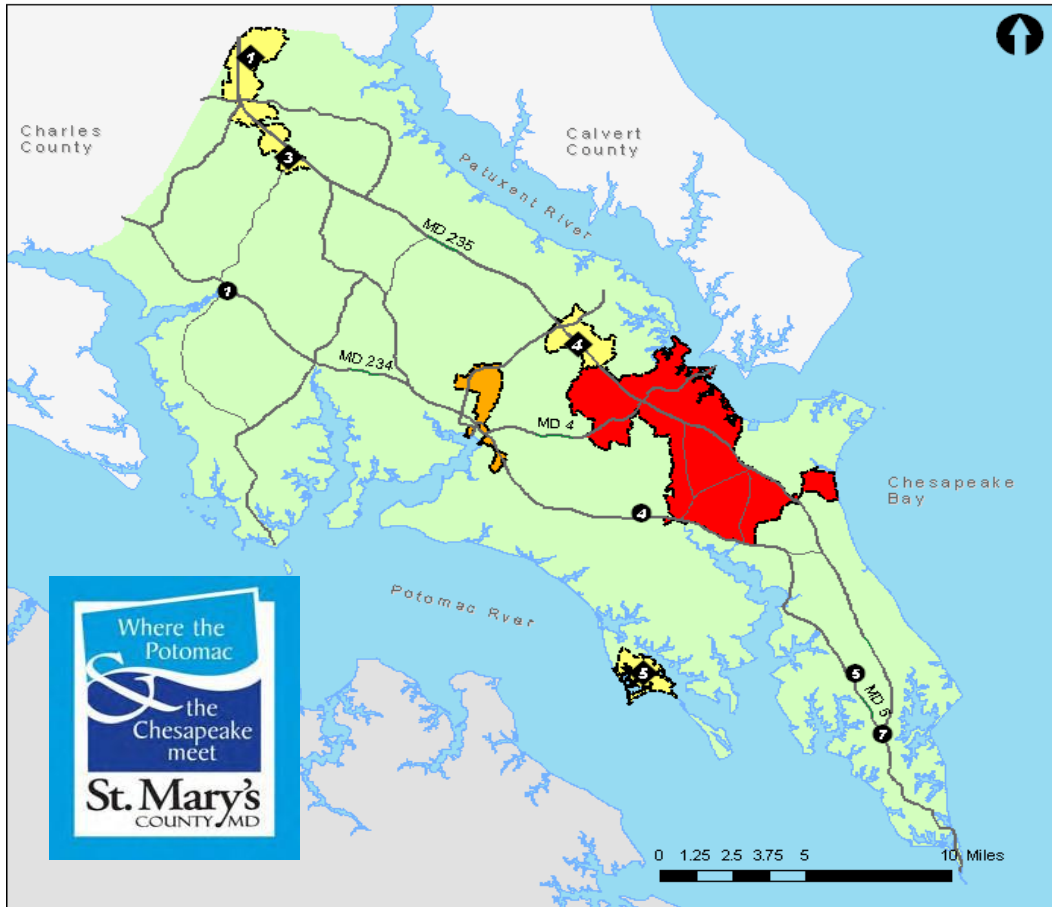


# ST. MARY'S COUNTY, MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Adopted: March 23, 2010

Effective: April 6, 2010

## QUALITY OF LIFE IN ST. MARY'S COUNTY A STRATEGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY **Draft Updates**

### **Introduction**

**Chapter 1:** Notable History and Characteristics

**Chapter 2:** Community Profile and Trends

May 3, 2021

**THE ST. MARY'S COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE 2021**

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# THE ST. MARY'S COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Introduction

Community planning and land use regulation in St. Mary's County has changed over the past 54 years when our first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1967. There have been six Comprehensive Plans adopted in: 1967, 1974, 1988, 1999, 2002 and 2010. The master plan for the Lexington Park Development District, a principal growth area in St. Mary's County, was updated in 2016. In 2020, the Comprehensive Plan was amended to support future expansion of the St. Clement's Shores Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to serve the Compton community.

The Comprehensive Plan is a land use and growth management document developed by the St. Mary's County Planning Commission and adopted by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County after resident input. The Commissioners of St. Mary's County use the Plan to manage resources and growth, preserve prime agricultural lands, protect environmentally sensitive areas, strengthen the economic base, provide efficient public services, and manage water resources. This Plan Update capitalizes upon the County's dedication to planning and is intended to guide decision making for the next 10 years. It comprises the long-term goals, guidance and recommendations relating to land development and preservation policies.

This Plan Update helps implement the Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC) [mission statement](#) to provide effective and efficient services, foster opportunities for future generations, preserve the environment, heritage, and rural character, by being responsible and accountable to the County's citizens.

## Legal Basis of the Plan

The State of Maryland requires that Comprehensive Plans be reviewed, and if needed, updated on a 10-year cycle. The Maryland Department of Planning on behalf of the State, reviews Comprehensive Plans for consistency with the State's Smart Growth and growth management laws, specifically, the Land Use Articles.

The legal basis includes the State Plan Visions-as per the Md Land Use Code 1-201 Visions. This is Maryland's Planning Visions Law (from 2009) that created 12 visions for achieving more sustainable patterns of growth and development throughout the State. It also includes State Plan Elements-Per Land Use Code 3-102 (a) that states that St. Mary's County's updated Comprehensive Plan must include the required elements.

In accordance with Section 3-204 of the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the St. Mary's County Comprehensive Plan Update will consist of goals, objectives, policies, text, maps, and charts.

The Planning Commission has the function and duty to prepare a comprehensive plan for St. Mary's County. As such, it will engage in a participation plan for a public engagement process. Residents will provide essential input and direction for the Plan Update's recommendations. Policy guidance will be obtained through public outreach including a community survey, community events, virtual workshops, and meetings, in addition to CSMC work sessions.

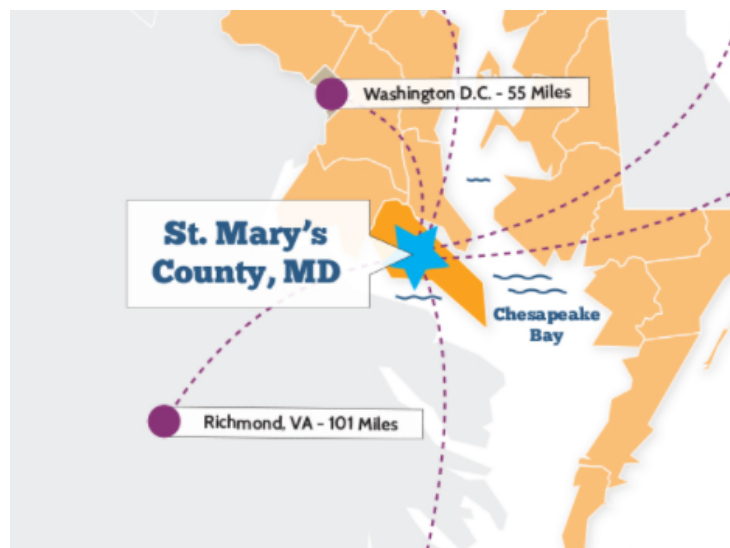
## Proposed Structure of the Comprehensive Plan Update

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan Update is to demonstrate, assemble and document the wishes of the community concerning its vision for the future of St. Mary's County and express these aspirations in value

statements, goals and action plans to achieve the stated goals. For the benefit of the public, it outlines measures expressing the area’s growth potential and new development opportunities. The Plan Update will plan land uses, coordinate transportation networks, provide a guide toward decisions for prioritizing and spending public dollars and provide a rational and reasonable basis for making development decisions. The update will review the County’s previous 2010 Comprehensive Plan by applying the community’s vision for future Land Use Plan, goals, objectives, and strategies to achieve the stated desires. These updates and directives will help St. Mary’s continuing to be a sought-after community by residents, visitors, and new businesses.

The document is organized in 14 chapters.

**Chapter 1- Notable History and Characteristics** St. Mary’s County’s roots and unique features are revealed in its historic districts and properties, Chesapeake Bay- Patuxent River-Potomac River-Wicomico River-St. Mary’s River waterfronts and agriculture preservation areas. In addition to its development districts and high-tech defense sector, this initial section contains a locational description as a Chesapeake Bay Peninsula; its historical background as an early American settlement; and World War II Naval Aviation. Since its commissioning April 1, 1943, Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River has evolved into the Center of Excellence for Naval Aviation. It is also known as: “Where the future of Naval aviation infrastructure begins, Naval Air Station Patuxent River (NAS Patuxent River) and the Webster Outlying Field.” It is also a farming and recreational resource. The County is on the outer edge of the Washington, D.C., Commuting Region, a distance of 55 miles.



<https://www.yesstmarysmd.com/>

Map Reference: Department of Economic Development

## **Chapter 2 -Trends and Community Profile**

The Trends and Community Profile helps to set the baseline for the Comprehensive Plan Update. The Community Profile examines population growth trends, demographics and factors that impact land use, employment, housing, community facilities and transportation.

## **Chapter 3: Successes and Challenges**

Based on the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, this will review the achievements and outcomes since 2010. It includes the effectiveness of state and local policies intended to influence land use and the evaluative frameworks for assessing land use planning and policy.

#### **Chapter 4: Community Vision and Strategy**

Based on the assessment of baseline data and review of the success and challenges, this section will provide a foundational element for the planning process. It will outline the Community Vision inclusive of the 12 visions for St. Mary County that will be detailed per State requirements (Md Land Use Code 1-201).

A fundamental component of the planning process involves recording the vision of the community.

The vision guides decisions within the community and serves as the basis for the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan Update. The vision helps to guide the Planning Commission to ensure that decisions are ultimately in conformance with the aspirations of residents.

The Comprehensive Plan Update will include the required Land Use Element based on Land Use Code Section-102 and other additional elements to advance the purpose of the Plan Update. Each element will have goals and objectives with other requirements.

#### **Chapter 5: Water Resources Element**

In 2006, Maryland's General Assembly passed House Bill 1141 highlighting the importance of considering water resource management and the growth-related impacts on Maryland's aquifers, waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. This law required local comprehensive plans to include the analysis of water supply and sewer capacity. The Plan Update includes a water supply assessment to ensure that drinking water and other water resources will be adequate for existing and future development. It will also guarantee that there are suitable receiving waters and land areas to meet stormwater management and wastewater treatment and disposal needs. Groundwater assessment will be detailed in this section.

#### **Chapter 6: Resource Protection Element (Sensitive Areas Protection Element)**

The Sensitive Areas Element sets goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards to protect Sensitive Areas from the effects of development. The Maryland Land Use Article (Section 3-109) requires jurisdictions to protect streams and their buffers and areas of critical State concern. This includes tidal wetlands, non-tidal wetlands, tidal and non-tidal floodplains, habitat protection areas, threatened and endangered species, steep slopes, agricultural and forest lands, open spaces, and mineral resources.

#### **Chapter 7: Growth Management Element**

Md. Code, Land Use § 3-111 requires maps, goals, objectives, and policies that guide how lands are to be conserved and developed. The Plan Update provides a framework to accommodate future development in an efficient and sustainable manner that is compatible with the character of the County, such as the protection of valuable and sensitive natural resources. It includes a land use plan concept, a growth areas concept, preservation area concept, rural preservation goals, and development guidelines.

#### **Chapter 8: Priority Preservation Area (PPA) Element**

The Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 (HB 2), passed by the Maryland Legislature, requires certified counties to establish Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs) in their comprehensive plans. It requires that a county seeking state certification of its agricultural land preservation program identify Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs) and update its comprehensive plan with a PPA element. This update will review the designated PPAs that contains productive agricultural or forest soils supporting profitable agricultural and forestry enterprises.

