

05 Preserving Our Agricultural and Rural Community

The goals, policies and action items necessary to plan for a continued vibrant and viable agricultural community are provided for in this chapter. In addition to describing the trends of the agricultural economy this chapter includes the programs that have been instituted to preserve land in Frederick County and a new State Planning requirement for a Priority Preservation Plan. The Priority Preservation Plan contains an implementation strategy; which will require specific studies or action for its implementation and to reach the County goal of placing 100,000 acres under protective easement by the year 2020.

	Amendment Status
Goals, Policies, Action Items	04/08/2010
Maps and Graphics	04/08/2010
Background Information	04/08/2010

A vision for preserving our agricultural and rural communities...

Agriculture is an essential part of the County's history and economy with a long established role in the physical development of our communities to the economic output that provides agricultural products and jobs in the agricultural economy. The preservation of our agricultural lands and the County's rural heritage remains one of the highest priorities - feeding both the community treasury and the collective soul - will continue to play a fundamental role in defining this community in future decades, perhaps enjoying a rediscovered value to future generations of citizens seeking local and sustainable sources of food, fiber, and fuel. The County's rural landscapes, taken for granted by some, will be increasingly valued for what they are.

GOALS

- AG-G-01 Preserve the County's prime agricultural lands for continued production.
- AG-G-02 Encourage the growth of new, and the preservation of existing agricultural industries in Agricultural designated areas in order to support local farm operations.
- AG-G-03 Permanently preserve through various agricultural programs at least 100,000 acres of agricultural land by 2020 and protect a total agricultural base of 200,000 acres as a Rural Reserve to support a diversity of agricultural practices.
- AG-G-04 Maximize state funding and technical resources for a coordinated agricultural land preservation effort.
- AG-G-05 Maintain compatibility and create a regional mass with agricultural preservation activity with adjoining counties.

POLICIES

- AG-P-01 Enhance the existing Agricultural Preservation Program by identifying Priority Preservation Areas, which will assist in the protection and retention of the County's agricultural industry resource base.
- AG-P-02 Minimize the development in areas of our best agricultural lands to preserve critical masses of farmland.
- AG-P-03 Prohibit expansion of designated Rural Residential areas into surrounding lands designated Agricultural/Rural.
- AG-P-04 Support Frederick County's farming economy and farming communities and services necessary to sustain a viable agricultural industry.
- AG-P-05 Support land use initiatives to maintain and enhance Rural Communities to service the agricultural industry.
- AG-P-06 Prohibit the expansion of community growth areas for development into Priority Preservation Areas.
- AG-P-07 Community water and sewer service will not be extended beyond Community Growth Areas into lands designated Agricultural/Rural.

STATE PLANNING MANDATES AND VISION

This chapter supports the following State Visions:

- Quality of Life and Sustainability
- Growth Areas
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Resource Conservation

This chapter also addresses the State of Maryland mandate for completion of a Priority Preservation Plan as required in HB-2.

RELATED COUNTY PLANS

2006 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

The Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPRP) provides the necessary framework from which to develop an integrated and coordinated approach to the provision of park and recreation facilities, agricultural land preservation, and natural resource protection. To maintain eligibility for Maryland's Program Open Space (POS) funding the County must prepare and update this Plan. All land acquisition and park development funded through these programs must be consistent with the approved LPRP. One of the prominent State guidelines for the LPRP is to ensure that public investment in land preservation and recreation supports, local comprehensive plans, associated implementation programs, State Planning Policy, and State and local programs that influence land use and development.

2007 Agricultural Land Preservation Program Certification Report

Certification of local Agricultural Land Preservation Programs is jointly administered by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP). The Certification Program allows counties to retain greater portions of the Agricultural Transfer Tax if they are able to demonstrate that they have an effective program to preserve agriculturally viable land. Certified counties are allowed to keep an additional percentage of the Agricultural Transfer Tax revenue (75%) where uncertified counties retain 33% of the revenue. The increase in a county's share of Agriculture Transfer Tax helps support its agricultural land preservation program. All retained funds must be spent or encumbered for land preservation purposes within three years or the funds revert to MALPF. Frederick County was re-approved for State Certification in 2007.

