

Prince George's County

July 2016

Preliminary Resource Conservation Plan



***A countywide functional master plan connecting
green spaces and agricultural and rural
conservation to support a platform
for sustainable growth.***



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County Planning Department
pgplanning.org

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The Prince George's County Planning Department
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
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ABSTRACT

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This countywide functional master plan combines the related elements of green infrastructure planning and rural and agricultural conservation into one functional master plan in order to streamline the process, meet state requirements for planning elements, and more efficiently update existing plans and maps. The Resource Conservation Plan was prepared in response to recommendations in the County’s general land use plan, *Plan Prince George’s 2035 Approved General Plan* (Plan 2035). Developed with the active participation of the community, including property owners, developers, residents, and elected officials; this document contains goals, measurable objectives, policies, and strategies pertaining to green infrastructure planning, agricultural and forestry conservation, and rural character conservation.

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The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland Washington Regional District;
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire county public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Department of Planning (M-NCPPC):

- Our mission is: To promote economic vitality, environmental sustainability, design excellence, and quality development in Prince George's County.
- Our vision: Thriving communities—now and into the future.

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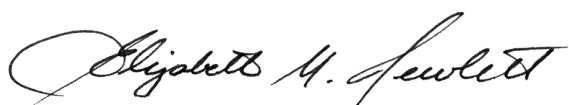
FOREWORD

The Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is pleased to make available the *Preliminary Resource Conservation Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan* (Resource Conservation Plan or RCP). This plan combines the related elements of green infrastructure planning and rural and agricultural conservation into one functional master plan in order to streamline the plan preparation process, meet state requirements for planning elements, and more efficiently update existing plans and maps. The Resource Conservation Plan was prepared in response to recommendations in the County's general land use plan, *Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan* (Plan 2035), and supports the plan's desired development pattern. It contains three functional master plans: the Green Infrastructure Plan that updates the 2005 *Approved Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan*, the Agriculture Conservation Plan that contains an update to the 2012 *Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan* and expands to include policies and strategies that apply countywide, and the Rural Character Conservation Plan that brings forward the recommendations of multiple studies and planning efforts to provide guidance for rural character conservation and viewshed protections.

