



## THE LIVABLE FREDERICK MASTER PLAN

# Five-Year Evaluation

June 2025

Division of Planning and Permitting  
Livable Frederick Planning and Design Office

Frederick County, Maryland





# A Letter from the Frederick County Planning Commission

The Livable Frederick Master Plan (LFMP), adopted in 2019, established a framework to guide the future of Frederick County. In accordance with Maryland law, this 5-Year Report serves as a check-in to evaluate the County's progress toward achieving the vision, goals, and initiatives outlined in the Plan. This report reflects both the achievements made and the challenges encountered between 2019 and 2024, while also identifying opportunities to further the LFMP vision in the years ahead.

This 2024 5-Year Report was approved by the Frederick County Planning Commission on June 18, 2025 and prepared by the Livable Frederick Planning and Design Office in close collaboration with numerous county departments and community partners. The Planning Commission appreciates the contributions of all who provided timely data, analysis, and subject matter expertise. Their assistance was essential to the completion of this report.

Over the past five years, the County has made meaningful progress in implementing the LFMP vision for 2040; however, limited school capacity in our growth areas remains the most significant barrier to implementation. Additionally, external challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have impacted our ability to meet certain objectives, particularly in areas such as housing and childhood poverty.

Despite these challenges, the Planning Commission has advanced several plans during this period that were subsequently approved by the County Council. These include the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan, the Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan, the South Frederick Corridors Plan, the Water and Sewerage Plan Triennial Update, and the Water Resources Element.

The Planning Commission remains committed to realizing the vision of Livable Frederick through sustained implementation efforts. We hope that this report will serve as a useful resource for state and local decision-makers, community partners, and members of the public, as we collectively work toward a more livable Frederick County.

Sincerely,

Tim Davis, *Chair*

*Frederick County Planning Commission*



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## Introduction

The Livable Frederick Master Plan was adopted on September 3, 2019 after a multi-year public outreach process. Livable Frederick articulates a Vision for the county – a shared expression of the future that we desire for our families, our neighborhoods, and the entire Frederick County community. The actions that our government, non-profit institutions, businesses, and households need to take to advance our shared goals and achieve the Vision are identified in the Action Framework. The Development Framework addresses the geography of growth and preservation.

This five-year evaluation addresses the status of Livable Frederick implementation, as well as challenges and opportunities for continued progress to achieve the Vision in the years to come.

### **vi IT IS THE YEAR 2040.**

**FREDERICK COUNTY IS**

**A VIBRANT AND UNIQUE COMMUNITY**

**WHERE PEOPLE LIVE, WORK, AND THRIVE**

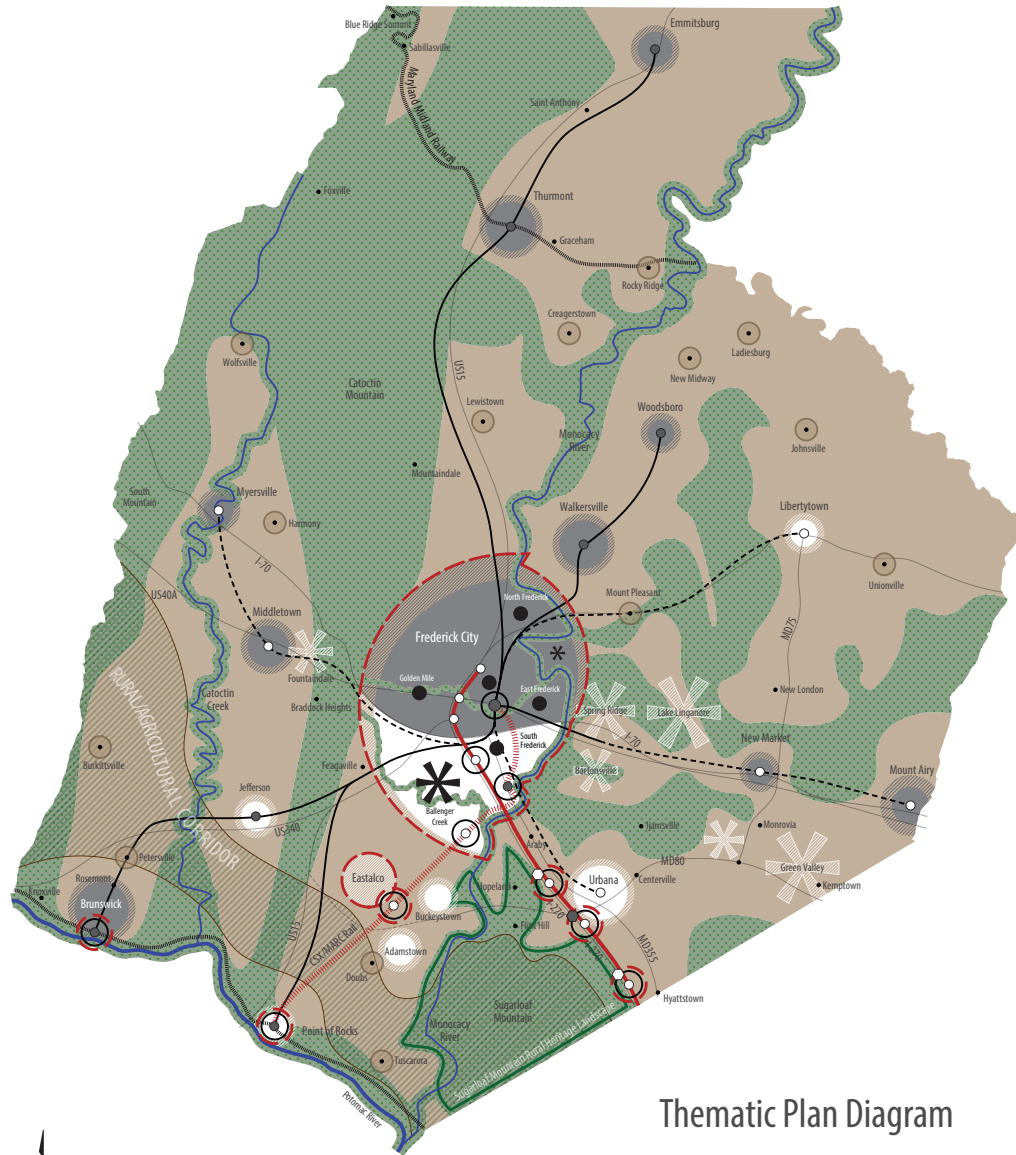
**WHILE ENJOYING**

**A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE**

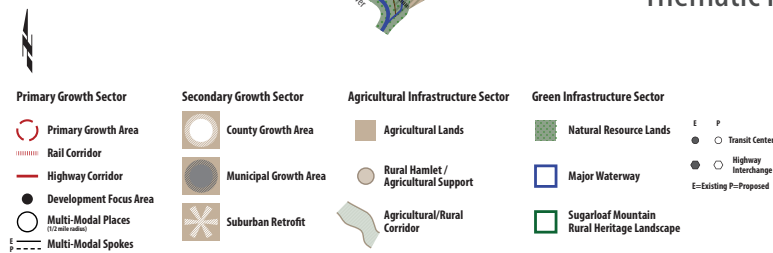
**AND BELONGING.**

## Df Development Framework

The Livable Frederick Development Framework identifies four planning sectors: the Primary Growth Sector, the Secondary Growth Sector, the Agricultural Infrastructure Sector, and the Green Infrastructure Sector. Each sector has differing priorities but plays an equally vital role in support of livability. The sectors are depicted in the Thematic Plan Diagram.



Thematic Plan Diagram



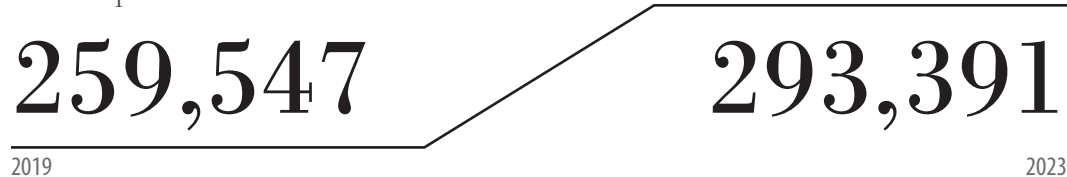


## Population and Housing Change

Frederick County experienced population and household growth between 2019 and 2023. The total population is estimated to have increased by 33,844 residents, or approximately 13%. There was a corresponding 10.5% increase in the estimated number of homes (10,536). During this time period, the age group with the largest numerical gain was people under the age of 18 (8,574) and the largest percent change was people aged 75-84 (increase of 31.5%). The overall median age held steady during this time since increases in the older population were largely similar to the increases in the younger population.

Despite the growth in population and housing units, competition for housing has increased as indicated by tightening vacancy rates in both rental and owner-occupied housing. The rental vacancy rate decreased from 6.7% in 2019 to 3.4% in 2023 and similarly the owner-occupied vacancy rate decreased from 1.1% to 0.4%. While ideal vacancy rates vary based on tenure and market, both the current renter and homeowner vacancy rates suggest a constrained housing supply. This is further indicated by increasing rents, home values, and seller's market.

### Total Population



### Percent Increase in People Under 18

14.3%

2019-2023

### Percent Increase in People Aged 75-84

31.5%

2019-2023

### Median Age

38.7

2019

38.8

2023

Total Housing Units

100,798

2019

111,334

2023

Owner-Occupied Vacancy Rate

1.1%

2019

0.4%

2023

Renter Vacancy Rate

6.7%

2019

3.4%

2023

Housing Costs: Median Sales Price

\$325,340

2019

\$456,299

2023

Housing Costs: Median Gross Rent

\$1,425

2019

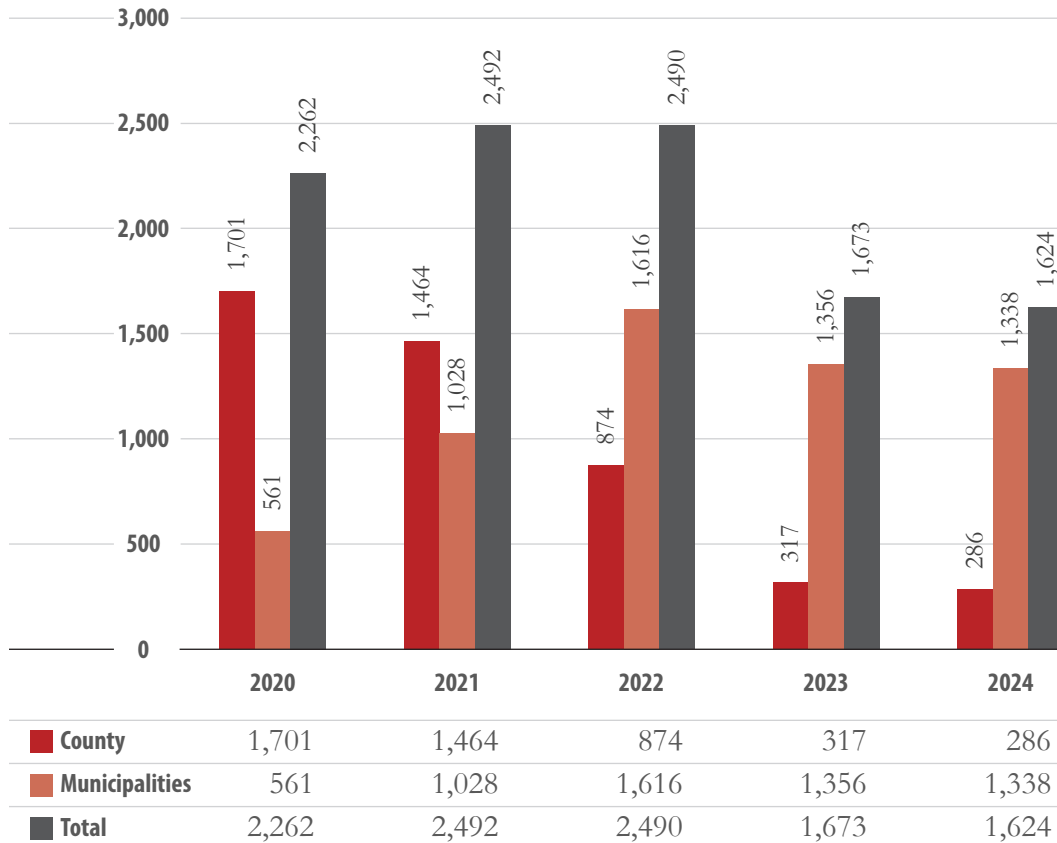
\$1,719

2023

## Dwelling Unit Change

From 2020 to 2024, the county permitted 4,642 new residential units. The municipalities permitted 5,899 new residential units, with the majority of these new units located in the City of Frederick. Continued buildout of the Brunswick Crossing development is also reflected in the municipal total. This pattern of development is consistent with the Livable Frederick Development Framework, which includes land in and around the City of Frederick and the City of Brunswick in the Primary Growth Sector. Growth in these areas includes infill development, redevelopment, and new development via annexation.