2008 Frederick County Agricultural Strategic Plan

This Plan was prepared through the County's Office of Economic Development (OED) as an update of an Agricultural Market Analysis and Strategic Plan prepared in 2001. The 2008 Strategic Plan conducted an assessment of the agricultural industry and sectors in the County including an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the agricultural economy. The Plan includes recommendations under three areas: *market developments, training and education, and regulatory support for agriculture.*

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE COUNTY

Frederick County's history since its initial settlement in the mid 1700's has been closely tied to agriculture. The County's fertile soils, sufficient water, and its favorable climate and topography were a strong attraction to the early settlers. The productivity was such that Frederick County was the largest wheat-producing county in the United States in 1790. The growing agricultural industry was already well diversified with grain crops, livestock, vegetables, fruit orchards, and for a short period tobacco.

The role of agriculture in the County can be described in the context of the County's economy; its rural landscape, and its communities. The expansion of agricultural activities also affected the physical landscape of the County through the clearing of forestland. Many of the County's towns and communities were established to support the surrounding agricultural enterprises. Proximity to major markets, strong local agricultural structure/businesses, high quality soils and access to water sources are just some of the advantages in the County that positively impact agricultural activities. In an effort to highlight the role of agriculture in the County the general plan mapping for this Plan includes an Agricultural and Rural Communities Plan component.

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

Frederick County has one of the strongest agricultural economies in Maryland. Agriculture remains important to the County's overall economy as one of its leading industries with an agricultural output of approximately \$133 million in 2006 and farm employment of 1,100 workers. Even with a continuing decline in the number of farms (down from 1,800 in 1964 to 1,200) and the amount of land in farm use (down from 289,000 acres in 1964 to 195,000 acres), agriculture is expected to remain a significant part of the County's economy. Unlike many counties in the Washington metropolitan area, Frederick has been able to sustain the supporting agricultural industries including farm equipment sales, grain and feed mills, and processing businesses.

The County's leading agricultural sectors are dairy and livestock/poultry. The County is the State's leading dairy producer (\$50.1 million in 2002) and is one of the top 75 counties in the entire country. Frederick also leads the State as the largest beef producer. Frederick County is ranked first in the State in milk production, hay production and corn for silage. While the field crop and forage represents a secondary sector it accounts for the largest agricultural land use in the County with approximately 120,000 acres.

The equine industry in the County is ranked second in the State for number of equine facilities and number of acres (22,000 acres) used solely for equine purposes. The County ranks third for the number of horses (8,500).

The horticulture industry, which includes Christmas tree farms, greenhouse operations, sod, and production of nursery stock, is an increasingly larger component of the County's agricultural industry. Compared to other central Maryland jurisdictions the County's industry is relatively small with about 49 horticultural operations.

The produce industry includes the production of fruits and vegetables, which are a significant component of direct market sales through roadside stand operations and farmers markets. Included in this sector is the expanding winery and wine grape operations, which are part of the high-impact value-added agricultural enterprises that are replacing traditional production

farming. The agricultural industry will continue to change reflecting market conditions and will be affected by forces beyond the County boundaries.

RURAL LANDSCAPE AND COMMUNITIES

Beyond the role of agriculture as part of the County's economy is the effect agriculture has on how the County looks, its rural landscape of rolling hills and open vistas and its rural communities. For many residents and visitors, the County's rural landscape and small towns are a defining contribution to the perception of the County as a unique place.

The rural landscape extends beyond those lands that are under active agricultural use and include residential and other uses that are generally compatible with the surrounding agricultural lands. Throughout the County's agricultural area are rural communities, some dating back to the County's early settlement that provides opportunities to support the surrounding agricultural activities. While these communities are not considered growth areas that would accommodate intensive new development they could provide a focus for locating agricultural processing facilities or other businesses that support agriculture.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION MEASURES

AGRICULTURAL ZONING

The County's Agricultural Zoning District encompasses approximately 243,000 acres and is the primary means to protect our agricultural resources. The County's Agricultural zone is regarded as one of the strictest in the State though it does permit limited residential subdivision and other non-agricultural uses.

