

CHAPTER 3 ECONOMY

Residents who participated in community meetings during preparation of the comprehensive plan identified the economy as their top issue of concern. The inability to keep and attract industry was ranked issue number one, improving the county's revenue base ranked number three, young people leaving the county because of lack of employment opportunities was issue number four, and the need for a more diversified economy ranked number six (see Appendix 1).

ECONOMIC BASE OVERVIEW

The county's economic problems are severe (see Tables 3-1 and 3-2).

- With 4,347 jobs in 1992, the manufacturing sector accounted for 38 percent of jobs located in Dorchester County. Between 1982 and 1992 manufacturing, and the transportation, communications and utilities sectors lost 240 jobs. An estimated 1,150 manufacturing and warehouse jobs have been lost since 1986. These were primarily from Philips Technologies Airpax Protector Group, Chun King, Duxbak and Hurlock Sportswear.
- Non-manufacturing employment has increased in recent years but has not made up for the loss in manufacturing jobs because (1) some former manufacturing employees have failed to obtain new jobs; and (2) new jobs typically pay less and have fewer benefits.
- The county's unemployment rate was 9.8% in 1993, up from 7.6% in 1990. The statewide unemployment rate was 6.2% in 1993.
- Dorchester's share of regional employment fell from 20 percent in 1971 to 15 percent in 1992.
- Competing job opportunities, decreasing yields, and increasing operating expenses have resulted in a decline in farming, forestry and fishing occupations.
- Social problems are severe in the county and have been cited as contributing to labor force quality problems and lagging incomes, (see under Social Services in Chapter 6).

Table 3-1 At-Place Employment By Industry* Dorchester County, 1982-1992

Industry	Jobs		Change 1982-1992	
	1982	1992	Number	Percent
Agriculture Forestry Fisheries Mining (a)	80	40	-40	-50%
Construction	409	495	86	21.0%
Manufacturing	4,490	4,347	-143	-3.2%
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	529	432	-97	-18.3%
Wholesale Trade	345	438	93	27.0%
Retail Trade	981	1,695	704	71.8%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	164	215	51	31.1%
Services	1,335	2,085	750	56.2%
Government	1,634	1,600	-34	-2.1%
Total	9,927	11,347	1,420	14.3%

* Excludes self-employed and others not covered by the Maryland Unemployment Insurance Law.
 (a) Employment estimated. Sources: Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, Maryland Department of Economic and Employment Development, Dorchester County Economic Development Office.

Table 3-2 1992 Effective Buying Income, 1990 Poverty Status For Maryland And Lower Eastern Shore Counties

1992 Effective Buying Income*	Percent Households				
	Dorchester	Caroline	Talbot	Wicomico	Maryland
Under \$10,000	16%	16%	11%	14%	9%
\$10,000 - \$19,000	21%	21%	15%	19%	12%
\$20,000 - \$34,000	28%	29%	25%	29%	22%
\$35,000 - \$49,000	18%	21%	19%	20%	20%
\$50,000 and over	17%	13%	30%	18%	37%
Median Household Income	\$26,954	\$26,760	\$34,156	\$28,882	\$40,260
Average Household Income	\$32,283	\$30,337	\$45,523	\$34,963	\$47,246
Per Capita Income	\$12,978	\$11,131	\$18,812	\$13,106	\$17,277
Total EBI (millions)	\$391	\$309	\$596	\$1,010	\$85,464
Persons below poverty level, 1990	14%	11%	8%	11%	8%
Families below poverty level, 1990	10%	9%	6%	8%	6%

*Effective Buying Income is personal income less personal tax and non-tax payments. It is also known as disposable personal income. Sources MD DEED Brief Economic Facts, US Census.

See Appendices 5, 6, and 7 for additional labor force and employment tables.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goals:

Strengthen and diversify Dorchester County's economy.

Improve the county's revenue base.

Economic Development Planning

Economic issues lie at the heart of the county's problems. Increasing the number of well paying jobs would have a ripple effect throughout the county on land sales, the housing market, the retail and commercial sectors, as well as on schools and social services. However, attracting well paying jobs is a major challenge.

