

VISION PLAN for GREATER LA PLATA

*A Vision and Strategic Plan
for Downtown La Plata and the Surrounding Area*

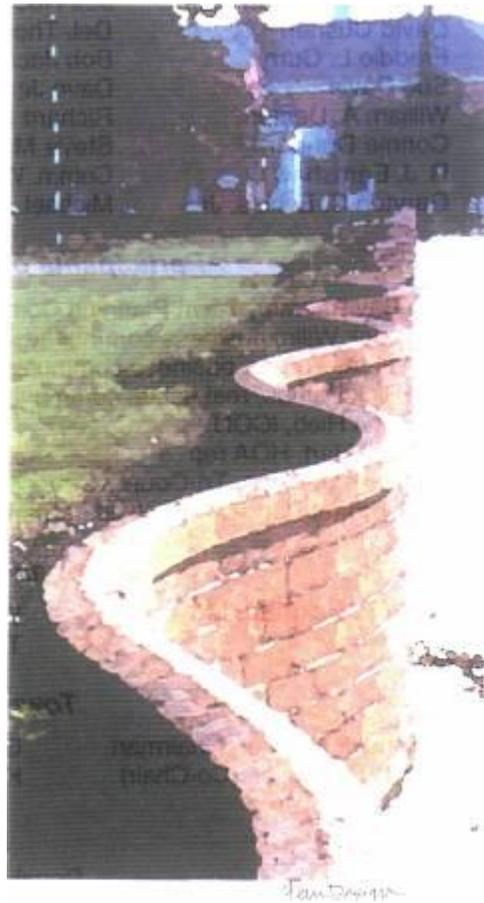


*created by
the Citizens and Officials of La Plata
in cooperation with
Charles County and the State of Maryland*

FINAL REPORT
March 10, 2000, Town of La Plata, Maryland

VISION PLAN for GREATER LA PLATA

*A Vision and Strategic Plan
for Downtown La Plata and the Surrounding Area*



Acknowledgments

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**FINAL REPORT VISION PLAN for
GREATER LA PLATA**

March 10,2000

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Overview
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Vision Workshops

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

Final Report

IV

March 10, 2000



1.
**Overview
of the Vision Plan Project**

Overview of the Vision Plan Project

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Purpose

The objective of this visioning effort is to allow the key "stakeholders" of this community to define the preferred future for the Town and the surrounding greater La Plata area, and to identify the key initial steps that need to be taken to achieve that preferred future.

Town citizens and leaders have become concerned about a number of issues that have emerged in recent years, including:

- Closure of key retail businesses and the future of the downtown area
- Traffic congestion, particularly on Routes 301 and 6
- » Sewer and Water capacities
- Future residential growth
- The role of the Town and its surrounding area in the County's plans for the future

The Town understands that most of its citizens and leaders hope that the future will include:

- Preserving the Town's distinctive small town charm and its own identity and sense of place
- Revitalizing the downtown area to become a pedestrian friendly area of small stores and restaurants as well as government offices
- Maintaining Route 301 as a vital business street with managed access and reducing congestion through the downtown area

The Town initiated this visioning process in order to refine and clarify those hopes for the future, and to determine what actions are needed to achieve the vision which citizens most desire.

The visioning process has been open, inclusive and interactive, involving representatives of all "stakeholders", including local neighborhood and business leaders, as well as Town, County and State officials. The process was designed to allow participants to look ahead 20 to 50 years into the future in order to create the most desirable, effective and practical future for the community.

Scope

PHASE I - ESTABLISH VISIONING PROCESS, SCHEDULE & BASELINE DATA

First Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Meeting (July 13) First
Visioning Workshop (July 31) Second TAG Meeting
(September 7)

PHASE II - DEVELOP AND EVALUATE ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS

Second Visioning Workshop (September 11) Third
TAG Meeting (October 19) Third Visioning
Workshop (October 30)

PHASE III - DEVELOP PREFERRED VISION PLAN

Fourth TAG Meeting (January 31, 2000)
Prepare Draft Vision Plan
Public Presentation of draft Vision Plan and fourth Visioning Workshop (February 26, 2000)
Prepare Final Vision Plan
Public Hearings and Presentations

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the Visioning process, and their respective roles, include:

VISIONING TEAM (70+ citizens and officials)

The Visioning Team is the core group that has provided the primary policy input toward creating the Vision Plan for the future of La Plata.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG)

The TAG has provided oversight and direction to the consulting team and functions as a kind of "executive committee" for the Visioning Team.

TOWN OFFICIALS

Town Staff. Staff has provided logistical support, research assistance, and oversight.

Town Elected and Appointed Officials. Town officials are represented on the TAG and Visioning Team and function in their official capacities in reviewing and affirming the final Vision Plan.

COUNTY AND STATE OFFICIALS

County and State officials are represented on the TAG and Visioning Team and provided input during the course of the project. They will be asked to provide final review and affirmation. They also serve as technical resources for the other participants.

CONSULTING TEAM

The consultants served as facilitators at the meetings, provides technical expertise on planning-related matters, helped create alternative scenarios and prepared all project documents.

CITIZENS AT LARGE

All citizens, including the press/media, were welcomed to observe the process and provide comment and suggestions during the course of the work. Public meetings on the draft vision products will be conducted to receive formal comment and affirmation from citizens at large.



Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS

The visioning process began as a result of the emergence of several major concerns among the citizens and officials of the Town. These included the traffic congestion, utility capacities, the future of Route 301 in relation to maintaining and revitalizing the historic downtown area, and the character and quality of future residential growth in the area.

The Town sponsored an all day transportation workshop in August of 1998, conducted by Dick Keller of Kellerco, Inc. This effort identified some of the major issues and alternatives for dealing with Route 301. This led in turn to the Town's decision to conduct a full visioning process in which all issues facing the Town could be addressed by citizens in an open and interactive manner.

The visioning process was designed also include County and State representatives so that the regional land use and transportation issues relating to the Town could be incorporated into the effort.

The Town selected the consulting team through a competitive process and began work in June of 1999. Given the sense of urgency among Town citizens and officials, the Town set an aggressive schedule of six months to complete the Vision Plan process.

The process included the following major steps:

- background research and analysis by the consulting team
- four public Visioning Work Shops involving 50 to 70 key citizens
- » four meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee to provide guidance and oversight
- informal meetings with the Town business leaders, County Commissioners, and staff of the State Highway Administration
- follow-up public meetings to present and discuss the results

The result of this process is a Vision Plan that sets forth the preferred future for the Town of La Plata and its surrounding lands, and provides the framework for a series of immediate as well as long term actions by the Town, County, State and private sector, to achieve this vision.



2.
Vision Plan:
The Citizens' Preferred Future
for La Plata

Vision Plan: The Citizens' Preferred Future for La Plata

THE GOALS OF THE 50-YEAR VISION FOR DOWNTOWN AND GREATER LA PLATA

The following goals form the foundation for the citizen's long-term vision for La Plata:

Downtown Enrichment

- Make Downtown a "pedestrian-friendly" place
- Enhance the downtown core with business services, small shops, a park-like environment, trees, clean streets, sidewalks, and other features that make it a pleasing and vibrant place
- Create a Town Center area with recreation, shops, and cultural and social opportunities

La Plata Parkway (By-Pass/Loop Road)

- ' Re-Route the principal thoroughfares from the Town's Core, in accord with the long term transportation network of this Vision Plan
- Build a La Plata Parkway that functions as a by-pass around the town for through-traffic

Mass Transit

- Acquire and build the necessary infrastructure to provide Mass Transportation service to La Plata area residents and businesses, including the provision of train stations, bus stops, park and ride lots, etc.

Parks and Recreation, Civic Enhancement and Open Space

- Upgrade the Park System by improving existing parks and creating new ones
- Establish a large Town Park, with bandstand, swimming pool, picnic areas, tennis courts
- Create a system of bicycle routes and sidewalks throughout Town
- Establish sidewalks and Street lighting on all Town Streets
- Create A Cultural Arts Center / Recreation Center, including activities for all age groups
- Establish a system of natural open space for public use

Industrial Development

- ~ Encourage high tech and light manufacturing industry to locate in the La Plata area

Buildings and Architecture

- Enhance the quality of development through architectural and landscaping controls
- Preserve and enhance unique buildings and institutions, such as conference center, college, county buildings, courthouse, library, and inns

Neighborhood Enhancement

- Encourage unique neighborhood design concepts, featuring pedestrian access, safety, comfort, sense of belonging, recreation areas, and unique construction and design

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

THE POLICIES FOR THE 50-YEAR VISION FOR DOWNTOWN AND GREATER LA

PLATA The following major policy elements guide the preferred general course of action:

Transportation Strategies to promote connectivity and mobility

- Promote Eastern Parkway (By-Pass) Corridor, with scenic highway design (separate design study)
- Upgrade US 301 to an "urban boulevard" design; develop detailed access plan for entire corridor
- Acquire right of way for redevelopment/redesign
- Connect streets where feasible
- Add new connections to Parkway (By-Pass) where appropriate, in accord with vision plan
- Promote long term passenger service with stations downtown, north and south
- Establish strong system of sidewalks and trails

Land Use Patterns integrated with streets & economic development concepts

Commercial Uses

- Concentrate pedestrian-oriented and specialty retail commercial uses in downtown core; redevelop tobacco barn area
- Limit auto-oriented commercial uses in a "campus" pattern along US 301 within current Town corporate limits, as shown on Vision Plan conceptual land use map
- Encourage office parks along northern part of 301 outside of current Town limits
- Encourage mixed-use pattern in commercial and office areas along 301, with more intensive uses fronting 301 and gradually less intensive uses farther from 301
- Coordinate with County to prohibit new commercial retail at Parkway (By-Pass) interchanges
- Develop conference center at edge of downtown - potentially on historic site north of County offices
- Encourage hotel at high tech park site on north side of Town
- Allow Big Box Retail with strict design controls

Industrial Uses

- Encourage high tech and flex industrial at key site on north side of Town along rail line
- Encourage light industrial & flex industrial at key committed site on south side of Town
- Encourage regional distribution facility at key site on south side of Town at intersection of Parkway by pass/301/rail

Public Uses

- Relocate Town Hall to a new Town Center Square on the Coke Plant site & adjacent land; add parking
- Locate cultural arts center at Town Center
- Maintain County Offices and Court at current site; re-orient entrance to Charles Street or 301
- Expand County Office site to north and west
- Establish system of sidewalks throughout downtown and links to downtown; establish system of trails (greenways) along natural drainage ways; establish urban "greens" at key sites in downtown area
- Establish green buffers along new roadways and along key existing roads such as US 301
- Establish "gateway" entrances on main roads entering the Town
- Develop new park on west side of US 301

Residential Uses

- Encourage lower overall housing densities in most areas of Town, especially along major roads (with limited access points) and in outlying areas
- Permit higher density housing as infill in and around downtown core, designed to enhance pedestrian-oriented streetscape, and as transition between commercial & lower density residential along US 301

