SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION RENEWAL

Eligible Applicants:

Local Governments with a Sustainable Communities Designation
Local Government Consortiums with a Sustainable Communities Designation

Application must be submitted
on or before the expiration date of
Sustainable Communities designation.

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
Division of Neighborhood Revitalization
2 N Charles Street, Suite 450
Baltimore, MD 21201
410-209-5800
http://dhcd.maryland.gov/

SGSC Approved - 7.23

LARRY HOGAN
Governor
BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lt. Governor
KENNETH C. HOLT
Secretary
OWEN McEVOY
Deputy Secretary

Overview of Sustainable Communities

The Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 established a framework for reinvestment and revitalization of Maryland's existing communities creating a single, locally designated geographic focus area. Since that time the "Sustainable Communities" designation has provided an efficient means of targeting scarce public and private resources for multiple State agency investments and prioritizations.

Purpose or Renewal and Streamlined Application

The Sustainable Communities (SC) designation must be renewed every five years. This renewal application provides an opportunity for local governments to update their existing SC action plan and report on the accomplishments made over the past five years. Through the renewal process, local governments can request additional technical assistance and highlight any areas from the original action plan for which progress must still be made.

Application Eligibility and Threshold Requirements

Local governments (municipal or county) are eligible to apply.

Eligible applicants are to reconvene their **Sustainable Communities Workgroup** to discuss the accomplishments and challenges of their Sustainable Community Action Plans in addition to any update they may like to make to the Action Plan. The applicant may choose to select new members to participate in the Workgroup. The purpose of this workgroup is to continue and reinforce working relationships and collaborations among local governmental departments and better align community development priorities and strategies. In addition, this is an opportunity to assess if the Workgroup would like technical assistance from State government agencies to implement certain action items or develop strategies to address local challenges.

Threshold Requirements

All Sustainable Community applications must meet the following threshold requirements:

1) Sustainable Community Area boundaries must be entirely within a Priority Funding Area (PFA) and should be an area in need of renewal and reinvestment that would benefit from a targeted long-term strategy. Applicants can verify Priority Funding Area boundaries by visiting the MDP website at: http://www.mdp.state.md.us/OurProducts/pfamap.shtml

2) The proposed Sustainable Community is within or near a town center or transportation center, or there is a need for financing assistance for small businesses, nonprofit organizations or microenterprises;

3) The updated Plan must be consistent with other existing community or comprehensive plans;

4) A Sustainable Communities Workgroup is re-convened and a roster of members should be provided with the application.

Applications that do not meet these threshold requirements will not be considered.

Application Submission and Evaluation

The Sustainable Community application will be evaluated based on thorough assessment of strengths and weaknesses and how well desired outcomes, strategies and action steps are connected to the local conditions.

The first page of the electronic application is the Table of Contents. This should also serve as a checklist and be used to provide corresponding tabs.

Please submit all materials (application, maps, pictures, and/or shapefiles) via email to the Sustainable Communities project management team.

Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Deliver Sustainable Community Applications via email:

Subject Line: Sustainable Community Application
To: Carter Reitman
carter.reitman@maryland.gov
Copy: Olivia Ceccarelli-McGonigal
olivia.ceccarelli@maryland.gov

Site Visits. Follow-up Discussion, Technical Assistance

Attendance at a minimum of one application consultation session or training is mandatory for all applicants. Consult with Carter Reitman at 410-298-5849 or by email at carter.reitman@maryland.gov if you would like to schedule a meeting.

If requested, the Department can provide technical assistance to local governments to prepare their Sustainable Communities applications. When needed, the Department may offer technical assistance, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Planning, to local governments with limited capacity to prepare their Sustainable Communities applications.

During the application review process, the review team may make site visits and/or hold meetings with applicants. In addition, applicants may be contacted by the Department for follow-up discussions prior to awards.

Approval

Approval of applications will be made by the Governor's Smart Growth Coordinating Committee on the recommendation of an inter-agency review team. The review team is coordinated by the Department of Housing and Community Development. The Governor's Smart Growth Coordinating Committee can defer the approval of a Sustainable Communities renewal to the Governor's Smart Growth Subcabinet.