Through its economic development office, Dorchester County has embarked on a strategic planning effort to create a more diversified economic base for the county. The key components of that planning effort are to identify industry growth opportunities, and to recommend strategies to respond to the loss of defense industry related jobs. Completion of the economic development strategic plan is expected in late 1995. A preliminary report was submitted to the county in August, 1995. With respect to growth opportunities the preliminary report stresses the importance of nurturing existing businesses. Industries recommended for primary targeting include sporting and athletic goods, back office services, aquaculture/agriculture, plastics/injection molding, and health care/medical equipment. Secondary targets include health care services and recycling. Three overall strategies are recommended: (1) position the county for growth; (2) promote existing resources; and (3) make investments for the future.

The strategic plan suggests what kinds of jobs the county is suited to attract and identify strategies toward attracting them. However, this alone will not mean the jobs will come. Dorchester competes with other counties on the Delmarva Peninsula, which share many of Dorchester County's assets and who are also eager to attract jobs.

Attracting jobs involves creating an overall economic, physical, and social climate that will make Dorchester County attractive to employers and workers and encourage them to locate in Dorchester rather than

elsewhere. Thus, the county's economic development is closely tied to issues such as land use, water and sewer, transportation, government, housing, and the environment. Improving each of these aspects of county life will make Dorchester a more attractive place to work and live. From this perspective, the entire comprehensive plan is an economic development plan. Chapter 1 of this comprehensive plan includes an overall vision for Dorchester County. Each plan chapter contains strategies geared towards achieving that vision. For example, the housing section contains strategies designed to increase the value of residential property and to create incentives to build move-up housing attractive to middle management and the streamlining section contains strategies designed to improve and facilitate the development process. Implementation of the entire comprehensive plan will create an overall context for successful economic development.

The relative contributions of the various sectors of the economy to the county's overall health are less well understood. The county needs a better understanding so it can invest its limited resources wisely. For example, manufacturing, agriculture, forestry and tourism are all important, but which have the greatest potential to assist the county? Should the county spend money on advertising to attract tourists, on tax relief to existing or potential employers, or on buying easements to preserve agriculture? Which investment will provide the biggest return? What should the level of support be for each sector? A thorough economic analysis of the county is beyond the scope of the strategic plan or the comprehensive plan but would help the county in making such difficult decisions. The preliminary Economic Development Strategic Plan recommends that the county adopt a capital improvements program which would prioritize the county's investments.

Strategies:

Pursue the strategies of the economic development strategic plan towards creating new jobs.

Complete an economic analysis of the county to assist the county in making investment decisions.

Consider adopting a formal capital improvements program.

COUNTY IMAGE

Goal:

Improve Dorchester County's image.

Dorchester County's lack of a positive image was the fifth highest ranked issue from all of the community meetings held during preparation of the comprehensive plan. Image is a broad-brush term that means different things to different people, but, cumulatively, a poor image has a negative effect on economic development, which ultimately hurts every county resident. Lack of a positive image can result in businesses or investors looking at alternate locations, potential home buyers not considering the county, and potential visitors not frequenting county businesses.

Among the attitudes expressed during preparation of this plan that concern image were the following:

- lack of a "can-do" attitude on the part of the county;
- no embodying theme or message for the entire county;
- run-down areas, buildings in poor repair;
- trash and litter;
- uncontrolled signage;
- perceived lack of coordination between county and towns;
- inability to grapple with government and management issues;
- perceived failure of past development/redevelopment efforts; and
- perception of uncertainty with respect to business environment.

Because they involve political and organizational matters, solutions to many of these issues are beyond the scope of a comprehensive development plan. However, the fact that citizens rated the issue so highly indicates a general and real concern that merits specific attention. In much the same way as a private corporation or business looks at itself and how the public perceives it, the entire county needs to be looked at for areas where it can improve its image. Solutions might include the following: creating joint town and county boards and commissions; adopting and enforcing new regulations on signage; and exploring ways to improve the physical appearance of key locations; adopting a standard format for county letterhead and publications; exploring ways to more effectively coordinate and market existing volunteer and non-profit efforts, in areas such as government, social services, recreation, education, police and fire, museums and the arts. The economic strategic plan also

contains recommendations on image enhancement to counteract negative publicity. These include communication initiatives and creating a centralized source of information about the county.

Strategies

The county should create a broad ranging, interdisciplinary and interjurisdictional committee to study the county's image and make specific recommendations for ways to make improvements.

Inventory dilapidated buildings and properties which detract from the appearance of the community. Work with the owners to clean up such sites.

INDUSTRY

Goals:

Attract and retain industry.