#### **Chapter 9: Housing Element**

House Bill 1045 adopted in 2019 added a Housing Element requirement for Comprehensive Plans written after June 1, 2020. The Housing Element Bill includes housing goals, objectives, policies, plans and standards; updates of the Area Median Income (AMI) adjusted for household sizes, and the following:

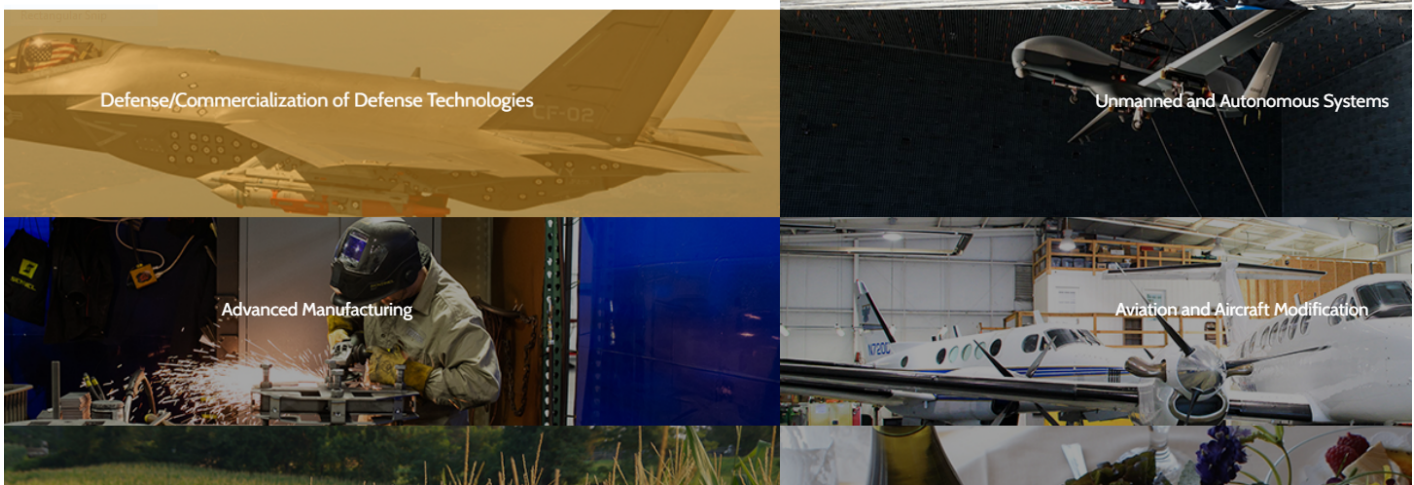
Low Income Housing- Affordable to a household with an aggregate annual income that is below 60% of the area's median income; Workforce Housing- Housing Ownership that is affordable to households with an

aggregate annual income between 60%-120% of the Area Median Income (AMI); Rental Housing that is affordable to a household with an aggregate annual income between 50%-100% of the area AMI. The Comprehensive Plan Update will include housing visioning and implementation, comprising of Housing Planning, Housing Data and Housing Practices and Housing Affordability to meet the requirements.

### **Chapter 10: Economic Development Element**

The purpose of the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan Update is to provide a framework of goals, objectives and policies that states the County’s desire and strategy toward maintaining a strong, healthy local economy. Committing to these policies in the Plan Update is an important step for making progress toward achieving its economic vision. The Economic Development Element will complement St. Mary’s County existing economic development programs, initiatives, and procedures. The civilian labor force, the unemployment rate, the federal defense, and high-tech sectors will be examined. DED is updating its economic development plan.

<https://www.yesstmarysmd.com/industries/>



Source: Department of Economic Development.

### **Chapter 11: Community Services and Facilities Element**

The Community Services and Facilities Element will provide policies and actions on health care, childcare and senior care facilities, libraries, police stations, fire stations and other facilities. A well-balanced and adequate public facility system is a key part of the County’s drive to sustain and enhance the quality of life for its residents. This Community Services and Facilities Plan Element will also include data on existing and proposed County and other public facilities, semi-public facilities, parks and recreation, schools, utilities services.

### **Chapter 12: Transportation Element**

The Maryland Land Use Article section §3-102 requires a jurisdiction to include a transportation element in its Comprehensive Plan. The introduction to the transportation element will summarize the community’s vision for its transportation network, with community input it will receive during the stakeholder engagement portion of the comprehensive planning process. This element will include existing transportation facilities by mode, goals / objectives / policies / recommendations, and an implementation plan. Issues to be addressed include the non-motorized transportation (pedestrian walkways, footpaths, sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle and trail facilities, bicycle friendly streets, interconnected greenways, share use paths, off-road paths, bikeways, and bike lanes), the need for continued development of the County's aviation facilities and a long-range transportation plan. The Department of Public Works and Transportation is currently updating the County Transportation Plan.



### **Chapter 13: Human Services Element**

The Human Services Element will provide a review of programs and services needed by the County's residents, and segments of the population in need. It defines the County's roles and describes tools that can be used to understand and address residents' needs for human services. Attention will be given to the senior population as well as children and teenagers. The Human Services Element will describe the efforts in planning, funding, coordinating, and improving human services delivery in order to achieve a more socially sustainable community.

<https://www.stmarysmd.com/aging/>

### **Chapter 14: Implementation**

The Implementation Element describes how the policies and actions in the Comprehensive Plan should be carried out. The Element provides recommendations on improving the long-range planning process, enhancing links between the Comprehensive Plan Update and future County budgets. It also identifies recommended Comprehensive Plan actions and zoning regulations to ensure relationships and consistency between the comprehensive plan, the zoning ordinance, and other regulations.

## Chapter 1-Notable History and Characteristics

### A Chesapeake Bay Peninsula

The County is a Chesapeake Bay peninsula, an early American settlement, a farming community, the site of the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, (NAS Patuxent River), part of the Washington, D.C., commuting region, and a recreational resource. There is the need to protect the unique character of St. Mary's County as a rural Chesapeake Bay peninsula, by preserving the agricultural landscape, conserving its natural resources, and preserving its historical heritage in the process of growth management.

St. Mary's County is in Southern Maryland. The county is bordered on the west by the Wicomico River, on the south by the Potomac River, on the east by the Chesapeake Bay, and on the northeast by the Patuxent River. With over 500 miles of shoreline on the Patuxent River, Wicomico River, Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay, 22.1% (51,171 acres) of the County's land area is within 1,000 feet of tidal waters, thereby within the "critical area" as defined by State legislation. <https://dnr.maryland.gov/criticalarea/Pages/default.aspx> Water based recreation provides a wide range of experiences and choices where the Potomac and Patuxent meet the Chesapeake. Examples of water-dependent facilities include waterfronts, boating ports, marinas, community piers, public beaches, recreational areas, and fisheries. Five Maryland state parks (Kitt's Point State Park, Point Lookout State Park, St. Mary's River State Park, Newtowne Neck State Park and Greenwell State Park) with beaches and fishing opportunities are found here. With about 15 marinas, boaters can take recreational voyages on the waterways. <https://www.visitstmarysmd.com/%20?>

The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), Navy Alignment in 1991, resulted in the consolidation and integration of four large warfare centers. One center was at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, (NAS Patuxent River) in St Mary's. NAS Patuxent River became a major employment center with around 22,000 employees, pre-COVID-19. The expansion of NAS Patuxent River created job growth along the California-Lexington Park Corridor with over 64,287 employed, in this area of the County, pre-COVID-19. <https://apps.bea.gov/itable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=70&step=1>

The occupations include defense contractors, and those employed in government and service sectors.

### An Early American Settlement

The site of St. Mary's Fort, which was built in 1634, was discovered in March 2021.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/researchers-finally-discover-remains-st-marys-fort-180977310/>

In 1634 approximately 150 European settlers arrived in two ships, the *Ark*, and the *Dove*, to colonize Maryland. This is the origin of St. Mary's County, the Mother County of Maryland. St. Mary's County was the first capital of Maryland and was the capital until 1695 when the capital was moved to Annapolis. Leonardtown, the County seat, which was incorporated in 1858, was settled in 1660. Until the Civil War, the town served as an important tobacco trading post.

There are 31 sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places in St. Mary's County. Among these are the St. Mary's City Historic District, with a museum on the site of Maryland's first capital and living history exhibits assembled across the landscape. There is also the Charlotte Hall Historic District, which encompasses a small village along "Old Route 5" that includes 13 recorded buildings and sites of historic and architectural interest as well as the main campus of the of the old Charlotte Hall Military Academy. The Piney Point Coast Guard Light Station was built in 1936 and decommissioned by the Coast Guard in 1964. In 1980, the Federal Government deeded the property to St. Mary's County. It is known as the Lighthouse of Presidents because several early US Presidents visited or stayed on the grounds.

Figure 1. National Register of Historic Places



National Register of Historic Places: Source: Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), 2021

There are about 1090 sites in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Sites.

The St. Mary's County Historic District Commission, later renamed the St. Mary's County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), was created on June 4, 1975, and granted the authority to collect information on historic resources and increase public awareness through education. HPC identifies and oversees the St. Mary's County's historic landmarks, districts, and sites. The HPC has been active in

documenting sites. Historic Preservation Guidelines were completed in 2002 and the County was awarded Certified Local Government status by the Maryland Historic Trust and the National Park Service. The Certified Local Government Program (CLG), which was established by the National Park Service under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, is an initiative providing technical assistance and small grants to local governments seeking to preserve the important and significant aspects of their heritage. St. Mary's County is a "Certified Local Government." The Certification was renewed in 2019 and 2020.

The HPC enhances the quality of life in St. Mary's County by ensuring that the County's many historic resources are recognized and appreciated. The Department of Land Use and Growth Management is staff to the HPC. In 2007, the County received a grant from the State Highway Administration for a corridor management plan for the Religious Freedom Scenic Byway.

<https://destinationssouthernmaryland.com/discover-history/birthplace-of-religious-freedom-maryland-history/the-religious-freedom-national-scenic-byway-daytrip-maryland/>

A chronology of the history of St. Mary's County begins with the Native American habitation, and the arrival of the European colonists; continues with tobacco farming, and the establishment of NAS Patuxent River in 1943. Slavery did take place in the County, see, for instance, the 300-year-old slave quarters in St. Mary's County.

<https://wtop.com/maryland/2020/10/300-year-old-slave-quarters-found-in-st-marys-co/>

In addition to providing education, historic sites attract tourists, preservation of historic sites plays an important cultural role in cultivating pride, heritage, and uniqueness and is a form of economic development

<https://www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/Museums/>

### ***Farming Community***

As of 2017, 61,803 acres of farmland were on 615 farms. In 2012 there was 67,086 acres of land on 632 farms, and in 2007 there was 68,648 acres on 621 farms. The median size of a farm was 106 acres. The acreage of land in farms in 2017 accounted for approximately 26.7 % of the County's total land area, which is a decrease from 29.5 % and 6350 acres since 2002. The chart below illustrates the farming acreages from 2002 to 2017 as per the data from Census of Agriculture. (2017 Census of Agriculture - County Data, USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service).

### **Definition of Farm**

"The census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year. The definition has changed nine times since it was established in 1850. The current definition was first used for the 1974 Census of Agriculture and has been used in each subsequent agriculture census. This definition is consistent with the definition used for current USDA surveys."

Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Table 1. Farmland Acreage by Year

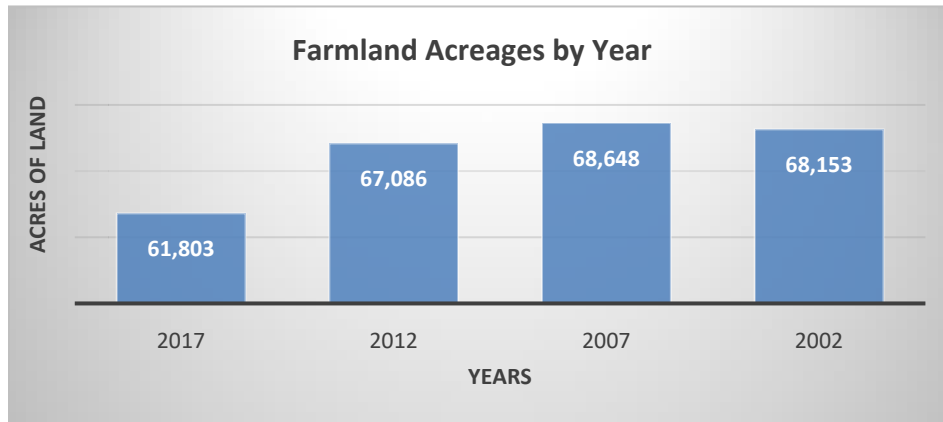


Table 2. Number of Farms

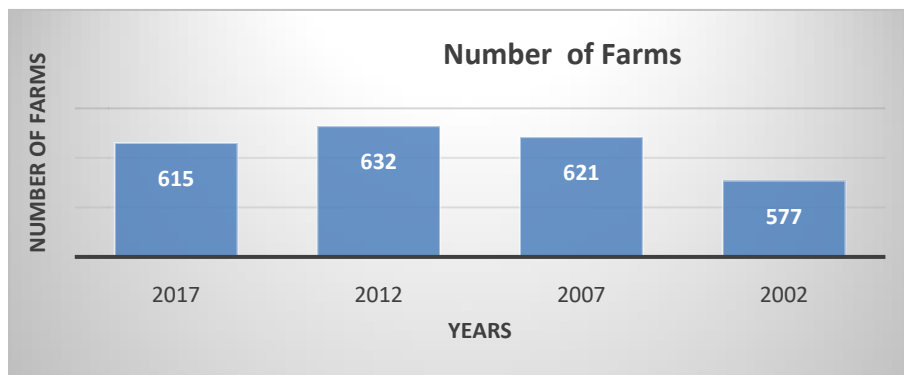
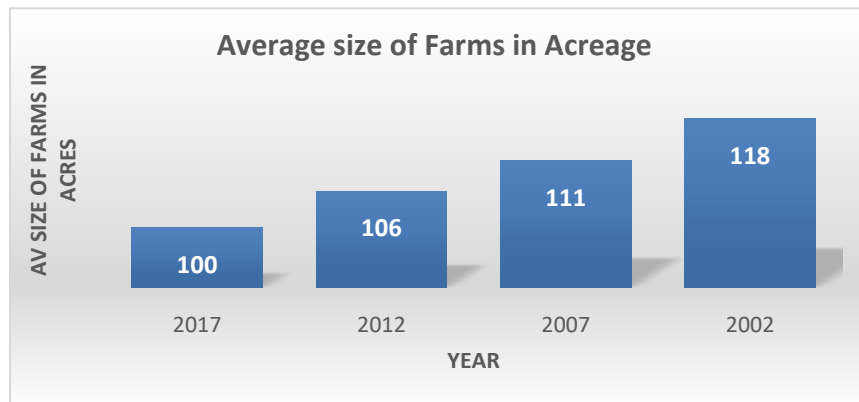


Table 3. Average Size of Farms in Acreage

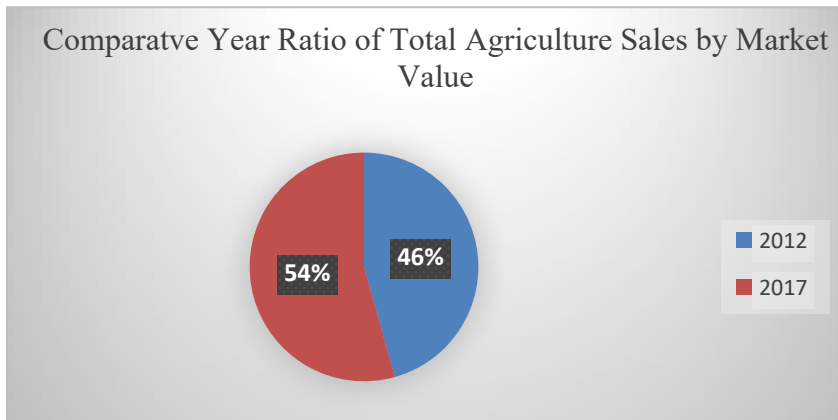


Sources of Information: Census of Agriculture 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017

Since the State tobacco farms buyout in 2000, the main agriculture products are soybeans, vegetables, bedding plants and flowers, livestock, poultry, wheat, oats, and sorghum. Crop farming is dominant. The total agricultural sales by market value of products sold in 2012 was \$21,800,000 and it was \$25,955,00 in 2017, an 8%. increase.

[https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full\\_Report/Census\\_by\\_State/Maryland/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Census_by_State/Maryland/index.php)

Figure 2. Comparative Year Ratio of Total Agricultural Sales by Market



The Department of Economic Development has been undertaking programs to create markets for farm products. Farming in St. Mary’s County is helped by its types of local produce and proximity to larger urban markets. The local farm economy has created distribution outlets such as a planned Regional Agriculture Center for meat processing.

<https://smadc.com/regional-agriculture-center/>

Other markets are the Loveville produce

auction, and the County-sponsored farmers markets.

In 1995, the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board set a goal of 60,000 acres of farmland to be in permanent protection, as part of the County becoming certified to administer a local agriculture preservation program. (Certification makes the county eligible for state funds for land preservation and participation in the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program). Between 2008 and 2021, 9,178 acres have been placed in the County Agricultural Preservation Program. The County program includes the following: Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust, Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development, Maryland Historic Trust and Maryland Environmental Trust.

<https://mda.maryland.gov/malpf/Pages/default.aspx>

<https://ptlt.org/>

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/land/Pages/RuralLegacy/home.aspx>

<https://www.somdrcd.org/>

The Agricultural Land Preservation Program properties under easements are shown in the table below. As of January 2021, 13,916 acres have also been enrolled under a Tax Credit Program for properties placed in a five-year Agricultural Land Preservation District (ALPD).

Table 4. Agricultural Land Preservation Program-2008-2021

<b>AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM</b>	<b>EASEMENTS / PROPERTIES 2021</b>	<b>ACRES 2021</b>	<b>EASEMENTS / PROPERTIES 2008</b>	<b>ACRES 2008</b>
Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)	132	13,380	78	8,473
Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust utilizing the Rural Legacy	17	3,352	11	2,860
Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development utilizing the Rural Legacy	29	3,219	N/A	N/A
Maryland Historic Trust (Bachelors Hope)		303		303
Maryland Environmental Trust	14	2,704	11	2,142
<b>Total as of January 2021</b>		<b>22,957</b>		<b>13,778</b>

Source: Department of Economic Development: 2021 and 2008 (2008 data as shown in 2010 Comprehensive Plan)

Properties under all the above types of agricultural preservation programs preserve land in the County, save farmland, and retain the character of the rural areas.

### **Military Installations-Naval Air Station Patuxent River (NAS Patuxent River) and Webster Outlying Field Annex**

NAS Patuxent River has 25 miles of shoreline at the mouth of Patuxent River and is bounded to the east by the Chesapeake Bay. The station is adjacent to the Lexington Park Development District. NAS Patuxent River and Webster Outlying Field annex (NAS Patuxent River annex) occupy approximately 6,500 acres and 85 acres, respectively. NAS Patuxent River is the Navy's principal research and development, test, evaluation, engineering and fleet support center for naval aircraft and their support systems.

NAS Patuxent River provides support services to NAVAIR, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD), and other activities. The overall complex comprises about 8.76 million square feet of facilities, runways, and miles of restricted and controlled airspace. Webster Outlying Field annex is used as an auxiliary field for daylight testing and is the primary test area for Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs).

A number of the of high-tech defense contractors in maritime aviation, research, development, testing, and evaluation that provide services to NAS Patuxent River, are found here. They make the area home to a high percentage of high-tech employment. The Department of Economic Development Technology Resource Book is [here](#).

Due to the size and impacts of NAS Patuxent River and Webster Outlying Field annex on St. Mary's County, there have been joint agreements, joint land use studies and semi-annual encroachment mitigation and prevention meetings between St. Mary's County and NAS Patuxent River to understand the compatibility issues and concerns. These efforts foster and encourage cooperative land use and resource planning.

### ***Commuting Trends***

Most work destinations from St. Mary's County are to Charles County, Calvert County, Prince Georges County and Washington, D.C. Using Local Employment dynamics from the US Census Bureau 2011-2015 American Community Surveys (ACS), Journey to Work Data, commuting patterns or Journey to Work indicated that about 13,395 residents in St Mary's County or 24% of those employed travel to work outside St. Mary's County each day. About 9,748 workers travel from the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area to work in St. Mary's County each day. The main commuters are from Calvert County, Charles County, Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County. (ACS data: 2011-2015)

It is also noted that about 41,526 residents about 75% live and work in St. Mary's County, their county of residence, with most employment related to the military and federal related sector at NAS Patuxent River or Webster Outlying Field annex (ACS data: 2017)

### ***A Regional Recreational Resource***

The Plan Update has a goal to meet the level of service measured by parks to population density and driving distances to recreational facilities such as trails, parks with water access, museum sites, tennis courts, etc. It will also enhance the understanding of St. Mary's County's historic character, integrate preservation values into County planning, land use, and other policies and practices and protects historic districts and properties. St. Mary's County is rich in natural scenic beauty and historic sites. The local museums and cultural activities of the County attract, educate, and entertain the visiting public. Visitor destinations in the County include Point Lookout State Park, Historic St. Mary's City and Historic Sotterley. <https://www.visitstmarysmd.com/> Attractions include the Maryland International Raceway featuring championship drag racing, Budds Creek Motocross, Potomac Speedway, Pax River Air Show, Crab and Oyster Festival, County Fair, Historic St.

Mary's City and Historic Sotterley.

The Plan Update acknowledges and supports the essential role that these lands play in meeting the recreational needs of St. Mary's residents, employees, and visitors. Destinations for residents and visitors include commercial and private marinas, public boat launches, and fishing charter operations located along the creeks and rivers that feed into the Wicomico, Patuxent and Potomac Rivers, the Chesapeake Bay and the St. Mary's River

Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties are linked by visitor destinations and attractions. They coordinated their efforts to become a designated Heritage Area and adopted the Southern Maryland Heritage Area Plan (SMHA). This made the three counties eligible for grants, loans, and other benefits. The SHMA addresses riverside towns and rolling farmlands with 2,000 sites listed in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties and almost 100 structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places. From the prehistoric culture of the Chesapeake Bay region and the early settlement of the British colonists aboard the *Ark* and the *Dove*, the SHMA includes the earliest sites of religious freedom, the sites where the contacts between colonists and Native Americans took place, the tobacco farms in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the unique culture of watermen and boat builders. The SHMA serves to protect and preserve these valuable resources unique to the character and history of the Southern Maryland counties. It identifies 63 sites and activities in St. Mary's County including historic, cultural, natural, and recreational centers. A copy of the SHMA is [here](#).



## Chapter 2 – The Dynamics of Change

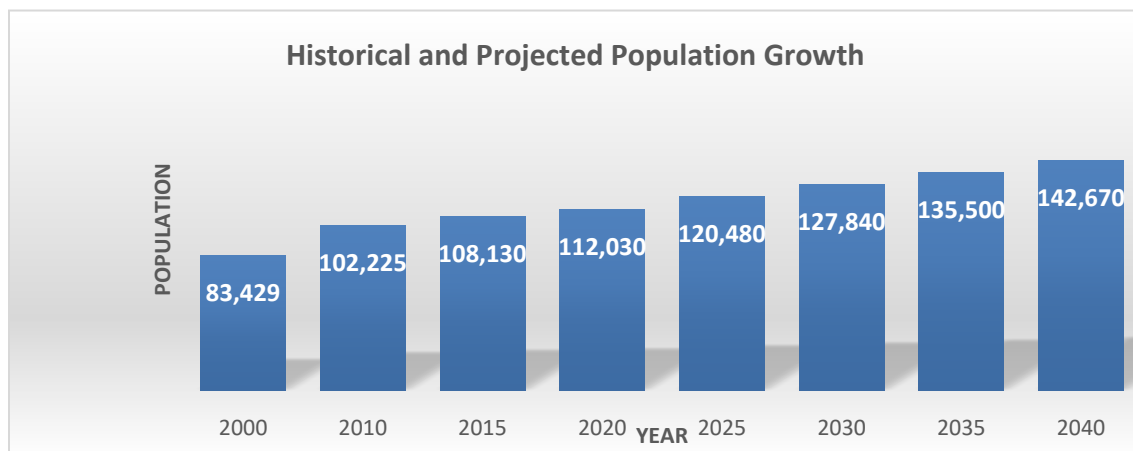
### Population and Households

Table 5. Historical and Projected Total Population for Region 2010 to 2040

<u>Region/Area</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2030</u>	<u>2035</u>	<u>2040</u>
<b>Southern Maryland</b>	276,588	335,458	352,380	367,520	388,220	407,860	425,860	443,180
<b>St. Mary's County</b>	83,429	102,225	108,130	112,030	120,480	127,840	135,500	142,670
<b>Charles County</b>	119,177	149,146	154,300	162,950	172,530	182,570	192,700	202,890
<b>Calvert County</b>	73,982	88,087	89,950	92,540	95,210	96,950	97,660	97,930

Source: Maryland Department of Planning, December 2020 American Community Survey (ACS)

Figure 3. Historical and Projected Population Growth



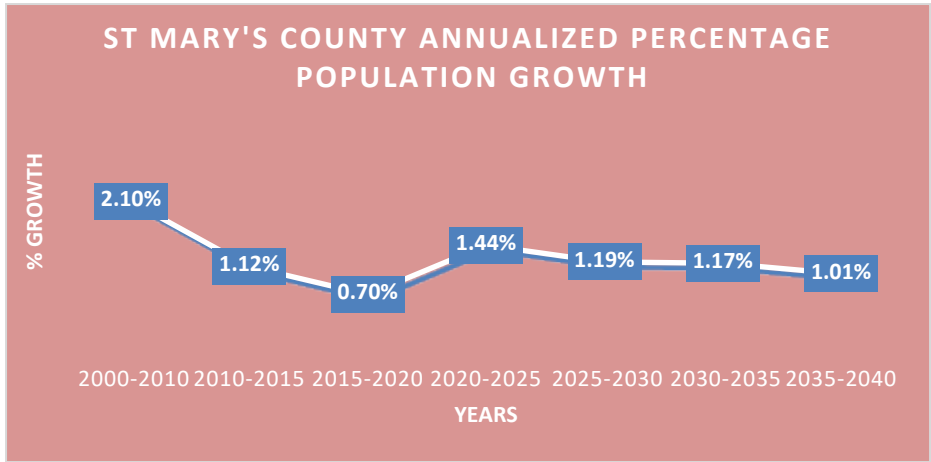
The County grew by 28,501 (34%) from 83,429 in 2000 to 112,030 in 2020. It is projected to grow by 30,640 (27.3%) from 2020 to 142,670 in 2040.