All questions related to the application, please contact Olivia Ceccarelli-McGonigal at 410-209-5826 or by email at olivia.ceccarelli@maryland.gov or your regional project manager, found at this link: https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Documents/SRP/PM-Map-ContactInfo.pdf

RENEWAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The Sustainable Communities application for renewal has **three** sections:

A. **Contact information, General Information, Organizational Capacity:**
   In this section, applicants are asked to update their contact information, provide information about demographic shifts over the past five years, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their Sustainable Communities workgroup and share any technical assistance needs the workgroup may have.

B. **Report on accomplishments over past <u>five</u> years**:
   The report is an opportunity to reflect on any accomplishments achieved in the Sustainable Community area. It is a tool used to evaluate if the SC applicant achieved its intended outcomes, implemented the strategies initially envisioned, and identify what resources were used. Renewal applicants are encouraged to discuss how priorities, actions, and objectives were or were not achieved across the six elements listed on the previous page (v), including how any of the elements may have interrelated during the five initial years of SC designation.

C. **Sustainable Communities Action Plan Update:**
   The Sustainable Communities Action Plan has been revised so that it is less time consuming and focused on developing a strategic implementation plan. Renewal applicants are encouraged to use their previous Sustainable Communities applications as a basis for their updated Action Plan. You may identify which weaknesses have not yet been addressed or which strategies have not yet been implemented. Include your revitalization priorities for the next five years, basing them on your community's current strengths and weaknesses.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN ELEMENTS

The table below provides a description of each subject area/element of the Sustainable Communities Action Plan. Included are examples of common strengths and weaknesses within each subject area and the types of projects that might be implemented to address said strengths and weaknesses.

ENVIRONMENT: Describes projects involving the natural environment, our use of natural resources, and our relationships to the natural environment.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): the quality of land, water, and air; watershed maintenance and preservation; tree canopies and green spaces; climate change mitigation and adaptation; energy conservation; green infrastructure; stormwater infrastructure and management; water and sewer capacity; recycling, pet waste, and organic waste programs; the mitigation of environmental hazards; and parks and recreation.

ECONOMY: Describes projects centered on economic growth and management.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): business attraction & retention; improving and maintaining the health of business districts, downtowns, and main streets; commercial vacancy reduction; workforce attraction and retention; employment/job training; marketing, branding, and tourism; improving or creating economic impact of cultural and historic assets; providing technical and financial assistance to businesses; commercial building acquisition, rehabilitation and/or adaptive re-use; and creating a sense of place and vibrancy through streetscaping and beautification.

TRANSPORTATION: Describes projects involving the way people in your community get from place to place.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): 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; and road conditions.

HOUSING: Describes projects involving the homes in which people in your community live and which make it easier for them to find and stay in a place to call home.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): affordability; increasing homeownership; increasing rental housing; diversifying the kinds of housing available; improving housing conditions (interior or exterior); housing programs; aging in place; preventing foreclosures; and reducing residential vacancies.

COMMUNITY HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE: Describes projects concerned with public health, community culture, and the day-to-day life of community residents.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): improvement of public safety and the reduction of crime; libraries; educational facilities and programs; health and wellness facilities and programs; senior facilities and programs; youth facilities and programs; facilities and programs for the disabled; civic amenities, access to quality food options; collaborations with faith-based organizations; arts and entertainment education; and homelessness prevention, services, and facilities.

LOCAL PLANNING & STAFFING CAPACITY: Describes projects concerned with a local government's ability to plan for the community's future and to meet the current needs of residents.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): updating zoning ordinances or land use; updating municipal/local policies, taxes, fees, etc.; increasing local government staff capacity; and updating planning documents like sector plans or comprehensive plans.

Additional Guidance for Developing the Sustainable Communities Action Plan

III. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

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 improve the 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 livable and sustainable community.

All communities submitted an SC Plan when the community earned its original designation. Some applicants may want to take advantage of the designation renewal process to outline new strategies, set new priorities or reaffirm existing strategies for their Sustainable Community. Changes to SC Plans may reflect changes in external factors affecting the community or changes in the priorities of the applicant.

Action Plan Guidance

The Action Plan section has been broken down into the same six categories as the Comprehensive Assessment section of this document. These parts address key components of your Sustainable Community Action Plan. Follow the guidelines below to fill out the matrix.

1) **For each section, pinpoint essential strengths and weaknesses of your community**. Example Transportation: Strength - Good sidewalk connectivity. Weakness - Insufficient amount of downtown parking.