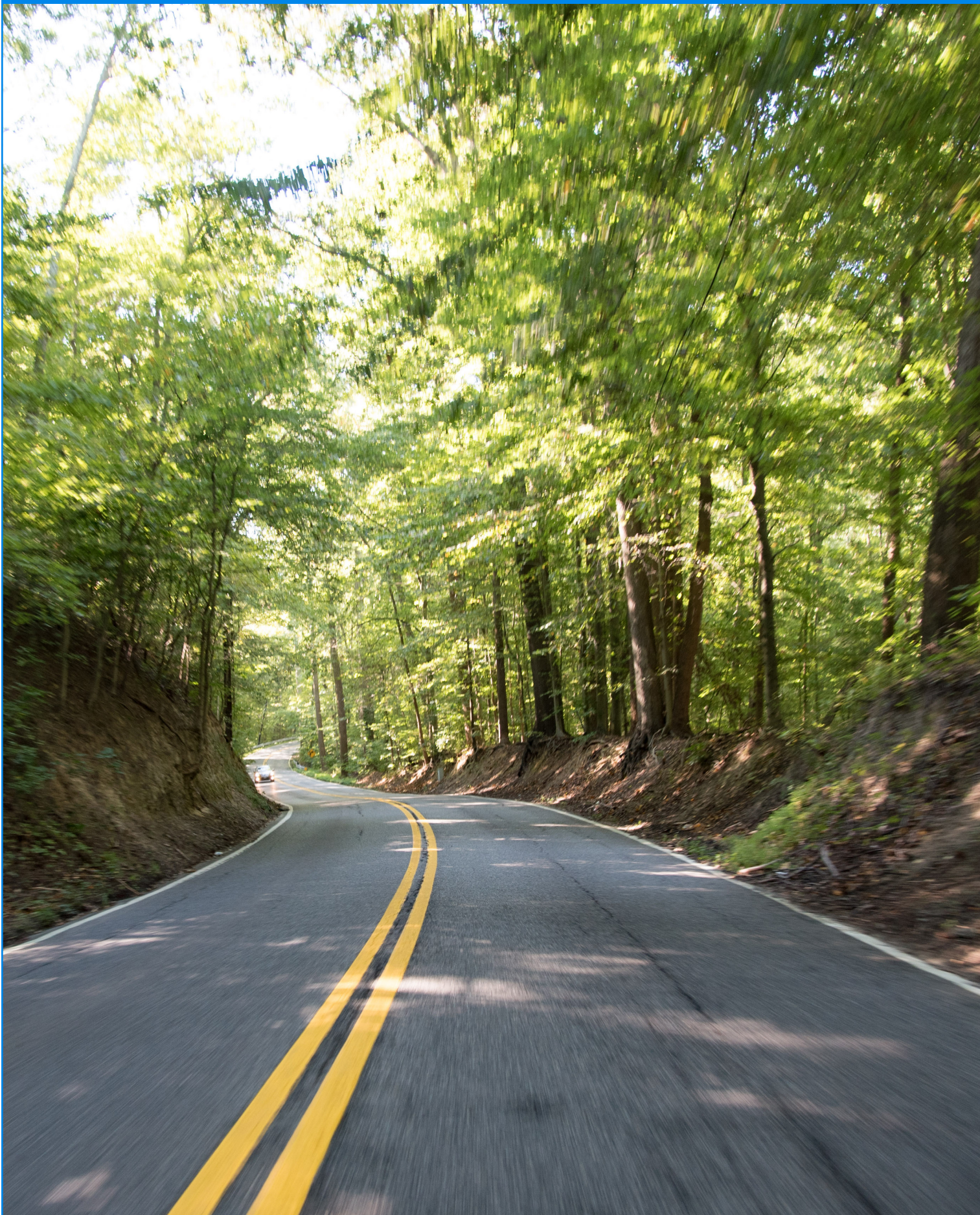
This plan is the culmination of several years of work by community members, the business community, staff from County agencies and Commissions, and elected and appointed officials to green our County, to provide better access to healthy food, and to preserve our cultural heritage. Numerous studies and previous planning projects support the contents of the RCP and contribute to the platform of sustainability needed to implement the vision of Plan 2035. Community input for the RCP was gathered through a variety of methods including five community input sessions, a robust website, and direct outreach to community groups and organizations. Input received during the development of Plan 2035 also contributed to the plan recommendations.

The RCP supports the core principles of sustainability established in Plan 2035. The plan addresses the social, economic, and environmental benefits of plan implementation through the various strategies proposed in each of the three plans. The Green Infrastructure Plan expands the definition of "green infrastructure" to include green roofs, green buildings, and other methods for greening the built environment. The Agriculture Conservation Plan builds on the previous implementation success of the 2012 Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan and adds urban agriculture to the types of agriculture and forestry enterprises that the County supports. The Rural Character Conservation Plan brings together multiple studies and previous planning efforts into one plan the purpose of which is to provide guidance for the conservation of irreplaceable viewsheds and rural character elements.

The Planning Board greatly appreciates the contributions and active involvement of the community and stakeholders in this countywide planning effort. We encourage your continued involvement in this and other countywide planning and development initiatives. We invite you to visit www.pgplanning.org to learn how you can continue to impact your communities in positive ways.



Elizabeth Hewlett
Chairman
Prince George's County Planning Board



Section I

Overview



BACKGROUND

The Resource Conservation Plan (RCP) is a countywide functional master plan that combines the related elements of green infrastructure planning and rural and agricultural conservation into one functional master plan in order to streamline the process, meet state requirements for planning elements, and more efficiently update existing plans and maps. The plan is being prepared in response to recommendations in the County's general land use plan, *Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan (Plan 2035)*. The desired development pattern described in Plan 2035 seeks to focus new development in areas where substantial public infrastructure already exists, such as at our 15 Metro stations. Plan 2035 directs development to land where infrastructure investments in roads, schools, and public services have already been made. This type of "smart growth" also reduces impacts on natural resources. The desired development pattern of Plan 2035 also contributes to the ability to conserve our common heritage and elements of the landscape that are irreplaceable through concentrating growth and reducing sprawl.



