Sustainable Community Application 2015

I. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITYAPPLICANT INFORMATION

Name of Sustainable Community:

Rock Hall Sustainable Community

Name of Applicant:

Town of Rock Hall

Applicant's Federal Identification Number: 52-6001572

Applicant's Street Address: P.O. Box 367, 5585 Main Street

City: Rock Hall **County:** Kent **State:** MD **Zip Code:** 21661

Phone Number: 410-639-7611 **Fax Number:** 410-639-7298 **Web Address:** www.rockhallmd.com

Sustainable Community Application Local Contact:

Name: Margaret R. Parry **Title:** Project Manager

Address: 5859 N. Main St. **City:** Rock Hall **State:** MD **Zip Code:** 21661

Phone Number: 410-639-7719 **Fax:** 410-639-7298 **E-mail Address:** mparry2000@verizon.net

Sustainable Community Contact for Application Status:

Name: Margaret R. Parry **Title:** Project Manager

Address: 5859 N. Main St. **City:** Rock Hall **State:** MD **Zip Code:** 21661

Phone Number: 410-639-7719 **Fax :** 410-639-7298 **E-mail Address:** mparry2000@verizon.net

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY – General Information

A. Proposed Sustainable Community Area(s):

(1) Provide a description of SC Area boundaries. How did the applicant determine that these are the most appropriate boundaries for its target area? Describe the methodology for choosing this target area.

The boundaries of the SC area may been seen on the map submitted. The SC boundaries designated were based on the desired outcomes identified in the action plan, as follows: potential housing and commercial development areas, our historic downtown and surrounds, potential housing rehab areas, areas in need of infrastructure improvements (sidewalks and crosswalks) our Route 20 commercial district and the "engine" of our economy and our way-of-life - our waterfront.

(2) Include the following in as an attachment: 1) PDF or JPEG of proposed Sustainable Communities map, 2) GIS shapefiles of proposed Sustainable Community boundary (mapped to the parcel boundary), 3) pictures of proposed Sustainable Community area.

(3) Approximate number of acres within the SC Area: 577

(4) Existing federal, state or local designations:

☐Community Legacy Area ☐ Designated Neighborhood ☐Main Street ☐Maple Street

☐National Register Historic District ☐Local Historic District ☐ Arts& Entertainment District

☐State Enterprise Zone Special Taxing District ☐BRAC ☐ State Designated TOD

☐ Other(s):

None of the above.

(5)Prior Revitalization Investments& Smart Growth:

(a) *List and describe any significant State and local smart growth or revitalization related program investments* (for instance, Community Legacy or SC Rehab Tax Credit) that have been invested in the Area since the launching of Maryland's Smart Growth initiative and programs in 1997 (including Housing investment). What impact have these investments made in the community?

Rock Hall does have a Comprehensive Plan which was up-dated in 2011.

B. Organizational Structure, Experience and Public Input:

(1) Describe the Applicant's organizational structure. Specifically, which organizations are members in the **Sustainable Communities Workgroup** and who are the respective staff? Who are the leaders, and how will the Workgroup advisor or staff manage implementation of the SC Area Plan?

The Sustainable Communities Workgroup consists of the Mayor and the Mayor's Cabinet (including the Vice Mayor, Town Manager, Clerk/Treasurer, President of Rock Hall Business Association, Administrator of the Fire Department, Town grant writer) and a dedicated, energetic group of residents with a wide variety of professional skills, talents, expertise and experience.
David Dahlstrom of the Maryland Department of Planning also participated regularly, and Mary Kendall and several MHCD interns attended one of our meetings. Both Mr. Dahlstrom and Ms. Kendall have been actively involved, and have helped to shepherd us through the process.

(2) Describe the Applicant organization's past experience in administering revitalization plans and projects. Describe the roles of the members of the **Sustainable Communities Workgroup**, including their experience in implementing revitalization initiatives. What are the strengths and challenges of the capacity of these groups with respect to implementation of the SC Plan?