2) **Based on those strengths and weaknesses, formulate specific outcomes that address the most pressing issues or greatest potentials. Include a means of measuring the success of said outcome.** Example Economy: Outcome – Expand broadband fiber optics in Town. Progress Measure - Linear measurement of fiber laid and number of residential and business connections.

3) **After defining the outcomes, list detailed strategies (break down to several action steps if needed) that will serve as the means to achieve those goals.** Example Economy: Strategy - Increase number of Town sponsored events ☐ Develop with community input, a series of weekend events that the Town could host.

4) **List potential partners that can support the successful implementation of these strategies through different types of resources.** Example Economy: DHCD (Community Legacy program), Small Business Administration (Services and financial assistance) etc.

CHECKLIST AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPLICANT: Baltimore County Department of Planning

NAME OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY: Essex

Please review the checklist of attachments and furnish all of the attachments that are applicable. Contents of the application should be tabbed and organized as follows:

❏ **Section A - Sustainable Community Renewal Applicant Information**
   ● Applicant Information

❏ **Section B – Sustainable Community Renewal Action Plan Update (Matrix)**

   ● Action Plan

❏ **Section C – Sustainable Community Renewal Report (Projects, Strategies and Partners)**
   ● Part 1: Qualitative Assessment
   ● Part 2: Comprehensive Assessment
   ● Competitive Funding

❏ **Section D – Sustainable Communities Workgroup Roster**

❏ **Section E – Signature Letter (acknowledging Disclosure Authorization and Certification)**

   ● Disclosure Authorization

❏ **Section F – Additional Files:** The following contents should be included:

   ● If requesting a boundary modification, map in pdf format and a GIS shapefile of the proposed Sustainable Community boundary

   ● Photos (jpeg format) of your aforementioned accomplished projects of the last five years

SECTION A - SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY RENEWAL APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name of Sustainable Community:	**Essex**
Name of Applicant:	**Baltimore County Department of Planning**
Applicant's Federal Identification Number:	
Applicant's Street Address:	**105 W Chesapeake Ave #101**

City: Towson	**County: Baltimore County**	**State: MD Zip Code: 21204**
Phone Number: 410-887-3480	**Fax Number: 410-887-5862**	**Web Address: www.baltimorecountymd.gov**

Sustainable Community Application Local Contact:

Name: Te-Sheng (Emery) Huang		**Title: Eastern Sector Coordinator**	
Address: 105 W Chesapeake Ave #101	**City: Towson**	**State: MD**	**Zip Code: 21204**
Phone Number: ▮	**Fax Number:** ▮	**E-mail Address:** ▮	

Sustainable Community Contact for Application Status:

Name: Ngone Seye Diop		**Title: Community Planning Division Chief**	
Address: 105 W Chesapeake Ave #101	**City: Towson**	**State: MD**	**Zip Code: 21204**
Phone Number: ▮	**Fax Number:** ▮	**E-mail Address:** ▮	

Other Sustainable Community Contacts:

Name: Ngone Seye Diop		**Title: Community Planning Division Chief**	
Address: 105 W Chesapeake Ave #101	**City: Towson**	**State: MD**	**Zip Code: 21204**
Phone Number: ▮	**Fax Number:** ▮	**E-mail Address:** ▮	

Sustainable Community Boundary and Description

(1) Are you requesting any changes to your Sustainable Community boundary? Describe why or why not?

No, the boundary in the original application encompasses the appropriate area.

1

(2) If yes, Include the following in as an attachment:
   a. PDF or JPEG of modified Sustainable Communities boundary map,
   b. GIS shapefiles of modified Sustainable Community boundary (mapped to the parcel boundary),

(3) Approximate number of acres of entire SC Area: 5512.5

(4) <u>Existing federal, state or local designations:</u>
   ☐ 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): Essex Commercial Revitalization District, Essex Design Review Panel Area, ARPA areas

(5) Describe the SC Area's current demographic trends (with respect to age, race, household size, household income, educational attainment, number of housing units, or other relevant factors). How have demographics changed in the last five years?

The Essex Sustainable Community area ("SC area") has an estimated 2021 population of 39,577, representing a small increase of 165 individuals since 2018. Median age of this population is 41.1 years, slightly higher than the countywide median age of 39.1 years.

Approximately 15.5% of the SC area's population is 65 years of age and over. Although this age bracket increased by 1% from 2018, a more significant decline occurred among the youth population (24 and younger), which decreased by roughly 4%, during the same period.