In 1977 the County amended its Zoning Ordinance including a significant reduction in the residential subdivision potential in the Agricultural Zoning District. Prior to 1977 agriculturally zoned parcels could accommodate up to 49-lot subdivisions, which resulted in approximately 59 subdivisions created throughout the County's agricultural area. Since 1977 parcels zoned Agricultural and existed as what is called an original tract as of August 18, 1976, could only subdivide into 3 lots + remainder, with a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet. In 1986 the Agricultural zone was amended to allow for additional subdivision rights if the new lots are clustered in a small portion of the farm parcel and the lots are no greater than 2 acres in size. The cluster option allows for an additional lot per 50 acres for parcels greater than 25 acres. It is also required that the cluster lots be located on the least productive soils.

Remainder parcels have no further subdivision rights and are often times in tracts of 100 acres or more. While these parcels do not have further subdivision rights under the existing zoning, there are additional non-agricultural uses permitted either by right or by special exception that can be permitted. A parcel's status as a remainder does not include a permanent preservation easement.

In addition to the ability to create 3 lots + a remainder for residential use, the Agricultural zone also permits farm lots, which are lots of 25 acres or more that are intended to be created solely for farm use. Such lots created after August 18, 1976 count towards the three lots and a remainder subdivision rights. In the past, farm lots were not required to be perced for an on-site

sewage disposal system since the use of the lot was to be strictly agricultural. However, because many of the farm lots were subsequently perced for residential use the County recently revised the subdivision regulations to require farm lot subdivisions to adhere to normal subdivision well and perc test requirements.

Since 2002 the number of residential lots created in the Agricultural zone has averaged approximately 150 lots/year, which is an increase over the period of 1995 to 2001, when the average was 84 lots/year. When combined with the number of farm lots created since 1995, a total of 1,804 lots encompassing 22,500 acres have effectively been taken out of agricultural use.

STATE AND COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

Maryland recognized the impact of the loss of farmland in the 1960's; which led to the development of Agricultural Land Preservation Programs. Agricultural land is consistently threatened by competing land uses. Agricultural Land Preservation Programs have become increasingly popular as a method to permanently preserve agricultural lands in the face of development pressure. Land preservation has many benefits to the community such as; protection of the land for local food and fiber production, limits sprawl, provides environmental protection, curbs the cost of community services, allows the implementation of land use plans, and also provides equity to landowners without developing the land. Frederick County has been at the forefront of the use of land preservation initiatives, as have many of the Counties in Maryland. Land preservation activities in the County are summarized below:

- As of March 2010 the County has permanently preserved 45,131 acres.
- There are a total of 322 farms currently preserved.
- Since 2001 the County has preserved an average of 3,200 acres of farmland per year.

Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Program

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) was created in 1977 by the Maryland General Assembly and is an agency within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The Foundation purchases agricultural preservation easements on properties through a competitive application process submitted by the property owners. These easements permanently restrict any non-agricultural related development on the parcels. Frederick County settled on its first MALPF easement in 1980. In 2007, MALPF had a total of 1,933 easements statewide preserving over 265,600 acres of land. Activity in the MALPF program has varied throughout the years due to a variety of factors including funding, easement values and development activity. In Frederick County, there are currently 165 MALPF Districts that encompass 23,557 acres, which includes 117 farms (18,235 acres) under easement.

Frederick County Critical Farms Program

The Critical Farms Program was established in 1994 in order to assist full-time farmers in buying farmland. This program was created to help farmers compete with non-farm buyers who often times have resources not available to farmers and therefore are in a more competitive position to buy farmland. The program works through the County's purchase of an option to acquire an easement that takes place at the time of settlement on the land purchase. The option agreement with the County requires the new farm owner to make application to MALPF and or another land preservation program within 5 years.

Since the program was adopted in 1994 the County has assisted in the acquisition of 27 farm parcels by fulltime farmers on 3,383 acres of land. Fifteen of these farm parcels have subsequently been permanently preserved under MALPF, two have been preserved under the Rural Legacy Program and two have been preserved under the Installment Purchase Program.