Table 6. Comparative Annualized Percentage Population Growth-St. Mary's County and State

<u>Region/Area</u>	<u>2000-2010</u>	<u>2010-2015</u>	<u>2015-2020</u>	<u>2020-2025</u>	<u>2025-2030</u>	<u>2030-2035</u>	<u>2035-2040</u>
<b>Southern Maryland</b>	1.93%	0.99%	0.85%	1.10%	0.98%	0.91%	0.82%
<b>St. Mary's County</b>	2.10%	1.12%	0.70%	1.44%	1.19%	1.17%	1.01%

Source: Maryland Department of Planning, Projections and State Data Center and Annualized Growth Rate December 2020

Figure 4. Annualized Percentage Population Growth



Between 2010 and 2015 the County annual growth rate was 1.12%, and from 2015 to 2020 it was 0.70%. Compared with the Southern Maryland Region (comprised of Charles County, Calvert County and St. Mary's County), the region had an annual growth rate of 0.99% between 2010 to 2015 and 0.85% between 2015 to 2020.

Figure 5. Election District Boundaries

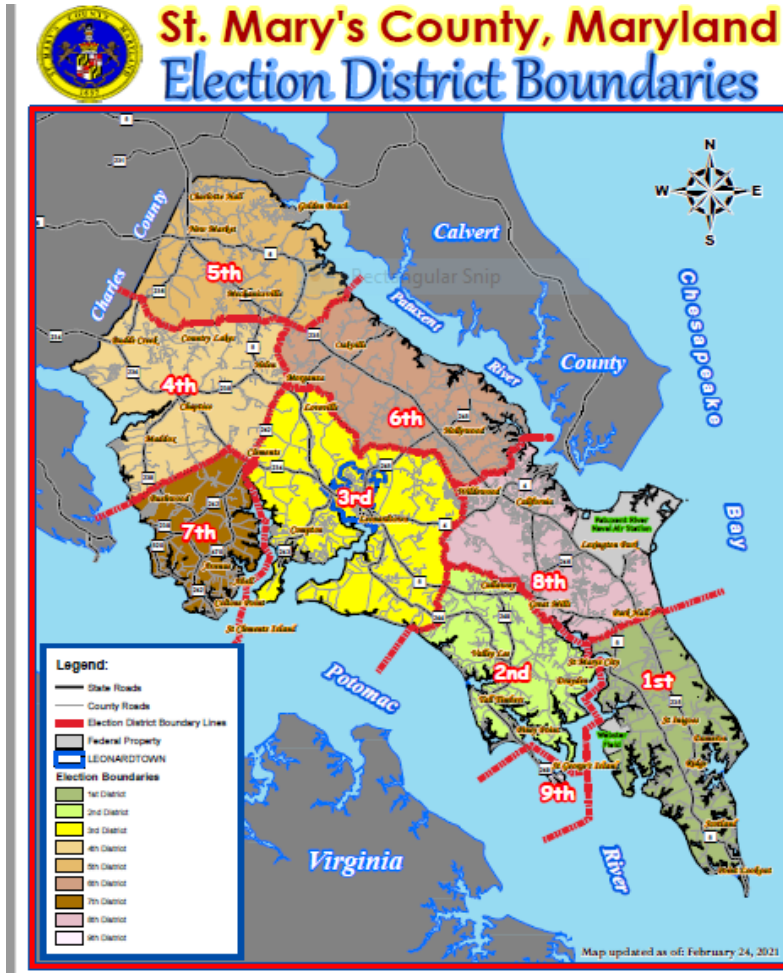


Table 7. Election District Population

ELECTION DISTRICT POPULATION 2019*	
DISTRICT	POPULATION
1	7,719
2	7,946
3	14,870
4	11,464
5	13,508
6	15,324
7	3,973
8	38,480
9	340

\*Source: 2019 Population Estimate from MDP Planning Data Services. Actual Population by Election District available for 2010. Estimates for 2019 calculated by LUGM.

The legislative and executive branches of County government are administered by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County who are elected to four-year terms. The Commissioners are elected at large by voters of the entire County. The members must reside in their respective Commissioner districts, except for the President.

The concentration of population remains in the 8th Election District that includes Lexington Park, California, and Great Mills. Other areas of population concentration are also found in Election District 3 (which includes Leonardtown and Loveville), District 4 (which includes Country Lakes and Wicomico Shores), District 5 (which includes Charlotte Hall and Mechanicsville), and District 6 (which includes Hollywood). Lesser concentrations will continue to be found in Election District 1 (which includes Ridge), and in Election District 2 (which includes Piney Point).

**Age Structure**

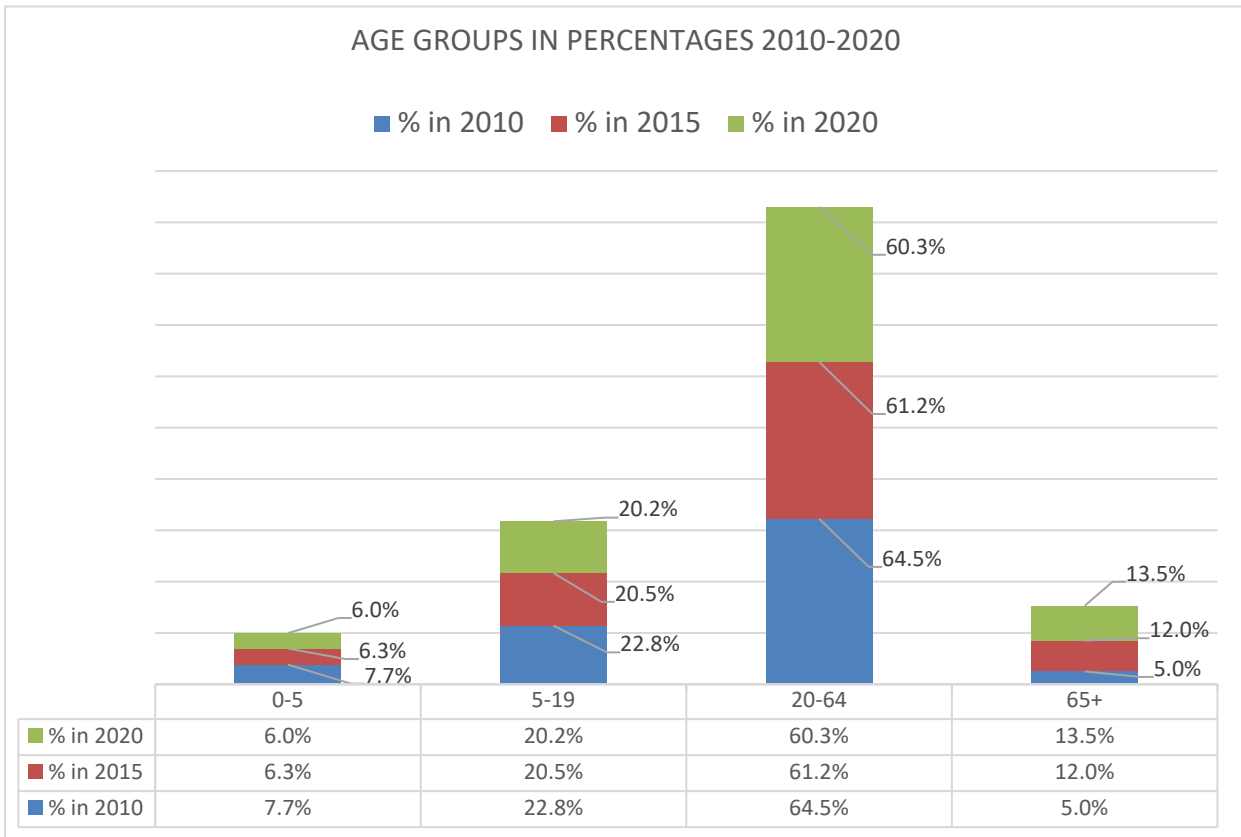
Table 8. St. Mary's County Age Structure 2010-2020

**St Mary’s County Age Structure 2010-2020**

<b>AGE GROUPS</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>
0-5	7,780	6,990	6,808
5-19	23,215	22,840	22,888
20-64	65,575	68,177	68,434
65+	5,087	13,406	15,380

The age structure of a population is the distribution of people of various ages. It is a useful tool for social scientists, public health and health care experts, policy analysts, and policymakers because it illustrates population trends like rates of births and deaths.

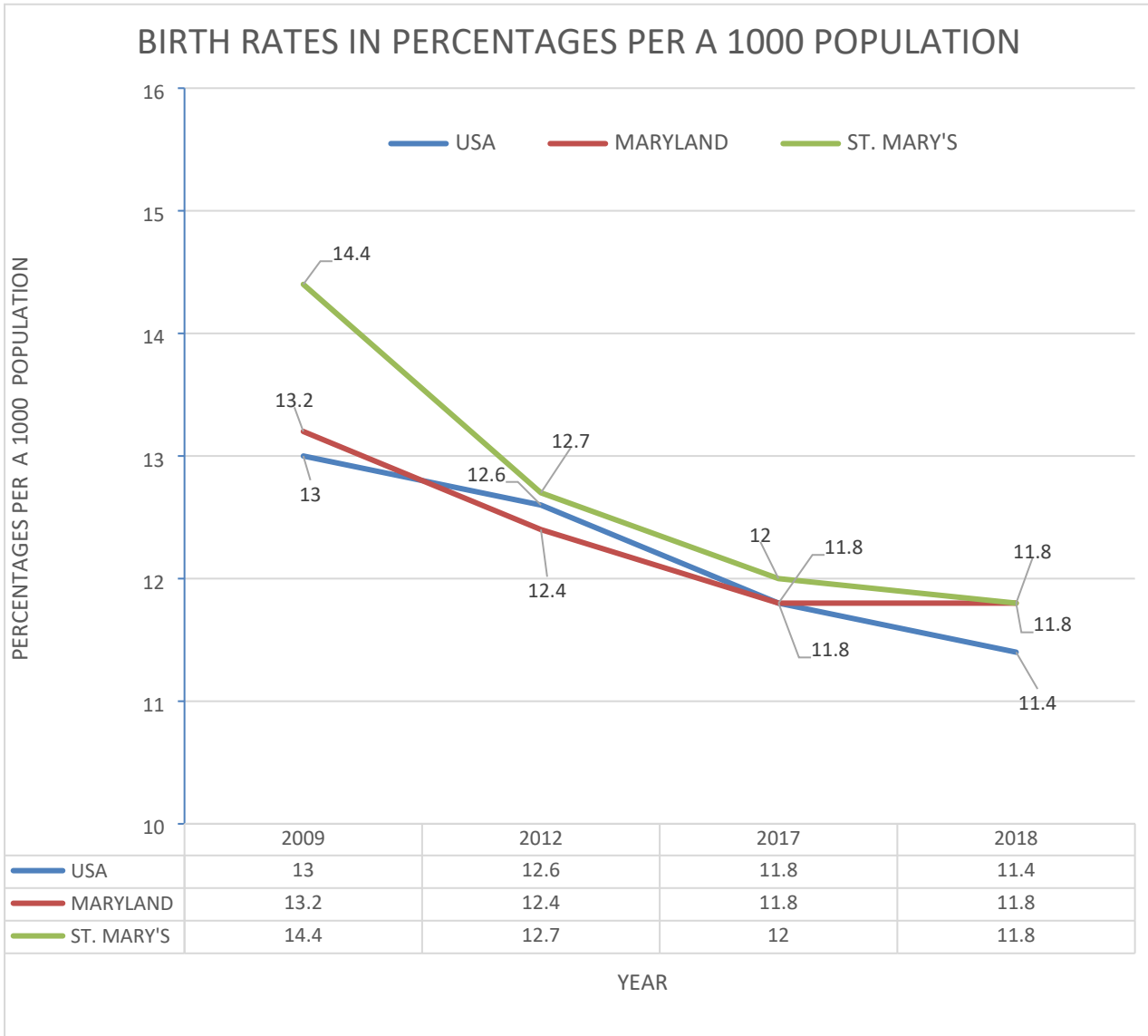
Figure 6. Age Groups



Between 2010 and 2020, age groups patterns indicate a decreasing trend except for the 65 and over that showed an increase.