The racial profile of SC area is predominantly white, with 56% of population in the "White alone, Not Hispanic or Latino" racial group. This percentage decreased from 2018, when over 59% of population was white, yet is still lower than the countywide average of 62.9%. The "Black or African American alone, Not Hispanic or Latino" population has remained consistent. There was also a slight increase in the Hispanic/Latino population, representing 7.2% of the total population, compared to 5.1% in 2018.

There are currently 16,740 housing units in the SC area, out of which 15,393 units are occupied, representing a 92% occupancy rate. Since 2018, occupancy rate has steadily increase while the total number of vacant units has declined by 2.4%. Owner-occupied housing units made up 55% of total housing units, while renter-occupied units made up 45% of the inventory in 2021.

Among individuals age 25 and older, 83.6% graduated with a high school diploma or equivalent, while 14.3% of individuals in the same age range hold a bachelor's or advanced educational degree. Though these two figures are higher than they were in 2018, educational attainment in the SC area remains lower than Countywide average (91% for high school or higher, and 37% for bachelor's or higher). The area's median household income has experienced an increase of $7,000 from 2018 to 2021. The figures show median household income in the Sustainable Community area jumped from $55,654 in 2018 to $62,654 in 2021.

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section A

	ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates	ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates	Change
Population		*S0101	Age and Sex*	
Total estimated population:	39,412	39,577	+165
Median Age	40.0	41.1	+1.1
Estimated population 65 and older	5,725	6,116	+391
Estimated population 24 and younger	13,473	12,081	-1,392
Race/Ethnicity		*DP05	Demographic and Housing*	
Estimated White population	23,475	22,248	-1,227
Estimated Black/African American population	11,992	11,971	-21
Estimated Hispanic/Latino (of any race) population	2,012	2,843	+831
Housing		*S2502	Demographic Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units* *B25004	Vacancy Status*	
Total housing units	16,316	16,740	+424
Vacant housing units	1,691 (10.4%)	1,347 (8.0%)	-344 (-2.4%)
Occupied housing units	14,625 (89.6%)	15,393 (92.0%)	+768 (+1.4%)
Occupancy – owner occupied	7,596	8,473	+877
Occupancy – renter occupied	7,029	6,920	-109
Educational Attainment		*S1501	Educational Attainment*	
Age 25 and over with high school diploma/equivalency or higher	21,309 (82.2%)	22,976 (83.6%)	+1,667 (+1.4%)
Age 25 and over with bachelor's degree or higher	3,332 (12.8%)	3,935 (14.3%)	+603 (+1.5%)
Income		*S1901	Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2021 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)*	
Average median household income of tracts within expanded area (excluding Tract 4925)	$55,654	$62,654	+ $7,000
Median Household Income (Countywide)	$74,127	$81,846	+7.719

Source: (1) 2018 and 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables; (2) ACS **S1901** table, Income in the Past 12 Months for Median Household Income (Countywide):
Selected Geography: Census Tracts 4502, 4503, 4504, 4505.01, 4505.03, 4505.04, 4508, 4515, 4516, 4923

Organizational Structure, Experience and Public Input:

(1) Describe any changes to the Applicant's organizational structure. Specifically, how has membership of the Sustainable Communities Workgroup changed in the last five years? Who are/were the leaders, and how will/did the Workgroup advisor or staff manage implementation of the SC Area Plan?

The Sustainable Communities Workgroup is comprised of different partners compared to the 2018 application process. Baltimore County Department of Planning continues to take the lead

responsibility for this application process. For the 2023 renewal application, the Workgroup is comprised of significantly more community members, community leaders, and local organizations. The Baltimore County Department of Planning will be managing the implementation of the SC Action Plan through partnerships with the Workgroup, local organizations, and other County agencies.

The Workgroup includes the following representatives:
- Bob Bendler, Essex Middle River Civic Council and Wilson Point Civic Improvement Association
- Leah Biddinger, Sussex Community Association
- Truphena Choti, AfriThrive
- Cliff O'Connell, Eastern Baltimore County Task Force
- William Feuer, Eastern Regional Lions Club and New Essex Day Festival Association
- Purnell Glenn, Essex Middle River Civic Council
- Mike Hager, Essex Senior Center
- Lisa Harlow, Heritage Society of Essex and Middle River Museum
- Pat Hook, Hawthorne Community Association
- Sharon Kihn, Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce
- Kevin McDonough, