



## Protecting Farmland

As demonstrated in the previous section, farmland in Prince George's County is disappearing at a rapid pace. If the loss of farmland continues at this rate, no farmland will be left by 2050. A report by the American Farmland Trust includes a significant portion of Prince George's County in its inventory of high-quality farmland under high development pressure (see Map 5). Given the alarming potential farmland loss, the county should consider establishing strategies to protect this disappearing resource.

Many reasons exist for protecting farmland in Prince George's County.



Local farms provide fresh food to the community and the region, strengthening the link between producers and consumers. The demand for locally grown fresh produce is on the rise.



Farmland provides substantial environmental benefits, including controlling flooding, protecting wetlands and watersheds, providing habitat for wildlife, and maintaining air quality.



Farming contributes to the county's economic base; it creates jobs, provides products for sale, supports related services and businesses, and produces tax revenue. Agriculture is the number one industry in the state of Maryland.





Farming is an integral part of the county's heritage. Family-owned farms have been passed down from generation to generation, creating a unique community character and contributing to the quality of life.



Preserving farmland retains the rural character. Rural conservation is the county's policy objective for the Rural Tier.



Farmland maintains scenic, cultural and historic landscapes that often attract and support the tourist industry. Urbanites enjoy getting out of the city and exploring the aesthetic qualities of the countryside. The county's beautiful rural landscape and working farms are only half an hour away from the nation's capital.



Farmland can be used for outdoor recreational purposes such as fishing, hunting, horseback riding, camping, cross-country skiing, and picnicking.



Farms provide educational opportunities, such as school tours, nursery tours, and agricultural technical tours for the community.