Frederick County Installment Purchase Program (IPP)

The Installment Purchase Program (IPP) was created in 2002 to supplement local land preservation efforts and to provide an attractive alternative to existing land preservation programs. The IPP works through the County's Bonding Authority to acquire development easements at today's prices and pay for them with a deferred principle payment and annual tax exempt interest payments. Rather than pay lump sum amounts for easements, the County invests in a zero coupon bond that matures to the full principle value of the easement. The property owner then receives the tax-free interest and a lump sum principle payment at the end of a term, specified by the landowner between 10 and 20 years. Since the program was created in 2002, the Installment Purchase Program has preserved 96 farms on 14,811 acres of land.

Rural Legacy Program

In 1997 the Maryland General Assembly passed the Neighborhood Conservation and Smart Growth initiatives to strengthen the earlier Planning Act of 1992. The Rural Legacy Program was established under these initiatives with the purpose of preserving agricultural, forest, and natural resource lands in contiguous blocks. The competitive grant funding is available to local jurisdictions or private land trusts to either purchase land outright or purchase development easements.

There are two approved Rural Legacy areas in Frederick County; the joint application between Frederick County and the Mid-Maryland Land Trust Association, Inc (MMLTA) and the joint application between Frederick County and the Carrollton Manor Land Trust Association. The Mid-Maryland / Frederick County Rural Legacy area was established in 1998 in the western part of the County encompassing the Middletown Valley along South Mountain extending from U.S. 340 north to Myersville. The Carrollton Manor/ Frederick County area was established in 2003 in the southern part of the County east of the Catoclin Mountains to the Monocacy River.

Since the Rural Legacy Program was created there have been 30 properties covering 4,064 acres put under a preservation easement. Twenty-nine of these properties to date have been preserved in the Mid-Maryland Rural Legacy area and the first easement was acquired in 2007 in the Carrollton Manor Rural Legacy area.

Transportation Enhancement Program

The Enhancement Program was first developed under the 1991 Federal transportation legislation known as ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) and has been carried forward with subsequent reauthorizations of Federal transportation legislation. The State of Maryland has been using this funding to purchase development easements to protect land associated with the Battle of South Mountain.

Federal Farm and Ranch Protection Program (FRPP)

The Federal Farm Bill provides funding through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) for farmland preservation. The County has been active in the FRPP since 1996 with an independent application, which won grant approval. Since that time the County has made joint

application with other Maryland Counties through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Program. Nearly all of the properties utilizing FRPP funds have been through MALPF. However the County does have easements on 496 acres that have used FRPP funds independent of MALPF.

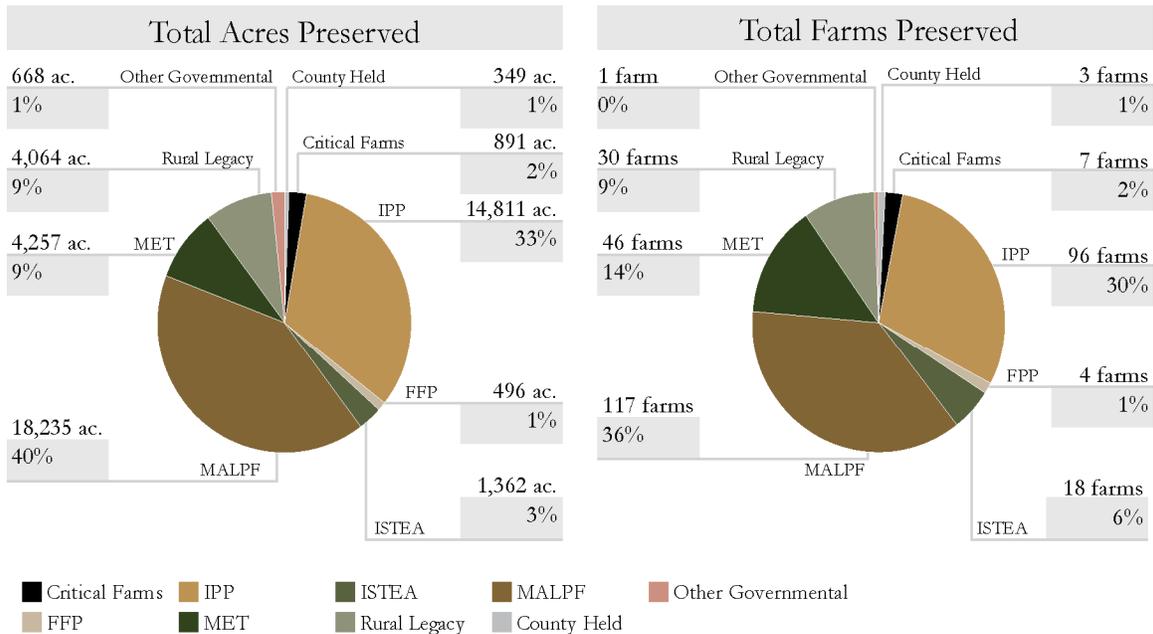
Maryland Environmental Trust (MET)

