

Land Use Glossary

APFO (Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance)

With an APFO in place, you cannot develop a tract of land unless the supporting county infrastructure (such as schools, roads, water supply, wastewater disposal) is in place. APFOs must be written with care, lest potential developers can demand that facilities be provided to their properties.

An Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance would allow approval of a plan for a subdivision or development only when it is found to be consistent with the Land Use Plan element of the Comprehensive Plan and only when adequate public or community facilities are available or will be available when required to support and service the proposed development. It would also define adequate facilities by setting standards and providing criteria which would establish a consistent methodology for identifying the impacts of proposed developments. Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances control the development process by conditioning approval upon showing that sufficient infrastructure and services are present or will be required. These provisions help ensure that land development coincides with the location and timing of capital facilities.

APG (Aberdeen Proving Ground) A large Army Post in nearby Harford County scheduled to grow in the coming decade as a result of the BRAC recommendation to move Army units and organizations there.

Appearance Code

The purpose of an appearance code should be to achieve development with a satisfactory visual appearance, preserve taxable values, and promote the public health, safety, and welfare.

Bonus Density

Building density in excess of normal or standard requirements, usually used as a tool or an incentive by planners to direct development.

BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure)

A federally funded and Congressionally approved committee to recommend military facility realignments and closures.

Cluster Development

"Clustering," also called Open Space Development, is an alternative to large lot "rural sprawl," which consumes open space, privatizes all land, and creates lots that are too small for farming or meaningful habitat protection.

County Comprehensive Plan

The charter planning document used by Cecil County to guide future growth. Last written in 1990, although subsequently amended in part.

Downzoning

Also known as “rural zoning” or “Agricultural zoning”, downzoning is the practice of restricting the type or amount of development allowed on a property. Usually this is accomplished by reducing the ratio of housing units per acre that can be built, or the allowable density of the property. In the case of Cecil County, planners have suggested reducing the allowable density in the northern part of the county from one house for every five acres to one house per 10 acres. They also want to lower the density in southern Cecil further from a 1-8 ratio to a 1-20 ratio.

FHNRMA (Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area)

Fair Hill was acquired by the State in 1975 from the DuPont family. It was acquired using funds from Maryland’s Open Space program. Fair Hill is a designated NRMA (Natural Resource Management Area). It is a unique and unspoiled rural landscape, of over 5600 acres offering a vast array of natural landscapes, habitats, flora and fauna, and extensive, in some cases rare, wildlife.

Growth Corridor

A Development District to encourage commercial, industrial and residential development. It is located in the Route 40 and I-95 corridor. This area is served by an extensive transportation network including the aforementioned Route 40 and I-95, Route 7, CSX Rail and Amtrak. The Development District also surrounds the Town of Elkton, North East and Perryville whose water and sewer systems also have the potential to serve commercial and industrial development.

Impact Fee

Exactions and Impact Fees: When combined with an overall growth management plan, impact fees and development exactions are effective in providing a means for local government to finance the capital improvements associated with new development. New development will not have a negative impact on the existing community residents if the infrastructure has sufficient capacity to handle the increased demand associated with the new development. Exactions and impact fees provide a direct means of obtaining the funds needed for capital improvements to service new developments. Both are based on the principal that new growth areas should be required to pay a pro rata share of the costs.

MALPF (Maryland agricultural land preservation fund)

Its primary purpose is to preserve sufficient agricultural land to maintain a viable local base of food and fiber production for the present and future citizens of Maryland. The Program consists of two basic steps: the establishment of agricultural preservation districts, and the purchase of perpetual agricultural conservation easements.

MWSP (Master Water and Sewer Plan)

The County Water and Sewer Plan evaluates water supply and sewage treatment needs on the basis of projected population growth and industrial demand. When existing water supplies and sewage treatment capacity are inadequate to handle projected growth, capital improvements are programmed. Areas within the County are classified into one of four categories for water supply and wastewater treatment:

- Areas with systems which are existing or under construction, including areas in condominium ownership using shared facilities;
- Areas with systems in the final planning stages which are planned within the next five years;
- Areas with systems planned within the five to ten year period; and
- Areas with individual systems serving a single lot.

NAR (Northern Agricultural Residential)

A Cecil County zoning category for agricultural land north of the Chesapeake & Delaware (C&D) Canal. It presently permits building to a ratio of one house per five acres, with bonus density up to one house per three acres. Under a downzoning proposal the standard would be one house per ten acres. The purpose of the Northern Agricultural-Residential zone is to maintain the existing rural character of the County by encouraging the continuation of agricultural and forestry uses. This zone is intended to prevent premature urbanization in areas where planned public facilities will only meet rural needs. The NAR also requires that the essential elements of rural character are included in new development. Low density residential development is permitted.

Open Space

Land and water areas retained for use as active or passive recreation areas or for resource protection in an essentially undeveloped state.

Open Space Funds

Since its inception in 1969, Maryland citizens have funded PROGRAM OPEN SPACE through a dedicated state real estate transfer tax. When you buy a house or land, the state real estate transfer tax, 0.5% of the selling price for the property, is paid at settlement to a special fund for PROGRAM OPEN SPACE. These funds are used to purchase open space to preserve wildlife, provide recreation and protect the environment.