Create flexibility in the county regulations to respond to potential employers' site needs.

As previously noted, lack of ability to keep and attract industry was the top ranked issue by participants in the comprehensive plan process. In addition to identifying the kinds of jobs the county is best suited to attract, the economic development strategic plan, cited above, will assess the county's economic development constraints. Some constraints may be physical such as lack of suitable sites or buildings, or lack of access. Other constraints may be financial such as lack of competitive financial packages. Still other constraints may be beyond the county's control.

Industrial Land

Dorchester's two industrial parks are located in the incorporated towns of Cambridge and Hurlock. There are approximately 1,900 acres of industrially zoned land in the unincorporated portion of the county. 1,086 acres are zoned Light Industrial (I-1), and 850 acres are zoned Heavy Industrial (I-2). Approximately 40 percent, or 760 acres, is undeveloped. The major locations are identified on Table 3-3:

Table 3-3

Major areas of industrially zoned land in Dorchester County, excluding incorporated areas.

Area of County	Acres	
	I-1	I-2
Hurlock ¹		322
East New Market	238	
Linkwood/Linkwood Road		261
Cambridge area including airport	710	109
Vienna	118	60
Scattered	20	98
Total	1,086	850

1. The Hurlock industrial park, 90 acres, is located within the Town of Hurlock.

Source: Dorchester County Planning and Zoning

It is important for the county to have an adequate supply of industrial land for potential users. All areas except Vienna contain areas of undeveloped industrially zoned land. Within the City of Cambridge there are vacant or underutilized industrial buildings. It is desirable that these buildings be reused for employment use. In some cases the sites are in poor condition and detract from the county's image and ability to market vacant sites and buildings. Some simple, inexpensive, site clean up could improve the appearance of these sites.

Based on demand in recent years and the preliminary findings from the Economic Development Strategic Plan, the county appears to have a sufficient supply of industrially zoned land. The Strategic Plan suggests that six acres of new industrial land would be needed annually, whereas the county has a supply of about 760 acres. The county should periodically review the quantity, quality and location of the county's industrial land inventory with respect to market demand.

Several participants in the comprehensive plan process wished to discourage employers from locating new sites in rural areas on so called "green field" sites, but rather encouraged the reuse of existing, abandoned, or underutilized buildings. This comprehensive plan strongly supports reuse and rehabilitation of older industrial buildings. However, given the importance of attracting jobs and improving the revenue base, the county should not discourage economic development opportunities in new locations, provided they are consistent with the overall vision for the county. Therefore, provided appropriate performance standards protecting existing and proposed land uses are met, this comprehensive

plan would allow for new industrial uses in the proposed development districts. Stronger performance standards for industrial uses should be met in the agricultural or village areas.

It can be difficult for a county to anticipate a potential employer's land needs. Lack of appropriately zoned land may be a disincentive to a potential employer and cause the employer to look to another county where land is immediately developable. On the other hand, if the county zones large areas of existing rural land for industrial or commercial use, undesirable uses may be attracted, and neighboring properties may be dissuaded from developing in desired ways.

The county needs to have the flexibility to respond quickly to a potential employer or economic development opportunity should an opportunity arise. Therefore, to add flexibility, the county should consider amending its zoning ordinance to incorporate floating zones and/or zoning with a site plan (see discussion under Streamlining in Chapter 8).

Airport

The Cambridge-Dorchester Airport is a 183-acre facility located on Bucktown Road, three miles east of Cambridge. It is owned and operated by Dorchester County (see Chapter 5 for a description of planned improvements at the airport). An Airport Protection Overlay Zoning District surrounds the airport approximately 3 miles in all directions and prohibits uses or development hazardous to air navigation.

The airport is a significant economic asset to the county. Approximately 15 acres on the airport site are available for industrial development. Lands east and south of the airport may be suitable for development into a new industrial park. The Preliminary Economic Development Strategic Plan recommends that the county acquire land in this area. Improved road access would be needed, and Chapter 5 of this comprehensive plan recommends that the county and state explore a possible future extension of Route 16 from Mount Holly to Cordtown Road, and extending on to Church Creek Road south of the Chesapeake Industrial Park. This would create a bypass around the busiest stretch of Route 50.