Infrastructure Needs

- Expand and extend water and sewer as needed to accommodate planned land uses, mainly within **current** Town corporate limits; totally within proposed parkway (by-pass) corridor
- Transportation improvements as noted above

Streetscape concepts for residential neighborhoods, CBD & 301 Corridor

Downtown CBD:

Building entrances front the street
Architectural harmony (guidelines and review process)
Public greens; central public green at new Town Center site
Parallel parking on the streets; parking lots behind buildings
Sidewalks on all downtown streets
Street trees and furniture
Sign standards/coordination

US 301:

"Campus" design concept for entire corridor
Upgrade US 301 to an "urban boulevard" design; develop detailed access plan for entire corridor
Connect streets where feasible, especially parallel to 301
Share parking on adjacent sites
Limited parallel/slash parking in front; most parking to the rear of buildings, "internal" to the site
Landscaping standards and coordination along 301
Sign standards/coordination
Pedestrian connections between buildings, parking and adjacent sites
Pedestrian crosswalks at traffic signals
All convenience commercial must be integrated into office or commercial parks along 301

Outlying Residential:

Managed access of neighborhood entrance roads to major collector roads
Landscaping standards/coordination
Entrance design standards/coordination
Interconnected road system within and between neighborhoods
Sidewalks throughout developed areas
Greenways throughout area
Clustering and alternative dwelling types in all residential areas

Architectural Controls

Develop architectural and site plan guidelines for:

Downtown residential
Downtown commercial US 301
Corridor Outlying residential
(optional)

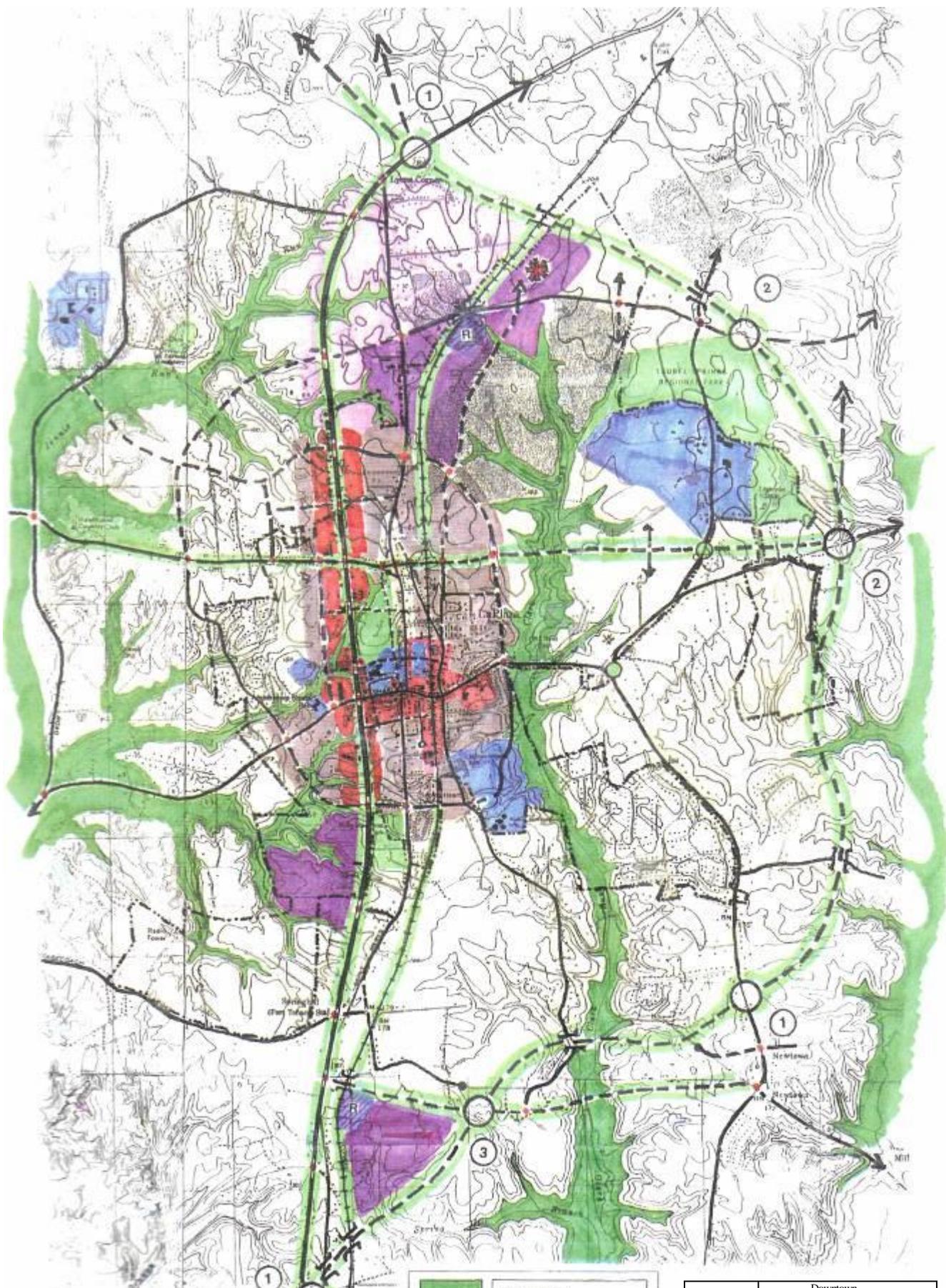
Concepts for improving Recreational Opportunities & Open Space Resources

Expand recreational facilities in Town as indicated above - small parks and greens, sidewalks, trails ***Town and***

County Cooperation - Comprehensive plan, zoning regulations, etc.

Coordinate and Cooperate with County regarding:

Parkway (By-pass) corridor right-of-way acquisition, road design and funding acquisition
Road access controls outside corporate limits
Interchange design and land use controls
Land uses outside corporate limits in accord with Vision Plan
Greenways throughout Greater La Plata in accord with Vision
Utility service
Continue County and Town administrative uses in downtown
Long term Town/County boundary

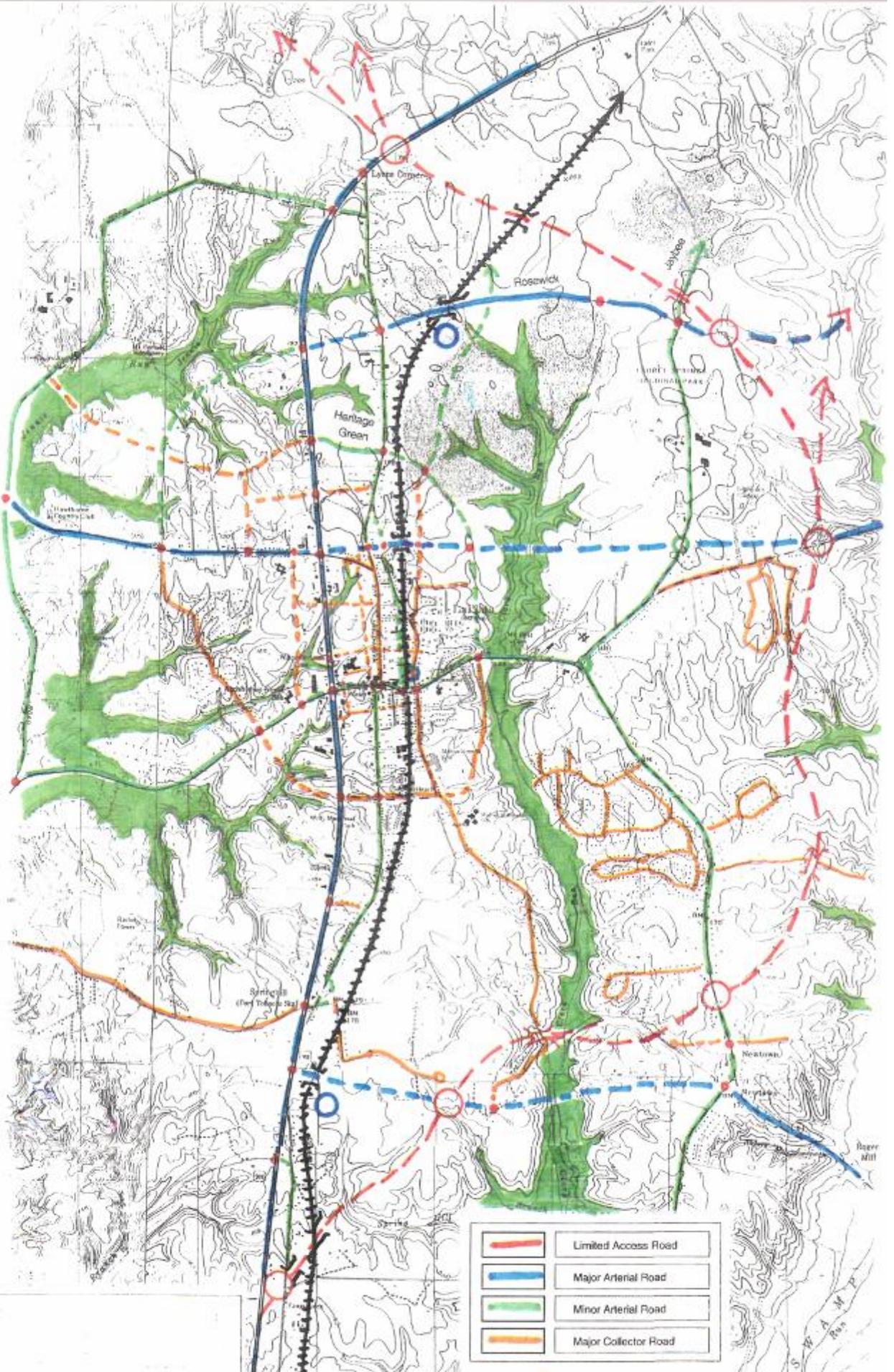


Vision Plan for Greater La Plata
CONCEPTUAL LAND USE
50 YEAR VISION
 FOR THE GREATER LA PLATA AREA
 0 0.5M 1.0M 1.5M
 March 10, 2000

	Natural Areas
	Conservation / Buffers
	Public / Institutional
	Flex & Light Industrial
	Corridor Office Park
	Corridor Commercial Park

	Downtown Commercial Mixed Use
	Downtown Residential Mixed Use
	Low Density Residential