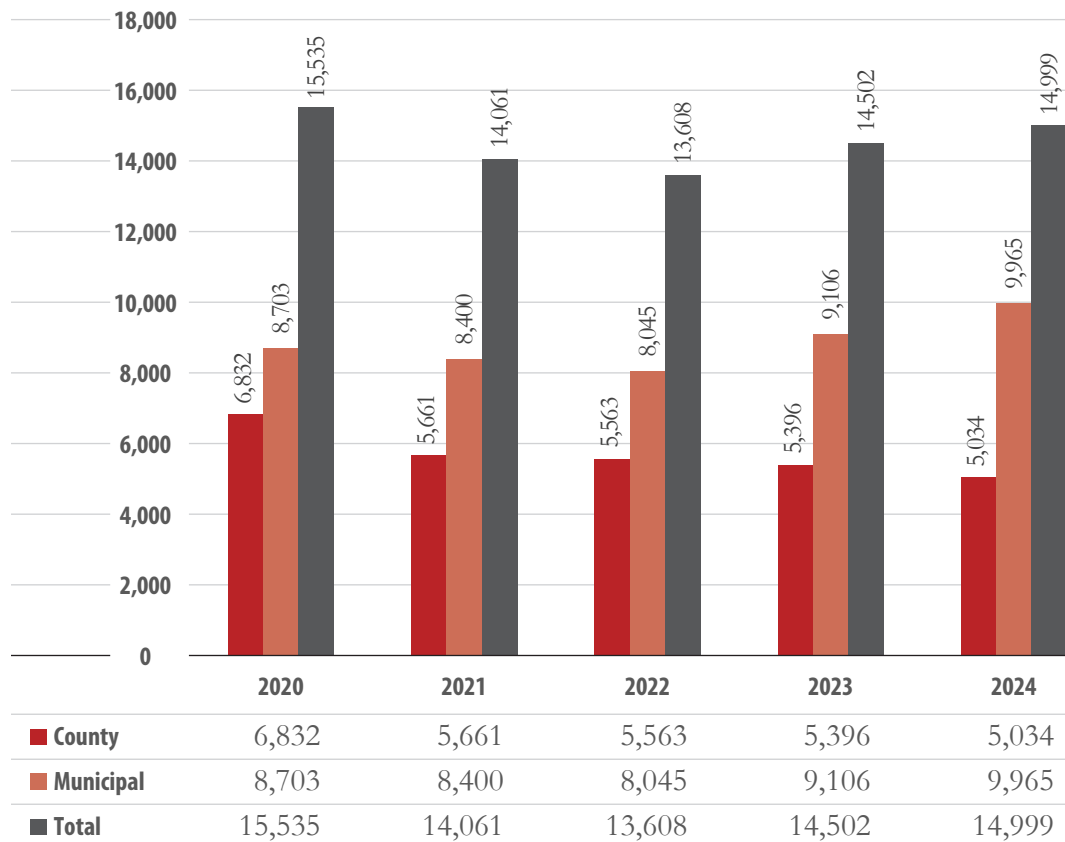
### Building Permits - New Residential Units



## Residential Development Pipeline

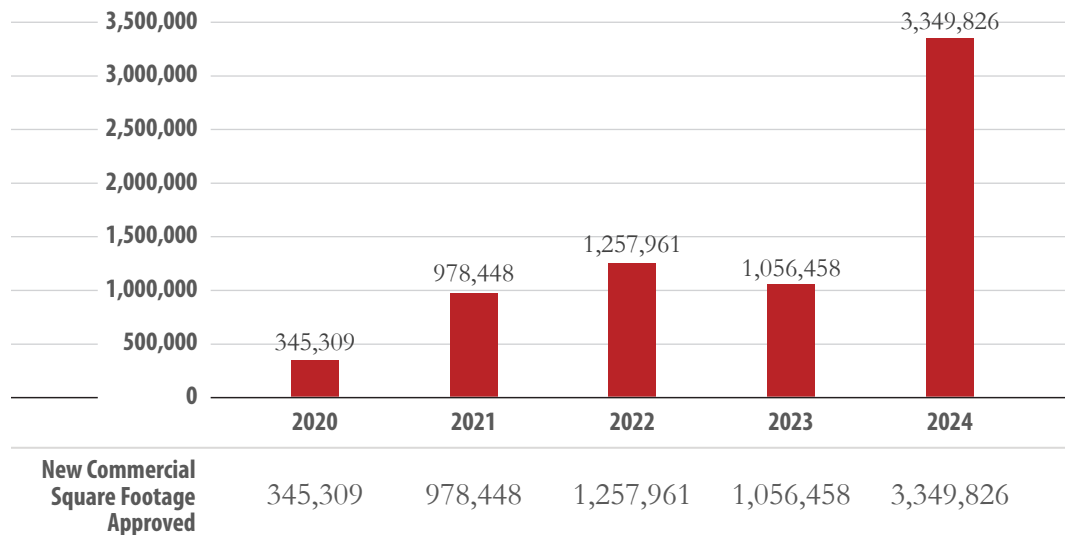
The residential development pipeline includes county and municipal projects that have received some type of development approval, as well as certain concept plans. Such approvals are derived from residential site plan applications, preliminary subdivision plan applications, and Phase I PUD/MXD applications (County only). Projects with a Developers Rights and Responsibilities Agreement (DRRA) are also included. The project may or may not be under construction. The pipeline total reflects unconstructed units. The residential pipeline from 2020 to 2024 has remained fairly consistent, averaging 14,541 units.

## Residential Units in the Pipeline



## New Commercial Square Footage


The Planning Commission and planning staff approve site plans for developments that add commercial square footage to the County inventory. Recent years have seen several large data centers approved for the former Eastalco property, as well as the approval of new warehouses and distribution centers, particularly in proximity to I-70.








## Action Framework

The Livable Frederick Action Framework is organized by four themes: Our Community, Our Health, Our Economy, and Our Environment. Goals, initiatives, and supporting initiatives are included for each theme. As part of the 5-Year Evaluation, the Livable Frederick Planning and Design Office hosted a series of meetings during the summer of 2024 to track progress on plan implementation since 2019 and identify implementation priorities for the next five years. The meetings were organized by the four themes. Participants represented various public agencies, nonprofits and institutions, and other community advocates whose work aligns with each theme. All meetings were open to the public. In addition to the summaries included below, the feedback was used to create a digital dashboard on implementation that can be accessed at [livable-frederick-fcgm.d.hub.arcgis.com](https://livable-frederick-fcgm.d.hub.arcgis.com).

 Our Community topics include housing cost and availability, our transportation network, preservation of our history, support for creativity, and cultural expression.

 Our Economy topics include early childhood education, resources for small businesses, support for agriculture, career training opportunities, and access to fast internet service for everyone.

 Our Health topics include nature and parks, access to nutritious foods, personal safety (physical, emotional), substance abuse prevention, sense of belonging, and healthy and vital neighborhoods.

 Our Environment topics include clean renewable energy, recycling and composting, safe water, clean air, and protection of wildlife habitat.

## Progress on Implementation

The Livable Frederick Master Plan includes over 700 initiatives and supporting initiatives – actions intended to advance the goals of each of the four vision themes. Many of these action items describe on-going efforts. Their inclusion reflects the importance of continuing to dedicate resources to these efforts that advance plan implementation. Examples of on-going efforts include programs that:

### Our Community

- address barriers to accessibility in county-maintained public rights-of-way
- enable seniors to remain in their homes safely and comfortably
- engage under-represented populations to broaden our knowledge of local history and tell a more complete story of our past
- promote tourism to support enjoyment of the county's cultural and natural resources

### Our Economy

- provide support for small businesses and start-ups
- support retention of businesses within all sectors
- support older adult learners through skill advancement and retraining
- provide agricultural innovation grants to support modernization and address changing market conditions

### Our Health

- deliver nutritious meals and produce to seniors
- provide food in the summer months for children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch during the school year
- for newborns and their families, provide a home visit soon after the baby's birth and personalized support to help connect families with resources
- respond to human trafficking, substance abuse, and domestic violence

### Our Environment

- reforest portions of county parks, and create meadows and pollinator habitats in others
- reforest stream buffers to improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat
- incentivize pump out and routine maintenance of septic systems
- install EV charging infrastructure throughout the county

Other initiatives and supporting initiatives have been advanced through the creation of new County government positions, offices, and commissions, as well as through the adoption of new practices. For County government operations, key among these has been establishing a clear link between Livable Frederick and County budget decisions. Requests for funding are now required to include a section addressing how the expenditure supports Livable Frederick implementation. Other new efforts include:

- provision of fare-free Transit service beginning in 2020, which has remained in effect
- initiation of the Rural Broadband Study in 2020 to identify needs and strategies to address those needs
- creation of the Office of Agriculture in 2022 to better support the local farming community and serve as a liaison between farmers and regulatory agencies
- adoption of the Toward Zero Deaths policy plan in 2022 to chart a strategic course for reducing pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist deaths and serious injuries on our roads
- release of the Complete and Green Streets Plan in 2022 to ensure a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable transportation network
- release of the Climate and Energy Adaptation Plan for Internal Government Operations in 2023 to benchmark and measure reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by Frederick County Government operations and prepare them for a changing climate
- creation of the Small Business Navigator and Ombudsman positions in 2023 to assist local businesses as they move through the regulatory review and approval processes
- creation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission in 2023 to guide improvements to roadways to improve cyclist and pedestrian safety
- creation of the Division of Housing in 2023, recognizing the importance of accessible and affordable housing to our residents' quality of life
- creation of the Rustic Roads Commission in 2024 to support the preservation rural roads in agricultural and resource conservation areas
- launch of a new, 24-hour statewide hotline in 2024 for all abuse and neglect reporting calls to connect families to the services offered by the Department of Social Services (1-800-91PREVENT)
- initiation of an update to the County's Housing Needs Study to provide a current assessment of the obstacles to affordable and attainable housing for all residents

## Implementation Planning

Following adoption of the Livable Frederick Master Plan in 2019, a Livable Frederick Work Program of area, functional, and thematic plans and major projects to advance implementation was approved by the County Executive. The Work Program includes plans and projects that are required by the state, as well as elective plans and projects that address local needs and opportunities. This approach marks a significant change from the previous regional planning approach, which lacked the flexibility needed for planning in our dynamic environment.

The Frederick County Land Preservation, Parks & Recreation Plan (LPPRP) was adopted in June of 2022 and approved by the Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in July of 2022. The plan provides a framework for a coordinated approach to the provision of parks and recreation facilities, the protection of natural resources, and the preservation of agricultural land. The LPPRP is developed in partnership with the County's municipalities every five years.

The Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan was adopted in October of 2022. The plan is focused on the protection of natural resources and the preservation of the scenic and rural character of the Sugarloaf Mountain area.

A comprehensive rezoning followed adoption of the Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan, with 74.1 acres rezoned. A total of 25 properties in the Sugarloaf Planning Area were entirely rezoned, with most of these properties being lots developed with single-family homes that were rezoned from Agricultural to R1 Residential. A total of four properties were partially rezoned, with Resource Conservation zoning added to sensitive environmental areas on two properties, Agricultural zoning added to one property, and 13.6 acres of General Commercial added to a 19.9-acre parcel, the balance of which was already zoned General Commercial.

The Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan that advanced to the County Council proposed the Sugarloaf Rural Heritage Overlay Zone. The proposed overlay included provisions prohibiting certain uses and limiting the scale of development to minimize impacts. The Overlay Zone was remanded to the Planning Commission and was ultimately rejected by the County Council.

The South Frederick Corridors Plan was adopted in April of 2024. Focusing on the area south of the City of Frederick along the Urbana Pike (MD 355) and Buckeystown Pike (MD 85) corridors, the plan envisions transforming this area from a suburban, car-oriented, specialized-use district into a vibrant, diversified-use, and walkable urban district that fosters economic growth, environmental stewardship, and community well-being. The plan emphasizes integrating land uses, providing diverse housing options, and enhancing transportation networks to reduce car dependency and promote sustainable lifestyles. To implement the plan, a form-based code and amendments to the adequate public facilities ordinance are currently being developed.

The Water Resources Element was drafted during the reporting period and was adopted in January of 2025. The Water Resources Element seeks to ensure adequate, safe, and sustainable water resources for current and future populations. It considers the impacts of anticipated growth and development on water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure.

The Water & Sewerage Plan Triennial Update was drafted during the reporting period and adopted in February of 2025. The Plan identifies areas to be served by public water or sewer in the municipalities and unincorporated areas of the County. It carries out the comprehensive plan's vision for how, when, and where a community will (or will not) grow by setting policies to control the timing and extension of utilities.

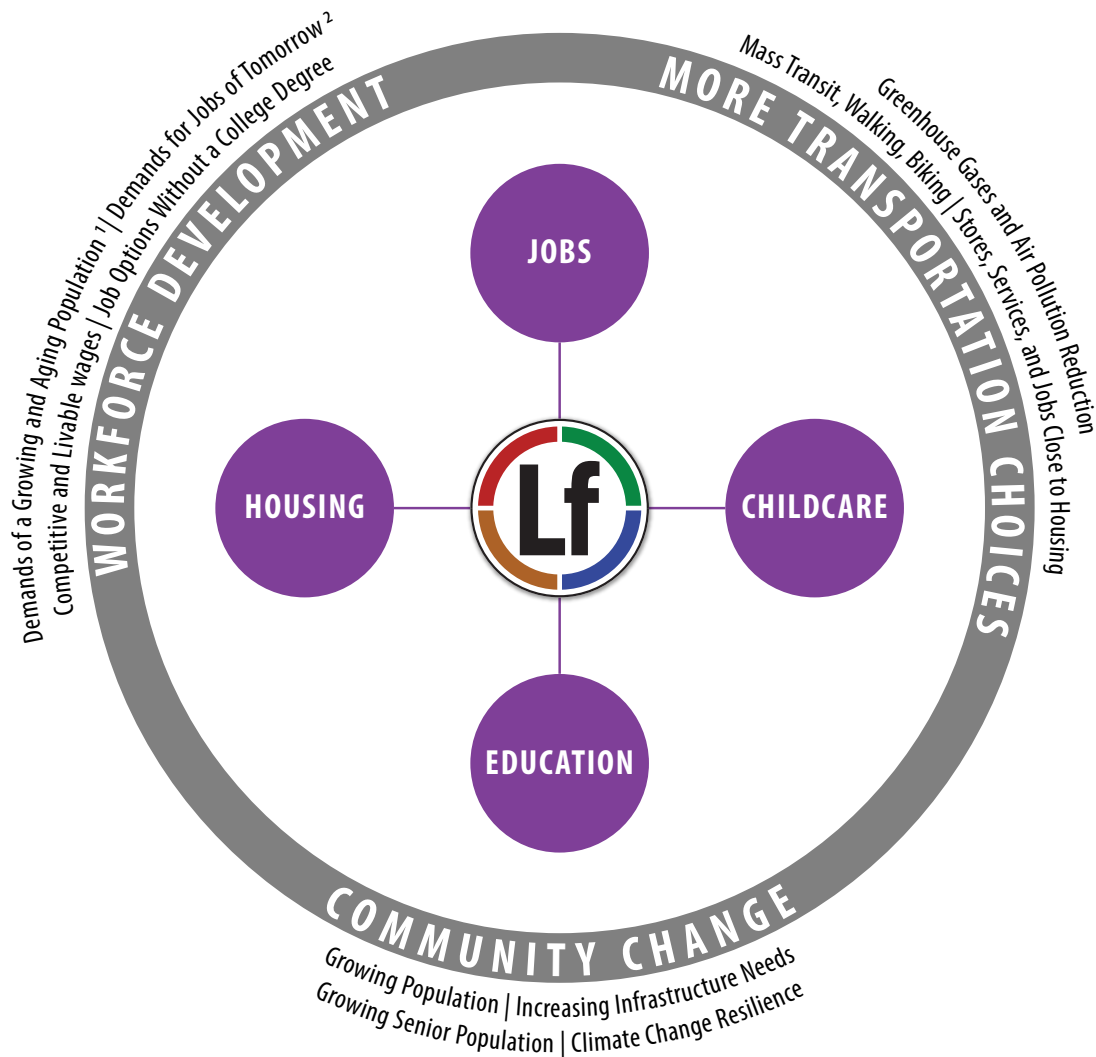
Municipal Reconciliation for the Town of Myersville and the Town of Middle Town was undertaken during the reporting period, with amendments to the County comprehensive plan to better align it with the plans for these two municipalities adopted in January of 2025. As the municipalities adopt comprehensive plans, it is necessary to review County-designated municipal growth areas and determine if changes to land use designations, growth area boundaries, and zoning designations are warranted.

The Historic Preservation Ordinance Update was approved in March of 2024. The ordinance was originally adopted in 1998 and had not been subject to a comprehensive update since then. The updated ordinance includes the addition of demolition review, archaeological review, cemetery protections, economic hardship provisions, a delisting process for County Register properties, and provisions addressing County-owned historic properties.

Four planning efforts are currently underway – the Investing in Workers and Workplaces Plan to foster employment opportunities and economic mobility, the Housing Element to support diversification of the County's housing inventory and development of affordable housing, the Green Infrastructure Plan to protect environmental resources and wildlife habitat, and the Historic Preservation Plan to protect and preserve cultural assets.

## Looking Back and Moving Forward

The 5-Year Evaluation not only reviews the last five years of implementing Livable Frederick but also sets the stage for the next five years. The four vision theme workgroups identified key priorities for each theme. The graphic illustrates shared priorities identified by all or most workgroups, emphasizing the interconnections between topics. At the core of the graphic is the Livable Frederick vision. The inner ring includes housing, jobs, education, and childcare. These are central to the shared priorities and are the cornerstones of a healthy, just, and thriving community. Additionally, three overarching goals influence all four priorities and make up the outer ring: expanding transportation choices, advancing workforce development, and responding to community change. The text outside the outer ring provides specific components of these goals. Together, these priorities and goals form the foundation for realizing the Livable Frederick vision, guiding us toward a brighter and more inclusive future for all residents.



1) healthcare, service navigation, teachers, childcare

2) technology, biosciences and manufacturing, green energy, preservation



# Challenges to Implementation

## School Funding

The Livable Frederick Master Plan identifies primary and secondary growth areas that include unincorporated communities like Urbana and Linganore, as well as several municipalities that are planning for growth, such as the cities of Frederick and Brunswick. Frederick County is consistently one of the fastest growing jurisdictions in the State and the Plan seeks to direct development and redevelopment to these targeted growth areas. However, limited school capacity in areas otherwise primed for sustainable growth remains the most significant barrier to implementation of the Livable Frederick Master Plan.

In a rapidly growing county like Frederick, addressing insufficient school capacity requires a multi-faceted approach that is respectful of students and families currently enrolled in the system, flexible in its ability to take best advantage of fiscal and land resources when they are made available, and politically-patient enough to understand that sustainable solutions require the element of time. In addition to adding new capacity and opening new schools, the local Board of Education also redistricts school attendance areas to help balance enrollments, considering not only the basic seating capacity for the anticipated number of students, but also the impacts that certain programmatic decisions have on class sizes, specialized spatial needs, and overall school enrollment. For example, pre-kindergarten classroom capacity is approximately half of the number of students in a traditional classroom.

To provide funding for the local share of school construction projects, Frederick County dedicates certain fee revenue solely for new school capacity and earmarks \$0.05 of property taxes for projects to improve aging schools. Acquiring State Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) funding support for new school capacity is a multi-year process, during which time school overcrowding typically exacerbates or the State could not justify 100% participation in the project. In order to shorten the length of time spent waiting for State funding, which is typically allocated in increments over four to six years, Frederick County forward-funds the State of Maryland's share of school construction projects. This forward-funding strategy leads to projects that are completed sooner while increasing school capacity more quickly than would otherwise be possible.

The County's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) does not allow approval of residential development projects if any of the schools that would serve the new homes are at, or over, 100% of state-rated capacity. The Ordinance intends to tie new residential growth to the availability of school capacity. In some cases, the County's municipal APFOs differ slightly from the County APFO by setting a threshold higher than 100%, but not all of the twelve municipalities have an APFO or similar mechanism to control the timing of residential development. In the City of Frederick, residential projects are permitted to proceed after a certain time period, regardless of the degree of school crowding. This leads to excessive school over-capacity in some areas, particularly growth areas adjacent to, or near, the City's boundaries, due to the County's inability to control the timing of additional new students generated by this municipal growth.

Although the State has been a good partner with the County, helping this community add nearly 6,000 seats of new school capacity since 2014, several schools continue to exceed 120-150% of their state rated capacity while awaiting State funding approval. In the meantime, meaningful progress toward meeting our housing goals is stymied due to the County's APFO restrictions. However, altering the APFO to a higher threshold would likely result in more school crowding, exacerbating an already challenging issue in our growing community.

Ultimately, the real problem is not necessarily an overly-restrictive APFO standard, but rather the notable lack of available State funding for new school capacity in Maryland's rapidly growing communities. If the State earmarked funding for projects that increase school capacity in areas of the State where residential growth is occurring, Frederick County would not have to forward-fund the State share of its school projects and could nearly double its annual investment in school construction projects. Currently, the total State contribution to Frederick County is estimated to be approximately \$15 million annually and that amount has been relatively unchanged since 2006, even though school construction costs have nearly tripled during that same period of time.

Frederick County stands ready to advance additional school capacity projects, should additional State funding become available. These projects would add capacity in areas of the County where the APFO has identified insufficient school capacity to support additional residential growth.

## Other Funding Limitations

The vision theme workgroup discussions revealed that many efforts, because of limited funding and staff, are implemented on a limited scale. For example, Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) and Farm to School Frederick County provide local food to some schools, such as Waverly Elementary. Green Schools supports composting efforts and Lunch Out of Landfill initiatives at approximately 10 public schools as of summer of 2024. Additional resources are needed to scale-up these efforts.

Also, several community partners noted the tendency for funders to prioritize a particular issue and provide funding for a term-limited campaign. At the end of the term, another issue has become the priority and there is no funding put forward to sustain the original campaign. An example of this is the pre-pandemic 5210 campaign for youth: 5 servings of fruits and vegetables, no more than 2 hours of screen time, 1 hour of physical activity, and 0 sugary beverages daily. A re-launch of the campaign has been considered; however, there is no longer grant funding for this effort. Campaigns to prevent sexual violence, address the use of firearms in suicides, and provide safe firearm storage in homes have also been stymied by limited funding and the shifting priorities of funders.

## Leadership Changes

As we move further from the years of Livable Frederick development and adoption, there have been leadership changes within County government and among our community partners. The vision theme workgroup meetings in 2024 were an opportunity to connect with people who had a key role in the development of Livable Frederick, as well as people who were learning about the plan and their role in its implementation for the first time. To continue to advance plan implementation, it is critical that we continue the conversation and that there be regular opportunities for education and engagement. In the summer of 2026, the Livable Frederick staff plans to reach back out to the Vision Theme Workgroups to discuss the status of implementation efforts and update the dashboard as needed.