There are three functional master plans contained within this document. They are separate functional plans for the purpose of amendments—their policies, strategies, and pages are numbered sequentially within each plan. Section I: Overview serves as the outer framework for the three plans and contains sections that are required for each plan, reducing redundancy. A Technical Summary that contains all of the research reports, studies, and analysis papers completed for the preparation of the RCP has been prepared and is available on the Prince George's County Planning Department's website.

The RCP, and the three plans it contains, has an implementation horizon of 20 years; however, an evaluation of the progress toward meeting the strategies in each plan is recommended to occur at least every 5 years, unless required by law to be prepared using a different timeframe. Each plan recommends that an action plan be prepared to ensure implementation of the proposed strategies.

An extensive community input process was conducted during the plan's preparation. Between January and April of 2016, three community input sessions, one open forum, and one municipal forum were held. The discussions were robust and the community was engaged. A project email address and web page were maintained throughout plan preparation and public engagement. A report on the public input received can be found in the Technical Summary. County agencies and commissions were also engaged with each other and with the Planning Department during the plan preparation stage. Their input, the extensive public input received during this process, and the public input process of the recently completed Plan 2035, have provided necessary insight into the community's needs and desires for the preparation of the three functional master plans contained within the RCP.

The purpose of the RCP is to provide broad countywide strategies and recommendations as a tool to guide future development activity and preservation, and to provide a foundation to achieve its stated goals. It should not be construed as superseding, or conflicting with, codified criteria for development.

Why combine three separate plan elements into one functional master plan?

The approval of Plan 2035 resulted in the need to update certain maps, policies, and strategies in some of the functional master plans. To make the process efficient, several projects were combined with the update to the 2005 *Approved Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan*.

The RCP includes the elements of green infrastructure, agriculture, and rural character as a platform for resilience needed to implement the desired development pattern of Plan 2035. As shown in Figure 1, these three elements are compatible and interrelated. Growing of forests supports the goals of green infrastructure preservation and the economic benefit of growing trees as an agricultural crop. Trees and forests clean the air, as does growing food close to where people live, because it reduces the miles food has to travel. Growing food near where people live means that healthy food is reaching people in their communities, providing choices for healthy living. Connected green infrastructure elements provide benefits not only to wildlife and plants, but also to people through cleaner air, cleaner water, and cooler communities.

Figure 1. The Intersections and Contributions of the Three Plan Elements



The economic benefits of implementing each of the functional master plans is a common thread for all three plans. With regard to green infrastructure, a study showed that the forest and tree canopy coverage in the County provides an annual benefit of \$12.8 billion by avoiding costs for cleaner water that would otherwise need to be met by stormwater management. Forest and trees also provide clean air benefits of \$21 million annually (calculated by estimating the medical costs to people affected by polluted air).

An economy based on green jobs benefits both the environment and the community, by bringing jobs close to where an accessible workforce exists and putting people to work greening their communities. An agriculturally-based economy that includes both large-scale operations and small-scale enterprises can thrive in the County with our abundance of land for farming and our opportunities for innovation around small-scale, urban, and industrial operations. Perhaps the fastest growing economy segment is one that combines heritage, rural, and active recreation activities such as bicycle tours and paddling trips. The County is well-positioned to expand this segment of the economy with our access to three major rivers and approximately 390 miles of Special Roadways.

Combining the three plans provides an opportunity to view and discuss the intersections between these elements and how they support each other as the platform for sustainability envisioned in Plan 2035.

Which elements update existing plans and how?