OPZ (Office of Planning and Zoning)

The Cecil County Office of Planning, Zoning, Parks and Recreation provides staff support to the Board of County Commissioners, the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals and the Board of Parks and Recreation. This office also implements the goals and objectives of the County's Comprehensive Plan through the administration of the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations and the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan and reviews and approves all Minor Subdivisions and Industrial and Commercial Site Plans

PDR (Purchase of Development Rights)

Purchase of development rights programs provide a way to financially compensate willing landowners for not developing their land. When buying development rights, the community obtains a legal easement, sometimes referred to as a conservation easement, that (usually) permanently restricts development on the land. The landowner, however, still owns the land and can use or sell it for purposes specified in the easement, such as farming, timber production, or hunting.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission serves as a citizen review board and makes recommendations to the Board of Appeals or County Commissioners regarding rezoning cases, special exceptions, amendments or changes to County Ordinances and updates to the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission has the authority to approve all major subdivisions of land. They meet the third Monday of every month and are appointed by the County Commissioners.

PFA (Primary Funding Area)

An area of high priority for infrastructure improvements to provide and incentive for development and growth. See the "Growth Corridor"

Right to Farm

A Right-to-Farm Ordinance exempts legitimate agricultural uses from nuisance suits that arise when residential uses extend into agricultural areas.

Rural Conservation District

(RCD) is a Comprehensive Plan category that generally encompasses existing agricultural areas north of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. It includes much of the Elk Neck area south of the Town of North East and west of Elkton. North of the I-95 and U.S. 40 corridor, the Rural Conservation District extends to the Pennsylvania State Line.

Rural Legacy Area

The Rural Legacy Program is an initiative designed to discourage sprawl development, encourage the revitalization of older towns and cities, preserve farms, forests and other open space. The Rural Legacy Program is a unique approach to land conservation created to protect the remaining landscapes and natural areas.

SAR (Southern Agricultural Residential)

A Cecil County zoning category for agricultural land mostly south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. It presently permits housing at a ration of one house per eight acres, but under a downzoning proposal could that ratio would change to one house per twenty acres. The purpose of the Southern Agricultural-Residential zone is to encourage the retention and maintenance of agricultural land, agricultural industry and agriculturally-related uses, forestry and compatible

rural uses to support the agricultural economy of the County. This zone is intended to prevent the premature urbanization in areas where public facilities can only meet rural needs. Low density residential development is permitted.

Shared Facilities

Large lots for residential development are required in areas not served by a central water supply or by sewage collection and treatment. Large areas on residential lots are needed for septic drainage fields. In the Piedmont, several acres may be needed to maintain the yield of domestic water from on-site wells. The goals of this Plan favor clustering houses on smaller lots in order to preserve farmland and open space, to create more compact development, and to make water and sewer infrastructure more cost effective.

SR Zoning (Suburban Residential)

A zoning classification for Suburban Residential building development usually permitting one house per acre with septic and well, and two houses per acre with County sewer and water.

TAC (Technical Advisory Committee)

A committee that meets to consider technical matters pertaining to Major and Minor Subdivisions and makes recommendations to the Planning Commission on approval or disapproval of Major Subdivisions.

TDR (Transfer of Development Rights)

TDR allows rural landowners in the resource protection areas (called the TDR sending areas) to participate in the development market by selling the right to develop their lands to developers or landowners in designated growth areas (called TDR receiving areas). The developer, as an incentive to participate in this program, is then granted a higher density allowance in the receiving area. TDR programs, when properly designed and implemented, can do much to overcome the political opposition to downzoning inspired by resource protection goals.

TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development)

In Traditional Neighborhoods, houses, shops, and workplaces are located much closer to one another than in conventional suburban development where land uses are intentionally separated. Under the Traditional Neighborhood development form, buildings are modest in size, and front on streets in a disciplined manner, uninterrupted by parking lots. Streets and blocks are arranged in geometric patterns to provide comprehensive and interesting routes of travel for pedestrians and motorists alike. Narrower streets serve a balanced mix of pedestrians and automobiles, while other streets are wider, to carry greater levels of traffic and serve as major ceremonial avenues, boulevards, or commercial main streets.

Traffic Impact Analysis

The purpose of a traffic impact analysis is to evaluate and plan for changes in traffic levels and patterns brought about by major development projects. A traffic impact analysis should evaluate new projects for consistency with the County's transportation plan and highway policies, and should minimize potential safety and congestion problems.

Urban Growth Boundary Plan

Provides the necessary water and sewer availability in the designated growth area. The establishment of this infrastructure will permit the majority of residential growth to occur in a geographically constrained area that can be most effectively served with public utilities. A fully functional growth area will reduce development pressure on the rural areas of the County which in turn will reduce the reliance on individual on-site wells.

Zoning District

The unincorporated areas of Cecil County are divided into one of the eighteen zoning districts:

"NAR" - Northern Agricultural-Residential;
"SAR" - Southern Agricultural-Residential;
"RR" - Rural Residential;
"SR" - Suburban Residential;
"DR" - Development Residential;
"TR" - Town Residential;
"VR" - Village Residential;
"RM" - Multifamily Residential;
"MH" - Manufactured Home;
"BL" - Business - Local;
"BG" - Business - General;
"BI" - Business - Intensive;
"MB" - Maritime - Business;
"M1" - Light - Industrial;
"M2" - Heavy - Industrial;
"MEA" - Mineral Extraction A;
"OS" - Open Space;
"BSU" - Bainbridge Special Use.