- Hotel Site
- Rail Station
- Interchange
- Round-About



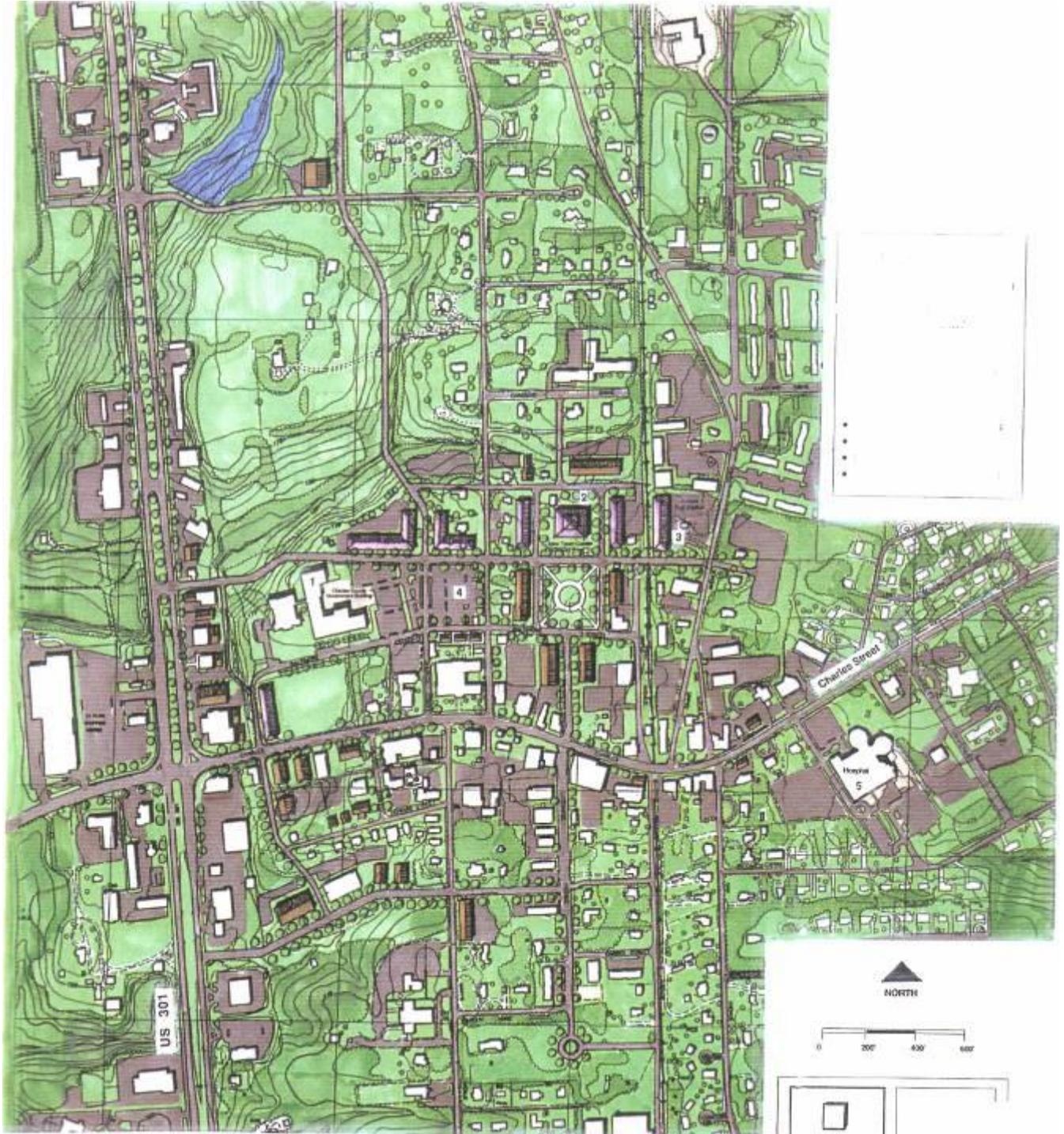
FOR THE GREATER LA PLATA AREA

0 1.250'

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata
TRANSPORTATION PLAN
50 YEAR VISION

	Limited Access Road
	Major Arterial Road
	Minor Arterial Road
	Major Collector Road

C-J Interchange Round-
 About Rail Station / Park and
 Ride



Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

**CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN
50 YEAR VISION**

March 10, 2000

**New Public
Buildings**

**New
Commercial
Buildings**

Major Features 1.

County Offices (expanded)

3. Street trees and sidewalks

4. On-street parking Infill

with new street **Existing**

5. Interconnect **Buildings** id

3.
Action Plan:
Strategies and Actions
to Achieve the Vision

Strategies and Actions to Achieve the Vision

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ACTIONS

Overall Priority

Appoint On-Going Vision Team to foster support and provide guidance for achieving the Vision

This is the first and most critical action the Town can take to achieve its Vision. A standing Vision Team is needed to provide continuous momentum and energy for the implementation process, as well as providing constructive input when conflicts, dilemmas and trade-offs emerge in the future. The Vision Plan must be a living entity and a standing Vision Team will be needed to keep it alive. The Vision Team formally established by the Town in conjunction with the County and State. It should be compact in size but should include key representatives of all stakeholder groups, including County and State representatives. It should be charged with monitoring and helping coordinate implementation of the action plan. This standing body might be called *The Greater La Plata Vision Task Force*, as suggested by citizens during the vision workshops.

Land Use, Planning, Zoning and Public Investment Priorities

Coordinate with County

- Route 301 Corridor - land use and access
- Right of Way Acquisition for Parkway / Loop Road
- Land Use and Access Management on new and extended roads
- Coordinated utility service policy
- Coordinate areas of responsibilities of Town and County; cooperative annexation, as may be appropriate

Identify and pursue funding resources (federal and state) "THINK BIG!"

- Smart growth
- Community revitalization
- Local county and town funding
- Figure out how to pay for future Town Center

Convert Coca Cola Plant Site to a new Town Center

Work with owners of Coca Cola Plant site and adjacent lands to relocate Coca Cola Plant and acquire land for a new Town Center - coordinate with Hospital to acquire existing Town Hall site

Transportation Priorities

Build Route 6 Connector

Evaluate alternative projects to provide alternative to Route 6 in downtown; select preferred alternative and seek funds to design and construct

Coordinate Town, County & Tri-County actions regarding Greater La Plata Vision Actions as required

Build Short term Roads - no acquisition costs required

- Heritage Green Parkway
- Jaybee Road
- Extension of Rosewick West
- Extension of Rosewick East (St. Charles)

Pursue Parkway Loop Road

Lobby for funding to promote plan implementation, especially for preserving the right of way for the eastern "parkway" loop road around Town, and phased link construction north to south.

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

"Parkway" is defined in this Vision Plan as a limited access highway, with no commercial uses, and sensitively designed to mitigate impacts on adjacent neighborhoods and fragile environmental areas, and to carry regional truck traffic around rather than through the Town.

From the perspective of La Plata, the proposed Parkway road, which would by-pass the Town to the east as shown in this Vision Plan, is the preferred alternative for relieving through-traffic on US 301, because it will be a limited access facility with no commercial uses along it, and will help achieve a high quality of life for all residents in the greater La Plata area.

However, citizens and officials of the Town recognize that this is a long term solution, probably in the 20 year time frame, and that the parkway "by-pass" solution would be required to go through a full NEPA study (National Environmental Protection Act). The Town further recognizes that in the NEPA process, various alternative solutions for US 301 would have to be studied, including those identified to date, as well as others that may be identified in the future.

The Town prefers the parkway for the reasons shown in this report, and is hopeful that it will in fact be accepted by the County and State as the appropriate long term solution for US 301 in the vicinity of La Plata. The Town intends to adopt the parkway concept into its Comprehensive Plan, and asks the County to do the same.

In the short term, the Town supports the widening of the US 301 right-of-way in order to serve existing businesses, on the condition that such widening be closely coordinated between state and Town and be designed to be ultimately converted into a pedestrian-friendly, urban boulevard, in conjunction with the completion of the parkway and/or other long term US 301 through-traffic improvements.

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

DETAILED PRIORITY ACTIONS

The following action plans were created, refined and affirmed by the Vision Team at the third workshop, (numbers in parentheses indicate votes given in favor by Vision Team participants).

Immediate Action Plan for 2000 - 2001

Land Use Planning, Zoning and Public Investment Actions 2000 - 2001

Priority	Action Item
	Appoint on-going Vision Team to foster support and provide guidance for achieving the Vision (23)
	Coordinate with County to amend County Comprehensive Plan consistent with Vision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Route 301 Corridor - land use and access• Right of Way Acquisition for Parkway / Loop Road• Land Use and Access Management on new and extended roads• Coordinated utility service policy• Coordinate policy and process for cooperative annexation [coordinate areas of responsibility between Town and County as may be appropriate]
	(24)
	Identify and pursue funding resources (federal and state)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smart growth• Community revitalization• Local county and town funding
	THINK BIG!
	Figure out how to pay for future Town Center
	Work with owners of Coca Cola Plant site and adjacent lands to relocate Coca Cola Plant and acquire land for a new Town Center - coordinate with Hospital to acquire existing Town Hall site (14)
	Amend zoning ordinance to limit the size of commercial/retail stores - possible impact fees to support implementation plan (referendum is not necessary if Town proceeds with zoning changes as called for)
	Economic development to bring industry / business to support costs of infrastructure

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

Land Use Planning, Zoning and Public Investment Actions 2000 - 2001 (cont'd)

Priority	Action Item
7	Amend Town Zoning Ordinance to implement Plan policies and Vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new development regulations for Route 301 Office and Commercial Parks • Create new development regulations for Industrial Parks • Create new development regulations for mixed-use infill development in downtown (10)
8	Amend Town Comprehensive Plan to establish policy framework for the long term Vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use Map • Policies for Residential, Commercial and Industrial Development • Policies for Access Management • Utility service plan (9)
9	Pursue plans for linkage to future light rail system
10	Create architectural standards and review procedures
11	Town Planner, at least part time; need to coordinate staff and marketing person to achieve EDC and Visioning Team
12	Actively seek ways to communicate plan and standards to businesses, developers and public
13	Fine tune definitions of land use terms - clarify, elaborate
14	Create detailed urban design plan for core area of downtown - streetscape plan, road connections, parking, architectural and sign guidelines, etc. (7) [including parking garage if feasible]
15	Create detailed design plan for sidewalks, bikeways and trails linking downtown to the surrounding natural areas and to outlying residential areas (3)
16	Set aside land for new schools; coordinate between Town and County School Board [added at fourth vision workshop]
17	Coordinate between Town and County on Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) formula [added at fourth vision workshop]

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

Transportation Actions 2000 - 2001

Priority	Action Item
1	Evaluate two alternative projects to provide alternative to Route 6 in downtown; select preferred alternative and seek funds to design and construct (23)
2	Coordinate Town and County and Tri-County actions regarding Greater La Plata land use and transportation actions as required (15)
3	Short term Roads - no acquisition costs required • Heritage Green Parkway • Jaybee Road • Extension of Rosewick West • Extension of Rosewick East (St. Charles)
4	Lobby for funding to promote plan implementation especially for eastern "parkway" right of way preservation and phased link construction north to south (12)
5	Perform Traffic calming Study on Route 6; and adopt Implementation Plan (7)
6	Perform Conceptual access management plan to account for transformation of existing 301 to 301 Business Boulevard (7)
7	Constantly review all site plans in Town and County to insure that plans are not approved which jeopardize Greater La Plata Plan (4)
8	Adopt Transportation Element of Comprehensive Plan by both Town and County; especially limited access "parkway" and other new roads - Secure County agreement to allow no new commercial development at future grade-separated or interim at-grade intersections along new "parkway" (3)
9	Monitor 301 Bypass selection process; revise comprehensive plans when alignment is selected (2)