The Resource Conservation Plan contains the following new plans, updates, and technical corrections:

1. An update to the 2005 *Approved Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan* and expanding the definition of Green Infrastructure.
2. A new functional master plan for agriculture and forestry resources that also updates the 2012 *Adopted and Approved Priority Preservation Area Functional Master Plan* (PPA) polices and strategies and maintains the PPA boundaries except for technical corrections.
3. An update to the state-mandated map showing septic tiers.
4. A new functional master plan for rural character and viewshed conservation that consolidates the recommendations from numerous previously approved plans and prepared studies.
5. An update to the boundaries of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area.



This project was combined with the creation of the County's first countywide agriculture plan. This plan builds upon the 2012 PPA that focused on a portion of the County's rural area. The 2017 *Agriculture Conservation Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan* makes technical corrections to the PPA boundaries that were a result of the final growth boundary location in Plan 2035 and updates the policies and strategies to address urban agriculture and other

countywide elements. In addition, Plan 2035 consolidated all of the recommendations of multiple previous plans and studies by recommending that the County address rural character and viewshed protections in a comprehensive way. The 2017 *Rural Character Conservation Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan* brings together the recommendations from three functional master plans (the 2009 *Master Plan of Transportation* and the 2010 *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* and the 2012 PPA) and three published studies regarding rural character conservation and viewshed protections. The strategies emphasize the use of context-sensitive solutions to preserve, enhance, and, where appropriate, restore elements of our historic cultural landscapes.

In addition to addressing previously approved County plans, the RCP addresses four state-mandated planning elements:

1. A Natural Resources Element in the form of the updated Green Infrastructure Plan.
2. A Priority Preservation Area (PPA) element in the form of an Agriculture Conservation Plan that includes urban and rural agricultural policies and strategies applied to all agricultural land, not just those areas within the PPA.
3. A Forestry Element in the form of policies and strategies to address the State's goal of no net loss of forest canopy as stated in the Forest Preservation Act of 2013.
4. A Sustainable Growth Act (SGA) Tier Map to address the requirements of the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012.

These four planning elements, and their related policies and strategies contained within their respective plans as part of the RCP, form the platform for the sustainable development and land conservation envisioned in Plan 2035.

PLAN SUMMARIES

The following sections describe each of the three plans contained within the Resource Conservation Plan:

2017 Green Infrastructure Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan

2017 Agriculture Conservation Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan

2017 Rural Character Conservation Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan

Each plan description also contains a discussion of the specific direction provided by Plan 2035 for each functional master plan.



2017 Green Infrastructure Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan (GI Plan)

The 2005 *Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan (GI Plan)* was approved on June 14, 2005. An assessment of the GI Plan's policies and strategies conducted in 2014 determined that 80 of the 92 strategies have either been completed or are ongoing. A full report of this assessment is available in the RCP Technical Summary. In 2010, the environmental regulations in the County Code were updated comprehensively to implement many of the plan's strategies. This has, in turn, resulted in a need to update the Regulated Areas portion of the 2005 GI Plan network map. The Evaluation Areas portion of the GI network was also updated to reflect currently available mapping data for the same topics addressed in the 2005 GI network, with the exception of areas added to address sea level rise and wetland migration as a result of climate change. The areas identified as Network Gaps on the 2005 GI network map are not identified on the 2017 GI network map because the new network is too complex to identify network gaps at the countywide scale. Network gaps will be identified using one of two methods in the future: (1) when master and sector plans are prepared, the GI network boundaries can be adjusted as needed and Network Gaps can be identified; and (2) when development applications are reviewed for areas where Network Gaps have not been identified.



Water quality is a serious issue facing all counties in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Green infrastructure methods and tools of all types and sizes, from rain barrels to ecological corridors, can improve water quality countywide. To support the efforts required to meet the standards of the Prince George's County Watershed Implementation Plan and to support the associated policies and strategies contained in Plan 2035, the updated GI Plan contains policies and strategies to address the full spectrum of green infrastructure types and sizes.