The Town Manager, Mayor, and project manager, will be primarily responsible for implementation, with the continued involvement of a workgroup, which would be expanded should Rock Hall obtain a Sustainable Community Designation. Our challenge - with a year-round population of approximately 1,200 - will be to find sufficient carrying capacity to implement our action plan. But we are confident that Rock Hall has enough dedicated, capable, committed community members willing to put in the time and effort necessary to move our plans forward, with the leadership and guidance of the principals listed above.

In regard to experience, Ron Fithian has been Rock Hall Town Manager for 18 years, and was re-elected as a Kent County Commissioner recently for an eighth term. He has also been Chairman of the Clean Chesapeake Coalition since 2012. He has had extensive experience in administering and implementing many large-scale projects over the years.

Mayor Brian Jones has been the Lead Technology technician for the Kent County School system since 2001. While serving as President of the Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company ten years ago he spearheaded the relocation of Rock Hall's outdated firehouse, which included the construction of a new, state-of-the-art fire house, with a large rental hall to host community activities and events. Both Both Mr. Fithian and Mr. Jones are Rock Hall natives.

Project manager Meg Parry has lived in Rock Hall for 14 years and has been writing and implementing grants for a wide variety of organizations for almost 20 years, including Motivational Theatre in Easton, Eastern Shore Area Health Education Center in Cambridge, Chester River Hospital Auxiliary and Chester River Hospital Center, both located in Chestertown.

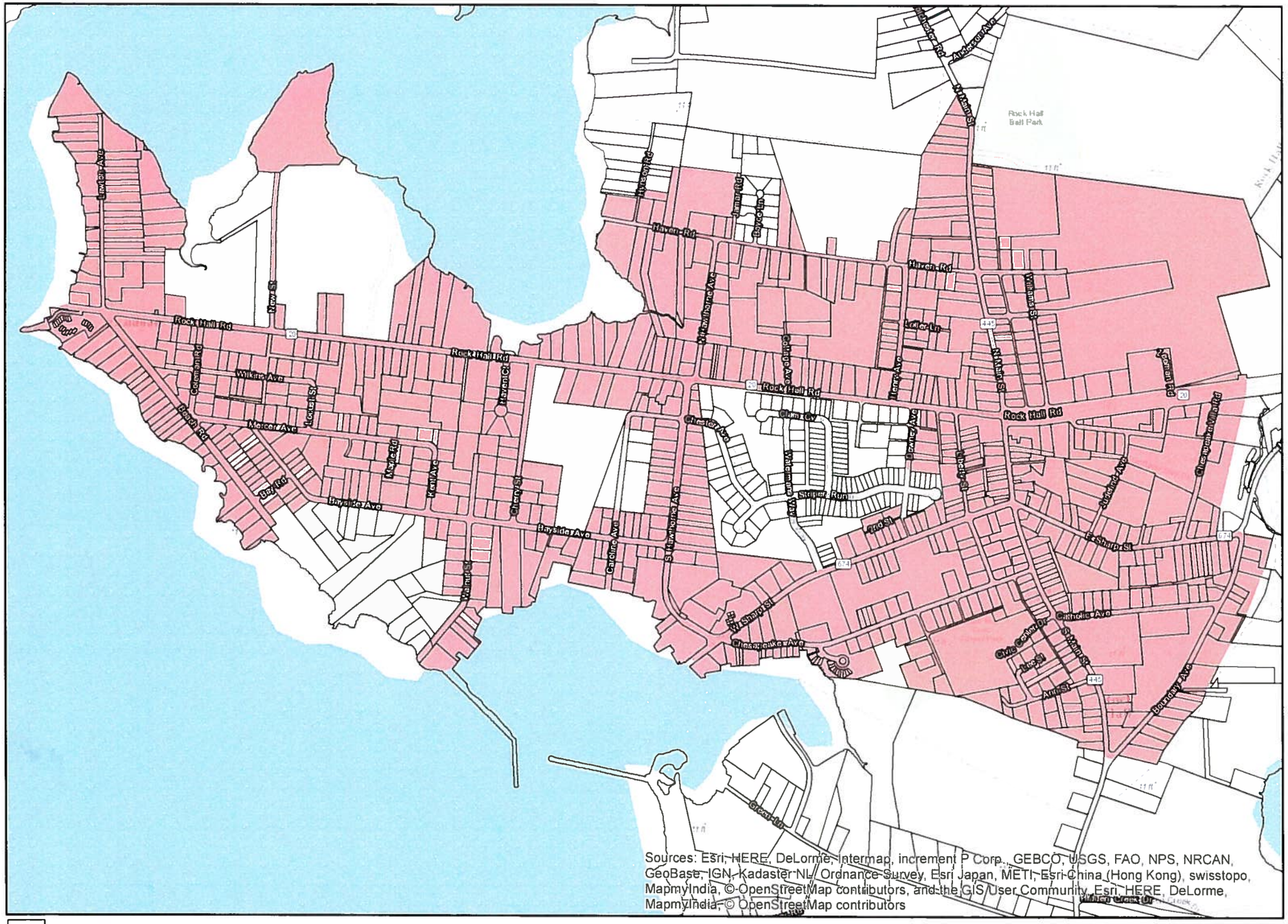
(3) How did residents and other stakeholders in the community provide input to the Action Plan described below in the next section? On which existing local plans (comprehensive plans, economic development plans, sector plans, etc.) is the Sustainable Communities Action Plan based?