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

Short Range Action Plan 2001 - 2006

Land Use Planning, Zoning and Public Investment Actions 2001 - 2006

Priority	Action Item
1	Proceed with development of Town Center site (12)
2	Implement Sidewalk and Trails Plan (12)
3	Coordinate with County to recruit high tech and corporate businesses to key sites in Town; link to CCCC (11)
4	Implement planning policies and zoning regulations through the rezoning and site plan review process(7)
5	Implement Downtown Urban Design Plan (4)

Transportation Actions 2001 - 2006

Priority	Action Item
1	Continue to coordinate Town County Actions regarding greater La Plata land use and transportation actions through <i>Greater La Plata Vision Task Force</i> (12)
2	Build alternative to Route 6 in Downtown La Plata (11)
3	Implement Access Management Plan for converting 301 to 301 business Boulevard with Town and County commitment (6)
4	Study downtown plan for access enhancement and adopt as element of comprehensive plan for area within and around loop road (2)
5	Continue to lobby for funds for roadway design and construction (2)
6	Update County-Town Comprehensive Plan for greater La Plata to reflect impact of east or west Waldorf Bypass (1)
7	Sustain review of all site plans in Town and County so that approved plans do not jeopardize greater La Plata plan (1)

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

The following specific policy and regulatory changes were identified by the Consulting Team as key items for implementing the strategies outlined in the preceding action plans of the Visioning Team.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND REGULATORY CHANGES

Suggested Potential Amendments to the Charles County Comprehensive Plan

The 1997 Charles County Comprehensive Plan is based upon the concept of concentrating future growth in the northern end of the County and in the incorporated towns and village centers. The plan also included new provisions aimed at achieving the objectives of the 1992 Maryland Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act, and giving greater attention to community character aspects of development, including urban design, quality of development and community image.

The Vision Plan for La Plata is consistent with this basic planning concept adopted by the County, and with most of the goals, objectives and policies of the plan. However, there are a few specific items in the County plan that may need to be adjusted or clarified to be certain that the County's Plan and the Town's Vision are in total harmony. These items include:

- Figure 4-2 Land Use Concept Plan

Potential light Industrial use south of Town. The Vision Plan foresees the potential for some regional distribution facilities on the east side of the rail line, approximately 1,000 feet south of the southernmost town boundary. This land use designation would need to be added to an area currently designated in the County Plan as Rural Conservation.

Less commercial use south of Town. The County Plan shows a large area of "commercial and business districts" at the southern edge of Town, across from Springhill at the intersection of Stagecoach Road and US 301. The Vision Plan shows only low density residential in that area.

Expanded light industrial use north of Town. The County Plan shows an Employment and Industrial Park District at the north edge of Town between Washington Avenue and the Rail Line. The Vision Plan also shows a light industrial use in this area, but also designates the area north of that as a corridor office park area, extending north as far as Lyons Corner, and to the west across Route 301. The area on the north edge of the Town between the rail line and US 301 which is designated on the County's land use map as a future incorporated area could be expanded to more closely map the industrial land use designations on the Conceptual Land Use Map in this Vision Plan.

Other map designations are generally compatible with the Map of the Conceptual Land Use for the 50 year Vision, and the overall amount of land that would be expected to be included in Future Incorporated Town Growth Areas is roughly the same in the Vision Plan as in the current County Plan, yet the framework of the Vision Plan provides potential areas for expansion of the designated Growth Area post-2020, if and when needed.

• Land Use Plan Concept and Implementation Strategies - #12. Highway Corridor Districts

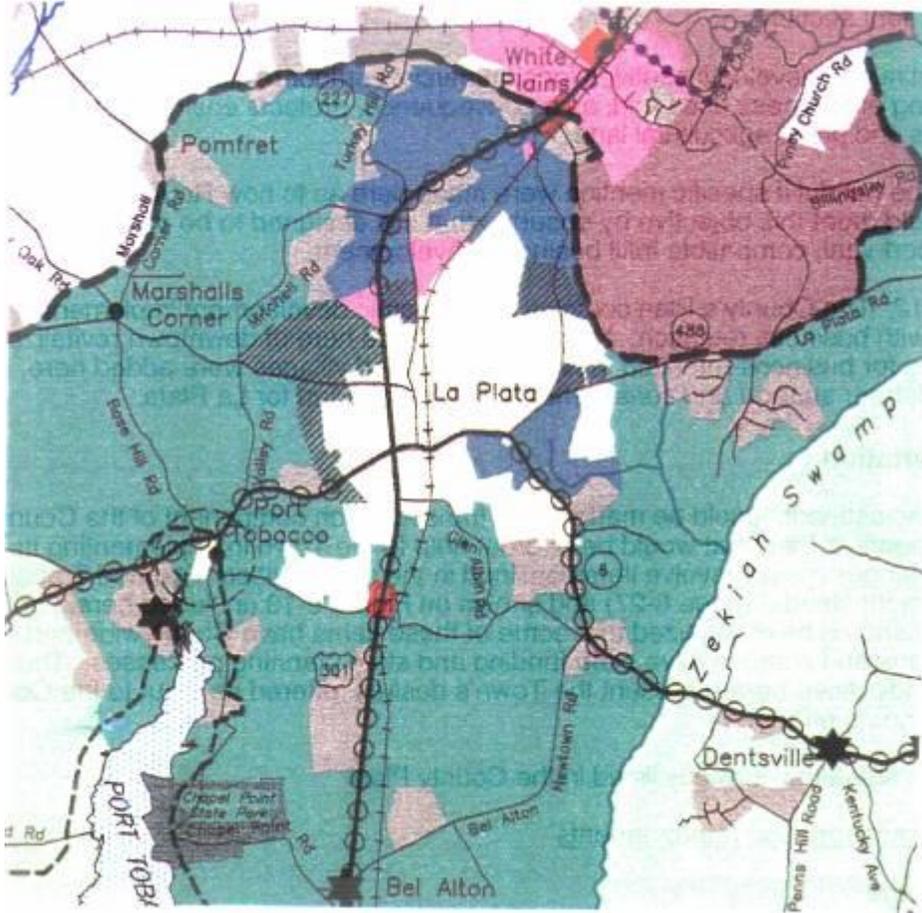
While the Vision Plan does not obviously conflict with the guidelines of this section, it would be more in tune with the Vision Plan if the County added language to this section that specified that major corridors in historic Town Center areas be designed as "urban boulevards", with pedestrian-friendly designs that will foster vibrant commercial areas as community focal points, in order to reinforce the efforts of the Town toward this end.

Further, although the existing provisions of the County Plan's growth management and land use element call for commercial and industrial development to be directed to a "park or campus-like form as opposed to linear or corridor form along County roadways", it would be helpful if the Plan could specifically reference the long term potential parkway loop road around La Plata and the necessity of prohibiting any "strip" commercial uses along this corridor.

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

Land Use Concept Plan from 1997
Charles County Comprehensive Plan

Figure 4-2,
Land Use Concept Plan



- Employment and Industrial Park Districts
- Commercial and Business Districts
- Agricultural Conservation Districts
- Rural Conservation Districts
- Rural Residential Districts
- Town Centers
- Incorporated Towns
- Future Incorporated Town Growth Areas
- Neighborhood Conservation Districts
- Major Mixed Use or Planned Unit Development

- Development District Deferred
- Development District
- ^ Development District Boundary
- : Urban Core •
- Military or Federally Owned Selected
- Major Open Space Areas National
- Register of Historic Districts Village
- Centers Critical Area Boundary
- Highway Corridor Districts

Economic Development Objectives (page 5-3 and 5-12 of County Plan)

The Vision Plan is consistent with the County's Plan for economic development. However, two adjustments would help establish even stronger linkage between the two documents:

Page 5-3: The County Plan now contains this land use objective in the economic development section

"Continue to develop incentives for commercial corridor revitalization which promotes infilling of business uses and, as a consequence, protects environmentally sensitive areas and prime agricultural land."

It would be helpful if specific mention were made here as to how Route 301 in and around La Plata could meet this objective by ensuring that it is designed to be an "urban boulevard" that will support vital, compatible infill business development.

Page 5-12: The County's Plan contains an economic development implementation strategy dealing with business retention. No mention is made here of downtown revitalization. If some strategies for business retention in historic towns and villages were added here, it would provide further support and consistency to the Vision Plan for La Plata.

Transportation

Various adjustments could be made to the transportation component of the County's Comprehensive Plan that would be of great help to the Town in implementing its vision. These changes mainly involve items outlined in the section titled "Planned Transportation Improvement Needs" (page 6-27) and shown on Figure 6-10 (included herein on the following page). It should be recognized that some of these items have Countywide and regional implications and some involve state funding and state planning processes. Thus, the changes identified here represent the Town's desires, offered as input to the County and State planning efforts.

Following are items currently listed in the County Plan:

MDOT Transportation Improvements

Short Range

M-4 Increase capacity along MD 6 in La Plata from US 301 to MD 488

The Plan does not specify the design characteristics of the road improvements to this portion of MD 6. To be consistent with the Town's Vision Plan, any improvements to Route 6 within 1,000 feet of either side of the rail road line should be designed to create a pedestrian-friendly, urban street with sidewalks, small turning radii, safe and convenient cross-walks, and other such features, rather than as a high-speed highway.