The plan also goes beyond the typical definition of green infrastructure and includes the topics of forest and tree canopy coverage, climate change, sea level rise, and other ecologically-related topics important to land use decision-making. Greening the built environment is addressed in the GI Plan through strategies aimed at increasing the number of green buildings in the County and increasing the use of various green building methods.

Plan 2035 provides the background and framework for the GI Plan update, including the importance of addressing water quality, land consumption, climate change, and greening the built environment. These issues are fleshed out in more detail in the GI Plan where appropriate. Policies 7 through 10 regarding lighting, noise, and energy infrastructure, and their related strategies, are carried forward in the GI Plan, and edited as appropriate. Plan 2035 contains a strategy regarding the completion of a forest and tree canopy coverage strategy and an update to the 2005 GI Plan. Both of these strategies are addressed in the 2017 *Countywide Green Infrastructure Functional Master Plan*.

2017 Agriculture Conservation Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan (ACP)

The Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Plan was approved in 2012. Several actions have been taken since its approval that warrant an update. An analysis of the 2012 PPA Plan's progress to-date found that:

- The Maryland Agricultural and Land Preservation Foundation has certified Prince George's County's preservation program, which was one of the PPA Plan's main goals, resulting in the need to update the policies and strategies to ensure that the program is certified in perpetuity.
- The Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 resulted in 95 percent of the land area outside the public water and sewer envelope being designated as an area where conservation of agricultural land and practices should be focused and where major subdivisions are prohibited, resulting in the need to re-evaluate the subdivision regulations.
- A new General Plan is now in place that designates areas outside the public water and sewer envelope as the Rural and Agricultural Area with a new set of broad policies and strategies for implementation, resulting in the need to update the more specific strategies contained in the various functional master plans.
- Properties were removed from the Rural and Agricultural Area as part of the Plan 2035 approval, resulting in the need to update the PPA boundaries and the SGA Tier Map.
- An urban agriculture study was completed in 2012 titled *Urban Agriculture: A Tool for Creating Economic Development and Healthy Communities in Prince George's County, MD*. This study draws attention to this topic in a comprehensive way and provided significant guidance to the preparation of the urban agriculture recommendations contained in the new Agriculture Conservation Functional Master Plan.

A full report of the PPA Plan's assessment is available in the RCP Technical Summary. Overall, these actions resulted in the need to prepare a comprehensive agricultural policy plan to support the long-term sustainability of both rural and urban agriculture in the County. The new Agriculture Conservation Plan (ACP) will address



countywide policies and strategies for agricultural and forestry practices. The boundaries of the PPA are only being amended to address technical corrections required as a result of changes made in other plans. None of the corrections proposed result from the preparation of the Resource Conservation Plan. Similarly, the boundaries of the 2012 PPA will not be amended with this update; only technical corrections are proposed to address actions taken in other plans. Refer to pages 88–89 of the ACP for more information on the technical corrections proposed to PPA and SGA Tier Map boundaries.

Countywide agriculture is primarily addressed in Plan 2035 in the Healthy Communities chapter under the discussion of the need for access to healthy food close to where people live. Approval of Plan 2035 was followed by the preparation of a study on urban agriculture that comprehensively addresses how urban agriculture can be integrated into communities where healthy food choices are needed most.

2017 Rural Character Conservation Plan: A Countywide Functional Master Plan (RCCP)

The *Master Plan of Transportation* calls for the development of “guidelines for the design of activities adjacent to designated roadways to include building setbacks, landscaping, scenic easements, and utility clearing.” The recent master plans for Subregions 5 and 6 contain policies and strategies that generally address rural conservation, but the plans do not contain the necessary guidelines or standards for implementation. The *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* also addresses the need for rural character conservation, but does not provide strategies for its protection.

There have been three studies that have discussed the need for rural character design standards and have provided guidance for the development of future policies and strategies:

- *Croom and Aquasco Roads Scenic Byway Plan Elements* (May 2012).
- *Rural Villages Study* (September 2012).
- *Conserving Significant Cultural Landscapes, Protecting the Piscataway and Accokeek Historic Communities and the Mount Vernon Viewshed* (March 2013).