Delmarva Power and Light Power Plant

Delmarva Power and Light Company (Delmarva Power) is seeking approval for a 300 megawatt coal powered generating station on an 1,130 acre site northwest of Vienna, south of Maiden Forest Road. If approved, start of operation is not expected before 2004. Under Maryland law the Maryland Public Service Commission must consider the environmental

impacts of the facility and can require conditions to minimize any adverse impacts.

The plant is expected to have a positive fiscal impact to Dorchester County, although the county and Delmarva Power negotiated an abatement plan that reduces property taxes during the early years of operation. A major investment in the Town of Vienna's water and sewer system would have to be made to accommodate the plant.

The power plant site is in the Comprehensive Plan's proposed agricultural area. The plant can be consistent with the land use goals for that area provided negative impacts are minimized. The plant could have significant transportation impacts (see discussion in Chapter 5).

Strategies:

Periodically review the county's inventory of industrially zoned land.

Support the reuse of existing industrial buildings

Consider amending the county zoning ordinance to include a floating industrial or employment zoning district.

**Support the proposed Delmarva Power and Light power plant.
Minimize negative impacts associated with the facility.**

Review performance standards for non-residential uses as part of a design manual (see also under Design Issues in Chapter 4).

RESOURCE BASED INDUSTRIES

Agriculture

Goals:

Preserve agriculture as a viable industry.

Increase farm values.

Minimize conflicts between agricultural and residential uses.

Agriculture is a key industry for Dorchester County. According to the 1992 Census of Agriculture, Dorchester's 347 farms covered one third of the county's land. The total value of all agricultural products sold

exceeded \$64 million, the most valuable products being poultry and poultry products, followed by soybeans, corn and wheat. Fresh vegetables, aquaculture, and watermelons, and hogs are also important. Close to 500 farm employees earn over \$3.3 million, (see Table 3-4).

Table 3-4 *Dorchester County Selected Agricultural Statistics*

	1982	1987	1992
Number Of Farms	438	392	347
Farms By Size			
1-9 Acres	26	37	39
10-49	70	65	69
50-179	145	122	87
180-500	110	86	64
500-1000	60	52	59
1000+	27	30	29
Land In Farms (Acres)	139,416	125,019	123,762
Percent Of County	39%	35%	35%
Average Size Of Farm (Acres)	318	319	357
Harvested Cropland (Acres)	98,845	83,948	94,671
Soybeans (Acres)	60,138	52,811	62,006
Corn (Acres)	28,628	19,399	18,827
Wheat (Acres)	15,004	14,725	19,962
Market Value Of All Agricultural Products Sold (in \$ thousands)	\$56,193	\$51,509	\$64,089
Rank In State (23 Counties)	8th	8th	7th
<u>Value Of Selected Products:</u>	\$27,760	\$29,494	\$35,065
Poultry & Poultry Products			
Soybeans	\$8,405	\$5,180	\$10,861
Corn	\$6,923	\$3,449	\$5,215
Wheat	\$2,161	\$1,961	\$3,604
Other	\$10,944	\$11,425	\$9,344
Number Of Paid Farm Employees	N/A	N/A	498
Payroll (\$1,000)	N/A	N/A	\$3,357
Acres In Agricultural Preservation Districts			3,170
Acres With Perpetual Easements			1,303
Total Acres In Agricultural Programs			4,473

Source: 1992, 1987 Census Of Agriculture, Dorchester County Dept. Planning And Zoning

Agriculture is important throughout the county, but the prime agricultural soils are found in North Dorchester, (see Figure 2-2). This land is also closer to residential and employment centers, and valuable for development.

Community meetings held in preparation for this plan revealed the following concerns on the part of farmers:

- The farmer's land is a present and future asset. Policies should not be adopted that would diminish the value of that asset.
- Farmers do not want their land to be regarded as "open space" for the community.
- If the community values agriculture, it should be prepared to pay to support it.
- Residential development and agricultural uses are typically incompatible. Increasing residential development in agricultural areas has negative impacts on the practice of agriculture.
- Adoption of right-to-farm legislation would send an important message that agriculture is a valued and protected activity.

There is considerable interest in the potential of a transfer of development rights (TDR) program as a potential long term strategy for Dorchester. In a TDR program, residential density is transferred in the form of development rights from agricultural areas to development areas, at a higher density than otherwise permitted in the agricultural area. Thus a farmer is able to both continue farming and receive money for the development value of his land. TDRs have been successful in counties with strong development pressure such as Calvert, Howard and Montgomery. Program success typically depends on, (i) demand for lots which the farmer is able to sell as development rights; and (ii) receiving areas, typically on public water and sewer, willing and able to absorb an increase in density compared to existing base density.