The Mayor's Cabinet members were invited by the Mayor to join the workgroup. Additional community members were solicited by open invitation at aTown Council meeting and by word-of-mouth. We met once a week for approximately six weeks to put together the action plan. The workgroup did use the updated Comprehensive Plan of 2011 as a loose framework for developing the plan, but also generated many new, original ideas. Citizens who were not a part of the workgroup will have an opportunity to read and comment on the application at the Town Council's October 8, 2015 meeting. In addition, the SCD application will be posted on the Town website.

III. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The Sustainable Community Action Plan (SC Plan or Plan) is meant to be a multi-year investment strategy – a strategic set of revitalization initiatives and projects that local partners believe will increase the economic vitality and livability of their community, increase prosperity for local households and improvethe health of the surrounding environment. The Plan should be flexible enough to be updated regularly and renewed every five years as the community envisions new goals. The priority initiatives and projects identified in the action plan are your priorities for improving the livability of community places -- residential, commercial, or other public or private properties – and the sustainability of new work, retail, recreational and housing opportunities for residents. At the same time, the plan should only discuss the strategies that will impact the geographic area targeted for revitalization, so that resources have the best opportunity to have the intended effect..These projects can also be designed to reduce the environmental impact of the community through water and energy resource conservation and management strategies. In this way, the Plan can be a road map for local stakeholders as well as State agencies to work together to create a more a livable and sustainable community.

Please complete the attached matrix.



Parcel Polygons

Sustainable Community Boundary*

*577.24 acres

Sustainable Community Boundary: Rock Hall, Maryland

Sustainable Community Action Plan

Rock Hall

Kent County

10/8/2015

Environment

(Environmental strengths and weaknesses can include but are not limited to quality of land, water, air, watersheds, tree canopy, risk of sea level rise, carbon footprint, energy conservation, access to local foods, green infrastructure, stormwater infrastructure/management, parks, trails and recreation, recycling, water and sewer capacity, etc)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Environment as foundation of the Town's economy, generates tourist and recreational activity (recreational boating, commercial and sport-fishing, hunting, kayaking, cycling) • Three County boat ramps and 40 slips, two protected harbors (Rock Hall Harbor and Swan Creek) for recreational and work boats, public beach (Ferry Park) • Chesapeake Bay and its abundant wildlife and plant life.	• Rock Hall Harbor needs more regular and consistent maintenance • Tree canopy along streets only covers 29% of Town