As part of the RCP, these documents were reviewed and combined into policies and strategies in the Rural Character Conservation Plan (RCCP) that support rural character conservation and the desired development pattern of Plan 2035. The plan contains countywide strategies for addressing rural character conservation with a focus on the corridors of Special Roadways (parkways, scenic byways, and scenic and historic roads) and the viewshed of Mount Vernon.



The Community Heritage, Culture, and Design chapter of Plan 2035 contains policies and strategies that address historic, cultural, and archeological resources. The RCCP focuses on the conservation of viewsheds and the cultural landscapes and resources that they contain. Plan 2035 states:

“Scenic vistas and viewsheds are an important component of the cultural heritage and historic qualities of our communities and some, such as the view from Mount Vernon or the Star-Spangled Banner Scenic Byway, have national significance... Conservation of these important components depends, in large part, on how new development relates to its landscape... design standards are an effective way to protect a viewshed or cultural landscape...”

Plan 2035 also contains a policy regarding the need to preserve and enhance the County’s rural and agricultural character. The policy has four associated strategies that call for cultural landscape preservation, context-sensitive solutions for rural character conservation, use of conservation subdivisions where appropriate, and implementing the recommendations of the viewshed study for Mount Vernon and Special Roadways. The RCCP contains more detailed strategies to implement this policy and guidelines for the preparation of design standards as part of the Zoning Ordinance. The RCCP also contains strategies for protecting viewsheds of national, state, and County significance.

GUIDANCE FROM PLAN 2035

In addition to the direction provided by Plan 2035 specific to each plan, Plan 2035 contains a vision for Prince George's County that supports the contents of the RCP when it envisions "...strong, green, healthy communities... [with] quality open space; restored ecosystems; and iconic destinations." Plan 2035's stated goal is:

"Prince George's County develops sustainably and equitably. It directs new development to existing transit-oriented centers; focuses public investment on its economic engines; capitalizes on and maintains its infrastructure; strengthens its established communities; and proactively preserves its natural, historic, and cultural resources." [emphasis added]

Plan 2035's overarching environmental goal is to:

"preserve, enhance, and restore the County's natural and built ecosystems to improve human health, strengthen resilience to changing climate conditions, and facilitate sustainable economic development."

The plan also emphasizes creating healthier communities to encourage businesses and workers to relocate to the County by greening the built environment, restoring degraded resources, and promoting a more sustainable development pattern that reduces reliance on driving and shifts development pressures away from greenfields and forests.

Each of the three plans within the RCP support the general vision and goal of Plan 2035, and specifically the environmental goal of Plan 2035, as demonstrated below in the analysis of the six Guiding Principles from Plan 2035. It is important to note that in Plan 2035 each principle has a discussion related to how Plan 2035 addresses the principle. The text below is specific to the RCP and contains discussions relating to how the three functional master plans address the principles.

1. Concentrate Future Growth

The current development pattern of sprawling onto undeveloped sites and not taking advantage of existing public infrastructure investments is unsustainable from both a natural resources and economic perspective. The desired development pattern as expressed in Plan 2035 directs growth to the designated Downtowns, Regional Transit Districts, the Innovation Corridor, and Local Centers to fully utilize the existing roads, schools, and other public facilities. The 2017 GI Plan supports this development pattern by designating areas of countywide significance within the GI network that should be preserved, providing general direction on where development should not occur in order to protect the precious remaining resources. When the GI network overlaps areas where growth is desired, the plan provides strategies for flexible designs to protect both the resources and the ability to build in desired locations. The ACP contains strategies for keeping farms in farming and expanding the opportunities for new farmers and people who want to cultivate smaller plots of land. These policies and strategies help to reduce development pressure in rural areas and focus development where infrastructure already exists. The RCCP also provides guidance on how to build in areas where rural character is strong and needs to be preserved or restored.