Because demand for new housing in Dorchester is weak, and because few areas have the capacity to absorb additional density above base zoning, the potential for a successful TDR program is limited in the short term. Proponents would like to see a program adopted so that it is in place when demand rises. Should the county adopt a program, it should also explore the feasibility of allowing platted, undeveloped lots to be transferred from agricultural and natural resource areas to development areas, towns and villages. This could help reduce the county's large inventory of such lots.

Strategies:

Create an agricultural zoning district where farming is the primary use.
(see Agricultural Area section in Chapter 2.)

Adopt a right-to-farm ordinance in the agricultural district.

The following features should be considered for inclusion:

- Definition of farm function;
- Limitation on circumstances in which agricultural operations may be deemed a nuisance;
- Requirement that plaintiffs pay costs if a nuisance suit is filed in bad faith; and
- Real estate transfer disclosure statement and/or statement on subdivision plats regarding right-to-farm.

Focus the efforts of the Agricultural Land Preservation Program in the agricultural district.

Seek alternative funding sources for additional easement acquisitions to permanently protect farming. Explore the feasibility of property tax relief for farms participating in easement programs.

Expand and encourage use of conservation easements in support of agricultural preservation.

Explore potential for transfer of development rights (TDR) program as a potential long term strategy for Dorchester.

Consider applying the program in both the Agricultural and Natural Resource Areas as shown on Figure 2-1.

Maritime Based Industries and Employment

Goal:

Maintain and strengthen Dorchester County's maritime industries.

Dorchester watermen have been harvesting the bay and its tributaries since the early 1600's. Maritime industries are a significant employer and, historically, have been a mainstay of the economy. Over 50 percent of a nearly \$67 million statewide harvest was landed in Dorchester County (see Table 3-5) .

Table 3-5 *Dorchester County and Statewide Seafood Harvest, 1993*

Fishery	Value of Catch in \$ millions	
	State	Dorchester County
Finfish	8.0	2.1
Crab	57.6	34.1
Soft Clam	0.92	0.51
Oyster	0.13	0.03
Total	66.7	36.7

Source: Maryland Department of Natural Resources

The Federal Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates that several hundred people are employed in fisheries. Coldwater Seafood Corporation with approximately 400 employees, is one of the county's largest employers. According to the Department of Planning and Zoning's 1993 Waterman Facility and Access study, there are approximately 12 seafood operations in the county, plus eight more in incorporated towns.

Counties on tidal waters are required by state law to designate areas for commercial fishing and support facilities in their comprehensive plans. The 1993 Waterman Facility and Access Study recommends 19 locations around the county for "watermen facility" designation. The study is incorporated by reference into this comprehensive plan.

Center for Environmental and Estuarine Studies (CEES)

The CEES, one of the 13 institutions of the University of Maryland System, is headquartered at the Horn Point Environmental Laboratory, located west of Cambridge. The center is an important employer. In 1994 the CEES, had a workforce of 95 regular employees and 51 graduate students with a payroll of \$4.3 million. The research emphasis at Horn Point includes aquaculture, seafood science, coastal oceanography, and wetlands and seagrass ecology.

The county should explore ways to strengthen the ties between the center and the community, and to maximize the potential economic development impact of the center.

Strategies:

Link maritime industries into the county's overall economic development program including boating and tourism.

Support policies which will improve fish and shellfish yields. Encourage stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries and watersheds by supporting federal, state and local initiatives designed to protect important aquatic resources.

Support the Center for Environmental and Estuarine Studies (CEES) and explore ways to maximize the potential economic development impact of the center.

Forestry

Goals:

Conserve the county's forest resources.

Broaden the economic development impact of the county's forest resources.

Historically, woodland and forest products have been important to Dorchester County's economy. Industries directly dependent on forestry include four saw mills, including a cooperage, and four secondary industrial facilities: wood chips; composting; firewood; and fishnet poles. Ninety eight percent of the forest land is privately owned: 40 percent by farmers, the remainder by industry and private individuals. Loblolly pine is the principal commercial timber species because it grows rapidly, tall and straight. Selected data concerning the county's forest resources are shown on Table 3-6.