The MET is a quasi-governmental organization of the State Department of Natural Resources with the purpose of protecting scenic open spaces including farm and forestland, wildlife habitat, environmentally sensitive or unique areas and historic sites. Easements are established only through voluntary donations by the property owner, which does provide property and income tax benefits. The first easements in Frederick County were donated on the Austin Renn Farm in Buckeystown. As of 2009 there have been 46 properties on 4,257 acres of land placed under an MET easement in Frederick County.

FUNDING

Funding for easement acquisition in Frederick County comes from four primary sources: State and Federal grants and cost share programs such as MALPF, Rural Legacy and FRPP; the Local Share of the Agricultural Transfer Tax (75%); a share of the Recordation Tax (15%); and local general revenue funds allocated through the County's annual budget process. Although the Agricultural Transfer Tax can be allocated to various programs it has been almost exclusively devoted to the MALPF Program. A portion of the Recordation Tax is dedicated to the IPP Program. The Critical Farms Program, Rural Legacy and MALPF also receive funding from our general revenue funds. From 1998-2008 over \$50 million dollars of local funding has been allocated to the various State and local programs to preserve land.

Figure 05-1: Agricultural Preservation



Source: Frederick County Division of Planning, as of March 1, 2009

PRIORITY PRESERVATION ELEMENT

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 (House Bill 2), which requires counties seeking state certification of their agricultural land preservation program include a Priority Preservation Element in its comprehensive plan. The primary component of the Priority Preservation Element is the delineation of Priority Preservation Areas (PPA's), which provide a focus for establishing agricultural preservation easements to create larger blocks of preserved farmland.

The Act states that Priority Preservation Area (PPA) shall:

- Contain productive agricultural or forest soils, or be capable of supporting profitable agricultural and forestry enterprises where productive soils are lacking.
- Be governed by local policies that stabilize the agricultural and forestland base so that development does not convert or compromise agricultural or forest resources.
- Be large enough to support the kind of agricultural operations that the county seeks to preserve, as represented in the comprehensive plan.

PRIORITY PRESERVATION PLAN

The County's Priority Preservation Plan is comprised of the following:

1. Rural Reserve
2. Priority Preservation Area
3. Implementation Strategy

Rural Reserve

The purpose of the Rural Reserve is to identify and promote the rural agricultural characteristics of the County and potential for agricultural and resource based industries. The County's Rural Reserve is designated for those areas outside of the community growth boundaries and encompasses lands in the County designated as Agricultural/Rural. Resource protection tools such as Agricultural Preservation easements, restrictive agricultural zoning and agricultural economic development are some of the methods used to protect this resource. The Rural Reserve is not to be considered as residual land left over from the growth areas but as specifically identified land with the purpose of maintaining the rural character of the County valued by so many of it's citizens. The Rural Reserve is intended to remain predominately intact for the future with only minor boundary revisions through future comprehensive plans.