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies	Action Items	Implementation Partners
Desired Outcome 1: Improve and maintain condition and appearance of Rock Hall Harbor **Progress Measure:** Water quality testing and monitoring	Contact DNR and nearby Riverkeeper communities to obtain information about water quality testing and monitoring	Educate boaters, waterfront property owners, business owners and citizens about maintenance and upkeep of Rock Hall Harbor	DNR, Town of Rock Hall, Riverkeepers, Center for Watershed Protection, and other regulatory and non-profit agencies
	Encourage the design and operation of buildings to be energy-efficient	Create a Harbor Master position with authority to enforce environmental laws and welcome and orient visiting boaters to the Harbor and available mooring locations	
Desired Outcome 2: To promote and encourage environmental/recreational tourism year-round **Progress Measure**: Increased lodging, restaurant and service sector revenues and numbers	Perform outreach to promote a diverse educational and recreational eco-tourism program, focusing on the environment and ecology, thereby promoting Rock Hall tourism and creating employment opportunities	Create, market and advertise a year-round calendar of recreational and environment-related events	Washington Colleg Center fo Environment and Society, Eastern Neck Wildlife Refuge, Friends of Eastern Neck, Kent County Tourism Office, Kent County Bird Club, Town website
Desired Outcome 3: Increase tree canopy along Rock Hall streets **Progress Measure**: Increase in number of shade trees	Identify areas where shade trees are most needed	Plant trees	DNR, Town of Rock Hall, State of Maryland, Non-profit agencies, Tree-Mendous Maryland
	Identify funding source for planting of trees		
	Find volunteers to plant the trees		
Desired Outcome 4: Add "green" elements to community **Progress Measure:** Increase in number of "green" elements	Work with SHA and build coalitions with experts	Install additional bike racks to encourage bike use	State Highway Admin., DNR, Maryland Dept. of Transportation, Maryland Dept. of Planning, Non-profit agencies
		Research electric trams/trolleys	
		Investigate possibility of becoming a golf cart (low speed electric vehicle) community for in-town transportation where there is a 25 mph speed limit	
Desired Outcome 5: Reduce water waste and consumption **Progress Measure:** Measurement of Consumption	Work with Town to develop conservation measures	Educate community about water conservation methods	Town of Rock Hall, Town DPW

Economy

(Economic strengths and weaknesses can include but are not limited to regional accessibility, business attraction/retention, health of the business district and commercial vacancies, workforce/employment and economic drivers, local policies/regulations, marketing, tourism, cultural and historic assets)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• A wide variety of tourist-oriented outdoor activities • Waterfront as "engine" of economy (local fisheries, tourism) • Historic Main Street	• Vacant storefronts • Limited job opportunities • Seasonal or week-end only store hours on Main Street and for other retail and service providers

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies	Action Items	Implementation Partners
Desired Outcome 1: Increase service and retail business to meet needs of residents **Progress Measure**: Monitor attraction and retention of new and existing businesses and facade improvements Desiginate a Main Street District	Attract new businesses, such as professional office building with physicians, lawyers' offices, business center such as UPS	Offer incentives such as tenant fit-out grants and loans and facade improvement grants to businesses in town center	Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development Program Assistance, Rock Hall Business Association, Kent County Economic Development, Office and County Commissioners, the Kent County Chamber of Commerce and other private sector groups, Community Legacy Grant Program, Maryland Department of Planning
	Keep track of available inventory of suitable properties for conversion/use as office/professional space	Maintain website that promotes the Town to small businesses	
	Invest in and establish community spaces in and around Main Street	Conduct survey of town residents to find out their needs	
	Provide incentives for development of Main Street and surrounds	Send out marketing materials to attract potential new tenants Investigate why Rock Hall lacks businesses that provide professional services	Community Legacy Grant Program, Maryland Department of Planning, Kent County Economic Development
		Review zoning code and make amendments if necessary to aoccommodate professional services building/small scale mixed use	Maryland Department of Planning
Desired Outcome 2: Establish Rock Hall as regional tourist destination offering diverse activities and events for different visitor populations (such as boaters, fishermen, sportsmen, birders) **Progress Measure:** Collect data on tourist numbers to estimate increase. Popularity on internet and social media measurable by site visits etc.	Promote local history, culture and environment as a resource for tourism (Chesapeake Heritage Area)	Create local festivals based on special assets of Rock Hall (culture, environment and history, such as a Rock Hall Heritage Festival)	Work with County's Director of Tourism Development and Greater Rock Hall Business Association
		Major advertisement of recreational tourist activities within the area (social media, magazines etc.), such as Eastern Neck Island	