Table 3-6 *Dorchester County Selected Forestry Statistics*

Total Forest Area (1995)	162,000 acres
Commercial Forest Area	141,000 acres
Commercial forest as percent of county	40 percent
Predominant tree species:	loblolly pine (31%) oak pine (28%) hardwood (41%)
Value of standing saw timber	\$43.9 million (as of 1980)
Number of forest landowners	2,200
Number of tree farms*	64
Number of forest industry jobs	150

*Definition: Over 10 acres, and having a Forest Management Plan
Source: Maryland Forest Service

A local forestry board, appointed by the secretary of the State Department of Natural Resources, reviews timber harvest plans within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. Outside the Critical Area, forest resources are protected primarily through non-tidal wetlands regulations and the county's forest conservation ordinance. Loss of forest land to crop farming has declined and the size of the county's forest resources has stabilized. This comprehensive plan's land use plan designates much of the county's forest land as natural resource area. As part of its economic diversification efforts the county should explore ways to incorporating forest-based industries into the county's overall economic development program, including tourism.

Forest Conservation

The county adopted its forest conservation program, as required by the State, in 1994. The forest conservation program is described in Chapter 7. The use of forest planting to buffer new residential development is discussed under Design in Chapter 4.

Strategies:

Support forest-based industries.

Explore ways to link forest and forest-based industries into the county's overall economic development program including tourism.

Mineral Resources

Goal:

Support mining in appropriate locations.

According to the Maryland Geological Survey, sand, and to a lesser extent, gravel are the county's only mineral resources. Areas of potential sand or sand and gravel are located mostly in North Dorchester, and south of Vienna to Henry's Crossroads. Most of the material is used locally because of the distance to major population centers. The sand and gravel industry grew from one operator in 1966 to seven in 1992. These operations are scattered but most are north of Route 50. Production was 175,847 tons in 1993, down from 446,325 tons in 1991. As of 1994, 220 acres were under permit for mining and 111 acres were actively being worked.

The county permits mineral extraction by special exception in most areas. A state permit is also required, issued by the Maryland Department of the

Environment. Both the special exception and the state permit require site restoration or rehabilitation upon completion of mining activities. There may, therefore, be some unnecessary duplication in the regulations. Eighty four acres have been reclaimed under the state program since 1977.

Strategy:

No major changes to existing policy are proposed in this plan.

To encourage streamlining, the county should examine the special exception text for overlap with the state requirements.

Tourism

Goal:

Increase tourism and tourism expenditures in the county.

Tourism has significant potential in contributing to Dorchester's economy. Table 3-7 shows that in 1992, US travelers spent approximately \$17 million in the County. Compared to other counties in Maryland, Dorchester ranked 21st out of 24 in terms of expenditures by travelers. By some measures, the study may underestimate total visitor expenditures, but there is general agreement that Dorchester County has the potential to greatly increase its tourism development .

Table 3-7 Impact of Travel on Dorchester County, 1992

	\$ Millions
Expenditures	17.34
Payroll	3.54
State Tax Receipts	0.7
Local Tax Receipts	1.24
Employment	220 persons

Source: Maryland Tourism Council, U.S. Travel Data Center

The county has a tremendous variety of natural and cultural resource assets including boating, nationally renowned natural areas, historic towns and villages, heritage areas, hiker/biker trails, hunting, fishing, and trapping. Total visitation to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in 1993 was over 120,000. Dorchester County is also convenient to large

urban markets and is located along the heavily traveled Atlantic Ocean tourist route. With these assets, Dorchester County also appears well placed to take advantage of the growing ecotourism and cultural tourism markets. Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of people. According to the Ecotourism Society, ecotourism is a growing segment of the worldwide tourism industry. South Dorchester, in particular, has the natural assets to attract large numbers of ecotourists. Among ecotourism's goals is to manage tourism such that tourism does not harm the very resources that attract visitors.

As with all forms of economic development, planning must be done to take full advantage of tourism opportunities. The county's tourism department, with one full-time staff person, has overall responsibility for tourism in the county. In late 1994, the department prepared a strategic plan, that established a mission and policies for Dorchester County tourism. To set the agenda for tourism planning and programming, the county should work with the towns and various organizations in the county, such as the newly formed Bed and Breakfast Consortium, to prepare a comprehensive tourism plan. The plan should evaluate resources, create a strategy, examine existing and potential conflicts, and include financial, marketing and management considerations (see Figure 3-1). Surrounding counties should be included in this effort. Potential links with the proposed Ocean Heritage Highway and the Atlantic Flyway Byway Projects, proposed by the Delmarva Advisory Council, should also be explored.