## Different Path to Achieve Goals

In some cases, the Livable Frederick Master Plan identifies a specific initiative to achieve a goal that, for a variety of reasons, is not the direction those responsible for implementation have elected to pursue. As an example, a supporting initiative for historic preservation is, "Establish an easement program to secure preservation of key historic features of a building or site (façade easement, frontage easement, etc.)." An easement program for the County's historic preservation program has been considered many times throughout the life of the program, yet listing of eligible structures and sites on the County Register of Historic Properties continues to be the preferred path for preservation of resources. Notably, other entities that hold historic easements, such as Maryland Historical Trust, have moved away from the practice in recent years. Thus, while progress is being made toward the plan goal, it is not occurring in the specific manner prescribed by the plan.

## Conclusion

For ease of use, the Planning Commission may wish for future plans to distinguish between on-going efforts and new initiatives. For new initiatives, it will be critical to engage the individuals within County government and the community who will be responsible for implementation in the vetting process.



# Indicators of Success

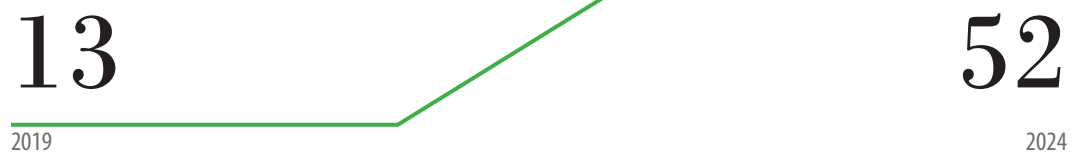
Livable Frederick did not include specific implementation metrics. The indicators in this 5-Year Evaluation were selected by staff. Indicators are organized by the plan's themes and are not necessarily linked to a specific initiative or supporting initiative. Instead, they are intended to show whether the Livable Frederick Vision is being realized. Each indicator was examined at a county level, with a baseline measurement dating to the adoption of the Livable Frederick Master Plan (2019/2020) and the most current data – often calendar year 2024. In some cases, data was unavailable for this time and a different period was used.

Notably, this report covers the first five post-adoption years. Not all implementation efforts have had time to take effect. Others were heavily impacted by events occurring during the reporting period, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic. Performance is intended to be achieved by 2040, the 20-year plan horizon.

		Base Year		Current Year		Trend	Target	
Our Community	County Register Properties	2019	13	2024	52	↑	↑	■
	Median Household Income	2019	\$123,565	2023	\$114,360	↓	↑	■
	Housing Cost Burdened Renters	2019	42.9%	2023	50.8%	↑	↓	■
	Housing Cost Burdened Homeowners	2019	19.6%	2023	19.3%	↓	↓	■
	Transit Ridership	2019	602,587	2024	843,224	↑	↑	■
	County Workers Working in Frederick County	2019	59%	2023	66%	↑	↑	■
	Pedestrians and Bicyclists Struck	2020	68	2024	118	↑	↓	■
	Public Schools At or Over 100% State Rated Capacity	2020	ES: 10	2024	ES: 15	↑	↓	■
			MS: 2		MS: 1	↓	↓	■
			HS: 2		HS: 4	↑	↓	■
Our Health	Childhood Poverty %	2019	5.5%	2023	8.5%	↑	↓	■
	ALICE households	2018	37%	2022	32%	↓	↓	■
	Adult Obesity	2019	29%	2022	33%	↑	↓	■
	Miles of Sidewalk	2019	171.2	2024	237	↑	↑	■
	Miles of Bike Lanes	2019	4.6	2024	29.2	↑	↑	■
	Public School Students Living in a Walk Area	2019	26.7%	2024	29.6%	↑	↑	■
	Uninsured Residents Under 65	2019	4.3%	2023	4.7%	↑	↓	■
Our Economy	Agricultural Acres Permanently Preserved	2019	61,319	2024	75,051	↑	↑	■
	Labor Force Participation	2019	68.7%	2024	58.7%	↓	↑	■
	Wages	2019	\$63,226	2023	\$78,465	↑	↑	■
	Jobs	2019	119,025	2024	125,956	↑	↑	■
	Tourism - Number of Visitors	2019	2.14M	2023	1.98M	↓	↑	■
	Tourism - Visitor Spending	2019	\$426M	2023	\$539M	↑	↑	■
Our Environment	Forest Acres Permanently Protected	2020	204.2	2024	294.0	↑	↑	■
	Waste Diversion	2019	54%	2023	52%	↓	↑	■
	Surface Water Quality: # of Temperature Impairments	2018	11	2024	46	↑	↓	■
	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	2020	~2.7 m MTCO2e				↓	■
	Air Quality Non-Attainment Days	2019	32	2024	30	↓	↓	■
	Publicly Available EV Stations	2019	31	2024	188	↑	↑	■

# County Register Properties

Number of County Register Properties



County Grant Awards



The County Register of Historic Places was established in 1998 when the County enacted the Historic Preservation Ordinance. From 1998 to the end of 2019, 13 properties had been designated to the County Register of Historic Places, an average of approximately 1.6 designations per year. From 2020 to 2024, the total designations rose to 52 properties, an increase of approximately 7.8 designations per year. This growth in designations is directly related to the County's establishment of the Rural Historic Preservation Grant Program.

The Frederick County Rural Historic Preservation Grant Program was created in 2020 to help fund rehabilitation, restoration, and preservation of historic properties. The first round of applications were accepted between December 2020 and February 2021. To be eligible for a grant, properties must be designated to the County Register. From 2021 through 2024, the County awarded \$1,253,099 in Rural Historic Preservation Grant Program funding to 27 County Register properties.



## Median Household Income

**\$123,565** **\$114,360**

2019\*

2023

\*CPI-adjusted to 2023

Median household income is the dollar amount where half of all households make less and half of all households make more. In comparison, the average household income in Frederick County – which was \$143,087 in 2023 – is much higher than the median figure since higher-income households skew the average upwards. The Census Bureau defines income as money “received on a regular basis.” Some examples are wages, self-employment, retirement, or government assistance. Median household income is used as an indicator of a community’s economic health. It can help to understand if a community faces challenges with income disparities or cost-of-living.

When adjusted for inflation, the 2019 median income was the equivalent of \$123,565 in December 2023. This means that actual median income – in terms of a household’s spending power – has decreased in Frederick County from 2019 to 2023, likely a reflection of the impacts of inflation in the post-COVID-19 era.

## Cost Burdened Households

Percent of Households Considered Housing Cost Burdened

42.9%

Renters: 2019

50.8%

Renters: 2023

19.6%

Homeowners: 2019

19.3%

Homeowners: 2023

Estimated Increase in Number of Cost Burdened Households

2,532

Renters: 2019-2023

1,934

Homeowners: 2019-2023

“Cost burdened” is when a household pays 30% or more of their monthly income for housing. This can limit a household’s ability to pay for other essentials such as food, transportation, child care, or health care or to build savings. Over the long term, housing cost burden may lead to eviction, foreclosure, or displacement as households seek less expensive housing somewhere else.

Housing costs for renters are inclusive of both rent and utilities. The percent of renter households considered cost burdened increased by 18% from 2019 to 2023 (7.9 percentage points). Currently, over half of all renter households are considered cost burdened. Affordable rental housing was already a need in Frederick County and the need is only increasing.

Housing costs for homeowners include mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, utilities, and condo/HOA fees. While the percent of homeowner households considered cost burdened slightly decreased by 0.3 percentage points, the actual number of cost burdened households increased by around 2,000. The increase in housing cost burden for homeowners is complex and likely driven by a combination of factors such as increases in sale prices, insurance premiums, and property taxes (primarily as a result of increased assessed values).

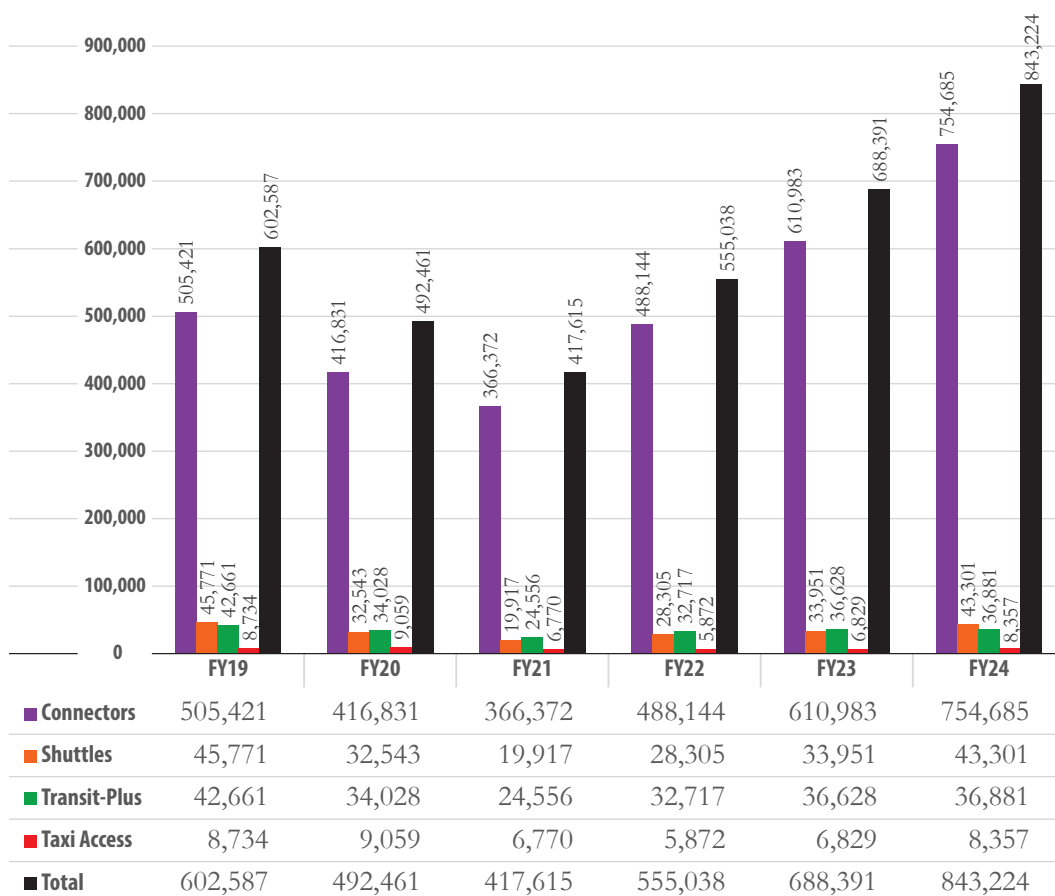
## Transit Ridership

# 602,587

2019

# 843,224

2024



Transit Services of Frederick County offers a variety of services to meet the needs of residents, employers, and visitors to Frederick County. Connector routes operate in the City of Frederick and urbanized areas of the County, while shuttle services operate primarily into and out of the rural areas. Transit-plus is a demand response paratransit service for older adults and people with disabilities. The Taxi Access Program (TAP) is a supplemental program for Transit-Plus users when Transit-Plus services are unavailable, such as nights and weekends. TAP provides riders with subsidized trips via local taxicab companies.

Over the past five years, Connector routes have seen significant increases in ridership while Transit-plus, Taxi Access, and Shuttle programs are recovering to their 2019 totals. Transit-plus is limited by capacity, and ridership numbers reflect that, although the decrease during COVID was due to orders requiring essential travel only. Route modifications have shifted some riders from Shuttles to Connectors. The reduction of Meet-the-MARC Shuttle service is reflected in the varying ridership as well. Meet-the-MARC ridership decreased significantly with telework and essential travel, and as a result, Transit opted to shift those vehicles and drivers onto Transit-plus to ensure essential trips were covered.

In 2019, Transit recorded 602,587 riders across all programs. By 2024, ridership surged to 843,224—a 40% increase – reflecting strong gains across Connectors, Shuttles, and the Taxi Access Program (TAP).

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant operational challenges for Transit, necessitating service adjustments, enhanced cleaning protocols, and essential travel orders during the height of the pandemic. In response, Transit introduced fare-free service in March 2020 to ensure safe distances between passengers and operators; sustaining fare-free service continues to improve ridership numbers, especially on short trips.

In recent years, efforts to analyze and improve bus routes and stops have intensified, with a focus on signage, location, and physical accessibility of bus stops, shelters, and paths of travel. Installation of passenger amenities systemwide has enhanced usability and wayfinding.

Coordination with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has been ongoing to develop and refine these processes, as well as ensure connectivity between local and regional transit options, including the MARC Train and Commuter Bus.

Notably, on April 1, 2023, existing Shuttle services in Brunswick/Jefferson and Emmitsburg/Thurmont underwent operational modifications, including Saturday service for the first time. North Frederick Shuttle began Saturday operations on January 1, 2024. Connector routes have undergone extensive modifications, including the introduction of midday service on the 20, 40, 50, and 51 Connectors, enabling service to run every 30 minutes from 9:15 am to 5:45 pm, reflecting the growth in ridership at those times. These changes have been well-received, with ridership steadily increasing due to extensive outreach efforts in these communities to raise awareness of available transit services.



## Place of Work

County Workers Working in Frederick County

59%

2019

66%

2023

Per the 2019 American Community Survey, 59% of the County's workforce of approximately 139,204 workers 16 and over worked in the County with 8% of workers reporting that they work from home. With the global COVID 19 pandemic, many workers who could work from home did so. Many workers have continued to work from home full-time or have a hybrid schedule, splitting work hours between home and an office or other workplace. In 2023, 66% of the County's workforce of approximately 156,067 workers 16 and over worked in the County, with 21% of workers reporting working from home.

The decline in the percentage of workers working beyond Frederick County is generally positive from a quality-of-life perspective. Workers working in Frederick County – in their home or at a local employer – may have more time for family, recreation, and community engagement. However, it is important to note that the employers of workers working from home may be based outside the County or State. The County's proximity to the Washington, D.C. metro area enables many highly skilled residents to work for employers based in the D.C./Northern Virginia area. These include various federal agencies that have recently rescinded or curtailed telework opportunities.

# Pedestrians and Bicyclists Struck

Number of Struck Pedestrians and Bicyclists



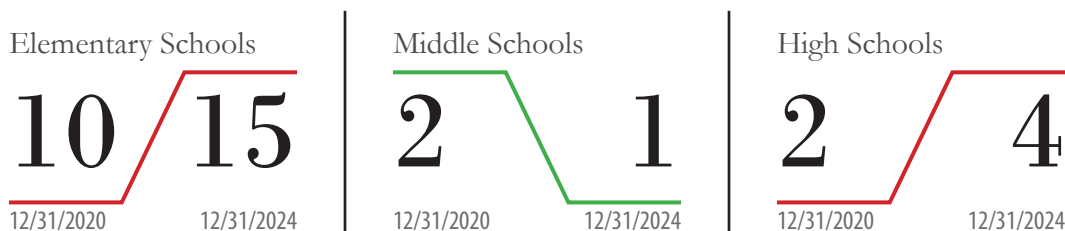
From 2020 to 2024, Frederick County experienced a notable increase in pedestrian strikes, with recorded incidents rising from 68 in 2020 to 118 in 2024. This data is collected by the Department of Fire and Rescue Services, which tracks dispatches involving pedestrians or bicyclists struck by motor vehicles, resulting in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) reports. The data includes incidents that occurred on roadways, within parking lots, and on private property. The data reveals that pedestrian strikes are more likely to occur during peak traffic hours and specific days, particularly Tuesday and Friday. Top contributing factors to serious injuries or fatalities include speeding, distracted driving, driver impairment, and aggressive driving.

Due to the City of Frederick's somewhat urban context, pedestrian strikes are more densely concentrated within city limits. Notably, ten high-density zones—defined as areas with four or more incidents within a 500-foot radius—are in and around Downtown Frederick and the Golden Mile. These areas experience a higher frequency of incidents likely due to their walkable nature, mixed residential and commercial uses, and high traffic volume.

In response to pedestrian safety concerns, Frederick County adopted the *Towards Zero Deaths* policy in 2020, prioritizing roadway safety for all users, including drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. This commitment was further solidified with the adoption of the *Towards Zero Deaths Action Plan* in 2022, which outlines strategies to reduce injuries and fatalities. The plan is a multifaceted approach that combines public education, enforcement, and infrastructure improvements. Specific initiatives include addressing pedestrian and bicycle network gaps, enhancing traffic safety considerations in development design standards, and creating safer travel conditions through targeted infrastructure upgrades.

Implementation of the *Towards Zero Deaths Action Plan* is overseen by the Towards Zero Deaths Task Force. The Task Force includes representatives from the Frederick County Sheriff's Office, Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS), the Maryland Highway Safety Office, Frederick County Planning, and the City of Frederick. By working collaboratively, the Task Force aims to foster a safer environment for all road users and to achieve the County's long-term vision of reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries.

## Public Schools $\geq 100\%$ State-Rated Capacity



State-Rated Capacity (SRC) is the number of students a school can reasonably accommodate as determined by a series of formulas in Maryland's regulations. These formulas vary based on grade level or program type and other factors. SRC is a way to standardize counting school seats across different school districts and to inform State funding of local school projects. This measure has limitations, since more recently designed schools may have more space flexibility than older buildings.

A public school does not turn away students who live in a school's attendance area and therefore a school's enrollment may exceed 100% of SRC. In the unincorporated part of Frederick County, a major subdivision (6 or more lots) for new residential development cannot be approved if the proposed development's attendance area has any elementary, middle, or high school that is at or over 100% SRC.

Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) monitors SRC for each school quarterly. SRC drives FCPS' planning efforts for redistricting (modifying the attendance boundaries or "feeder patterns" of schools) and schedules for limited renovations, additions, full renovations or replacements, and new schools.

Of its non-charter schools in operation during the 2019-2020 school year, FCPS reported 10 of 38 elementary schools, 2 of 13 middle schools, and 2 of 10 high schools were at or over 100% of SRC. As of December 31, 2024, FCPS reported 15 of 38 elementary schools, 1 of 13 middle schools, and 4 of 10 high schools as at or over 100% of SRC.

In between, Sabillasville Elementary School was converted to a charter school (Sabillasville Environmental Center) and Blue Heron Elementary School opened. These two snapshots show that while some progress has been made to expand school capacity, the need is still great and is often hyper-localized in fast-growing areas in the County. The urgent need to reduce overcrowding affects FCPS' and the County's ability to pursue projects that are needed in order to improve educational or extracurricular equity, but do not add capacity.

## Childhood Poverty

5.5%

2019

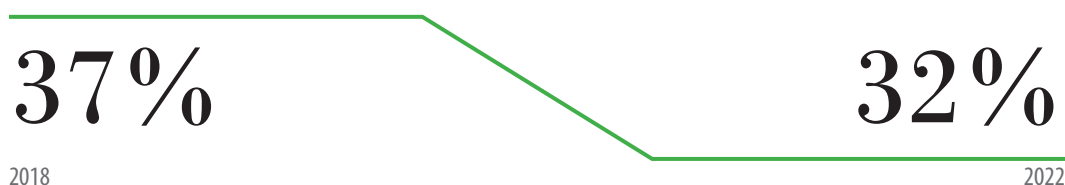
8.5%

2023

The U.S. Census Bureau calculates whether a household lives in poverty based on family size and age. As an example, for a family of four (two adults and two children), this was \$25,926 in 2019 and \$30,900 in 2023. Children living in poverty face interrelated challenges including housing and food insecurity, academic struggles, and poorer health. These outcomes can follow children into adulthood and continue the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Nationwide, it's estimated that between one-third and one-half of children who grow up in poverty also live in poverty as adults.

In Frederick County in 2019, 5.5% of children under 18 lived in families earning below the poverty threshold. This share increased to 8.5% in 2023. Frederick County's percentages are lower in 2023 when compared to Maryland (10.6%) and the U.S. (16.0%). Nationally, increases in child poverty over this time period have been described as impacts during and after COVID-19. These include job loss or reduced hours, inflation, and expiration of pandemic assistance like stimulus payments and the expanded child tax credit.

## ALICE Households



“ALICE” is a concept developed by the United Way. The acronym stands for “Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.” It is a recognition that an individual or family may earn above the federal poverty threshold but struggle to make ends meet. Unlike the poverty level, United Way works with local data to create a survival threshold and estimate how many households are below this threshold. The United Way budget also includes many daily living expenses not taken into account by the poverty limit such as transportation, childcare, and healthcare.

What first appears to be a decrease in households unable to meet basic needs may be more complex. The County is growing. From 2018 to 2022, the number of households in Frederick County increased by 9,009. In terms of the number of households at each threshold, households in poverty increased (791), ALICE households decreased (2,944), and households above the ALICE threshold increased (11,162).

The reason for the decrease in the number of households above the poverty line but below the ALICE threshold is unclear. It could be due to changing economic factors, displacement of ALICE households, or a mix of both. The trend is also recent which makes it more difficult to understand the cause(s) and whether the trend will be short- or longer-term.

# Adult Obesity

Rates of Adult Obesity



In 2019, the adult obesity rate in Frederick County was 29%. By 2022, the rate increased to 33%. Factors such as limited access to healthy foods and restricted opportunities for physical activity due to environmental and socioeconomic constraints likely contribute to this increase. However, physical inactivity rates among adults in Frederick County have remained relatively stable, with approximately 16% of adults reporting no physical activity since 2020—a figure lower than the Maryland state average. Also, while the adult obesity rate has risen, Frederick County still maintains the third-lowest rate among Maryland counties.

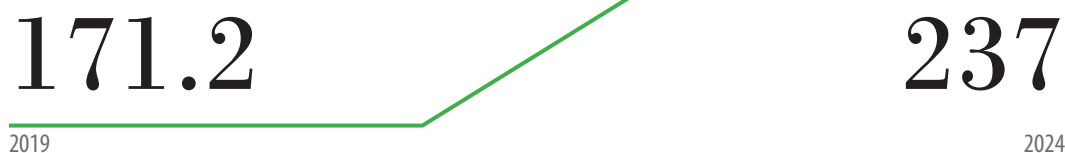
In Frederick County, heart disease remains the leading cause of death, with a mortality rate of 133.2 deaths per 100,000 residents. Other leading causes include cancers, chronic lower respiratory disease, and diabetes, all of which can be exacerbated by obesity.

Addressing obesity and its related health risks requires a collaborative, multi-agency approach. Policies and initiatives that enhance access to nutritious food, promote active transportation, and expand recreational opportunities are critical to fostering healthier communities.

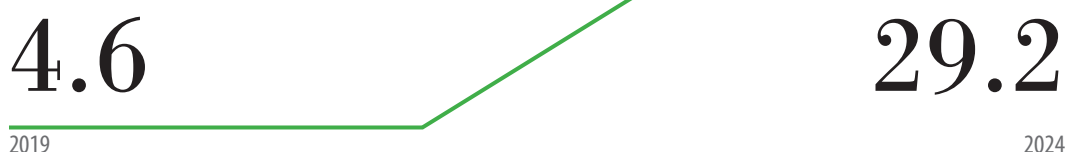


## Bike and Pedestrian Facility Miles

Miles of Sidewalk



Miles of Bikelane



Between 2019 and 2024, Frederick County significantly expanded its bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The total mileage of sidewalks increased from 171.12 miles to 237 miles, while bike lanes grew from 4.6 miles to 29.2 miles. This increase in facility miles reflects the County's ongoing efforts to enhance connectivity and promote a range of safe and accessible transportation options.

A key driver of this expansion has been the County's Bikeways & Trails Plan, adopted in 2018, which prioritizes safety, connectivity, and the integration of multi-modal design into both new and existing roadways. The plan identifies opportunities for expanding on-street bike networks and multi-use trails, supporting a more comprehensive and interconnected transportation system.

Building upon this framework, the Livable Frederick Master Plan (LFMP) further reinforces the County's commitment to community and health. One of its major initiatives is to: *"Make physical activity more possible, convenient, and enjoyable by supporting the development of walkable, mixed-use, and accessible communities that emphasize non-motorized transportation."* To achieve this, the LFMP promotes:

1. Development patterns that enhance multi-modal accessibility, ensuring that walking, biking, and transit are viable and convenient alternatives to driving.
2. The creation of fully interconnected street networks, distributing travel demand across multiple routes rather than concentrating it on a few arterial roads, thereby improving mobility and reducing congestion.
3. Mixed-use and higher-density development, fostering walkable environments that naturally support pedestrian and bicyclist activity.