2. Prioritize and Focus Resources

In Plan 2035 the resources being referenced are primarily financial ones; however, the resources of ecological areas, green energy, local food, and cultural landscapes are also in need of prioritization and focus. The primary purposes of creating functional master plans are to prioritize the conservation of the remaining resources of countywide significance and focus attention on addressing land use-related issues in the functional area.

3. Build On Our Strengths and Assets

Prince George's County has innumerable strengths and assets related to the environment, agriculture, and rural character. Our County is located in the coastal plain where the floodplains are wide areas full of diverse plant species, providing exceptional corridors for wildlife movement. The floodplains connect stream corridors to Special Conservation Areas that contain unique environmental features that should be carefully considered when land development proposals are reviewed in the vicinity to ensure that their ecological functions are protected or restored and that critical ecological connections are established and/or maintained. Our location on the banks of three major rivers provide varied opportunities for connections to the natural world and access for outdoor recreation. Our public lands for recreation exceed 27,000 acres and our parks and recreational programs have been national award winners multiple times. These assets support healthy communities and a healthy environment.

4. Create Choice Communities

All three plans in the RCP contribute to creating desirable communities that contain green and shaded areas that are equitably accessible, provide nearby sources of healthy food choices, and preserve our cultural heritage in ways that are easily accessible to all.

5. Connect Our Neighborhoods and Significant Places

Barriers to connectivity can sometimes be created when natural resources are present. Where communities lack connections because of existing natural resources, the GI Plan provides strategies for making the needed connections to increase the existing community's walkability and protect the natural resources from degradation. Where existing rural character elements may create barriers to community connectivity, solutions need to be carefully considered in order to protect the character elements while providing a point of connection.

6. Protect and Value Our Natural Resources

The plans contained within the RCP directly address this principle by focusing on the remaining natural resource assets through the GI network and Special Conservation Area designations; providing strategies to conserve valuable agricultural and forested lands; and by protecting our rural character for generations to come. Plan 2035 provides the over-arching direction for implementation of this principle within the three plans:



*“Protecting and restoring our green infrastructure network, waterways, agricultural preservation areas, and forested lands will help improve the quality of our water and air, preserve remaining open spaces, and enhance community health. A healthy environment is increasingly a prerequisite for many businesses and workers looking to relocate to the region. **Plan 2035 commits to proactively greening our built environment, restoring degraded resources, and promoting a more sustainable development pattern that reduces our reliance on driving and shifts development pressures away from our greenfields.**”*

As part of the framework for analysis, Plan 2035 organized these six guiding principles into three themes—WORK, LIVE, AND SUSTAIN—developed through community consensus during the Envision Prince George’s community visioning sessions. These overlapping themes frame the Plan 2035 vision, policies, and strategies and underscore the importance of weighing economic, social, and environmental decisions when creating land use policy. Plan 2035’s WORK, LIVE, AND SUSTAIN framework is repeated here with vision statements that focus on the elements contained in the RCP:

In 2035 Prince Georgians WORK in a thriving and diverse economy that:

- Provides a range of well-paying jobs for County residents that embrace and support a green economy.
- Grows the tax base by nurturing green businesses that provide jobs in communities reducing the need for workers to commute to work.
- Acknowledges and builds upon the County’s availability of industrial space in communities that need jobs.
- Provides healthy workplaces for both indoor and outdoor workers.

In 2035 Prince Georgians LIVE in safe, walkable, and healthy communities that:

- Provide safe connections to adjacent communities and resources without compromising ecological resources.
- Preserve and celebrate our cultural and historic resources and foster community character.
- Promote healthy lifestyles by ensuring access to healthy foods, health services, and a connected network of trails, parks, and recreational opportunities.
- Provide high quality, efficient, and equitable access to green spaces.