Transportation

(Transportation strengths and weaknesses can include access to transit corridors, pedestrian safety and accessibility/sidewalks, alternative modes of transportation, such as bikeways and trails, public transit, such as bus and rail, carpooling, proximity to transportation centers, parking, road conditions)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• A seasonal tram service is provided. • A sidewalk connects the center of town and the Harbor • Main Street is pedestrian-friendly	• Lack of regular year-round transportation either in-town or to nearby towns • Lack of bike racks at the beach and throughout Town, and dingy docks for boats. • Need sidewalks, bikepaths and crosswalks at multiple locations

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies	Action Items	Implementation Partners
Desired Outcome 1: To increase year-round transportation , both in and out of Town **Progress Measure:** Local residents report improved transportation	Expand Delmarva Community Transit service to and from Rock Hall	Survey residents regarding their transportation needs Post DCT schedule on Town website	Delmarva Community Transit, State Highway Administration
Desired Outcome 2: Installation of sidewalks on Bayside Avenue and additional crosswalks and sidewalks for shoppers along Route 20 commercial strip **Progress Measure:** Monitor number of crosswalk, sidewalk and bikepath improvements and signage	Share the Road signs on Bayside and between Route 20 marinas and Town	Investigate and research potential funding sources for stated infrastructure improvements Investigate alternatives to existing transportation Contact SHA district engineer to let him/her know our concerns and priorities for Route 20 commercial district infrastructure improvements	Rock Hall DPW, Kent County DPW, State Highway Admin., Community Legacy Funds, Maryland Dept. of Transportation

Housing

(Housing strengths and weaknesses can include affordability, homeownership vs rental, housing stock diversity, housing condition and value, housing programs, foreclosures, residential vacancies, property values, home sale values)

Strengths	Inventory of Weaknesses
• Inventory of well-maintained, historic homes. • Potential, considering open tracts of land in Town, to construct senior or year-round housing project(s) • Rental housing available	• Shortage of affordable housing/rental properties • Shortage of affordable housing/rentals. • Lack of medical and professional services in Rock Hall • An inventory of vacant and abandoned properties

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies	Action Items	Implementation Partners
Desired Outcome 1: Promote a variety of senior care facilities such as independent and assisted living accommodations **Progress Measure:** Monitor, with cooperation of realtors and developers, number of senior housing facilities available	Identify and market, with help of realtors, housing assistance programs Identify suitable properties for these projects Identify developers interested in these projects	Acquire properties and construct/renovate housing projects	Kent County Board of Realtors, DHCD, Maryland Dept. of Planning, Rock Hall Business Assn, town government, private sector, Rock Hall realtors
Desired Outcome 2: Provide a pool of below-market housing and rentals for residents **Progress Measure:** Monitor, with cooperation of realtors and developers, number of "affordable" housing/rental units	Ensure consistency with current zoning code. Inform realtors and residents about housing start-up grants Identify and market, with help of realtors, housing assistance programs	Post housing grant information on Town website Market and advertise above on other media (hand-outs, newspaper article) Post information about programs on Town website	
Desired Outcome 3: Improve condition of existing housing stock **Progress Measure:** Number of rehabilitated houses	Ensure compatibility with current zoning Inform realtors and residents about housing assistance opportunities	Post information on Town website and use other advertising and marketing strategies	

Quality of Life & Society

(Strengths and weaknesses can include crime, socio-economic demographics, educational opportunities, museums, libraries, historic and cultural assets, civic amenities, faith-based organizations, economic health of households, sense of place, etc)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Waterfront community • Local police, fire and EMT coverage • Public elementary school located in-town • Small-town atmosphere • Civic Center complex with pavilion, state-of-the-art playground, tennis courts and basketball • Town suitable for walking and cycling • Three museums • Rich cultural heritage	• The Town Hall building is aging and out-dated • Drug and alcohol abuse • Lack of health care and professional services • Need more public restrooms