## Birth Rates

Figure 7. Birth Rates per a 1000 Population



The birth rates have been decreasing in St. Mary’s County, the State and nationally. Being aware of these changes in the composition of the population allows the County to plan for education, health care services and other needs. Knowing age ranges is important since it is related to the demand for different types of services. A population composition with a higher percentage of residents under five or above 65 will need different types of services.  
 (Source of Data: Maryland Vital Statistics Reports)

## Land Use and Distribution in Acres 2002 and 2010

St. Mary's County contains approximately 231,280 acres of land area. Land cover distribution is the physical land type. The changes in the types of land use cover presents information on distribution of land cover types across the County surface area. It shows how much of the land area is covered by forests, wetlands, impervious surfaces, agriculture, and other land and water types. Information on land use change is important for land use planning in St. Mary's County and is useful in establishing the baseline information for activities like thematic mapping and change detection analysis. It also protects land uses or for future allocation.

Between 2002 and 2010, the acreage of land in agriculture decreased from 55,167 acres in 2002 to 51,511 acres in 2010, a decrease of 6.6 %. Agriculture land includes farmlands, nurseries, horticultural areas and vineyards. Within the same period, the acreage of land in forests decreased from 112,113 acres to 106,211 acres by 5.3%. wetland by 1.3%.

Mining activity and the extractive industry saw an increase from 708 acres to 723 acres, an increase of 11.9%.

Table 9. Land Cover Distribution in Acres 2002-2010\*

Distribution by Land Use Cover	Acreage 2002	Acreage 2002 in Percent	Acreage 2010	Acreage 2010 in Percent	Land Use Change 2002-2010 acres	Change 2002-2010 Percent
Residential*	50,142	21.50%	58,083	25.20%	7,941	13.6%
Commercial	2,517	1.10%	3,065	1.30%	548	17.87%
Industrial	391	0.20%	501	0.20%	110	28.13%
Others (Transportation-Institutional)	9,110	3.90%	8,021	3.50%	-1,089	-13.57%
Agriculture	55,167	23.70%	51,511	22.30%	-3,656	-7.09%
Forests	112,113	48.10%	106,211	46.00%	-5,902	-5.56%
Extractive	708	0.30%	793	0.30%	85	10.7%
Wetland	2,762	1.20%	2,725	1.20%	-37	-1.35%
TOTAL	232,910	100%	230,910	100%		

Source: Maryland Department of Planning Generalized Land Use Cover Data: 2002 & 2010.

\*Data for 2020 from the Maryland Department of Planning is not expected until September 2021.

\*Residential includes categories: Very low density, low density, medium density and high density.

\* Data are from MDP and MDP does not distinguish among the categories.

Figure 8. Land Cover in 2002

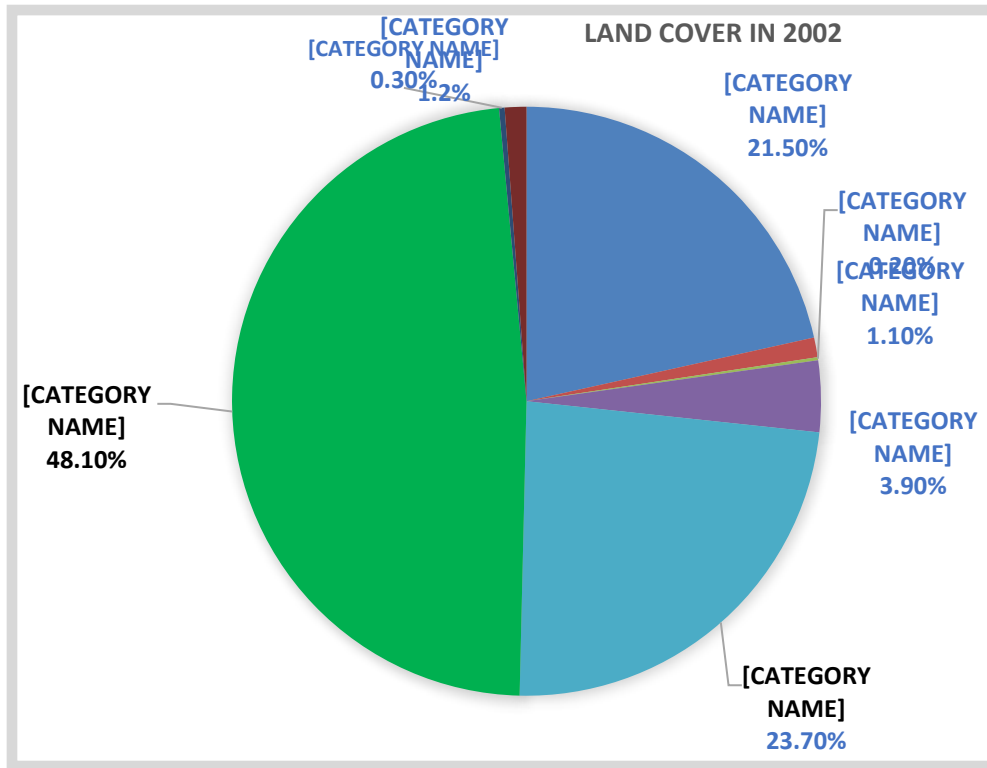


Figure 9. Land Cover in 2010

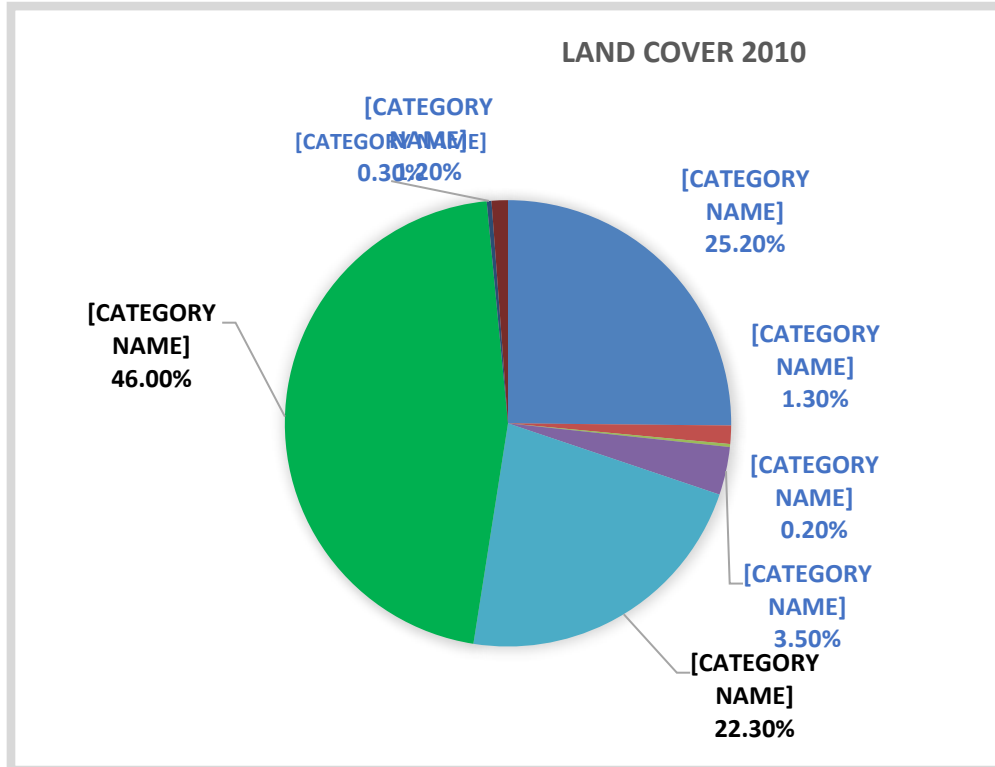
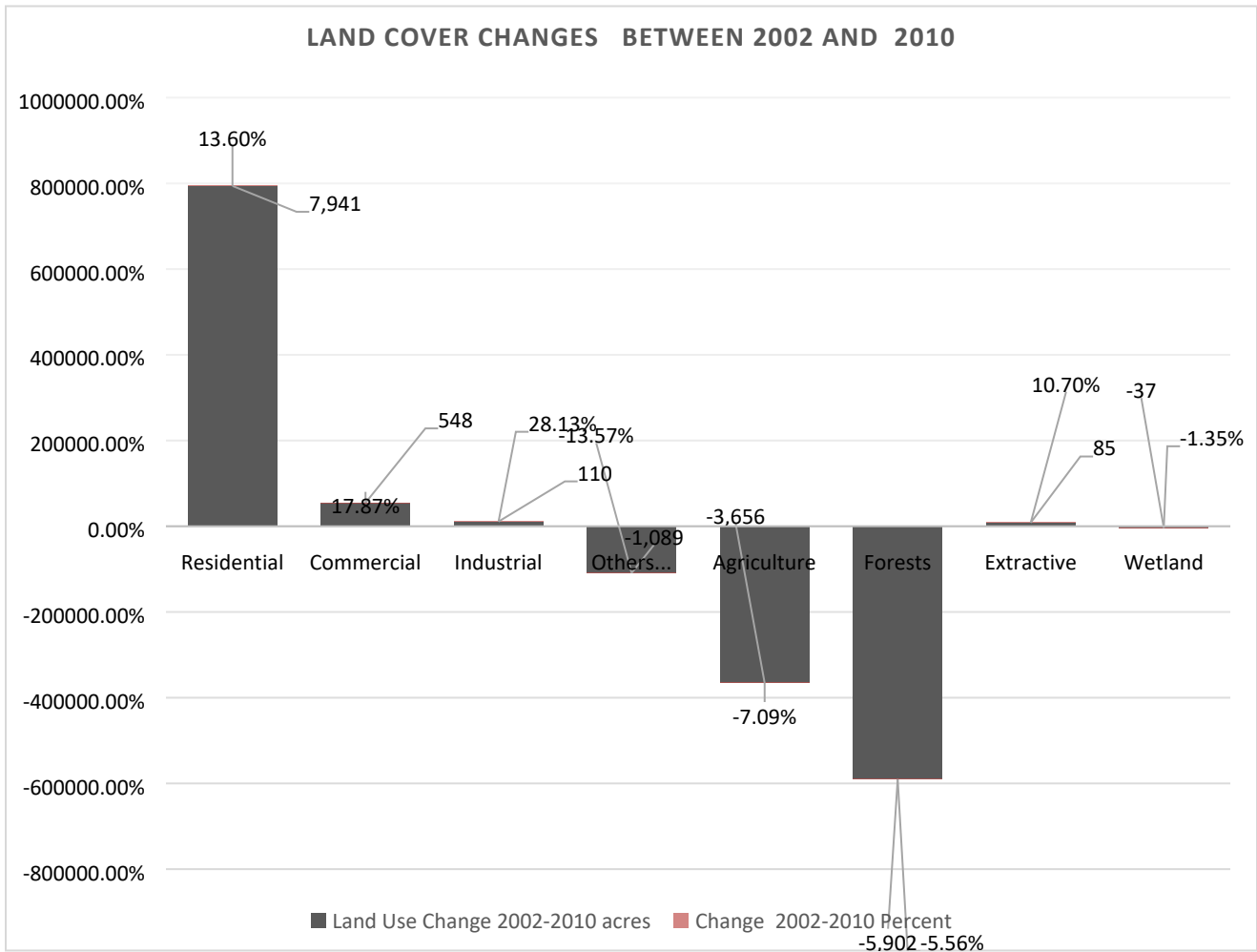


Figure 10. Land Cover Changes: 2002-2010



**Observations between 2002 -2010**

Residential Land Use Cover had a greater increase.