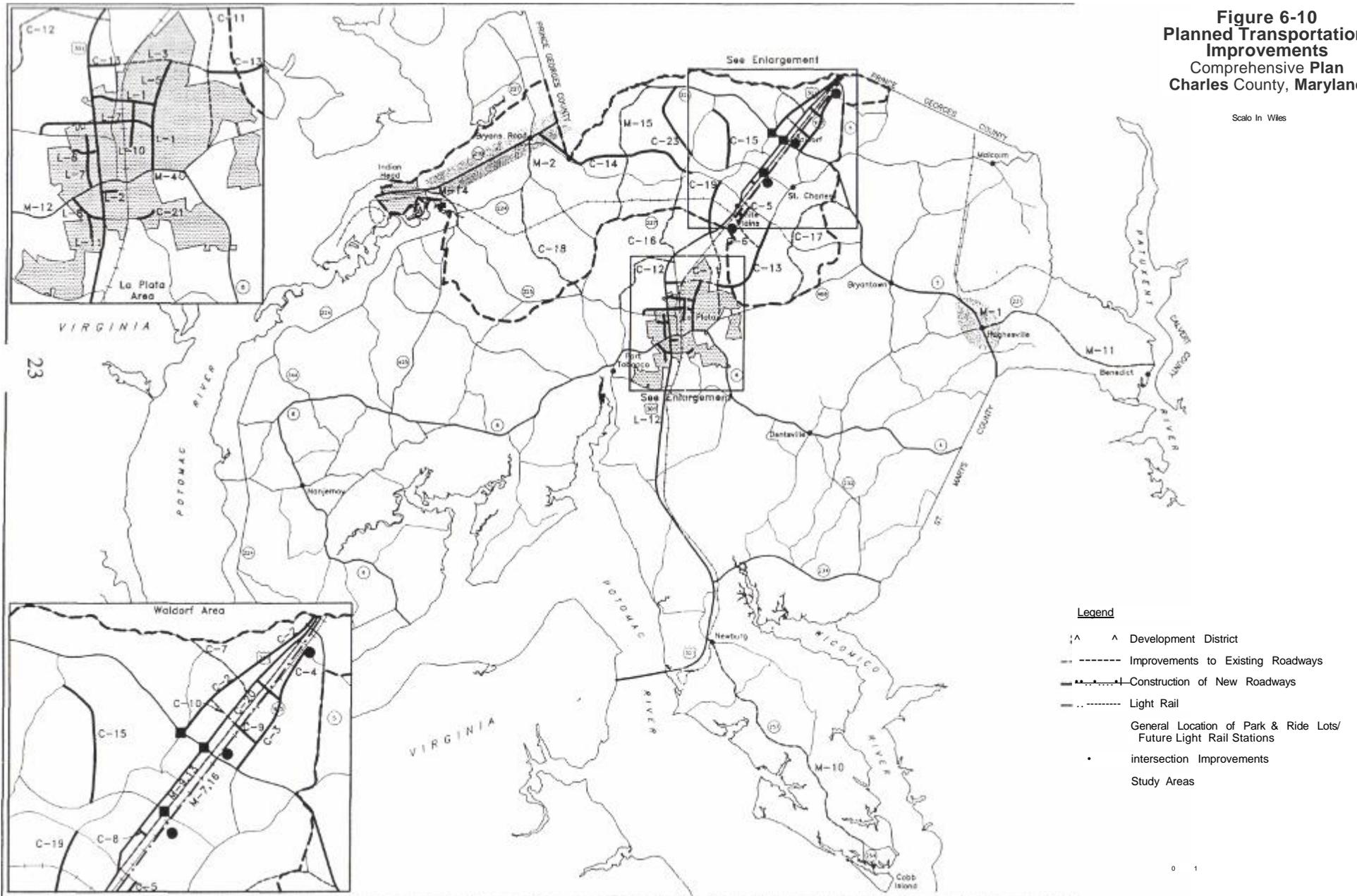
Mid Range

M-12 Increase capacity of MD 6 from Port Tobacco to US 301 in La Plata

The Plan does not specify the design characteristics of the road improvements to this portion MD 6. To be consistent with the Town's Vision Plan, any improvements to the portion of Route 6 within 1,000 feet of US 301 should be designed as a pedestrian-friendly, urban street with sidewalks, small turning radii, safe and convenient cross-walks, and other such features, rather than as a high-speed highway.

Figure 6-10
Planned Transportation
Improvements
 Comprehensive Plan
 Charles County, Maryland

Scale In Miles



County Transportation Improvements

Short Range

- C-1 Develop access management plans for the US 301 corridor through Waldorf and La Plata as part of a sub area plan

The Plan should specify that such access management plans within the greater La Plata area should be compatible with the La Plata Vision Plan and be aimed at ultimately converting US 301 to an "urban boulevard" with a pedestrian-friendly streetscape that connects to the downtown street network.

Mid Range

- C-11 Upgrade Jaybee Lane to Radio Station Road to provide an alternative north-south route from US 301 to La Plata.

Retain this project as is.

- C-12 Improve Mitchell Road by straightening out curves and building shoulders. Also upgrade the intersections of Mitchell Road/Valley Road [Rt. 225] and Mitchell Road/US 301. "

Retain this project as is. C-13 Extend Rosewick Road and connect from

US 301 to St. Charles Parkway.

Retain this project as is, except move up to Short Range priority. *Long*

Range

- C-21 Coordinate with the Town of La Plata to complete an upgrade and extension of Willow Lane south of MD 6 and to US 301 to complete an eastern bypass of downtown La Plata.

Retain this project as is. Selected Town of La Plata Road Projects (from Town of La

Plata Comprehensive Plan)

- L-1 Continue efforts to have Heritage Green Parkway completed from Washington Avenue to Charles Street. Re-evaluate methods for financing roadway if it has not been built by 2001.

Retain as is, except note the need to coordinate with the Vision Plan in terms of this link being designed so that Heritage Green Parkway will be a continuous loop road connecting to Charles Street, rather than for Heritage Green Parkway to "T" into the north-south connection to Rosewick Road.

- L-2 Continue efforts to complete the second phase of Centennial Street to connect St. Mary's Avenue with US 301. (complete)

- L-3 Add two travel lanes on Rosewick Road when St. Charles Parkway eventually connects with that road.

Retain this project as is.

- L-4 Require the connection of Shining Willow Way westward with US 301 and eastward with Heritage Green Parkway.

Retain this project as is.

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

- L-5 Require a connection from Heritage Green Parkway to Rosewick Road.
Retain this project as is.
- L-6 Require the improvement of existing Allegheny Avenue to Town specifications and its connection to Oriole Lane.
Retain this project as is; coordinate with Vision Plan to ultimately provide access and/or bridge at US 301
- L-7 Require the connection of Magnolia Drive with Port Tobacco Road (MD 6).
Retain this project as is; coordinate with Vision Plan. L-8 Require the construction of a road connecting Quailwood Parkway and Glen Albin Road.
Retain this project as is; coordinate with Vision Plan.
- L-9 Support efforts to provide an additional entrance and exit from the County governmental complex onto US 301.
Retain this project as is; coordinate with Vision Plan concepts for US 301 and Charles Street, as well as connections into downtown along the north side of the County Complex.
- L-10 Require the connection of Dorchester Street and Heritage Green Parkway.
Retain this project as is; coordinate with Vision Plan.
- L-11 Require a new road connecting the Glen Albin, Quailwood Parkway connector road to Catalpa Drive or Buckeye Circle through the South Towne Centre parcel.
Retain this project as is.
- L-12 Require the connection of Buckeye Circle to Stagecoach Road (if property is annexed to the south)
Retain this project as is.

In addition to the refinements to existing items as noted above, the following additional items should be added in order to make the Town's Vision Plan and the County's Comprehensive Plan consistent with regard to transportation improvements.

- Under MOOT Transportation Improvements, work with the state to agree to add the following:
 - M-X (long range) Acquire Right-of-Way for Potential Parkway Loop Road to the East of La Plata (reference map depiction)
 - M-Y (long range) Preserve right-of-way for light rail service south to La Plata (a mention of this long term concept should also be added to the discussion of rail transit service on pages 6-23 and 6-24).
- Under County and Town Transportation Improvements, add references to each of the road linkages shown on the Transportation Plan for the 50 Year Vision for the Town that are not already included in the existing list of improvements.

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

Suggested Potential Amendments to Town of La Plata Comprehensive Plan

Goals, Objectives, Principles and Standards (page 5 of the La Plata Comprehensive Plan)

In addition to the general discussion in this section of the broad, long term goals of the Town, the specific goals identified in this Vision Plan could be added to this section (from page 5 of this report). These goals could be inserted after the existing five paragraphs which could serve as an introduction to, and overview of these goals. (Note that for consistency of style and format, the Town may want to organize and possibly supplement these additional goals so that they relate directly to the seven basic "elements" of the plan).

Community and Economic Development Element (page 9 of the La Plata Comprehensive Plan)

Add to this section the policies from the Vision Plan that deal with Commercial Land Uses, Industrial Land Uses, as well as relevant items from the list of Streetscape Concepts, and those items under Public Use policies that are not to be added to the Plan's Open Space and Recreation Element. Also add any relevant elements that are created as part of the downtown urban design plan (described below under Planning/Studies).

Land Use Element (page 14 of the La Plata Comprehensive Plan)

Add the Conceptual Land Use map showing the long term vision for development of the Town and surrounding area, either as shown in the Vision Plan, or as modified to distinguish clearly between Town and County territory.

Refine the land use categories shown on the Conceptual Land Use map, to provide more specificity to development densities and standards for residential uses in the two general residential categories; consider refining the map further to differentiate between Town/County residential areas, and/or between urban/rural residential areas.

Add the conceptual map for the long term enhancement of the Downtown area.

Transportation Element (page 17 of the La Plata Comprehensive Plan)

Add the Transportation Strategies to promote connectivity and mobility from the policy elements of the Vision Plan.

Add the Transportation Plan map showing the long term vision of the transportation network for the Town and surrounding area.

Open Space and Recreation Element (page 23 of the La Plata Comprehensive Plan)

Add those policies under Public Uses and Streetscape Concepts that deal with open space and recreation resources.

Add a detailed plan element for a network of sidewalks, bikeways and trails linking downtown to surrounding areas (elements created as part of the downtown urban design plan)

Housing Element (page 25)

Add the policies under Residential Uses, and the relevant policies listed under "outlying residential" Streetscape concepts.

Review and Regulation Element (page 27)

Add items listed under Architectural Controls, and cross-reference other relevant items listed under Streetscape Concepts.

Community Facilities Plan (page 61)

Add a map showing the existing and proposed service area for Town water and sewer service.

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

New Section on Town/County Cooperation

Add a new section to the Plan dealing specifically with the importance of continuing cooperation and coordination between the planning efforts of the Town and County, including the specific policy elements contained in this Vision Plan report.

New Section on Plan Implementation

Add a new section to the Plan dealing specifically with implementing the Action Plan contained in this Vision Plan Report. This Action Plan may be refined and updated during the course of public review and adoption.

Suggested Potential Amendments to Town of La Plata Zoning Regulations

Section 191-23 C-B Central Business District

Review this section to ensure that development in this district will be consistent with the Vision Plan goal of creating and maintaining a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented downtown. Items to consider for review and revision include:

- B. Permitted Accessory Uses
Consider adding residential uses.
- C. (5) Convenience stores permitted as a Special exception use
Consider adding special site plan standards for these uses in this district so as to ensure that a pedestrian-oriented streetscape is maintained.
- E. Signs (coordinate any changes with section 191-32)
Consider adopting special sign standards for the C-B district which might reduce the total area of signs and limit or prohibit illuminated signs.
- F. Off-street parking
Consider adopting a special provision for this district that would allow provide greater flexibility in meeting the off-street parking requirements, possibly including the option of contributing money to a Town parking facility fund in lieu of meeting the full off-street parking requirement.

Section 191-24 C-H Commercial Highway District

Review this section to ensure that development in this district will be consistent with the Vision. Items to consider for review and revision include:

- Limit percentage of required parking area that may be located between the principal structure and the front of the lot
- Limit total amount of square footage per structure
- Require sidewalk and driveway or street connections to adjacent parcels
- « Limit access points to major arterial roadways
- « Further limitations on signs
- Special landscaping requirements
- Outdoor lighting requirements/limitations

New District: C-O-P Office/Commercial Parks

Consider the creation of a new district for those portions of the US 301 corridor designated as "Office Park" uses or "Corridor Commercial Park" uses on the Conceptual Land Use map, with provisions such as those required for the Commercial Highway District, but with fewer permitted uses, a minimum district, a larger minimum lot size and limits on the maximum floor area ratio (building intensity).

