for people and broaden the process by which a community discovers, considers and tackles issues.

Calvert County’s approach to implementing sustainability begins with addressing land use goals using natural boundaries focused on defining natural and rural areas (Priority Preservation Areas) and growth areas (Priority Funding Areas). The county’s sustainability success depends upon its long-standing commitment to broad public participation in the planning process and on holistically implementing the actions listed in all chapters in the Comprehensive Plan.

## Land Use’s Sustainability Approach

The Land Use Chapter promotes creating a sustainable land use pattern through a balanced mix of residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial uses and is anti-sprawl. Proposed policies allow mixed uses and higher development intensities that create more efficient land use patterns and spaces in the Town Centers and Villages. Areas like Calvert County that lie at the outer edges of metropolitan areas should be maintained as natural resource protection areas, farming regions, and vacation/recreation/retirement areas. Sustainable Calvert can create images of living communally in small, farm-oriented communities with a strong sense of unity surrounded by wide-open spaces. These energy-efficient land use patterns promote economic and social activities that are less dependent on automobiles.

## **Environment and Natural Resources' Sustainability Approach**

The Environment and Natural Resource Chapter promotes conservation of natural resources, such as surface water, forests, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas and fisheries, so that they will be available for future generations. The chapter also encourages preservation or restoration of environmentally sensitive areas (wetlands, floodplains, wetland and waterway buffers, steep slopes) and large tracts of forested land and wildlife corridors for the beneficial functions they provide as habitat for fauna and flora, nutrient and sediment retention and removal, flood control, and recreation. Sustainable communities conserve natural resources, reduce consumption, reuse products, and recycle.

## **Housing's Sustainability Approach**

Proposed policies promote sustainable building practices that minimize environmental impacts from buildings and landscapes. The proposed policies create a range of housing densities, types, and sizes that provide residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes. This strategy means an adequate percentage of homes needs to be affordable and located away from incompatible uses.

## **Transportation's Sustainability Approach**

The Transportation Chapter promotes creating a sustainable transportation system that allows for shorter and fewer automobile trips by integrating land use activities that complement daily life into the pattern of residential living. It includes policies and actions that promote alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle, such as walking, bicycling, and public transit through mixed-use development and pedestrian-oriented design.

## **Economic Vitality's Sustainability Approach**

The Economic Vitality Chapter aims to balance the provision of commercial services and employment with the maintenance of a high quality of life. Sustainable economic development is necessary to ensure the long-term viability of the community. A reasonable rate of diversified economic growth is encouraged to provide jobs for residents, to increase incomes, and to expand the tax base.

## **Water Resources' Sustainability Approach**

The Water Resources Chapter promotes the safe disposal of wastewater in environmentally sound ways so that groundwater and surface water quality remain viable for fisheries and useful to humans in terms of consumption, irrigation, and recreation. Pollutants need to be maintained at levels below which they might have significant impacts on human health and below the assimilative capacity of receiving waters.

## **Community Facilities' Sustainability Approach**

The Community Facilities Chapter promotes the design of public buildings that will accommodate a variety of uses and are energy-efficient as well as easy to maintain. Public facilities should be prioritized to the Town Centers. There is also a need to ensure that all members of the community and visitors have access to recreational resources, which promotes physical and mental health as well as positive

social interaction. The plan promotes disposing of solid and hazardous waste in ways that have the least environmental impact and are fiscally responsible.

The plan aims to create sustainability-focused school facilities that encourage the future generations to be responsible citizens through environmentally-sensitive design. This provides an excellent learning opportunity that is enhanced by site amenities. These could include water gardens, outdoor laboratories, and planting native vegetation.