Lack of quality accommodation in the county has been cited as a deterrent to tourism and overall economic development. Efforts to attract quality hotels or other transient accommodations should continue. The county's zoning regulations for bed and breakfast inns should be reviewed. Currently bed and breakfast inns are defined only within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area regulations.

Sailwinds Park

Sailwinds Park is located on state owned land in the City of Cambridge but is being developed as a countywide facility to promote tourism and economic revitalization. Development of the park began in 1992. A private non-profit organization directed by a 12-person board oversees development of the park. The ultimate uses for the project include a visitors center and exhibition center, a park, beach and playground, a festival hall and convention center, 200-slip marina, and a 300-room hotel. Sailwinds Park is a significant investment and should play an important role in Dorchester's overall tourism and economic development strategy.

Figure 3-1

Factors For Ecotourism Planning

Here is a framework and process for the development of plans that will protect natural resources or promote ecotourism potential.

Preliminary Assessment

- Investigate whether ecotourism is appropriate.
- Create or empower a group to conduct or oversee the planning process.

Evaluate Environmental Resources

- Identify and inventory resources (biologic, geologic, etc.).
- Identify locations and strategies for resource protection.
- Determine the area's physical limitations for handling tourists and wildlife.
- Assess potential environmental education opportunities.

Evaluate Cultural Resources

- Identify local cultural and social resources.
- Inventory local historic sites, structures, or events.
- Assess potential cultural education opportunities (anthropological, archeological).

Create Regional Strategy

- Establish priority locations and programs for ecotourism.
- Relate ecotourism strategies to the existing transportation system and local population base.
- Evaluate the potential for logical expansion of local ecotourism areas.

Set Agenda for Local Planning and Programming

- Identify those uses and opportunities that most closely relate to the character of the area.
- Identify types of recreation and/or activities to be provided.
- Identify the type of expected users and visitors.
- Relate planning and programmatic goals to existing resources.

Local Participation

- Organize local citizens and government officials, and educate them as to planning process and benefits of ecotourism.
- Utilize methods to involve public in planning for ecotourism.
- Coordinate efforts with existing planning initiatives and local interest groups.
- Evaluate opportunities and methods for training local people for ecotourism support services.
- Create support for plan through the promotion of benefits resulting from ecotourism.

Create vested interest for local people to protect resource.

Existing and Potential Conflicts

- Identify conflicts between the social and cultural character of the region and ecotourism.
- Determine potential for degradation of cultural and environmental resources.
- Identify conflicts between various ecotourism pursuits.
- Identify problems between the existing economic use of resources and ecotourism.
- Evaluate changes in local lifestyles and behaviors resulting from ecotourism.
- Provide forums within public participation structure to identify conflicts.

Financial Considerations

- Identify potential public and private funding sources.
- Identify potential funding structures and financing mechanisms.
- Identify visitors' willingness to pay for visits to the area.
- Develop a multitiered fee structure which differentiates between local people and visitors.
- Promote financial self-sufficiency for ecotourism.

Marketing Considerations

- Promote interactive relationship between tourism and the environment.
- Identify the type of visitor who would best use area.
- Relate marketing to provided services and facilities.
- Relate marketing and programming to area's carrying capacity.
- Determine what visitors are looking for, and their travel patterns.

Management and Protection Strategies

- Determine what organization is in control and accountable for ecotourism management.
- Provide a clear organizational structure for ongoing management.
- Monitor environmental regulations and survey tour groups for compliance.
- Survey visitors for opinions on facilities and services.
- Provide ongoing communication with local interest groups and government agencies.

Michael Brown

Source: Planning for Ecotourism, Environment & Development, April 1993, American Planning Association.

Strategies:

The county should work with the towns and interested groups and organizations to prepare a comprehensive plan for developing tourism in the county.

The county should seek designation as a Certified Heritage Area in conformance with House Bill 1¹ (Heritage and Tourism Areas).

As of mid-1996 a Dorchester County Heritage Steering Committee had begun meeting to begin developing a heritage tourism plan for the county.

Continue efforts to attract quality accommodations to the county.