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies	Action Items	Implementation Partners
Desired Outcome 1: Ensure on-going outreach services by University of Maryland's Well Mobile, which provides medical services and education to the community on a regular basis **Progress measure:** Retention of Well Mobile visits	Investigate new funding sources for Well Mobile	Increase public awareness about the Well Mobile services	University of Maryland, Kent County Health Dept., non-profits
Desired Outcome 2: Create a regional arts center in Rock Hall for performance visual arts and artisans	Encourage public art displays throughout Town	Seek school involvement	Local artists, Mainstay performance hall, Rock Hall Elementary School
	Convene a focus group of local artists to brainstorm strategies		
	Create annual art show and student competition		
	Investigate potential locations for an arts and culture building with studios, children's' programs, gallery and performance space		
Desired Outcome 3: Enhance and promote the preservation and recreational use of public open space and natural areas. **Progress measure:** Increased usage of open space and natural areas	Establish a Greenways Program.	Apply to programs for funding.	MDE, Rails-to-Trails, Rock Hall Parks and Recreation
	Improve public access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.	Apply for funding for additional parking and picnic areas	Rock Hall DPW, DNR, Chesapeake Bay (Program/Foundation, etc.
Desired Outcome 4: Promote Rock Hall's heritage **Progress measure:** Additional visitation at cultural sites in town	Promote awareness of Rock Hall's history and culture and develop marketable approaches to encourage heritage tourism.	Apply for Stories of the Chesapeake Certified Heritage Area	Maryland Historic Trust
	Integrate options for directional signage in the Town identifying key cultural and recreational sites	Develop a wayfinding signage plan and cultural maker plan to identify appropriate locations for signage.	Town of Rock Hall and Rock Hall Parks and Recreation
		Apply for Community Legacy Program	DHCD

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies	Action Items	Implementation Partners
Desired Outcome 5: Obtain the services of a Code Enforcement Officer **Progress measure:** Code Enforcement Officer hired	Check Town Code for existing language regarding code enforcement policies Check with adjacent towns and counties to find out how they enforce town codes	Code enforcement for violations not covered in zoning code (i.e., abandoned vehicles on private property)	Town of Rock Hall and Kent and Queen Anne's counties
Desired Outcome 6: Support the town's Rock Hall Against Drugs (RHAD) program and Helping Our Youth Achieve Success (HOYAS) initiatives	Increase public awareness of these programs	Obtain funds to support these programs	Town of Rock Hall, HOYAS, Kent County Health Dept.

Local Planning and Land Use

(Strengths and weaknesses in the local planning and land use subject area include but are not limited to zoning, land use, policies, taxes and fees, historical patterns of development, lot sizes and shapes, etc)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Wastewater treatment plant has excess capacity. • Potential for infill projects. • MD sustainable certified community.	• Town zoning code and Comp Plan need review and potential up-dating • Need funding for building preservation activities • Need for additional designated open space • Need additional solar panels for residential application

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies	Action Items	Implementation Partners
Desired Outcome 1: Preserve waterfront in perpetuity. **Progress measure:** Total number of properties and easements acquired	Consider the acquisition of easements or property	Identify feasible properties for acquisition. Develop Master Plan for waterfront	Town of Rock Hall, DNR, Maryland Dept. of Planning
Desired Outcome 2: Maintain the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods from incompatible adjacent land uses	Improve neighborhood appearance and viability	Review and enforce appropriate regulations	Town of Rock Hall, Kent County Planning
Desired Outcome 3: Strengthen Rock Hall's small town character and historic heritage. **Progress measure:** Adoption date of design guidelines.	Establish high quality design guidelines for redevelopment and adaptive reuse sites.	Review zoning for compatibility	Town of Rock Hall and Kent County Planning
Desired Outcome 4: Encourage home occupations to provide additional job opportunities **Progress measure:** Total number of special exception permits for this use administered/ permitted	Consider amending the Zoning Code to allow low impact home occupations that can be administratively approved or approved by special exception	Review/modify Zoning Code to accommodate home occupations	Town of Rock Hall, Maryland Dept. of Planning