There were losses in forest and agriculture.

Commercial and Industrial land cover had minor increases.

The Department of Land Use and Growth Management will examine its subdivision applications to find out if agriculture and forest are being converted. If the decrease in agriculture and forest is due to development based on zoning, the decrease in ag and forest is to be expected.

**Employment**

The St. Mary’s County Department of Economic Department (DED) is preparing a new Economic Development Strategy. St. Mary’s County, Maryland Comprehensive Economic Development Study & Proposed Strategy (CEDS)

<https://www.stmarysmd.com/docs/UMD%20Recommended%20CEDS.pdf>

The goals, objectives, and policies in an Economic Element will be based upon DED reports taking into consideration the local and regional economic trends and determination of opportunities and constraints relevant to St. Mary’s County. The following data presents the historical and current employment patterns.



Figure 11. Employment Patterns 2010-2019

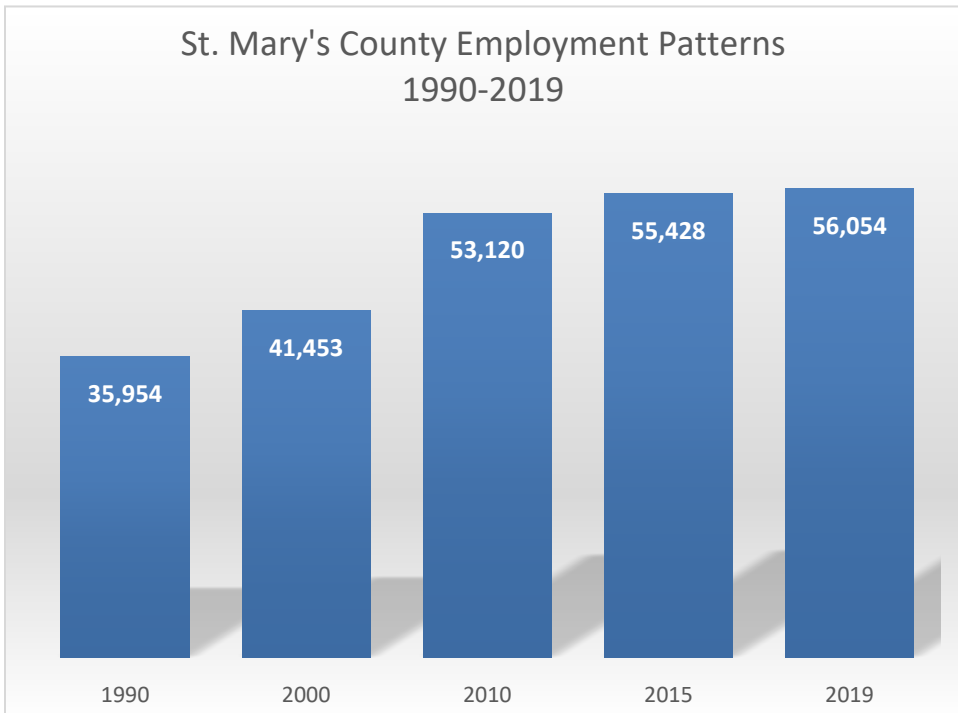
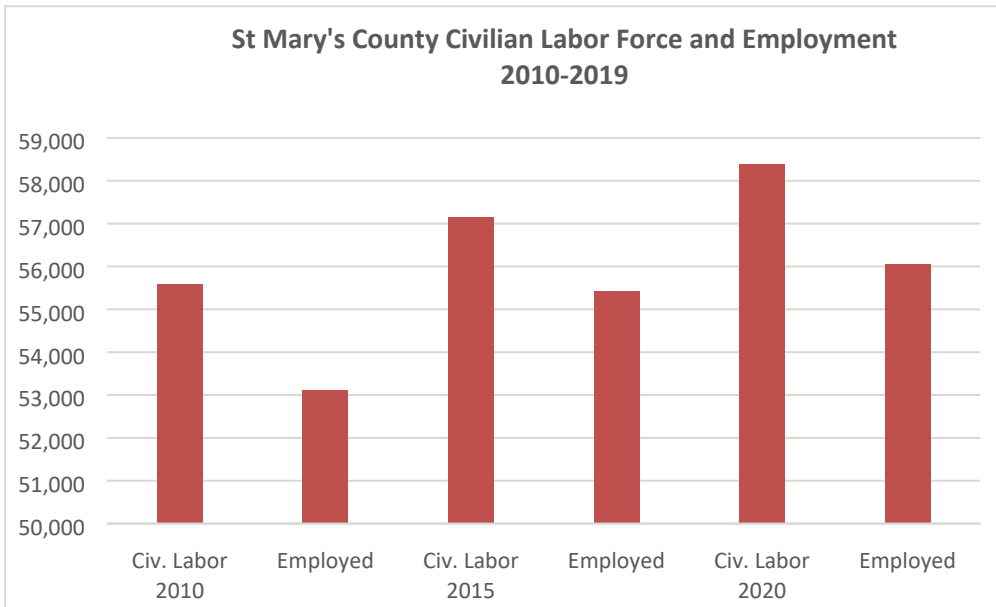


Figure 12. Civilian Labor Force and Employment 2010-2019



Source of Data: American Community Survey (ACS), 2010, 2015 and 2019)

The main employment zones are NAS Patuxent River, Webster Field, Lexington Park Development District, Charlotte Hall and Leonardtown.

Between 2010 and 2019, the County Civilian labor force grew from 55,597 to 58,388, a 5.02% increase. In the same years, the actual employment was 53,120 in 2010 and 56,054 in 2019 showing a growth of 5.5%.

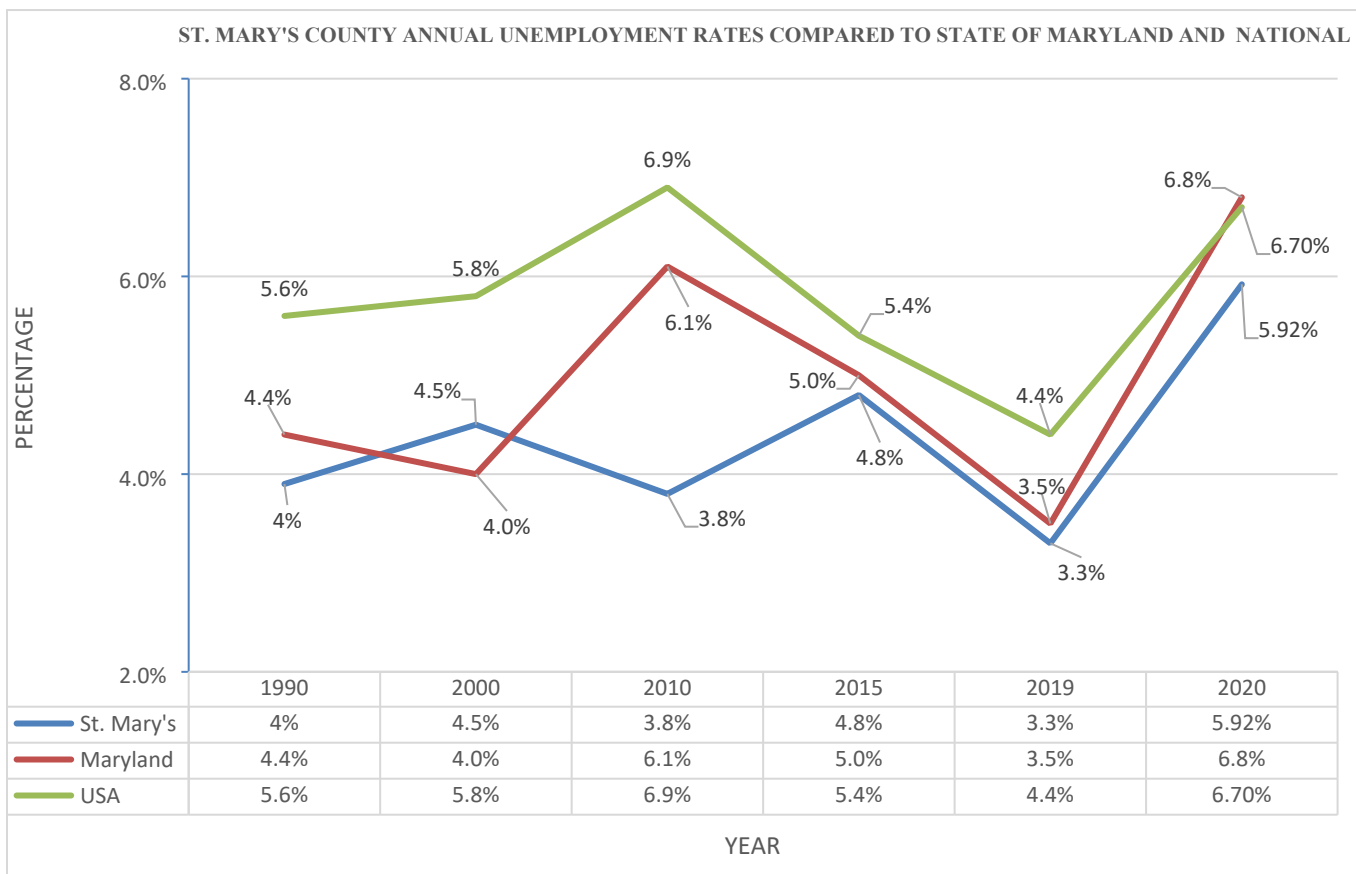
The Civilian labor employment trend is identified by industries in medical services, higher education, consumer

goods, retail trade, accommodations, and food services. Major companies and institutions in this category are: MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, Town, State and County Government; HMR Veterans Services, Inc of Maryland / Charlotte Hall; St. Mary's College of Maryland; College of Southern Maryland; and Walmart and other retail services.

On defense related employment, NAS Patuxent River is the largest employer with an estimated 22,000 employment on the base and its surroundings contractor offices (pre COVID-19). This includes over 200 firms in aviation, unmanned systems, advanced manufacturing spaces, professional & technical services, scientific research services, technical products and & services, aeronautics and & systems engineering, and software development.

## Unemployment Rates

Figure 13. Comparative Unemployment Rates



The unemployment rate in St. Mary's County is lower than that of the State and country. Median family income is \$102,798 (Source: American Community Survey, ACS 2019) and characterized by persons with jobs mostly in the high- tech, professional and & technical services, health care and education that require training in science, technology, engineering, and math.

There are 14,966 families earning above \$100,000 a year, 10,966 families earning between \$35,000 and \$99,000 and 3,863 families earning below \$34,999. Regarding households, there are 17,884 households earning above \$100,000; 15,425 households earning between \$35,000 and \$99,999; and 7011 households below \$34,000.

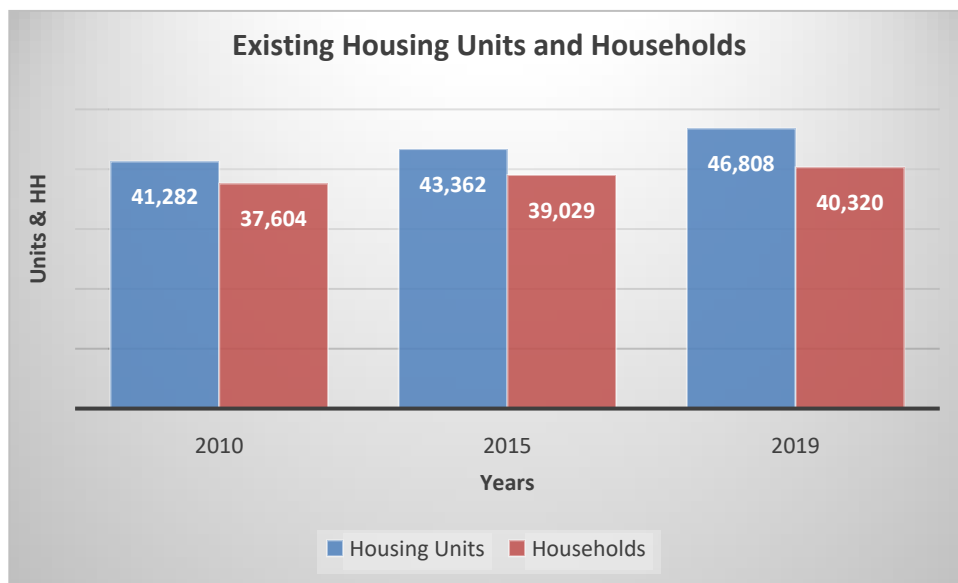
There are 44,435 persons or 39% of the population who are high school graduates (includes equivalency) or who did not graduate high school. There are 30,586 persons with a college or professional degree. The latter are the population with higher incomes, assuming that education and income are directly related.