Priority Preservation Areas (PPA)

Within the Rural Reserve, PPA's are established to target and prioritize land preservation easement purchases and other incentives to preserve land. Further, the purpose of the PPA's is to target land preservation efforts and build critical masses of protected lands on the highest priority properties. In addition the Priority Preservation legislation builds on earlier State efforts through the Rural Legacy Program to concentrate land preservation efforts in those areas deemed to be most important by the County. As such most of the two approved Rural Legacy areas; the Mid-Maryland Rural Legacy Area and the Carrollton Manor Rural Legacy Area have

been included as Priority Preservation Areas. The criteria for establishing Priority Preservation Areas included the following:

- Prime farmland soils as identified in the USDA Soil Survey for Frederick County
- Existing clusters of agricultural preservation easements
- Predominance of large farm parcels of 100 acres or more
- Existence of high value agricultural enterprises such as dairy farms, wineries, and greenhouse/nursery operations.

Frederick County has a large agricultural land area of over 250,000 acres with many valued agricultural areas, most of which could be considered for priority preservation. However, in order to truly prioritize and to create an achievable preservation plan, the priority preservation areas were constrained in a reasonable manner. The methodology for identifying the Priority Preservation Areas involved the mapping of characteristics including size of parcels, prime farmland soils, existing preservation easements, zoning, comprehensive plan growth boundaries, and high value agricultural enterprises. In total there are 99,038 acres of land included in the five Priority Preservation Areas described below.

Mid-Maryland Priority Preservation Area

This PPA predominately consists of the Mid-Maryland Rural Legacy area and encompasses approximately 17,460 acres west of Catocin Creek, east of South Mountain, extending north of US 340 to Myersville. This is an area of significant prime farmland including two of the three best farmland soils in the County with Myersville and Fauquier loams. This PPA contains the largest contiguous block of preserved farmland in the County, with 8,983 acres (51% of the total PPA and 60% of Undeveloped Land in PPA) under easement.

Carrollton Manor Priority Preservation Area

This PPA contains approximately 17,966 acres located south of Ballenger Creek, east of US 15, west of the Monocacy River extending south to the Potomac River. The MD 85/New Design Road corridor contains the largest concentration of preserved farmland in this PPA and is characterized by larger farms on relatively flat terrain, with some of the most productive agricultural soils (Duffield) in the County. There are 4,213 acres (23 % of the total PPA) under easement and 26% of the undeveloped land remaining within this Priority Preservation Area.

Walkersville Priority Preservation Area

This PPA encompasses 10,946 acres virtually surrounding the Town of Walkersville and extends north to the Town of Woodsboro. The PPA also extends to the west of US 15 including the Crum and Thatcher properties, which were annexed into the City of Frederick in 2009. The area includes the highest concentration of prime farmland anywhere in the County and includes 1,955 acres (18% of the total PPA) under easement. This PPA encompasses the Town of Walkersville's growth area that would accommodate potential annexation into the Town for residential or employment development. Currently there are 980 acres of undeveloped land within the corporate limits of Walkersville, which at a density of 3.5 dwellings per acre could yield approximately 2,335 dwellings. This is important in order to recognize the Town of Walkersville's future expansion needs that can be accommodated within the current municipal boundary. As proposed, this PPA will enable Walkersville to maintain its identity separately from Frederick City to the southwest and the Town of Woodsboro to the north.

Middletown/Jefferson Priority Preservation Area

This PPA encompasses 5,710 acres and is west of Braddock Heights and east of Catoctin Creek extending south from Middletown to Jefferson. This PPA was delineated based on the predominance of prime farmland soils and the high percentage of farm parcels greater than 100 acres in the Middletown valley outside of the Mid-Maryland Rural Legacy area. There are 1,570 acres (27% of the total PPA) under easement, which is 30% of the undeveloped land remaining within the PPA. There are 27 parcels of land that are larger than 100 acres that encompass over 3,960 acres.

Eastern County Priority Preservation Area

This PPA is the largest, encompassing 45,956 acres east of MD 75, west of the Carroll County line and extending south to the Town of New Market. The northern extent is MD 194 north of Ladiesburg. The area includes 10,666 acres (23% of the total PPA) under easement, which is over 27% of the undeveloped land remaining in the PPA. The predominance of prime farmland and existing preservation activity are visible in this area. With the high degree of preservation in neighboring Carroll County, this PPA results in a large regional land preservation area.