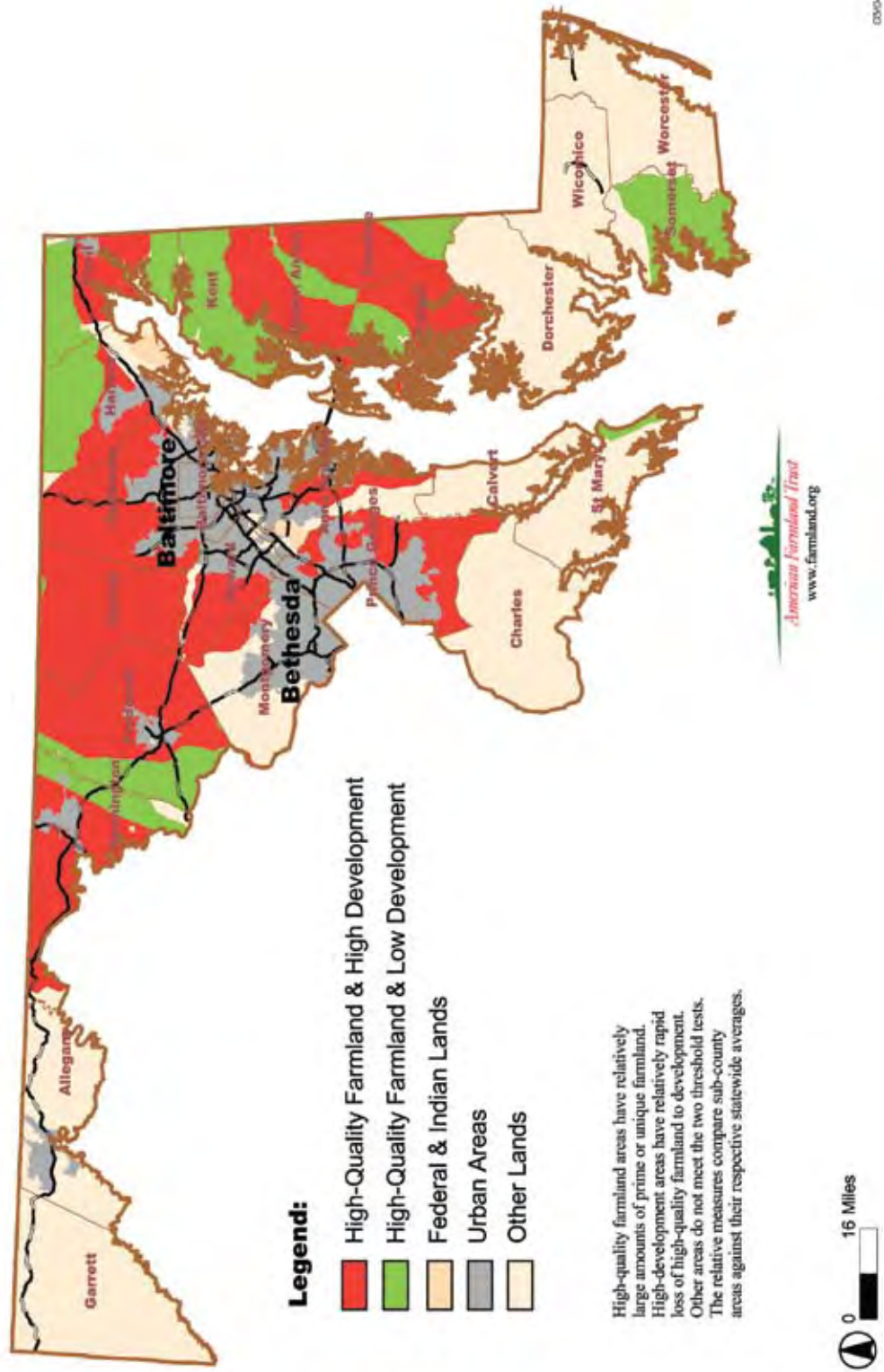


Preserving farmland also contributes to historic preservation. The National Trust for Historic Preservation included the Tobacco Barns of Southern Maryland in its 2004 list of America's Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places. Preserving historic tobacco barns in their intact rural setting offers an opportunity for preserving cultural and historic resources that reflect the county's rural heritage.

To help preserve farmland, policies and plans have been adopted both at state and county level.



**Map 5: Farming On The Edge  
Sprawling Development Threatens America's Best Farmlands**



This map is reproduced with the permission of the American Farmland Trust. For full documentation, visit [www.farmland.org/farmingontheedge](http://www.farmland.org/farmingontheedge).

## Smart Growth and Agriculture Connection

One of the principles of Maryland's Smart Growth initiative is to "preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas." The state of Maryland pioneered the smart growth concept and Prince George's County embraced it. In the late 1990s, to control growth and preserve farmland, Priority Funding Areas were designated outside the rural areas where the majority of farmland is located. On the other hand, Rural Legacy Areas, the preservation counterpart to Priority Funding Areas, were designated to protect large, contiguous rural landscapes, encompassing agricultural, natural, cultural, and forestry resources. Priority Funding Areas and Rural Legacy Areas are designed to work together to ensure that Maryland's communities and natural resource lands continue to function as healthy places and contribute to the vitality of Maryland's economy.<sup>5</sup>

## General Plan and Master Plans

The 2002 Prince George's County Approved General Plan identifies three policy areas: Developed, Developing and Rural Tiers (see Map 6). The General Plan policy for the Rural Tier is summarized as follows: "The vision for the Rural Tier is protection of large amounts of land for woodland, wildlife habitat, recreation and agricultural pursuits, and preservation of the rural character and vistas that now exist. Land use, environmental, transportation, and public facilities policies recommended for the Rural Tier are intended to balance the ever-increasing pressure for residential development and landowner's equity with the desire to maintain rural environs and character."<sup>6</sup>

Even prior to the state's Smart Growth initiative and the county's General Plan, rural conservation and agricultural preservation were important concepts for the rural parts of the county. Both Subregion V and Subregion VI Study Area master plans have provisions about maintaining farmland, woodland, and the rural character. A major goal of the Subregion VI Study Area master plan, which includes the southeastern portion of the county, is to preserve the rural character of the area.<sup>7</sup> The plan encourages the continuation of agriculture as an economic activity, and supports preservation of farmland, woodlands, and other natural, cultural and historic resources. The plan introduced the Rural Conservation Subdivision concept to allow preservation of permanent open space, without lowering land values or affecting landowner's equity. Legislation has been drafted and scheduled for introduction in January 2006 to implement this concept. Where farmland cannot be preserved for perpetuity through land preservation programs or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), the Rural Conservation Subdivision concept is an excellent alternative to conventional large-lot development.

