Planning for Results

Kent County, Maryland’s Approach to Preserving Working Landscapes

Presented by Carla Gerber, Community Planner
Kent County Department of Planning, Housing & Zoning
April 28, 2010
First Some Background...
Lessons Learned

- Start with a broadly shared vision
- Understand and foster the relationship between a healthy community, economy and environment
- Support traditional industries when appropriate – understand natural and cultural assets
- Use a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory tools to reach goals
- Use available authority and programs to their fullest
A Broadly Shared Vision

- First Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1968
- The Plan was updated in 1974, 1984, 1996 & 2006
- The basic objectives have remained the same:
  - Preservation and enhancement of the natural assets of the county
  - Generation of economic activity sufficient to provide a good living for all inhabitants
  - Concentration of populations in and around existing communities
A Broadly Shared Vision

- The 1996 Comprehensive Plan went one step further and included a “Vision for Kent County”
- The Vision recognizes the County’s economic, natural and cultural assets
- The Vision establishes a set of principles to guide decision making in the future
Understanding the Economy

- According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture:
  - 729 people worked on Kent County farms
  - The wages paid to those workers was $15,090,000
  - The market value of agricultural products sold was $85,711,000
Understanding the Economy

In 2007 among Maryland counties, agricultural production in Kent ranked

- #2 – Corn for grain
- #3 – Barley
- #5 – Soybeans
- #5 – Wheat
Understanding Natural and Cultural Assets

- 57% of the County is defined as prime farmland
- 9 Century Farms, 1 National Bicentennial Farm
- Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway
- Stories of the Chesapeake State Recognized Heritage Area
Use a Variety of Tools

- Agricultural Advisory Commission
  - Created in 1980
  - 7 Members – one from each Election District
  - Must be actively engaged in Agriculture
Use a Variety of Tools

- The Agricultural Advisory Commission:
  - Advises County Commissioners and Planning Commission
  - Recommends policy changes or programs
  - Develops agricultural leaders
  - Introduces issues and ideas
  - Establishes trust and mutual respect necessary to adopt many agricultural programs
Use a Variety of Tools

- Agricultural Priority Map
  - Identifies those lands essential to the continuation of agriculture in Kent County
  - First developed in 1983
  - Refined and updated over time
  - Basis for Priority Preservation Area
Agricultural Priority Preservation Area

[Map of Kent County, Maryland showing Agricultural Priority Preservation Area with legend and sources]

Source: Kent County Department of Planning, Housing and Zoning. Parcel data layer property of Kent CEM. Map prepared March 2009, revised April 2009.
Use a Variety of Tools

- **Zoning – Density and Lot Size in the Agricultural Zoning District**
  - **1989**
    - Zoning density went from 2 acre lots to base of 1 dwelling unit per 30 acres or with design incentives to 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres
  - **2002**
    - Reduced minimum lot size to \(\frac{3}{4}\) acre
    - Limits maximum percentage of a property in lots to 10%
    - Limits the number of new lots that can be created along an existing public road to 2 lots
Use a Variety of Tools

- Zoning Uses in the Agricultural Zoning District
  - Agriculture is a permanent and preferred land use
  - Eliminated competing and potentially conflicting land uses
  - Added ways for farmers to diversity
Use a Variety of Tools

- The Comprehensive Plan calls for a “Kent County Economic Resource Bill of Rights”
  - Right to Farm
  - Right to Fish
  - Right to Hunt
Use Available Programs

- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation
  - State funded purchase of development rights program
  - Partially funded with agricultural transfer tax
  - County locally prioritizes easement applications
  - Over 16,250 acres are protected by MALPF easements
Use Available Programs

- Rural Legacy Program
  - State funded purchase of development rights program
  - Kent County partnered with other counties in a regional approach
  - Over 1,285 acres are protected by Rural Legacy easements
Use Available Programs

- Maryland Environmental Trust / Eastern Shore Land Conservancy / Other
  - Donated conservation easements make up almost half of the permanently protected land in Kent County (over 15,450 acres)
  - Agricultural Security Corridor
  - Eastern Shore 2010
Use Available Programs

- **Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway**
  - Travels through the center of the county’s prime agricultural lands
  - Corridor Management Plan promotes protection of scenic views but does not put any limits on agriculture
  - Interpretive Plan contains projects aimed to promote better understanding of the county’s agricultural and natural heritage
Use Available Programs

- Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area
  - Agriculture is a theme of the Heritage Area
  - Management Plan includes recommendations on ways to protect the region’s natural and cultural heritage
Successes

- Over 33,000 acres is permanently protected
- Lowest rate of agricultural land conversion in the state
- New development is being located within county-designated growth areas