Table 05-1: Priority Preservation Areas

Priority Preservation Area	Total Land Area (acres)	*Undeveloped Land (acres)	Existing Easements (acres)	Percent Undeveloped Land in Easement	Land Needed for 80% Goal (acres)
Mid-Maryland	17,460	15,081	8,983	60%	3,082
Carrollton Manor	17,966	16,280	4,213	26%	8,811
Walkersville	10,946	10,376	1,955	19%	6,346
Middletown/Jefferson	5,710	5,268	1,570	30%	2,644
Eastern	45,956	39,084	10,666	27%	20,601
Total	99,038	86,089	27,387	32%	41,484

*Parcels greater than 25-acres and NOT Zoned for Development

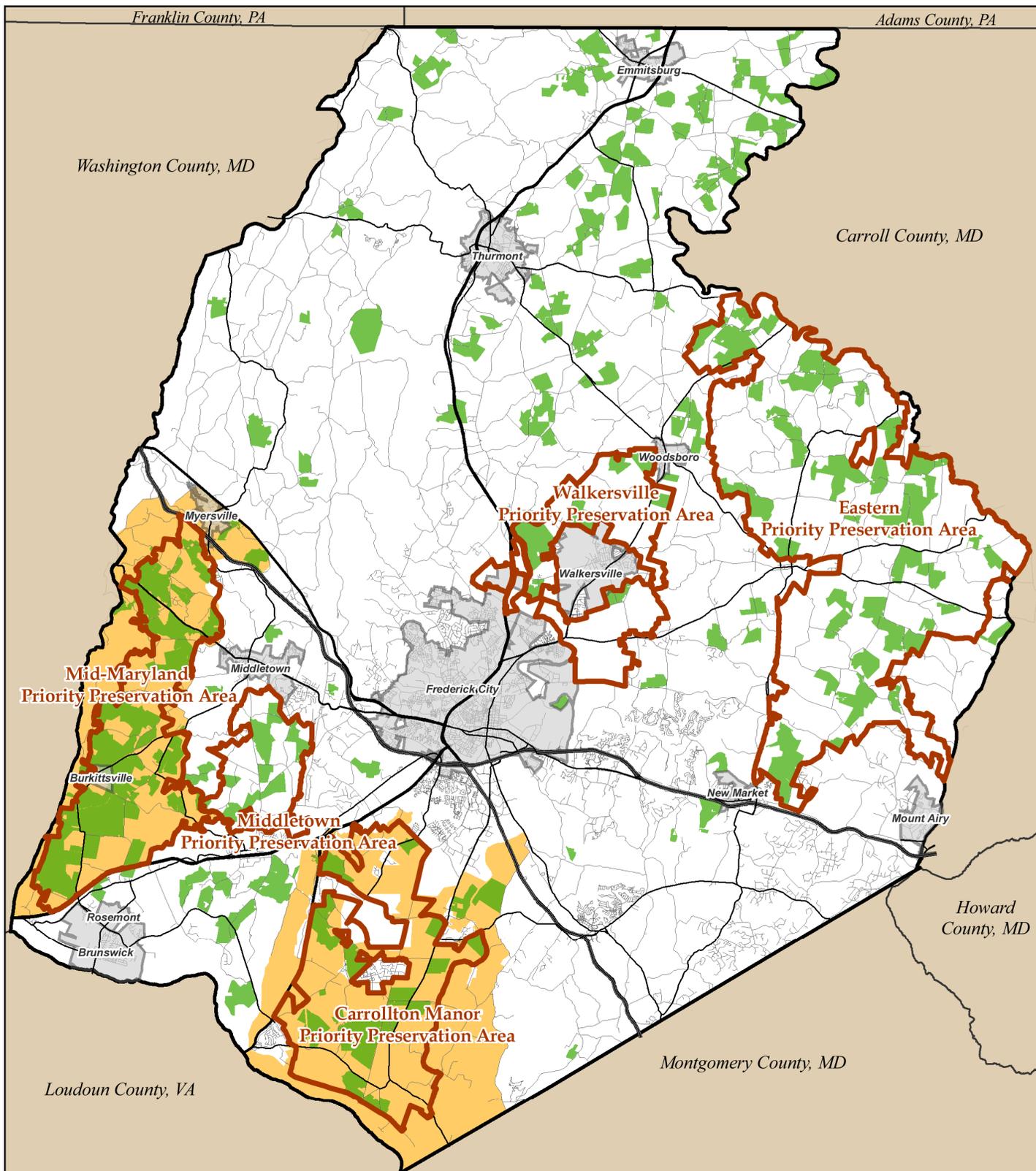
Implementation Strategy

In order to implement the Priority Preservation Plan and promote the preservation of these areas a number of actions should be taken.

- Increase the visibility and identity of the rural character of the County by promoting those areas outside of the growth areas as a Rural Reserve. The Rural Reserve would include the Agricultural/Rural designation and establish that development, public infrastructure and regulations will be made in accordance with the rural character.
- Support amendments to Zoning Ordinance to consider limiting the number of large farm parcels (which are used for residential purposes) that can be created off an original tract of land. In addition a maximum lot size should be considered for the Ag zoning district.

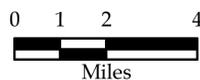
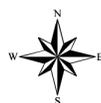
- Amend the Ranking systems for the Installment Purchase Program (IPP), the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Program (MALPF) and the Critical Farms Program to increase the ranking points for properties within the PPA's.
- Re-examine the potential for a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program that would establish the PPA as sending areas. A TDR program would utilize private sector funding as a means to preserve land while directing new development to the community growth areas.
- Prepare a fiscal analysis for the impact of an expanded tax credit program to give tax credits to property owners to establish 10 year agricultural preservation districts in order to give enough time for easements to be purchased or otherwise preserved.

Map 05-1: Agricultural Preservation and Priority Preservation Areas



Agricultural Preservation & Priority Preservation Areas

- Permanent Agricultural Preservation Easements
Includes Critical Farms Options
- Rural Legacy Area
- Priority Preservation Area



Division of Planning
GIS & Data Services Section