Section 191-25 I Industrial District

Review this section to ensure that development in this district will be consistent with the Vision. Consider re-organizing the provisions of this district and possibly combining them with the Industrial Park District to form a single I-P industrial district, or creating a very limited. If this district is retained, it should have an intent section, minimum district size and minimum lot size.

Section 191-25.1 I-P Industrial Park District

Review this section to ensure that development in this district will be consistent with the Vision. Items to consider for review and revision include:

- Expand use list to include flex industrial and office/research uses
- Clarify special exception uses
- Clarify types of commercial uses permitted
- Add minimum lot size
- Reduce "by-right" building height
- Consider providing choices and flexibility on landscaping requirements to balance requirement for landscaping (5% green area) with requirements for individual lots
- Require Master Plan submittal and approval as part of rezoning

Section 191-25.3 L-I Light Industrial District

Review this section to ensure that development in this district will be consistent with the Vision. Consider re-organizing the provisions of this district and possibly combining them with the Industrial Park District to form a single I-P industrial district, or creating a very limited, General Commercial district for such uses as mini-warehouses. If this district is retained, it should have an intent section, minimum district size and minimum lot size.

New District: D-M-U Downtown Mixed-Use District

Consider creation of a new district for the downtown area, which could many of the provisions of the C-B district, but with a greater focus on residential uses. Provisions could include a range of dwelling types, moderately high densities, and minimal yard requirements to ensure that structures have a close relationship to the street.

Section 191-34 Site Plans

Review this section in conjunction with the site plan standards of the subdivision ordinance to ensure that adequate provisions are included for achieving coordinated, safe and shared access points along major roadways.

Section 191-42 Cluster Subdivisions

Review this section in order to ensure that it is useful for all single family detached residential districts, rather than only for residential uses at the R-21 density level. Additional provisions for the amount and configuration of required open space would be also be appropriate.

Design Standards

As a separate section under supplemental regulations, the Town should consider adding urban design guidelines for all residential and commercial development. Such standards would be based upon the urban design plan prepared for the downtown area (which should also include design concepts for key portions of the US 301 corridor that connect to the Downtown area).

These guidelines would provide that the design of new buildings, structures, structural alterations or structural rehabilitations, enlargements or reductions are proposed, must be compatible with the historic character and design of the area (or as shown in the urban design plan), and would promote

the historic spatial and visual qualities in downtown area, including building bulk, building setbacks, building height, scale and massing, facade articulation, accessory structures, fences, and parking.

These design standards would not be intended to prescribe architectural styles or design details; rather the standards would be aimed at preserving and enhancing the existing traditional buildings and patterns of development in and around the downtown area.

Inconsistencies Between the Vision Plan and Town Zoning Map

There are relatively few major inconsistencies between the existing zoning map and the Conceptual Land Use Plan map of the Vision Plan. There are many minor inconsistencies that may gradually evolve toward consistency over the course of time. These include:

- The C-H Commercial Highway District along US 301 may be amended to ensure that future development in the long term will contribute to creating an "urban boulevard" for this area, particularly between Route 225 and Charles Street.
- There is an R-3 tract north of Catalpa Drive at the southwest edge of US 301 which is not literally in conformance with the Vision's Conceptual Land Use Plan, although it does not conflict greatly with the thrust of the Conceptual Plan in that it represents higher density development relatively near the downtown area.
- There is an R-3 tract on the west side of Radio Station Road that is located in an area designated as low density residential on the Conceptual Land Use Plan.
- There are potential inconsistencies in between the Conceptual Plan and the two major MUD districts in that the proportion of industrial and residential uses on these two sites may not match the designations shown on the Conceptual Plan. This is probably not a major issue as long as there is a significant amount of employment uses on both tracts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENTS (TOWN, COUNTY AND/OR STATE)

Land Acquisition/Reservation

- Eastern Parkway Loop Road Corridor (State)
- Town Center Site acquisition and development (Town & County with private sector partners)

Transportation Infrastructure Construction

- Heritage Green Parkway
- Jaybee Road
- Extension of Rosewick West
- Extension of Rosewick East
- Construct Route 6 Alternative Connector (State)
- Connecting streets within Downtown (Town, developers)
- Sidewalks, Bikeways and Trails, in accord with Plan (Town/County)

Building/Public Facility Construction

- New Town Hall at Town Center Site (Town)
- County Complex Expansion (County)

Planning/Studies

- Traffic Calming for Route 6 (State)
- Access Management for US 301 (State/County/Town)
- Light Rail Linkage and Site Location for Stations (State)
- Detailed Urban Design Plan for Downtown and Adjacent Areas (include economic development component) (Town)
- Sidewalk, Bikeway and Trails plan (could be subsumed in the Urban Design Plan) (Town)

4.
Summaries of the Vision Workshops
and Other Meetings

Summaries of the Vision Workshops and Other Meetings

BASELINE ASSUMPTIONS

Following are the key Baseline Planning Assumptions derived from the TAG discussion on July 13, in preparation for the first Visioning Workshop.

Growth. Population and employment growth in and around the Town will continue (county/state policies and forecasts - "smart growth", etc.), along with regionally related benefits and impacts

Constraints. Although public facilities and utilities will need upgrading, they can be made to accommodate additional growth in the long term, if such growth is appropriate and desirable

Long Term View. The Vision Plan will take a long term view (50+ years), but should include short term strategies and actions to achieve that vision ("short term constraints often find long term solutions" and "some current practices may have long term limits")

"Greater La Plata". Any Vision of the future must consider downtown La Plata as well as the area adjacent to the Town

Cooperation. Town, County and State cooperation will be required to achieve the desired vision

Small Town Character. Most local residents wish to protect the "Small Town Character" of La Plata

US Route 301. Route 301 will not "go away" - a major highway and/or rail line going through the middle of town causes various impacts

County Seat. La Plata will always be a service center for the County - County not moving out of town

Town Boundaries. The boundaries of the incorporated Town may or may not change in the future, in response to the Town's future needs

Fundamental Choices. The Town must choose what kind of character its downtown will have ("Upper Marlboro or Fredericksburg")

VISION WORKSHOPS

First Vision Workshop July 31, 1999

The first vision workshop was held at the CBI meeting room at Charles County Community College from 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 31, 1999. Of 71 participants invited, 74 were in attendance.

Creation of Vision Statements

The Visioning Team worked as one whole group, as well as in small groups to create vision statements describing the ideal future of La Plata 50 years from now; to develop consensus visions for key topics; and specific goals to express those visions. The entire Visioning Team reviewed all of the goals and ranked them in terms of importance and preference. The most important goals which received the strongest support, in order of priority, are as follows:

Downtown Enrichment

- Make Downtown Pedestrian friendly (grants)
- Create within the Town's Core:
 - Business Service
 - Park like environment
 - Trees, clean streets, sidewalks, etc
- Create Core Business Area
- Town Plaza providing recreation, shops, cultural and social opportunities
- Train Station Project, etc. (promote historical relevance of area)
- Small Shops in Town
- Establish an Architectural Review Board to Direct Creation of a Town Center

La Plata By-Pass

- Re-Routing Principal Thoroughfares from the Town's Core
- La Plata By-Pass; park and ride; rail service
- Town to increase Dialogue for Accelerated Resolution by County and State of Eastern /Western By-passes of the Town
- Begin Process to Get Approval of a Parkway Around La Plata

Mass Transit

- Mass Transportation - set aside infrastructure
- Mass Transit - Metro Green Line from La Plata
- Trolley to connect La Plata, college & Port Tobacco to Promote Historical/Cultural Tourism
- Mass Transit - Town will need to position itself to become transit hub for Southern Maryland in context with mass transit expansion of greater Washington
- Public Transportation ties into other areas of Southern Maryland and Greater Metro Area
- Expand Mass Transit to Southern Maryland
- Link La Plata to MARC system; Bus Stops in Key Locations; Transit Terminals

Parks and Recreation, Civic Enhancement and Open Space

- Upgrade the Park System, Improve Existing Park, Create New Parks
- Large Town Park, with Bandstand, swimming pool, picnic areas, tennis courts
- Designated Bike Routes Throughout Town; Architecture Pleasing; Bike Racks; Appropriately Designed Signage; Sidewalks (Brick) and Street lighting on all Town Streets
- Create A Cultural Arts Center / Recreation Center, including activities for all age groups
- Natural Open Space - public use

Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

Industrial Development

- Tax Incentives, Change of Zoning and Gift of Sites to Encourage High Tech Industry
- Create incentive package to attract high tech and light manufacturing
- Incentives for Targeted Industries - Economic Development Plan
- Designate Hi Tech Business Areas

Buildings and Architecture

- Architectural/Landscape Controls
- Key, unique, one of a kind Buildings and Institutions, i.e., conference center, college, county buildings, courthouse, library, inns, B&Bs

Neighborhood Enhancement

- Unique Neighborhood Concepts
 - Pedestrian access
 - Safety, comfort, sense of belonging
 - Recreation areas
 - Unique construction design

Eight Topic Groups Were Identified from the Initial Goals Exercise (not in any priority).

1. Architectural Quality
2. Pedestrian Friendly Environment
3. Alternative Transportation
4. La Plata By-Pass / Route 301
5. Arts, Culture and Recreation
6. High Tech and New Economy
7. Open Space and Natural Areas
8. Unique Neighborhood Concepts

The Visioning team re-formed into these topic groups and identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each topic. These topic groups served as the framework for all future small group work at the second and third Vision Workshops.



Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

Second Vision Workshop September 11, 1999

The second vision workshop was held at the Richard Clark Senior Center on Saturday, September 11, 1999. Of 70+ participants invited, over 50 were in attendance.

The consulting team presented three major alternative long term future scenarios for transportation and land use for the La Plata area. These scenarios were based upon the results of the first Visioning Workshop and on the analysis conducted by the consulting team.

Each scenario used a different transportation network as a "framework" and thus each had a different future land use pattern based upon that road network. The three scenarios are summarized as follows:

- Route 301 upgraded through the middle of La Plata (no by-pass). Land uses were generally concentrated at the entrance points to town, with little downtown revitalization
- Route 301 by-pass to the west of Town. Land uses were generally concentrated along new major corridors linking downtown to the by-pass, with better opportunities for downtown revitalization.
- Route 301 by-pass to the east of Town. Land uses were generally concentrated along new major corridors linking downtown to the by-pass, with better opportunities for downtown revitalization and for incorporation of Route 301 into the fabric of the town as an "urban boulevard".

The team then presented some ideas for the potential future of the downtown area, emphasizing the potential for a stronger identity as the government center, for "infill" development to create a pedestrian-oriented core, and incorporation of Route 301 into the fabric of the downtown.

Evaluate Transportation Alternatives

Each participant filled out an individual work sheet indicating the rationale for their preference of an east or west by-pass. The results of these work sheets indicated that the Eastern By-Pass Option had stronger support and less opposition among participants than did the Western By-Pass Option, although the results were mixed. (Detailed results of these work sheets are shown in the appendix to this report).