Additionally, the County is collaborating with various agencies to implement the Towards Zero Deaths Plan, which focuses on reducing pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities, particularly in the County's highest-density areas. Moving forward, the County will continue working to close network gaps, enhance connectivity, and integrate infrastructure improvements that support safe, accessible, and efficient multi-modal transportation for all users.

## Public School Students Living in a Walk Area

26.7%

2019-2020

29.6%

2024-2025

From the 2019-2020 school year to the 2024-2025 school year, the percentage of Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) students living within a designated walk area – also referred to as a walk shed – of their assigned school increased from 26.7% to 29.6%. This indicator reflects the proportion of students who theoretically can walk or bike to school based on the boundaries of walk areas defined by FCPS.

It is important to note that this metric does not reflect the actual number of students who walk or bike to school. Students counted within these walk areas may still travel by car or other means of transportation. Additionally, some students who reside within a school's walk area may be enrolled out of district for various reasons, such as attending a charter school.

Over the five-year period, student enrollment in FCPS grew by 9,756. While walk shed percentages vary significantly by school, this increase may reflect broader demographic changes or shifts in population density that influence the number of students residing within walkable zones.

Despite this progress, walkability remains limited in many parts of the county, particularly in rural areas where schools are often not located within walking distance of residential areas. Even in some suburban areas, barriers such as a lack of sidewalks, incomplete trail connections, and limited traffic calming infrastructure continue to hinder safe and practical walking/biking routes for students.

In response, Frederick County has partnered with multiple agencies to advance pedestrian and bicycle safety through initiatives such as the *Towards Zero Deaths Vision Plan* and the *Safe Streets for All* program. These efforts will be integrated into updates of the County's adopted plans and design guidelines and aim to support safer, more connected school access for all students, regardless of location.

## Uninsured Residents Under 65

4.3%

2019

4.7%

2023

In 2019, an estimated 4.3% of Frederick County residents were uninsured. This increased to 4.7% in 2023. In absolute terms, the number of people under 65 who were uninsured increased by 2,592 (23%) between 2019 and 2023. Health care can still have significant out-of-pocket costs even when someone has insurance, but going without health insurance can be even more financially devastating. A lack of health insurance is also a health risk. People without insurance may delay or not seek preventative care or outpatient treatment.

Almost everyone over age 65 is insured. Only 0.1% of this age group was estimated to be uninsured in 2023. Even with almost universal insurance coverage there are still health care challenges for this population. County Health Rankings, a public health data dashboard, reported that in 2021, approximately 2.1% of Medicare-billed hospital stays were classified as preventable. 'Preventable' was defined as a specific list of health conditions which are generally manageable in an outpatient setting or primary care. Preventable hospital stays can indicate a lack of regular primary care resulting from insufficient quality, access challenges, or both.

People under 19 also are highly likely to be insured. Only 2.7% of this age group was estimated to be uninsured in 2023.

Most uninsured individuals are working-age adults. An estimated 85% of the uninsured population in 2023 was 19-64 years old. . Most uninsured people in this age group were actively working (76%) and just over half worked full-time, year-round.

A study by the Centers for Disease Control on uninsured adults aged 18-64 found that the cost of coverage was the most common reason for not having health insurance (NCHS Data Brief No. 382, September 2020). Public insurance programs such as Medicaid and Medicare are vital in providing health insurance to vulnerable people and those with low or no income. In 2023, an estimated 20.1% of Frederick County residents were enrolled in Medicaid. State-wide, 40% of Medicaid enrollees are children and 7% are 65 or older. Without this and other programs, insurance coverage – and general community health and wellbeing – would likely suffer.

## Preserved Agricultural Acres

1,434

2019 Yearly Total

3,055

2024 Yearly Total

61,319

2019 Cumulative Total

75,051

2024 Cumulative Total

At the start of 2020, a cumulative total of 61,319 acres of agricultural land had been preserved in Frederick County. This includes 1,434 acres preserved in calendar year 2019. Likewise, in 2024 a total of 3,055 acres were preserved, bringing the cumulative total to 75,051 acres — representing 18% of the County's total land area. The Frederick County Office of Agriculture works to protect farmland through various conservation easements while also supporting agricultural operations with business and marketing assistance and technical support.

The Agricultural Preservation Office administers a variety of local, state, and federal programs aimed at safeguarding agricultural lands. The three primary preservation programs utilized in Frederick County include:

- **Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF):** Provides easement acquisitions to permanently restrict non-agricultural development on farmland.
- **Rural Legacy Program:** Focuses on protecting large contiguous tracts of agricultural and forested land, ensuring long-term conservation of natural-based industries, critical habitats, and greenbelts. The program also supports preservation of properties with cultural resources.
- **Installment Purchase Program (IPP):** Offers long-term financial incentives to landowners for placing conservation easements, enabling them to retain land ownership while securing permanent preservation.

These programs, in coordination with other state and federal efforts, offer Frederick County farmers multiple avenues to protect their land and sustain the county's agricultural economy.

The County's long-term goal for agricultural land preservation is to secure 160,000 acres of permanently protected farmland by 2051, with an active agricultural land base of at least 200,000 acres. Additionally, the County aims to preserve 80% of the undeveloped land within its Priority Preservation Area (PPA). At the end of 2024, 49% of the PPA was preserved. Achieving the 80% target will require a strategic approach, using existing resources, securing additional funding, and working closely with landowners to identify and protect the most vital agricultural lands.

# Labor Force Participation

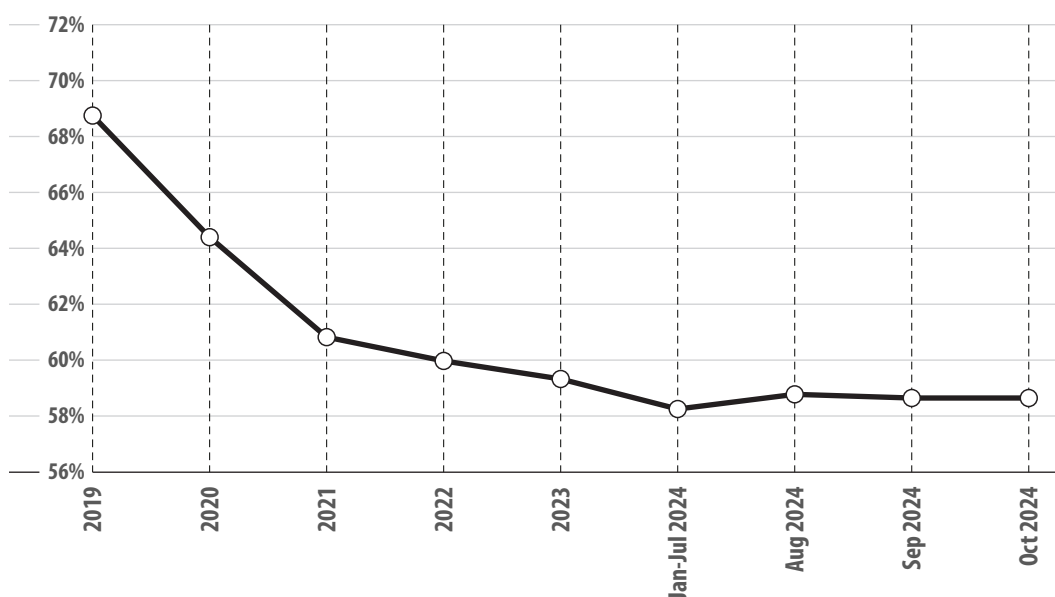
Participation Rate

68.71%

2019

58.7%

2024



Frederick County Workforce Services Lightcast Q1 2025 Data Set

In 2019, Frederick County's labor force participation rate (LFPR) stood at 68.71%, while in 2024 this rate declined to 58.74%, despite rising wages and an increasing number of available jobs. In comparison, Maryland's statewide LFPR currently stands at 65.6%, highlighting Frederick County's decline. The County's Office of Economic Development defines the LFPR as a key economic indicator. It measures the share of the population over 16 who are employed or actively seeking work. Those who have left the workforce and are not actively looking for employment are not considered participating in the labor force. In Frederick County, two major factors contribute to the decline in workforce participation: limited access to affordable childcare and an aging population.

Access to affordable childcare is a critical factor influencing labor force participation. The cost of childcare often determines whether parents can enter or remain in the workforce, which directly impacts household financial stability and long-term earning potential. In Frederick County, the availability of licensed childcare slots has not kept pace with demand due to licensing regulations, staffing shortages, and increased competition from publicly funded Pre-K programs. If this trend continues, the ratio of children per licensed childcare slot is projected to reach a critical shortage level within the next decade.

In Frederick County, the aging population is expanding at a rate that exceeds the state average, contributing to a significant reduction in the local labor force. Data from Frederick County Workforce Services shows that from 2019 to 2024, the number of adults aged 65-69 increased by 23%. The growing older adult population in Frederick County is expected to intensify workforce shortages, particularly in industries that rely on experienced labor. Additionally, this demographic shift is projected to increase demand for healthcare and senior services, placing further strain on the local economy.

The decline in Frederick County's labor force participation rate reflects certain challenges that could impact economic growth, housing demand, and commuting patterns. Addressing childcare accessibility will be essential to ensure more parents can enter or remain in the workforce. Additionally, supporting career development opportunities for working-age adults, such as skills training, job placement services, and workforce readiness programs, will be key in mitigating labor shortages in the coming years.



## Wage Growth

\$63,226

2019

\$78,465

2023

From 2019 to 2023, Frederick County experienced significant wage growth, with the average annual wage increasing from \$63,226 to \$78,465. This reflects a 24% increase over the four-year period. Several factors have contributed to this upward trend, including the county's strong educational attainment, cost-of-living pressures, and broader economic conditions.

One key driver of wage growth in the county is its highly educated workforce. As of the most recent data, 24.7% of Frederick County residents hold a bachelor's degree. This rate is 3.2% higher than the national average. This highly skilled labor pool has helped attract employers offering competitive salaries, particularly in industries requiring specialized knowledge and technical expertise such as healthcare, education, and biotechnology.

Additionally, increases in the cost of living have influenced wage trends. Frederick County's cost-of-living index of 126.6 is above the national average, putting upward pressure on wages as businesses compete to retain talent in an increasingly expensive region. Economic trends, including inflation and shifts in the labor market following the COVID-19 pandemic, have also played a role in rising wages across various sectors.

Looking ahead, the County is working to sustain this wage growth through initiatives such as the Investing in Workers and Workplaces Plan, which aims to attract and retain high-paying jobs locally. By strengthening employment opportunities and reducing the need for long commutes, Frederick County is positioning itself for continued economic growth and opportunities.

## Jobs

119,025

2019

122,589

2024

Between 2019 and 2024, the total number of jobs in Frederick County increased from 119,025 to 122,589, representing a 3% increase. While this indicates steady job growth over the five-year period, it fell slightly below the national growth rate of 3.9%.

During the same period, Frederick County experienced substantial population growth. The resident population increased by 40,670 people—a 15.6% rise since 2019. Projections estimate an additional 40,029 residents by 2029, a further 13.3% increase. Despite this ongoing population growth, the County's labor force participation rate dropped significantly from 68.7% in 2019 to 58.7% in 2024. Contributing factors may include a growing retirement-age population, limited access to affordable childcare, or other socioeconomic barriers.

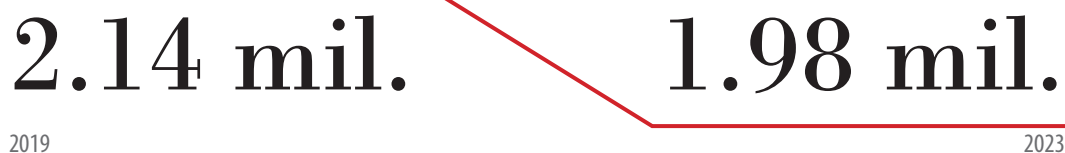
Frederick County's economy continues to be anchored by several major industries, including government, retail trade, and health care. Job growth during the reporting period was strongest in government and professional, scientific, and technical services—sectors that are expected to remain vital to the County's economic trajectory.

While job growth in Frederick County has remained positive, the declining labor force participation rate presents a potential challenge to long-term economic sustainability. Continued investment in workforce development, housing, and transportation infrastructure will be essential to support the County's evolving labor market and ensure that employment opportunities keep pace with population growth.

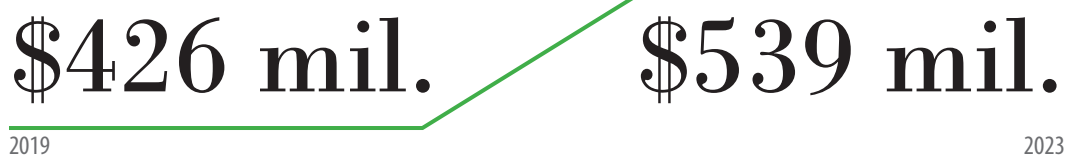
Source: Lightcast Q1 2025 Economy Overview – Frederick County MD

## Tourism

### Number of Visitors



### Visitor Spending



According to the Tourism Economics report issued in August 2024, visitor volume in Frederick County has rebounded strongly following the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 92% of 2019 levels. While 2.14 million visitors traveled to the County in 2019, this figure dropped to a low of 1.3 million during the pandemic years of 2020-2021. By 2023, visitor numbers had risen to 1.98 million, reflecting ongoing recovery and growth in the tourism sector.

In 2019, the County ranked 8th in the State of Maryland for tourism spending and has since advanced to 7th highest in visitor spending as of FY2023-2024. Additionally, tourism spending in Frederick County has experienced a steady upward trajectory, increasing from \$426 million in 2019 to a record \$539 million in 2023.

Tourism remains a key driver of Frederick County's economic vitality, supporting over 6,100 jobs and accounting for 5.8% of the County's total employment in 2023. Beyond employment, tourism significantly contributes to the local economy, generating tax revenue at local, state, and federal levels. Visitor spending in retail, recreation, and the restaurant and craft beverage industry alone contributed over \$300 million to the local economy in 2023.

## Forest Permanently Protected

204.2 ac.

2020

294.0 ac.

2024

Year	Existing Forest Impacted (Ac.) <sup>1</sup>	Existing Forest Retained (Ac.) <sup>2</sup>	New Forest Planted (Ac.)	Forest Area Permanently Protected (Ac.)	Forest Banks Established (Ac.) <sup>3</sup>
2020	233.0	180.0	24.2	204.2	35.2
2021	295.6	201.4	17.9	219.3	26.9
2022	214.7	179.2	83.1	262.4	113.4
2023	193.5	150.9	81.8	232.7	0.0
2024	526.6	286.2	7.8	294.0	65.2

A November 2022 report by the Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology, the University of Maryland College of Agriculture & Natural Resources, the Chesapeake Conservancy, and the University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Lab regarding the changes in forest cover and tree canopy in Maryland between 2013 and 2018 established the total amount of forest in Frederick County in 2018 at 147,005 acres (or 34.7% of the County's area).<sup>4</sup> This analysis occurred at a critical juncture in the implementation of the Maryland Forest Conservation Act (FCA) of 1991, as enacted under the Frederick County Forest Resource Ordinance (FRO) in 1992.

During the time period analyzed by the Maryland Forest Technical Study, Frederick County had lost approximately 500 acres of forest (or 70 +/- acres of forest a year) as a result of a 2011 legislative change to the FRO that eliminated a short-lived policy of "no-net-loss" of forest.<sup>5</sup> "No-net-loss" policies, as applied to forest conservation, are intended to ensure that any activity that removes existing forest provides for (at a minimum) the establishment of an equal acreage of new forest to be established on the same property or a different property with the County. At the time, "no-net-loss" regulations were not inherent in the FCA but have been adopted by several counties within Maryland to reverse observed, yet slow, declines in forest cover under the FCA as originally implemented. With the adoption of Frederick County Bill No. 20-08 in late 2020, Frederick County restored the previously held policy requiring "no-net-loss" of forest associated with land development activities.

<sup>1</sup> Indicates the total amount of forest on properties subject to the FRO.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the total amount of forest retained within the area of addressed by FRO regulations.

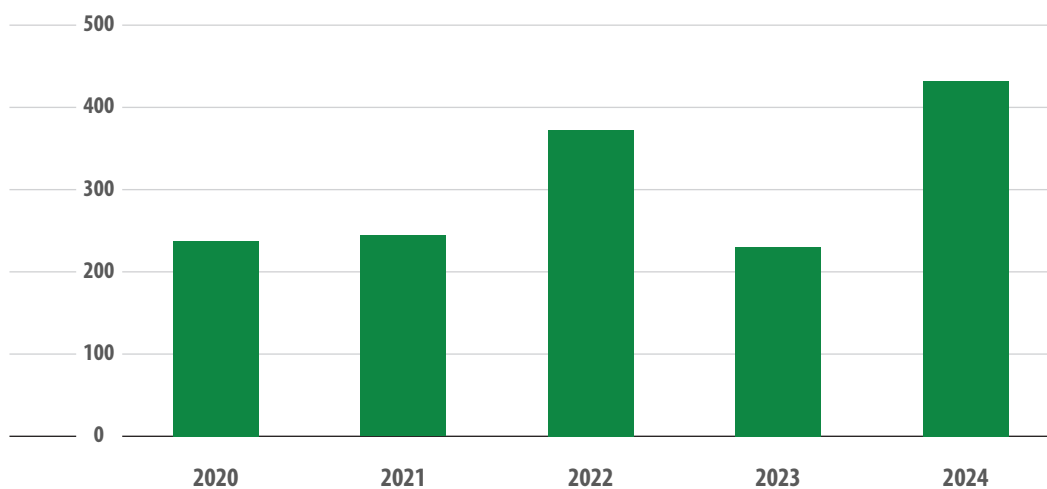
<sup>3</sup> Forest Banks also represent permanently protected forest acreage.

<sup>4</sup> [https://agmr.umd.edu/sites/agmr.umd.edu/files/documents/Hughes%20Center/Maryland%20Forest%20Technical%20Study\\_Use\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](https://agmr.umd.edu/sites/agmr.umd.edu/files/documents/Hughes%20Center/Maryland%20Forest%20Technical%20Study_Use_Final_Web.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Wheeler, T. (2020, July 23). Frederick County, MD, protects forests with new law for 'no net loss.' Bay Journal. [https://www.bayjournal.com/news/growth\\_conservation/frederick-county-md-protects-forests-with-new-law-for-no-net-loss/article\\_c57451cc-cd25-11ea-bfa1-8318c8328640.html](https://www.bayjournal.com/news/growth_conservation/frederick-county-md-protects-forests-with-new-law-for-no-net-loss/article_c57451cc-cd25-11ea-bfa1-8318c8328640.html)

The results of Bill 20-08 and of new projects being subject to the “no-net-loss” requirements became readily evident in 2022, as indicated in the provided chart. The amount of forest preserved started to exceed the area of forest impacted by development or clearing activities at that time, and this trend is expected to continue as more and more development projects are initiated after the enacting date of the legislation are undertaken.<sup>6</sup> Frederick County hopes to continue to increase the amount of permanently protected forest in the future to realize the benefits of ample forest cover for wildlife habitat, clean air, clean water, and carbon sequestration.

**Forest Acres Protected in Frederick County 2019–2024 (FRO)**



<sup>6</sup> Bill No. 20-08 included a grandfathering provision for certain projects already in the land development process, and while these projects are still subject to the requirement of the FCA/FRO, they are not subject to “no-net-loss” requirements.

# Waste Diversion

54%

2019

52%

2023

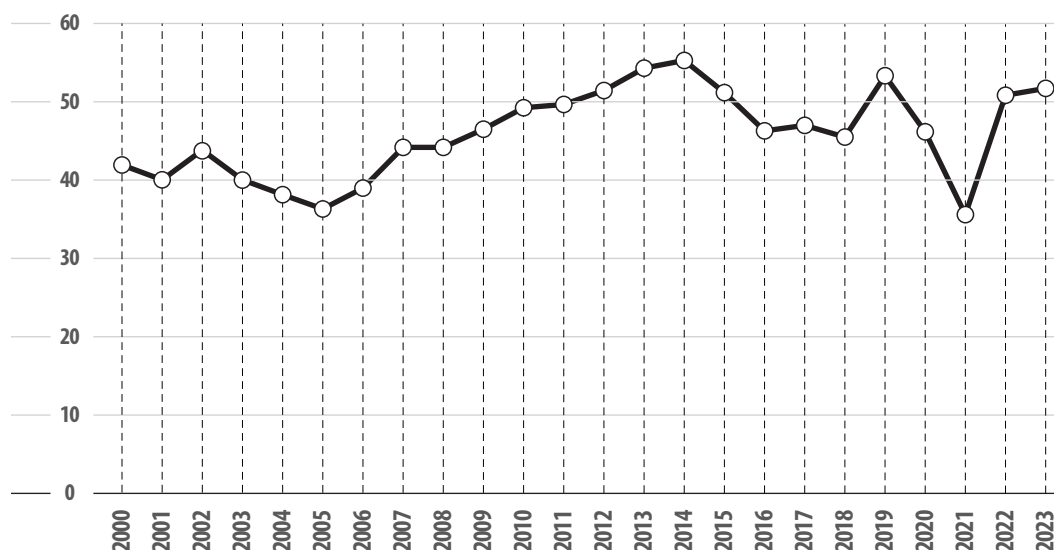
Waste diversion is preventing waste from ending up in landfills or incineration facilities by redirecting it to recycling, composting, or other waste management alternatives. Waste diversion in Frederick County is calculated annually by the County's Solid Waste and Recycling Department, based on the previous year's waste generation and diversion data. This calculation incorporates the county's recycling rate combined with the Source Reduction (SR) credit.

To compile this data, the Solid Waste and Recycling Department collaborates with Frederick County businesses to quantify recycling activities that fall outside the direct purview of the agency. The data included in this 5-Year Report is current as of 2023.

The Livable Frederick Master Plan, adopted in 2019, set a countywide goal to achieve a waste diversion rate of 60% by 2025. However, progress toward this goal was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, waste diversion efforts hit a low of 35.35%. Since then, the county has made notable improvements, with recent rates at 51.69%.

As of this report, Frederick County has not yet achieved its 60% waste diversion goal. Additionally, data for 2024 will not be available until January 2026, as the reporting process requires businesses to submit recycling activity data, which must then be analyzed and verified for accuracy.

## Waste Diversion Rate





# Surface Water Quality

## Number of Temperature Impairments

11

2018

46

2024

Water Quality Impairment	Watershed					
	Upper Monocacy River		Lower Monocacy River		Catoclin Creek	
	2018	2024	2018	2024	2018	2024
Fecal Coliform	○	○	○	○	●	●
Total Phosphorous	●	●	●	●	●	●
E. Coli	●	●	●	●	○	○
Total Suspended Solids	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sedimentation/Siltation	○	○	●	●	○	○
Lack of Riparian Buffer	○	○	●	●	○	○
Mercury in Fish Tissue	●	●	○	○	○	○
PCBs in Fish Tissue	●	●	●	●	○	○
PFOS in Fish Tissue	○	○	○	○	○	○
Chlorophyll-a	○	●	○	●	○	○
Temperature	8	24	3	9	0	13

○ Impairment Not Present    ● Impairment Present

The Maryland Integrated Report (IR), prepared by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), provides information on the quality of Maryland's waters. Each biennial report represents an effort to monitor, assess, and improve the biological, chemical, and physical integrity of surface waters within the State of Maryland by incorporating numerous sources of water quality testing data.

The 2018 Integrated Report was approved by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on April 9, 2019, and the 2024 Integrated Report was approved by the EPA on September 4, 2024. The included table provides a summary of those potential impairments (identified as parameters in the IR) that can prevent surface waters from meeting water quality standards for being "fishable-swimmable" and, therefore, result in the establishment of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). The concept of "fishable-swimmable" for surface waters means they are capable of supporting a balanced indigenous wildlife population, as well as providing support for water-contact recreation.

As the table indicates, the type and number of present parameters has not changed significantly in the last five years. One notable change is the increase in the number of streams or stream segments being identified for high water temperatures that can endanger aquatic life and result in events like algal blooms. Appendix C of the 2024 IR indicates that many of these new listings are believed to be a result of a changing climate (particularly in the Catoclin Creek and Upper Monocacy watersheds).

More information on the 2024 Integrated Report and TMDLs can be found at: <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/TMDL/Integrated303dReports/Pages/2024IR.aspx>.

A copy of "Appendix C: 2025-2032 Vision for Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Program" can be found at: [https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/TMDL/Integrated303dReports/Documents/Integrated\\_Report\\_Section\\_PDFs/IR\\_2024/MD%202024%20Public%20Draft%20IR\\_5\\_31\\_24\\_Appendix\\_C.pdf](https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/TMDL/Integrated303dReports/Documents/Integrated_Report_Section_PDFs/IR_2024/MD%202024%20Public%20Draft%20IR_5_31_24_Appendix_C.pdf)

# Greenhouse Gas Emissions

2020 Net Emissions (Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent)

## 2,732,715 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e

In 2020, the transportation sector was the County's largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, accounting for 48% of the total at 1,585,839 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e. This included 44% from on-road sources, 3% from off-road sources, 1% from air passenger travel, and less than 1% from commuter rail.

Buildings accounted for 35% of Frederick County's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – 1,155,250 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e – with 18% from commercial energy consumption and 17% from residential energy consumption. The buildings sector has shown the greatest decline in emissions over the past 20 years. Other lesser contributors include solid waste, certain agricultural practices, and the conversion of forested land to other uses.

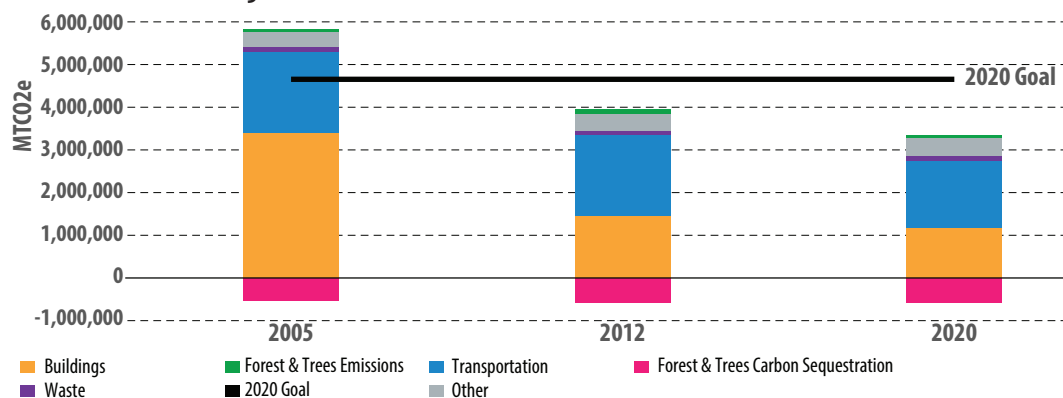
The COVID-19 pandemic had unprecedented effects on GHG emissions and its long-term impacts will be evaluated in the 2023 GHG inventory report, scheduled for release in late 2025. This updated inventory will provide a more current and comprehensive understanding of community-wide emissions in Frederick County.

In recent years, the County has taken significant steps to advance climate action. In 2020, the County Council adopted a Climate Emergency Resolution, committing to cut GHG emissions by 50% from 2010 levels by 2030 and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. In 2023, Frederick County Government adopted the Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP) for Internal Government Operations, which builds on ongoing sustainability efforts and strengthens the County's climate response. The CEAP aligns with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (MwCOG) 2030 Climate and Energy Action Plan and supports the goals of Maryland's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act.

The County is also developing a companion 2025 Climate and Energy Action Plan for the community in collaboration with the City of Frederick and MwCOG. This plan will outline strategies and actions for reducing community-wide GHG emissions and enhancing resilience to climate hazards. It builds on the foundation laid by the updated 2022 Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan.

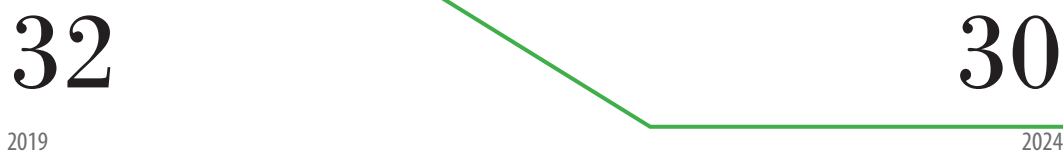
As Frederick County moves forward, continued collaboration and implementation of emission reduction strategies will be essential to achieving long-term climate goals while supporting a growing population.

**Frederick County Greenhouse Gas Emissions**



## Ozone Nonattainment Days (Air Quality)

Average Nonattainment Days



Ozone nonattainment days are defined as days when monitored ground-level ozone concentrations exceed the health-based standards established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). These standards are intended to protect public health and the environment from the harmful effects of air pollution.

Between 2019 and 2024, the average number of ozone nonattainment days in Frederick County decreased slightly, from 32 days in 2019 to 30 days in 2024. This modest decline may reflect localized improvements in air quality, but year-to-year variability is common and can be influenced by broader regional trends. Factors such as higher summertime temperatures, shifting wind patterns, and upwind emissions from other areas can all affect ozone levels in Frederick County.

Frederick County is currently served by a single ambient air quality monitoring station located at the Frederick Municipal Airport. This station measures ozone concentrations between April 1 and October 31 annually, which corresponds to the region's ozone season. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) does not operate the ozone analyzer during the winter months, as ozone concentrations in Maryland during this time typically remain well below levels that would trigger nonattainment status. While other sites across the state—four operated year-round by MDE and two by EPA—provide broader coverage, the Frederick monitor remains the sole direct data source for ozone within the county.

# EV Charging Infrastructure

Publicly Available EV Stations

31

2019

188

2024

Since the adoption of the Livable Frederick Master Plan in 2019, Frederick County has experienced substantial growth in publicly available electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. In early 2019, the county had 28 publicly accessible Level 2 charging ports and 3 Direct Current Fast Charging (DCFC) Level 3 ports, totaling 31 EV charging stations. By the end of 2024, these numbers had increased to 137 Level 2 ports and 51 DCFC ports, bringing the total to 188 publicly available EV charging stations.<sup>1</sup> This rapid expansion highlights national, state, and local efforts to accelerate transportation electrification.

Frederick County's commitment to EV readiness was further strengthened with the adoption of the Community-Wide Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan in 2023. The Plan aligns with the county's greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets—50% by 2030 and net zero by 2050. The transportation sector is a major contributor to GHG emissions, accounting for 48% of Frederick County's total, according to a 2020 Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) inventory. The transition to electric vehicles is a critical step in reducing transportation-related emissions.

Despite strong momentum for vehicle electrification, limited charging infrastructure remains a key barrier to widespread EV adoption. Ensuring enough chargers are accessible is essential to alleviating range anxiety and supporting a growing EV market. As of October 2023, 4,710 EVs were registered in Frederick County. Projections indicate this number could rise dramatically to between 48,461 and 106,796 EVs by 2035. To support this transition, infrastructure expansion will be necessary, with estimates indicating a need for more than 4,000 workplace Level 2 charging ports, 3,000 public Level 2 ports, and 400 DCFC ports across the county.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Alternative Fuels Data Center

<sup>2</sup> Frederick County Community-wide Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan (Executive Summary) 2023

# Indicators of Success Summary

As the County works toward the Livable Frederick Master Plan's 2040 vision, many indicators remain in the early stages of responding to implementation efforts. Significant external events, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic, have also influenced outcomes across several thematic areas of the action framework.

**Our Community** indicators reflect a mixed picture: transit ridership and the number of County Register properties have grown; challenges persist in housing affordability and school capacity at all levels. About half of the tracked indicators in this theme have shown either positive or negative movement, highlighting both progress and ongoing needs.

**Our Health** shows more limited gains—improvements in walkability are offset by rising childhood poverty, adult obesity, and an increase in uninsured older adults, underscoring persistent equity challenges.

**Our Economy** continues to show strong performance in visitor spending, wage growth, job creation, and agricultural preservation. However, a declining labor force participation rate—driven by an aging population—poses future economic challenges.

Meanwhile, **Our Environment** has seen encouraging progress, with increases in preserved forestland and electric vehicle infrastructure signaling a growing investment in sustainability in both the public and private sectors.

The implementation landscape is continuously evolving. As we move forward over these next five years, challenges include the recent loss of federal jobs and federal financial resources and the associated impacts to families and our community. Data center development also poses certain challenges. The early results described in this evaluation demonstrate meaningful progress and highlight where continued focus is needed to achieve the County's long-term goals and its vision for a livable, resilient, and inclusive future by 2040.





# Data Sources

Page	Data Source
3	American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Table S0101
4	American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Table DP04 (Except Median Sales Price)
4	Maryland Association of Realtors Year-End Housing Statistics (Median Sales Price)
5	Frederick County Division of Planning & Permitting
6	Frederick County Division of Planning & Permitting
14	Frederick County Division of Planning & Permitting
15	American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Table DP03
16	American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Table DP04
17	Frederick County Division of Transit Services
19	American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Table S0801
20	Frederick County Division of Fire & Rescue Services
21	Frederick County Public Schools Quarterly Enrollment Report (12/31/2020 and 12/31/2024)
22	American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Table S1701
23	United Way of Frederick County ALICE Report
24	Frederick County 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment
25	Frederick County Division of Public Works
26	Frederick County Public Schools
27	American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Table S2701
28	Frederick County Division of Economic Opportunity (Office of Agriculture)
29	Frederick County Division of Economic Opportunity
31	Frederick County Division of Economic Opportunity
32	Frederick County Division of Economic Opportunity
33	Visit Frederick City and County 2023-2024 Annual Report
34-35	Frederick County Division of Planning & Permitting
36	Frederick County Division of Solid Waste & Recycling
37	Maryland Department of the Environment
38	MWCOG* Community-Wide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Summaries (Published 12/2022)
39	Frederick County Division of Energy and Environment
40	Alternative Fuels Data Center, U.S. Department of Energy

\*Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments



# Acknowledgments

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*Development of the 5-Year Evaluation involved collaboration with staff across a wide range of Frederick County government agencies and departments.*

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### *Livable Frederick Vision Theme Workgroups*

The Livable Frederick Vision Theme Workgroups met during the summer of 2024 to share progress on implementation efforts, as well as barriers to implementation and priorities for the next five years of implementation. The Workgroups included a variety of community partners in addition to County staff.

#### *Our Environment*

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Jaime McKay, Transit Services of Frederick County  
Shannon Moore, Frederick County Division of Energy and Environment  
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Carey Murphy, Envision Frederick  
Hannah Nickerson, East Frederick Rising  
Denny Remsburg, Frederick County Farm Bureau  
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Kevin Sellner, Citizens for Responsible Growth  
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Katie Stevens, Office of Agriculture  
Jason Stitt, Frederick County Division of Public Works  
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Barb Trader, Mobilize Frederick  
Lynn Rubin Traversa, UMD Extension  
Lin Wang, Frederick County Division of Parks and Recreation

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Stacy Wantz, YMCA Frederick Head Start  
Alison Wexler, Frederick County Food Council  
Lorenzo York, Empowering Community Leaders Network, Inc.

#### *Our Community*

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Rose Chaney, African American Resources Cultural and Heritage Society  
Joe Hayden, Frederick County Division of Parks and Recreation  
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Tiffani Kenney, Frederick County Office of Equity and Inclusion  
Jamie McKay, Transit Services of Frederick County  
Ken Oldham, United Way of Frederick County  
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Nick Redding, Preservation Maryland  
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Jason Stitt, Frederick County Division of Public Works  
Carolyn True, Frederick County Division of Aging and Independence









Division of  
Planning and Permitting  
Livable Frederick Planning and Design Office

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Frederick County  
Government *Maryland*