In 2035 Prince Georgians SUSTAIN our natural resources and rural areas by:

- Promoting higher-density, compact, mixed-use development in our Regional Transit Districts.
- Providing incentives for green construction practices at the building and neighborhood scale.
- Proactively enhancing and restoring our ecosystems and planning for climate change.
- Preserving our existing rural and agricultural communities including our rural viewsheds, farmland, and the agricultural economy.

This decision-making framework for working and living sustainably reduces impacts on natural resources and promotes healthy, connected, and walkable communities in keeping with the vision of Plan 2035.

Regional, State, and Local Planning Initiatives

Ongoing Regional Planning Efforts

The State of Maryland has long been a leader and participant in regional planning efforts, especially with regard to environmental planning. As a state with a considerable length of coastline on the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland has an obligation to actively work toward its cleanup. The programs and agencies working to improve the water quality in the Bay are too numerous to mention; however, it is important to note that the RCP supports the ongoing efforts to improve water quality by identifying an ecological network of countywide significant features and emphasizing the need to improve water quality locally.

The Patuxent River Commission (PRC) was created in 1984, four years after the passage of the 1980 Patuxent River Watershed Act. The Commission envisions a Patuxent River ecosystem that is as vital and productive in 2050 as it was in the 1950s. The PRC includes representatives from the seven counties that border the river and the city of Laurel, and additional watershed stakeholders and interest groups.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) supports two other regional environmental planning efforts that are seeking to physically connect natural lands and to connect people to the land. The Baltimore-Washington Partners for Forest Stewardship brings together public land managers within the Baltimore-Washington corridor to discuss land stewardship concerns and share information. M-NCPPC also supports the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition. This group is a voluntary coalition of public agencies, non-governmental organizations, professionals, and conservation groups. Their area of interest includes the seven counties and three major cities in central Maryland: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties and the cities of Annapolis, Baltimore, and Bowie. The Coalition's mission is to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors of central Maryland. By focusing on the four pillars of equity, discovery, biodiversity, and resilience, the Coalition hopes to bring nature to people and people to nature.

State Planning Mandates

The Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009 provides a vision for local jurisdictions to follow as they complete planning documents. The act reinforces the importance of planning for sustainable growth and development in local jurisdictions and contains 12 planning visions:

1. **Quality of Life and Sustainability:** A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air, resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment.
2. **Public Participation:** Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.
3. **Growth Areas:** Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers.
4. **Community Design:** Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources as well as preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources.

5. **Infrastructure:** Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner.
6. **Transportation:** A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers.
7. **Housing:** A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provide residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.
8. **Economic Development:** Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged.
9. **Environmental Protection:** Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources.
10. **Resource Conservation:** Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.
11. **Stewardship:** Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.
12. **Implementation:** Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels to achieve these visions

Together, these 12 visions guide how and where growth should occur without compromising the County's natural and cultural resources. The act acknowledges that the plans prepared by counties and municipalities are the best mechanism to establish priorities for growth and resource conservation. Once priorities are established, it is the State's responsibility to support them through programmatic and financial mechanisms.

Local Planning Efforts

The local planning efforts that have guided the RCP's contents started with the 2002 General Plan. The Environmental Infrastructure chapter provided the direction for creating the first green infrastructure plan and addressed the need, for the first time in a land use plan, to address water quality comprehensively. The 2002 General Plan also set the goal of preserving at least 1,500 acres of agriculture and forestry land per year. This goal, combined with the related policies and strategies, set the stage for the progress that has been made over the last 15 years. An analysis of the implementation status of the strategies in the Environmental Infrastructure chapter of the 2002 General Plan can be found in the RCP Technical Summary.

Plan 2035 is the County's current General Plan and provides the direction needed to redirect growth away from green and open spaces and toward areas where significant public investments in infrastructure have already been made. This shift in development focus complements the continued efforts to conserve irreplaceable environmental, agricultural, and cultural resources.

Multiple studies and reports were conducted that support the recommendations in all three plans. The RCP Technical Summary contains these studies and reports with links to where they are available online. All the support information is available on the project website that can be found on the Planning Department's web page at PGPlanning.org.