Based upon input at the first workshop, it was clear that the Visioning Team wished to have some kind of by-pass or loop road to take through-traffic around the Town and protect the viability of the downtown area.

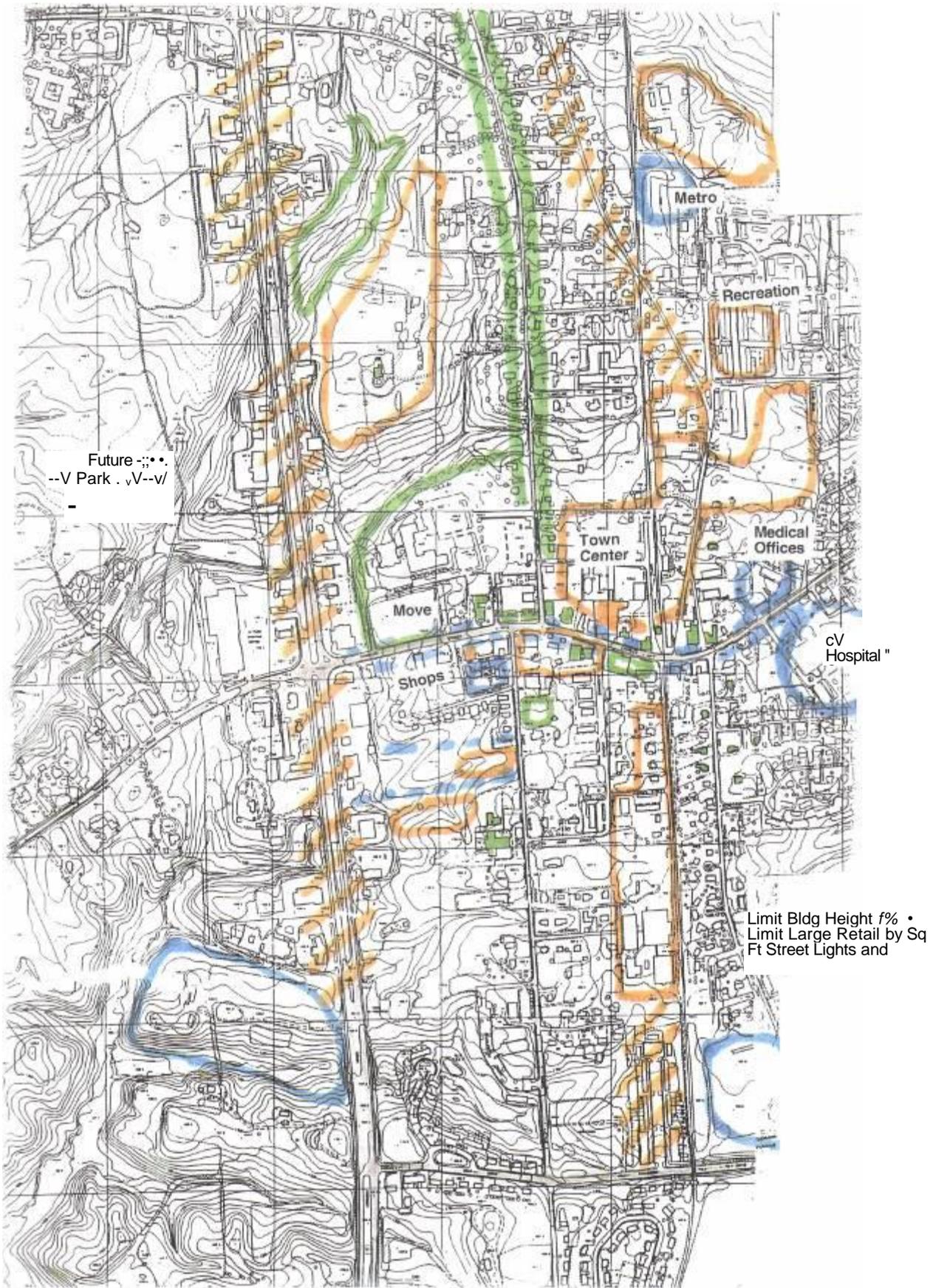


Identify Long Term Future for the **Downtown Area**

The Visioning Team then broke into eight topic groups to sketch long term plans for the future Downtown area. The groups worked "in parallel" with the same assignment. Major ideas that enjoyed multiple mentions and/or broad support among the groups are summarized below. A "composite" map of all eight groups is shown on page 37.

- Save all historic buildings in Town
- Move/redevelop Coke Plant, oil tanks, mill, warehouses
- Move Town Hall into town; Town Square at Coke Plant
- Washington Avenue - keep residential
- More retail around P. O.
- Health campus
- Sidewalks on streets; Walk-bike system
- Preserve - county government center, hospital center, P.O.
- Amenity at Hermitage (park/lake)
- Access to west side
- Look at deteriorating residential around industrial areas
- Other uses - 301 boulevard connected with Charles St., High density residential connect to Downtown
- Consider retail focus of Downtown (keep things like farmers market)
- Need arts/cultural center
- Youth recreation - sports, entertainment, education
- Critical mass in five minute walk zone
- Parking deck to conserve land and provide for new traffic
- Theater important - keep or provide new location
- Commercial development that fits downtown
- Recreation facility within walk of Downtown
- Preserve core
- Town Hall center with retail, parking
- New central green space
- Park and Ride
- Small business downtown
- High tech near County Center, Hospital
- Improve / keep 301 corridor
- Preserve / improve Main street
- Agracopia Farm - preserve - Clark's Run - recreation area





Vision Plan for Greater La Plata

COMPOSITE OF IDEAS
 FOR THE DOWNTOWN AREA

From the workgroups at Vision Workshop 9/11/99

-  Features to Save
-  Features to Add
-  Areas to Redevelop

Pick a By-Pass Corridor

Each of the eight topic groups was asked to discuss the two general options for a by-pass (eastern or western corridor) and to reach a consensus agreement on the preferred route. This choice then determined which transportation base map the group would use to show preferred future land uses for the greater La Plata area.

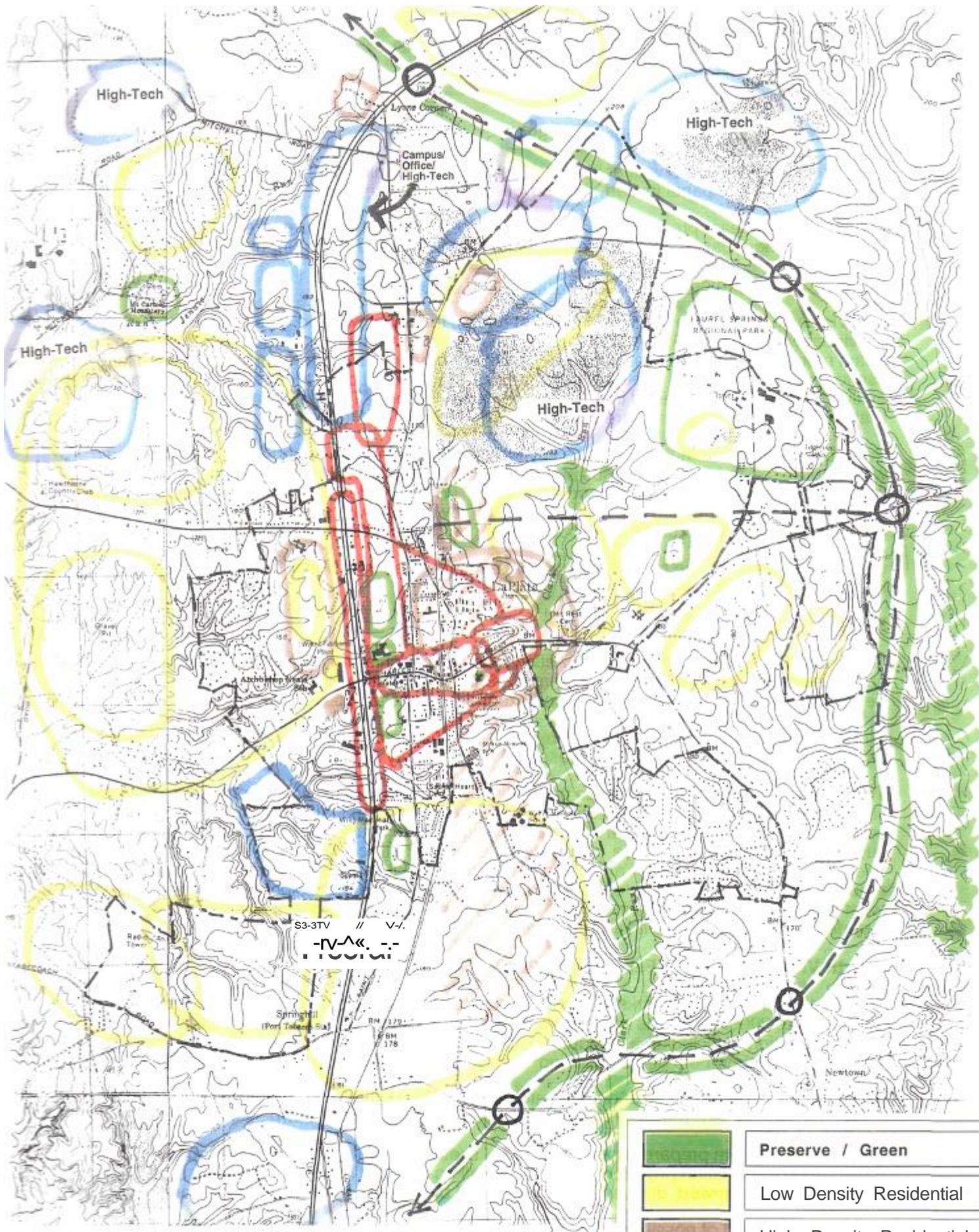
Sketch a long term plan for general land use in the whole greater La Plata area

Each of the eight topic groups was asked to sketch a long term scenario for future land uses in the greater La Plata area. Each group was specifically asked to work together to:

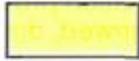
- Locate future industrial and "big box" retail employment
- Locate future retail/office employment
- Locate new residential (higher density and lower density)
- Locate key sites/areas to be preserved

The results of this exercise are summarized below. A "composite" map of the results is shown on page 39.

- Build-out 301 retail commercial
- Build up core - keep edges low density
- Preserve parks, open space
- High tech around college
- Eliminate some proposed interchanges
- Make by-pass a "greenway" corridor
- Extend Hawthorn R. East-west
- N.E. area commercial, light industrial
- Question need for big boxes in La Plata
- Big Boxes - north of Food Lion
- Urban core ends at Hawthorn; campus new commercial N. E.
- Preserve Clark's Run
- Golf course
- Low density development to By-pass
- Preserve Downtown core
- Need to study east/west traffic
- High tech campus, north
- Protect parks, McCormick and Clarks Run swamp
- High density residential around metro stops
- Retail commercial up-grade west side of 301
- Low density on edges
- High Tech on rail and regional highways
- Retail on Main and 301 (boulevarded)



Vision Plan for Greater La Plata
 COMPOSITE OF IDEAS
 FOR THE GREATER LAPLATA AREA
 From the workgroups at Vision Workshop 9/11/99

	Preserve / Green
	Low Density Residential
	High Density Residential
	Commercial
	Industrial

Third Vision Workshop October 30, 1999

The third vision workshop was held at the Richard Clark Senior Center on Saturday, October 30, 1999. Of 70+ participants invited, over 50 were in attendance.