April 8, 2010

While efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of this map, Frederick County accepts no liability or responsibility for errors, omissions, or positional inaccuracies in the content of this map. Reliance on this map is at the risk of the user. This map is for illustration purposes only and should not be used for surveying, engineering, or site-specific analysis.

ACTION ITEMS

- AG-A-01 Study the feasibility of a transfer of development rights (TDR) concept and other alternatives that would support protecting agricultural land in the County.
- AG-A-02 Prepare Zoning Ordinance Amendment to support Agricultural industries and supporting businesses in Rural Communities while reducing regulatory roadblocks.
- AG-A-03 Develop and maintain a database of agricultural remainder properties and the development potential of properties zoned Agriculture and adopt incentives to promote the use of protective easements on existing agricultural remainders.
- AG-A-04 Revise standards for County road improvements in the Agricultural areas, basing the new standards on the needs of the agricultural community rather than the needs of non-agricultural uses.
- AG-A-05 In coordination with the Office of Economic Development, prepare an Agricultural Action Program to identify strategies that promote agricultural support industries and the agri-tourism industry.
- AG-A-06 In cooperation with other participating counties and the County's State Delegation, obtain appropriate revisions to the easement programs of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and the Maryland Environmental Trust to make the programs more attractive to farmers. Particular attention should be paid to the amount of funding available and the appraisal system in the easement program.
- AG-A-07 Prepare revisions to the County's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, building codes, and other related regulations/ordinances to address the evolving technological and operational characteristics of farm operations. This review will include zoning changes for appropriate agricultural uses.
- AG-A-08 Develop proposal to minimize farmland loss to residential activity such as establishing maximum lot size in agricultural zoning district.
- AG-A-09 Develop a program to educate the public and the farming community on planning and agricultural issues.
- AG-A-10 Implement the Priority Preservation Plan strategies.
- AG-A-11 Promote and expand the farm market network in the County.