The strengths that make St. Mary’s County an attractive place to start and grow a business are a well-educated and diverse workforce, culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, an existing high-tech corridor, defense and technological innovation, access to federal labs and agencies, a growing advanced manufacturing sector in support of defense and commercialized business opportunities, the unmanned and autonomous systems industry.

The weaknesses are the high poverty rate, although it is lower than the state’s. To grow the economy, and increase its tax base and reduce poverty rates, there may be a need for an economic vision with a mix of training and creation of development tools and partnerships with local business organizations and local industry. The Plan Update will incorporate the findings contained in the upcoming report from DED. The Economic Element can examine opportunities created by the existing higher technology, including the ability to work remotely, as demonstrated by the adaptation due to COVID.

### **Housing**

Figure 14. Housing Units and Households 2010-2019



The 2010 census showed 41,282 housing units in St. Mary’s County. By 2019/2020 it had increased by 13.4% to 46,808.

Future housing needs are determined by population growth, vacancy rates and size of household trends. The housing vacancy rate in 2010 was 8.99%. In 2019 the homeowner vacancy rate decreased to 3.6% but rental vacancy rate was 11.7%. The number of households increased by 7.2% from 37,604 in 2010 to 40,320 in 2019. In 2019, the Census Bureau report stated that the average median value of a home in St Mary’s County was \$320,700. In housing rental market, the median gross rental unit was \$1,370 per month. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/HSG860219>

The median household income for the same year was \$87,947.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/INC110219>

House Bill 1045 will be reviewed in this Plan Update to address the housing supply and affordable housing including Workforce housing and Low-income housing. Issues to be discussed will include accessory dwelling units, housing types, homebuyer assistance programs and foreclosure prevention programs. The Plan Update will examine ways to improve the supply of housing.

### ***Community Facilities***

A good and well-coordinated and adequate public facility system is a key part of the County's effort to sustain and enhance the quality of life for its residents. Noting that several departments and other government agencies are responsible for the planning, management, and oversight of the County's community services and facilities, this Plan Update will incorporate planning and policy guidance from the short-term and long-range plans, programs and capital improvement plans of these agencies. Efforts will be made to link them to land use plans so that the County can continue delivering essential services to existing residents while accommodating projected growth.

### ***Parks***

St. Mary's County has a broad range of outdoor and indoor public and private areas and facilities to meet the recreational needs of its residents and visitors. Parks and recreation planning and acquisition goals are established in the County's Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). As of the 2017 edition of the LPPRP, there are five state parks, 24 regional and community parks, and four indoor recreation centers. ([LPPRP Report here](#))

In addition, public schools provide 31 facilities used by the public for recreation. Other major facilities include the Great Mills swimming pool, the Wicomico Shores golf course and clubhouse, the Three Notch Trail hiker/biker route, and 29 State and County-owned water access points. There is a total of 12,200 acres of recreational land in St. Mary's County (3,200 County and 9,000 State).

In preparing the LPPRP in 2016, the County conducted a level of service analysis, comparing recreation facility supply to demand. Sizable deficits existed for a number of facilities. These deficits will increase through 2040 and beyond as the population increases unless facilities are programmed and developed to keep pace. The most significant needs were for additional athletic fields and sport courts, increased opportunities for water access and waterfront recreation, and a network of connected walkways, trails, and paths. Since 2012, the County was successful in completing major projects including the completion of Phase VI of the Three Notch Trail construction, and acquisition of Snow Hill Park and Shannon Farm properties.

Opened to the public in 2017, Snow Hill Park provides public access to the Patuxent River in the northeastern portion of the County. The County is building the Lexington Manor Passive Park that includes street improvements for walking, jogging and non-motorized transportation, new entrance and parking lot, public restrooms, Arts Park amenities, disc golf course improvements, trails, and community gardens. The C-SMMPO Lexington Manor Passive Park Study, 2019, that describes these improvements is [here](#)

### ***Schools***

Between 2010 and 2016, the total enrollment in public schools increased by 5.56% or 953 students over a six-year period from 17,150 students to 18,103 students. In 2016 total enrollment was 18,103. The total enrollment was 18,083 in 2019 and 17,246 in 2020, respectively. There was less than a .5% change in enrollment between 2016 and 2019, and a decrease of 4.63% in 2019.

Figure 15. Total School Enrollment 2010-2020

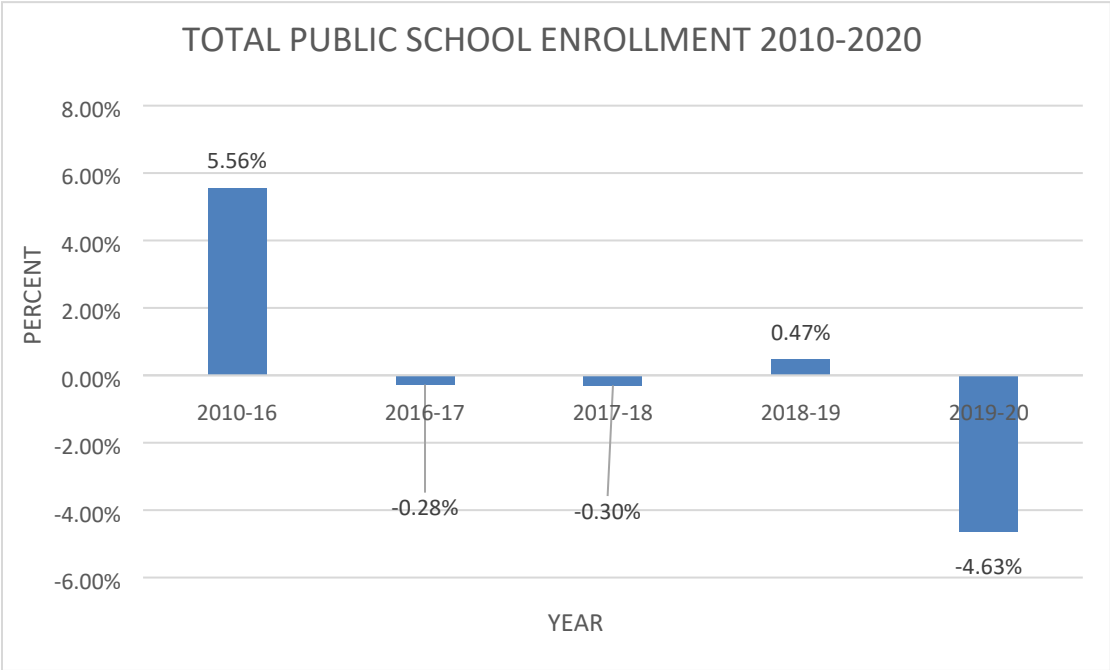


Figure 16. High School Enrollment 2010-2020

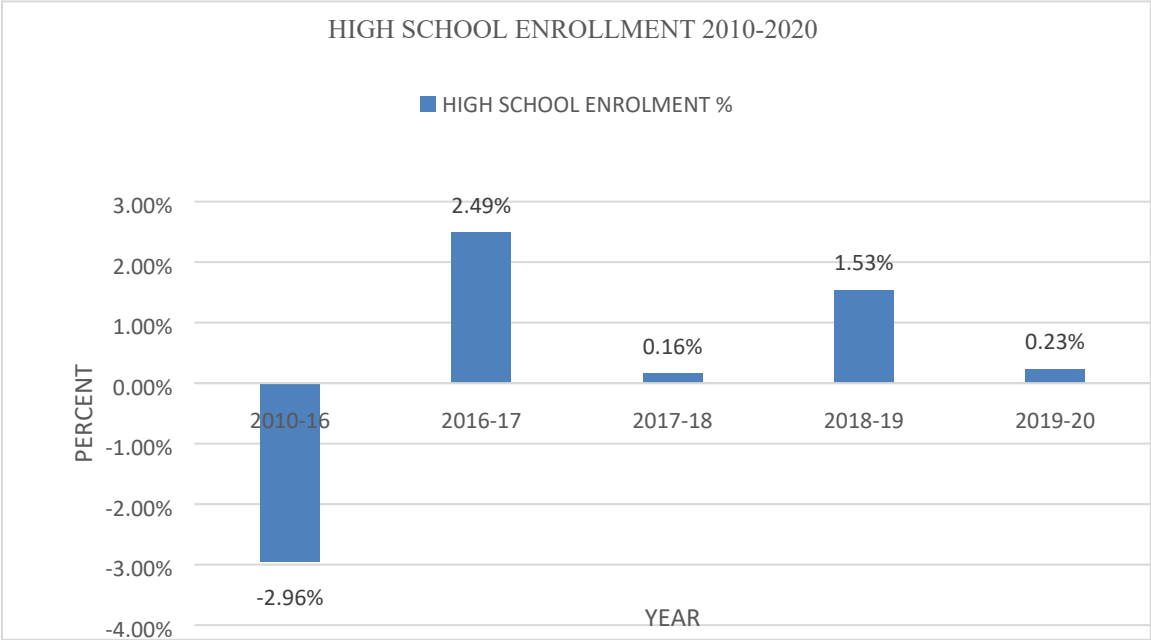


Figure 17. Middle School Enrollment 2010-2020

The Middle School enrollment had a decline from 2010 to lowest admission in 2020.

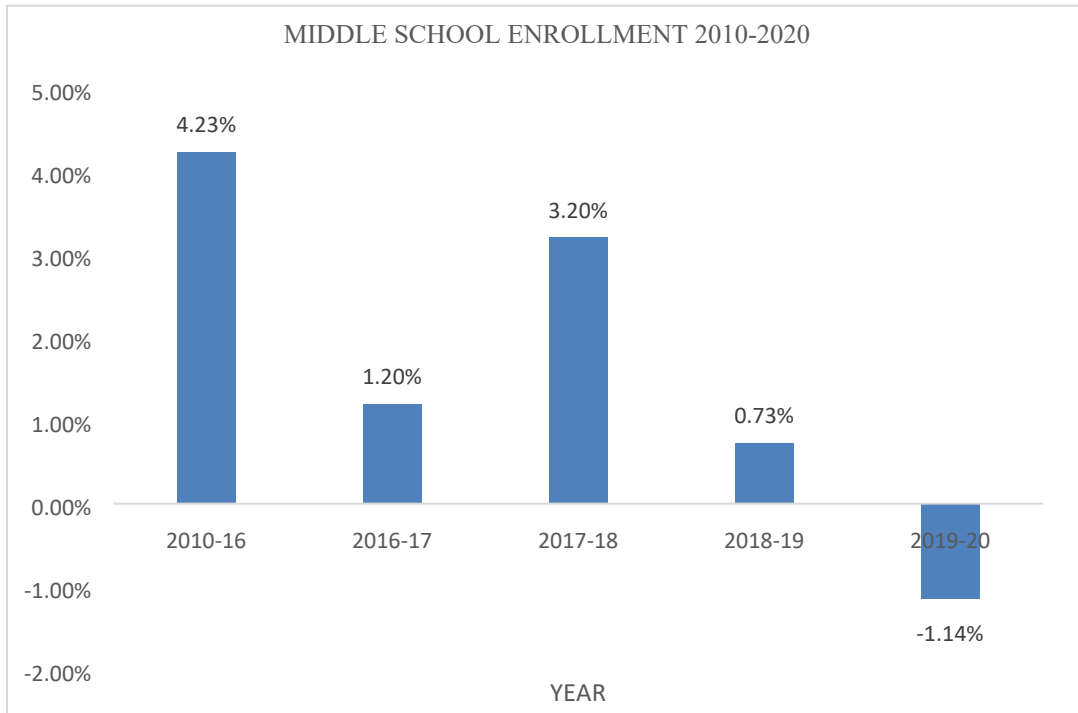
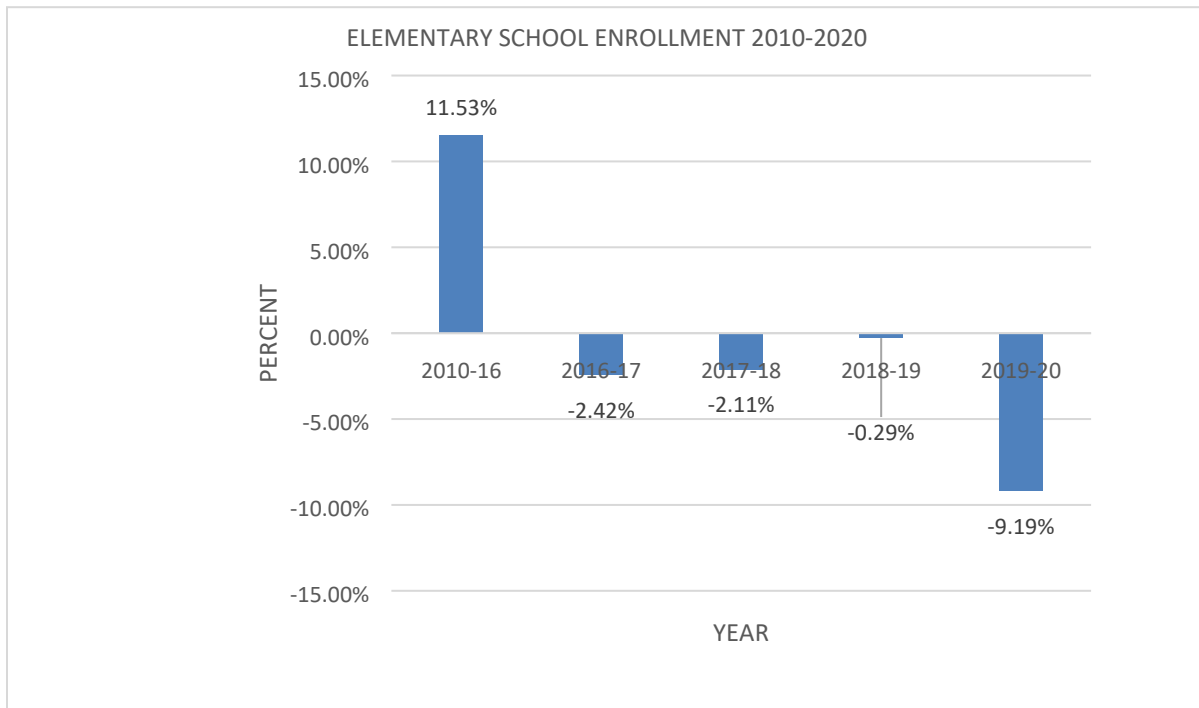


Figure 18. Elementary School Enrollment 2010-2020

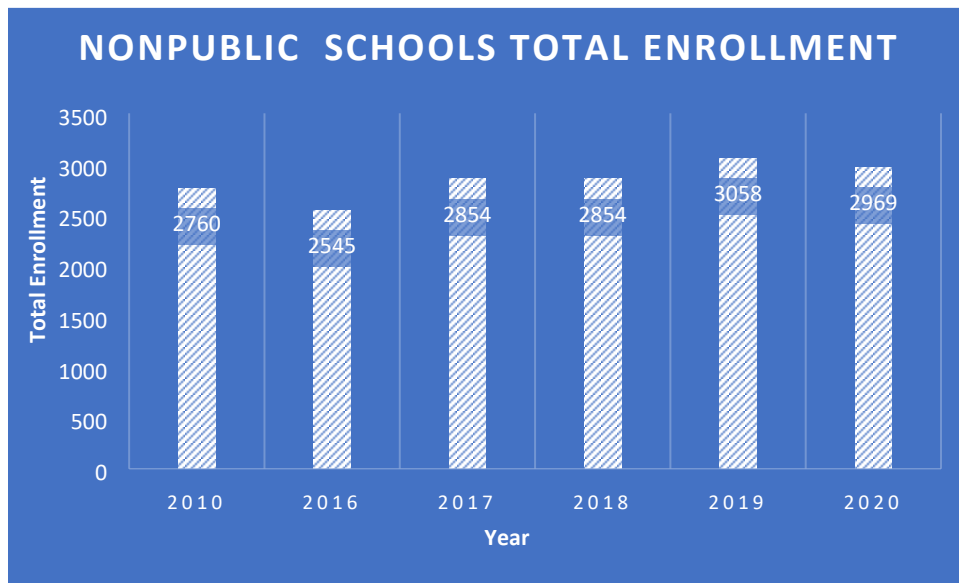


The Elementary School enrollment declined from 2010 to 2020.

The enrollment decrease in the elementary school system is expected to result in declining middle school and high school enrollments.

Non-public school enrollment was 2,535 in 2010 and 2,969 in 2020, an increase of 14.6%. The number of nonpublic schools was 37 schools in 2010 and 36 in 2020.

Figure 19



The 2019 Educational Facilities Master Plan was presented to the Planning Commission in September of 2020 and found to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2010. It was noted in the Facilities Master Plan that the enrollment and projections do not support new buildings, the focus was on renovation and replacements of existing school infrastructure. A facilities needs summary indicates that projects are mostly renovations.

<https://www.smcps.org/dss/capital-planning/educational-facilities-master-plan>

\*Nonpublic elementary school enrollment includes Grades K-5, Pre-Kindergarten, Head Start and Special Education, Nursery Schools, Private Schools, Church Exempt Schools and Publicly- Funded Nonpublic Schools

*Source:* <https://www.smcps.org/>

### **St. Mary's College of Maryland**

St. Mary's College of Maryland, established in 1840, is a four-year, fully accredited liberal arts college located in St. Mary's County. It has 56 buildings on a 360-acre campus on the St. Mary's River. It is designated as a Public Honors College. Total enrollment was 1,510 students for the Fall 2020 semester. The institution offers Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in 38 disciplines, of which psychology, biology, English, environmental studies, political science, and economics are among the most popular. The institution also offers one postgraduate degree, a Master of Arts in Teaching. Much of its campus is shared with Historic St. Mary's City, the fifth site of colonization in British North America and one of the most significant archaeological sites on the East Coast.

Source: <https://www.smcm.edu/>

### **The University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland (USMSM)**

The University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland (USMSM), formerly the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center, is located on a 24-acre site in the Wildewood Professional and Technology Park. This is Maryland's oldest higher education center and currently hosts educational programs sponsored by nine universities, including five University System of Maryland institutions. USMSM has a major research component through a partnership with the University of Maryland Unmanned Aircraft Systems Test Site.

Source: <https://www.usmsm.umd.edu/>

### **The College of Southern Maryland (CSM)**

The College of Southern Maryland (CSM) is a two-year, regionally accredited, public community college with its local campus in Leonardtown. CSM offers an array of associate degree programs, industry certifications, career training, wellness, and fitness activities. In 2010 there were 5,546 students enrolled, comprised of credit, noncredit full time, and part time. In 2019, the enrollment was 4,572.

Source: <https://www.csmd.edu/>

### **Water Resources and Wastewater Treatment Facilities.**

Potable water comes from four aquifers: the Piney Point-Nanjemoy, Aquia, Magothy, and Patapsco. Historically the County has withdrawn most of its groundwater from the Aquia and Piney Point-Nanjemoy aquifers. The St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission requires new public wells to utilize the Patapsco aquifer to relieve stress on the Aquia. Groundwater resources are expected to be adequate to meet the needs of a growing population through 2030.

Source: <http://www.mgs.md.gov/groundwater/index.html>

There are seven public wastewater treatment facilities in the County. Marlay-Taylor serves the Lexington Park Development District. Charlotte Hall serves that Town Center. St. Clements Shores and Wicomico Shores serve these neighborhood conservation districts. Forest Farms serves that community in the Rural Preservation District. Airedale Road serves Rural Preservation District properties in that area and the Village Center of Ridge. The Wicomico Shores, Forest Farms, and Airedale Road facilities are currently at capacity with no plans for expansion. The Town of Leonardtown has its own wastewater treatment facility.

In 2027, a preliminary evaluation is planned for the Marlay-Taylor facility expansion from 6 million gallons per day MGD to 9MGD.

The St. Clements Shores Wastewater Treatment Plant is being expanded to address potential hazards to public health from failing septic systems in the vicinity. The capacity needed to address these issues is estimated at 0.2 million gallons per day.

Source: St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission

### ***Solid Waste***

The County maintains State permits for both a Solid Waste Transfer Station and Processing Facility and a Landfill Expansion cell located at the St. Andrews Landfill property on St. Andrews Church Road (MD 4). Currently, the landfill is not an active landfill but rather it is considered a closed landfill, utilized as a homeowner drop-off site for residential bulk waste and recyclables, such as yard waste, scrap tires, white goods, and scrap metal. Items are sorted and placed in dedicated areas and the materials are then transported to various solid waste and recycling acceptance facilities. Currently, St. Mary's County also owns and operates six convenience centers where residents may drop off municipal solid waste and recyclable material. Small businesses may also use the sites for dropping off recyclables only. Residents not wanting to use the convenience centers can contract with one of the private haulers in the County. The convenience centers use single-stream recycling for paper, plastic, and metals. The convenience centers also accept electronics, batteries, motor oil, antifreeze, tires, propane cylinders, and fluorescent light tubes A complete list of materials that can be recycled can be found here.

<https://www.stmarysmd.com/dpw/recycleprogramlist.asp>



The six convenience centers and the St. Andrews Landfill drop-off site can be used by County residents who do not contract with a private hauler.

The County adopted a Solid Waste Management Plan for the 2016-2025 period in September 2015 as required by COMAR 26 03.03. Section 9-503 of the Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. The Department of Public Works and Transportation is preparing an update to the Solid Waste Management Plan.

### ***Transportation***

The dominant mode of transportation in St. Mary's County is the private automobile. In addition, most of the goods produced or consumed in the County are hauled by truck or horse-drawn buggy over these same roadways. Daily commuter transit service to the Washington, D.C., area is well utilized, and ridership has increased over the years. The MTA Commuter Transit Bus Route 725 California/Charlotte Hall-DC runs three daily trips to Washington, D.C., Monday to Friday only.

Local transit service is provided through the St. Mary's Transit System that has experienced an increase in ridership. This Plan Update encourages efforts to lessen dependence on the automobile.

Population increase and economic growth have caused an increase in traffic volume. The result has been problems of congestion, delays, and slower speeds, especially within the Three Notch Road (MD 235) corridor. FDR Boulevard, a road parallel to MD 235, continues to be constructed to take trips off MD 235. The Department of Public Works and Transportation is preparing updates to the Transportation Plan and the Transit Development Plan.

The Calvert-St. Mary's Metropolitan Planning Organization (C-SMMPO) has a Complete Streets Planning project in preparation in 2021. The C-SMMPO has completed several transportation related studies to improve commuting patterns in the County and region. They include the following:

- 1) The Naval Base Multi-Modal Mobility Study to provide methods of reducing the amount of automobile traffic on MD 235 associated with NAS Patuxent River employment center that generates the automobile congestion to improve mobility conditions in the area.
- 2) St. Andrews Church Road (MD 4) Study to identify solutions to traffic operations, safety and multimodal concerns along St. Andrews Church Road (MD 4) between Point Lookout Road (MD 5) and Three Notch Road (MD 235) in Leonardtown and California, respectively.
- 3) A Bus Stop Assessment Plan study that inventoried designated bus stops within the MPO area was completed. This plan included a review of accessibility and pedestrian connections, bus stop improvement recommendations, a hierarchy of bus stops for passenger amenities, potential new signed bus stop locations, needed investments, ADA accessibility and a Flag Stop Assessment.
- 4) An ongoing project will produce a Complete Streets Plan and project prioritization for non-motorized transportation including (pedestrian walkways, footpaths, sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle and trail facilities, bicycle friendly streets, interconnected greenways, share use paths, off-road paths, bikeways, and bike lanes). The Plan will examine safety, mobility, and accessibility for all users in the C-SMMPO region.

All the C-SSMPO documents are available on the C-SMMPO website: <https://www.calvert-stmarysmpo.com>

Source: Department of Public Works & Transportation and C-SMMPO