The Consulting Team presented the draft vision scenarios that were prepared after the second Vision Workshop, based upon the results of that workshop and further input from the TAG.

Evaluated and Affirmed Visions for Downtown and Greater La Plata

The Visioning Team then evaluated the draft futures for downtown and greater La Plata, using individual work sheets. A review of the results of these evaluations indicated that the Visioning Team members had collectively affirmed the preferred future visions for transportation and land use for the downtown and Greater La Plata areas. (A compilation of the results of these individual evaluation sheets is contained in the Appendix to this report). The Vision maps for greater La Plata and downtown La Plata are shown on pages 9 and 10 of this report.

Participants also evaluated all of those key elements that emerged during the workshops and which appeared to have consensus support, also by using individual worksheets. All of these key ideas received broad support and affirmation. (The only idea that won only a narrow margin of support was to allow "big box" retail within the Town limits with strict design controls - many participants preferred to prohibit big box uses regardless of design).

(These key ideas and the relative ranking that each received from Vision Team members are listed in the Appendix of this report).

Reviewed and Refined Action Plans

The Consulting Team presented draft Action Plans to for achieving the Vision. The Plans included an Immediate Action Plan (2000 - 2001) and a Short Term Action Plan (2001 - 2006). The Visioning Team then worked in groups to refine and expand those action plans.

The Visioning Team then reviewed the results as a whole group and ranked all of the actions to establish priorities. The results are presented in the Priority Actions on page 14 of this report.

The third workshop was designed to be the final workshop of the visioning process. However, subsequent to this workshop, the State Highway Administration staff formally requested that consideration be given to another alternative design for the future US 301 Corridor. The SHA suggested that US 301 could be "depressed" below grade through the Town, so as to limit the direct impact on the downtown and avoid the environmental impacts of building a new corridor around Town. The consulting team evaluated this concept and the Visioning Team was called together for a fourth workshop in order to formally consider this alternative and decide whether to include it as an option in the final Vision Plan.

Fourth Vision Workshop February 26, 2000

The fourth of three vision workshops was held at the Richard Clark Senior Center on Saturday, February 26, 2000. This was a special workshop conducted for the purpose of considering the SHA suggestion of including a long term option for depressing US 301 through the Town. It was attended by 50 members of the Visioning Team, including a staff representative of the SHA.

The State Highway Administration requested that the Town's Vision Plan include an option for building a "depressed" roadway within the US 301 corridor through Town.

The consulting team prepared some conceptual sketches of potential features of such a facility, based upon information provided by SHA, as well as analysis by the consulting team. These sketches were reviewed, discussed and evaluated by the Visioning Team at the special workshop.

Following is the list of possible advantages and disadvantages of such a facility that the Visioning Team considered. This list was reviewed in advance of the workshop by the SHA staff.

Pros and Cons of a Depressed Roadway on Existing US 301 Right of Way

Following is a list of some of the possible advantages and disadvantages of such a facility. A precise evaluation is not possible without further study, but the following points represent a preliminary evaluation of the concept as it might compare to a parkway / loop road.

These pros and cons were prepared by Herd Planning & Design, Kellerco, Charles Lamb and Tom Flynn, and were reviewed and refined by the Technical Advisory Group on January 31, 2000.

Pros	Cons
<p><i>Political Support.</i> Has support of SNA and thus potential support from County and State leaders.</p>	<p><i>Political Support.</i> This option is not (yet) a formal proposal from SHA; feasibility study needed.</p>
<p><i>Cost.</i> Total cost <u>may be less</u> than a parkway / loop road.</p>	<p><i>Cost.</i> Total cost <u>may be more</u> than for a by-pass/loop. (2.5 miles of depressed road and 0.75 mile of tunnel required).</p>
<p><i>Environment.</i> Would have less direct impact on sensitive environmental areas around town than would a parkway / loop road.</p>	<p><i>Environment.</i> Greater direct impact on environmental quality within Town - air quality, noise; impact on drainage and hydrology in area of tunnel.</p>
<p><i>Accommodate future by-pass.</i> Could be designed to accommodate the future addition of a parkway / loop road in the future if needed.</p>	<p><i>Accommodation of future by-pass.</i> Could weaken or eliminate commitment for future parkway /loop.</p>
<p><i>Local Business.</i> May have less impact on the long term market of some existing businesses than would a parkway / loop road.</p>	<p><i>Local Business.</i> Will have huge negative impact on most existing businesses during and after construction; one-way access may be detrimental.</p>
<p><i>Timing.</i> May be able to be built sooner than parkway /loop road due to political support and environmental issues.</p>	<p><i>Transition issues.</i> Impact on businesses and downtown environment during construction.</p>
<p><i>Network.</i> May be able to accommodate the conceptual road network preferred by the Vision Team, if supplemented.</p>	<p><i>Safety Hazard.</i> Depressed road would present serious safety and congestion risks in the case of a truck accident in the tunnel/depressed section.</p>
<p><i>Parkland.</i> The tunnel between Rt. 225 and Rt. 6 may be developed as a public park.</p>	<p><i>No Future Expansion/Long Term Capacity constraints.</i> Depressed road can not be expanded w/o destroying Town, thus, by-pass likely needed in future anyway. 20 year capacity? Serious capacity constraints will occur at the n/s termini of the depressed facility; once depressed, re-settlement / expanded access will be more costly.</p>
<p><i>Sprawl.</i> Would create less <u>direct</u> pressure for "sprawl" land uses around town than would a parkway / loop road with interchanges outside town; (However, may increase long term pressures for sprawl due to traffic congestion and inconvenience through Town).</p>	<p><i>Size.</i> A 10-lane facility would go through the Town.</p>
<p><i>Air-rights.</i> Median above tunnel would create potential additional real estate for commercial and or public uses; may off-set costs.</p>	<p><i>East Coast Traffic.</i> US 301 will carry a greater amount of thru traffic, which would be tunneled through/past downtown La Plata, co-mingling local access w/ thru traffic.</p>
<p><i>Right of Way.</i> Present r-o-w is enough for six lanes depressed plus four service lanes.</p>	<p><i>Downtown Traffic.</i> Would aggravate, not relieve.</p>
<p><i>Traffic.</i> Maybe better <u>short term</u> traffic relief.</p>	<p><i>Design Complexity:</i></p>
<p><i>Roundabouts.</i> Design may accommodate pedestrian and bike traffic and ventilation shafts.</p>	<p><i>Northern interchange.</i> Design of tunnel/depressed entrance is very complex, if even possible. <i>One-way service roads.</i> Create circuitous routing. <i>Bridges.</i> Need more bridges to prevent congestion. <i>Grade at termini.</i> Grades/topo may not accommodate tunnel/depressed road cost-effectively. <i>Signage.</i> Confusion at termini would occur. <i>Bikeways.</i> Will not accommodate bikeways in r-o-w. <u>Utilities.</u> Cost of relocating water, sewer, fiber optics.</p>
<p><i>Potential New Alignment.</i> Potential for new "bypass" parallel and adjacent on the west side of current 301 alignment.</p>	

Potential Language for the Vision Plan

The Visioning Team evaluated the pros and cons of the depressed roadway option, and decided by majority vote not to include it in the final report, because they believed it best to put forth the Town's most desired outcome. The language considered by the Visioning Team was as follows:

The Visioning process has produced a consensus recommendation of local citizens that a parkway by-pass should be built to the east of La Plata in order to protect the downtown from the severe impacts of high volumes of regional traffic.

However, citizens recognize that there are special challenges to building a by-pass facility. These include the review processes required by NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act), the cost of land acquisition and construction, potential opposition due to environment concerns, and potential opposition from state officials due to perceived conflicts with the concept of "smart growth".

Therefore, citizens and leaders of the Town believe it would be prudent to include an additional option for the long term future road network in and around Town. This option would consist of a "depressed" roadway along the existing US 301 corridor all the way through the town. Such a road would provide greater capacity than the current US 301 facility. While it is not the option preferred by the Town, it may be a viable option from the viewpoint of County and State officials. Thus, it is included in this report as a secondary, long term option.

Note that this "depressed" roadway option does not preclude the eventual construction of a parkway loop road. Both facilities may be required at some point in the future. In fact, if the depressed roadway is constructed, its capacity is severely constrained at the outset, and thus construction of a parkway loop road will likely still be needed in the future.

However, if such a depressed facility is ever built, it is imperative that it have certain features that are absolutely essential to the long term quality of life and economic prosperity of the Town.

The Conditions Required for Acceptance of this Concept by the Town would include:

- *Overall Design:* The general design and configuration of the depressed roadway facility and adjacent features should be in general accord with the conceptual sketches included in this Vision Plan, while recognizing that specific design details may vary due to site-specific conditions and future design refinements.
- *Termini.* The depressed roadway will extend from a point north of Town at approximately one half mile south of the intersection of Mitchell Road and US 301, to a point south of Town approximately 3/4 of a mile south of the intersection of Charles Street and US 301.
- *Covered Roadway.* The depressed roadway will be fully covered (tunnel) on the portions from Rt. 225 to Centennial Street shown on the conceptual sketches, except for required ventilation.
Note that SNA has indicated that full coverage for this entire portion of the road would probably be too expensive. Exact amount or percentage of coverage can not be known without further design and cost studies.
- *Street System.* The Central Business District street grid system is extended to US 301.
- » *Character of US 301.* US 301 is developed as an "urban business boulevard" with access from businesses along it.
- *Route 6 Connector.* The State will build the Route 6 connector link within five years.
- *Agreement to Preserve Both Options.* Further, in order for the Town to support plans for such a depressed road facility within the Town, there must be an Interjurisdictional Agreement between the State, County and Town to preserve both options for US 301 (parkway loop road and tunnel), with both options adopted as options in Town, County and State plans.
- *Right-of-way.* Depressed roadway for US 301 will be within existing right-of-way (unless "urban diamond" is built at an appropriate point and linked sensitively to the street grid of downtown)

TAG (TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP) MEETINGS

The Technical Advisory Group met on July 13, September 7 and October 19, 1999, in advance of each Vision Workshop. The TAG reviewed draft products produced by the consulting and gave insight and direction for the consultants' preparations for each workshop. The TAG also held a special fourth meeting on January 31, 2000 to consider the request of the State Highway Administration to include the "depressed" roadway option for US 301 through Town.

SPECIAL MEETINGS WITH TOWN, COUNTY AND STATE OFFICIALS

At key points in the process, members of the consulting team met informally with various town, county and state officials to brief them on the progress of the work and to get their input and advice as the project moved forward. Consultants met with senior staff members of the State Highway Administration, the Town's Business Commission and members of the Charles County Commission.