Develop zoning regulations to address bed and breakfast uses throughout the county.

BUSINESS, RETAIL AND SERVICE USES

Goal:

Accommodate business, retail and service uses in appropriate locations in the county.

Retail and service uses are accommodated in three land use zoning districts as follows: B-1 Neighborhood Business; B-2 Specialized Business; and B-3 General Business. The B-1 district allows for convenience goods and services. The B-2 district is designed specifically to allow maritime and agriculturally-oriented businesses in rural or residential areas that are unsuitable for general business uses. See Table 3-8 for acres in each zone.

Approximately 60 percent of the land in B-3 districts is located on or close to Route 50 between Cambridge and Route 16. The large shopping centers, such as Dorchester Square, are located within the City of Cambridge. Other areas with general business zoning are scattered in places such as Linkwood and near Route 16 between Route 50 and East New Market.

¹This Bill was adopted by the Maryland General Assembly in 1996.

Table 3-8 *Dorchester County Business Zoning Districts.*

Zone	Acres in County
B-1	61
B-2	79
B-3	481
Total	621

Note: Excludes incorporated towns

Overall, there does not appear to be a need for additional business zoned land. Approximately 40 to 50 acres of B-3 zoned land outside Cambridge is undeveloped. Furthermore, the policy of this comprehensive plan is to limit strip development and encourage business uses to locate in the incorporated towns. Therefore, further expansion of business zoning along Route 50 should be discouraged. Indeed, where the location of B-3 land conflicts with other comprehensive plan goals, opportunities to reduce the amount of B-3 zoned land should be considered. A possible candidate is the B-3 zoned area immediately east of Route 16, where access to Route 50 is limited by agreement with the State Highway Administration. The pattern of zoning along Route 50 outside Cambridge should be looked at in the context of a local area plan, as recommended in the Chapter 2. Access to Route 50 from currently undeveloped business-zoned land should be limited so as to minimize traffic impacts.

The county should continue to determine the need for areas of light commercial uses serving local or neighborhood needs on a case by case basis.

Signage

The Dorchester County sign code is administered by the Department of Planning and Zoning. During preparation of the comprehensive plan, residents commented that the county's appearance could be improved if signage were more tightly regulated. Several residents mentioned the confusion and clutter caused by the number of signs on the commercial strip along Route 50 in and around Cambridge. Also mentioned was the frequent need to obtain variances from the sign code, necessitating a hearing before the Board of Appeals.

Signage is important in that it helps set the tone for a community and contributes to the image visitors take away with them. The sign code should be reviewed for consistency with the comprehensive plan goal of improving the county's appearance, whether it is meeting the needs of

business, and can be applied more efficiently. Specific regulations may be needed around Cambridge to coordinate the city and county requirements. The county should also consider sign design guidelines as a tool for improving the appearance of commercial areas.

Strategies:

Encourage business uses to locate in the county's towns.

Discourage further expansion of business zoning and strip commercial development along Route 50.

Limit access to roadways from business developments.

Review the county sign code.

HOME BUSINESSES

Nationally, increasing numbers of people are working from their homes. With increased decentralization of the workplace this trend is expected to increase, and more Dorchester County homes will likely also be used as work places. Although the need for flexibility in permitting home occupations was discussed by the Dorchester Comprehensive Plan Committee, home occupations was not raised as a significant issue during preparation of the plan.

County regulations on home businesses are fairly restrictive, but historically have been interpreted fairly liberally. They can be summarized as follows: (1) certain low impact activities such as tutoring or direct sale product distribution (e.g. Amway, Tupperware) are considered accessory to the principal residential use, and are, effectively, permitted by-right; (2) home occupations and home professional offices are permitted by special exception. Under home occupations only one person can be engaged in the occupation. In a home professional office, no more than two persons can be working. Home-based contractors come under the category of home occupations.

Some other Maryland jurisdictions have more permissive regulations concerning home businesses. Because of the historically liberal interpretation of the regulations in Dorchester County, there are cases of businesses that have grown beyond what was intended as a home business, and which should probably now be located in a business zone.

Because of problems caused by such cases, participants in the comprehensive plan process were generally hesitant to further liberalize the regulations, potentially opening the door to similar problems. The county should monitor home business needs periodically to determine whether the County is losing economic development opportunities by over-regulating (see further discussion under Streamlining in Chapter 8).