



Countywide Resource Conservation Functional Master Plan PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Countywide Resource Conservation Functional Master Plan (“the Resource Conservation Plan” or “RCP”) will combine the related elements of green infrastructure planning and rural and agricultural conservation into one functional master plan in order to streamline the process, meet state requirements for planning elements, and more efficiently update existing plans and maps. The RCP will address four state-mandated planning elements: the Natural Resources Element (in the form of the updated Green Infrastructure Plan), the Priority Preservation Area (PPA) element (in the form of an Agricultural Plan that includes urban and rural agricultural policies and applies to all agricultural land, not just those areas within the PPA), a Forestry Element (in the form of policies and strategies to address the state’s No Net Loss of Forests policy in the Forest Preservation Act of 2013 and Plan 2035’s recommendation for a strategic plan for forest and tree canopy), and technical corrections to the Sustainable Growth Act map update. This plan will be written by in-house staff with a consultant providing support for the public participation process and providing input on the final staff draft.

Countywide Green Infrastructure Functional Master Plan

The Countywide Green Infrastructure Plan (“GI Plan”) was approved on June 14, 2005. Since that time, 80 of the 92 strategies contained in the plan have either been completed or are ongoing. A full report of this assessment is available on the project website. In 2010, the environmental regulations in the County Code were updated comprehensively to implement many of the plan’s strategies. This has, in turn, resulted in a need to update the “Regulated Areas” portion of the 2005 GI Plan network map.

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

This plan will also address forest and tree canopy coverage, climate change and sea level rise, and other ecologically-related topics that can impact land use decision-making. Green buildings and energy conservation will not be covered in the RCP, but are expected to be addressed in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations Re-Write project.

Countywide Agriculture Functional Master Plan

The Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Plan was approved in 2012, and while it may seem as if this plan does not need to be updated, several actions have been taken since its approval that warrant an update.

- The Maryland Agricultural and Land Preservation Foundation has certified Prince George’s County’s preservation program which was one of the plan’s main goals.
- The Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 resulted in 95 percent of the land area outside the public water and sewer envelope being designated as an area where conservation of agricultural land and practices should be focused and where major subdivisions are prohibited.
- A new General Plan is now in place that designates areas outside the public water and sewer envelope as “Rural and Agricultural Areas” with a new set of broad policies and strategies for implementation.

These three actions result in the need to prepare a comprehensive agricultural policy plan to support the long-term sustainability of both rural and urban agriculture in the County.

This plan will support the desired development pattern of Plan 2035. It is not anticipated that the boundaries of the 2012 designated PPA will change with this update. This plan will include technical corrections to the Sustainable Growth Act map approved by the County Council in 2012.

Countywide Rural Character Functional Master Plan

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

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

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

As part of the RCP, these documents will be reviewed and combined into Rural Character Conservation policies and strategies that support rural character conservation and the desired development pattern of Plan 2035. Rural Character Conservation Guidelines will also be prepared as part of this project. These guidelines are being prepared so that they can be considered for adoption either within or by reference in the re-written zoning ordinance.

Project Schedule (as of 6/12/15)

This schedule includes the use of a consultant to conduct and manage tasks specific to the public participation program and to review and comment on the staff draft of the entire document.

WORK COMPONENT	TIME FRAME
RCP Preparation and Approval	January 2015 – December 2016
Project Start-up	January – September 2015
Project initiation	Project initiation PB: July 2015 Project initiation DC: Sept. 8, 14 or 15
Public Participation Process	July 2015 – March 2016
Round 1: Engage County Agencies	July – October 2015
Round 2: Direct-contact input	September – December 2015
Round 3: Open Forum	January – March 2016
Drafting the RCP	July 2015–March 2016
Focused writing tasks and coordination of the plans	March – June 2016
Approval Process	
Joint Public Hearing	July 2016
Planning Board Work Sessions Complete	September 2016
PB transmits adopted plan to Council	October 2016
Additional Council hearings (optional)	(not considered)
Council Work Sessions complete	November 2016
Council adopts updated plan	December 2016