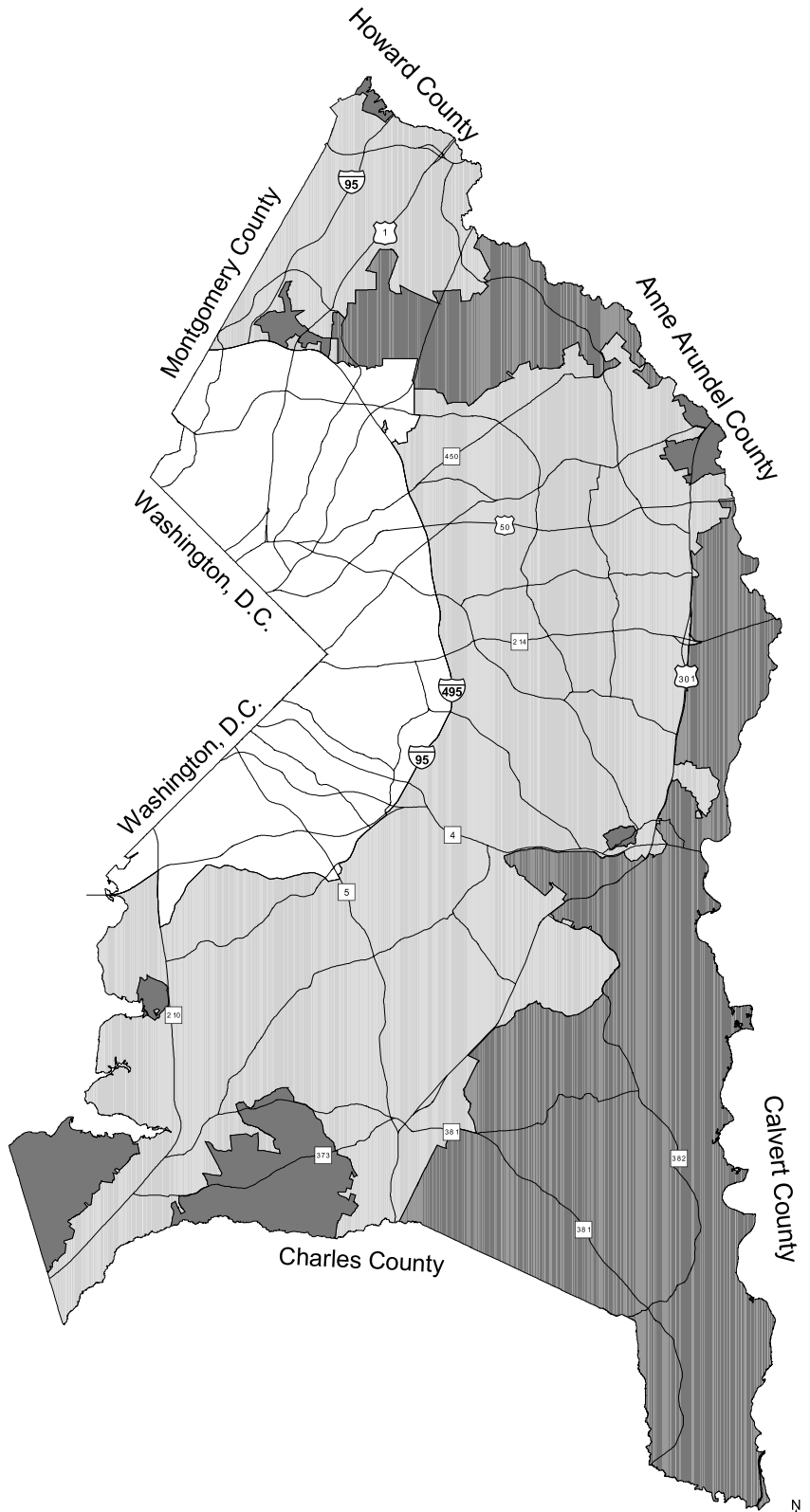
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<sup>5</sup> Maryland Department of Planning: [http://www.mdp.state.md.us/legacy\\_rural.htm](http://www.mdp.state.md.us/legacy_rural.htm).

<sup>6</sup> The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, *Prince George's County Approved General Plan*, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Subregion VII Study Area*.

**Map 6:  
Prince George's County  
Development Tiers**



0 5 10 Miles

Source: M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department

### Preserved Farmland in Prince George's County and Adjoining Counties

All Maryland counties adjoining Prince George's County have local farmland preservation programs and participate in various state programs. Table 4 shows the amount of preserved privately-owned farmland under various programs in Prince George's and adjoining counties. Prince George's County lags behind its neighbors in preservation programs and has the least amount of preserved private farmland among all Maryland counties.

	Anne Arundel	Calvert	Charles	Howard	Montgomery	Prince George's
MD Ag Land Preservation Foundation	4,317	4,467	2,967	3,949	3,322	123
County Ag Preservation Programs	5,693	4,936	–	15,175	6,678	–
Transfer of Development Rights	–	11,283	2,301	–	45,042	–
Rural Legacy	855	1,366	1,695	81	3,904	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,865</b>	<b>22,052</b>	<b>6,963</b>	<b>19,205</b>	<b>58,946</b>	<b>123</b>

Source: Data provided by individual counties from published and unpublished sources collected from various agencies.

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program is one of the oldest and most successful programs of its kind in the country. The MALPF Program consists of two basic steps: the establishment of agricultural preservation districts and the purchase of perpetual agricultural conservation easements. Although the program began in 1977, Prince George's County did not participate until 2004. In spring 2004, the first easement was established on a 122.74-acre farm<sup>8</sup>. There are two more farms<sup>9</sup> in MALPF agricultural districts, and they are likely candidates for future easements. Chart 3 illustrates the percent of land preserved in each county under MALPF. In both absolute and relative terms, Calvert County has the highest and Prince George's County has the least amount.



<sup>8</sup> Bull Run Farm at 3009 Accokeek Road.

<sup>9</sup> Deakins Run Farm (132 acres) on Gardner Road and Springhill Farm (313 acres) at 16400 Aquasco Farm Road.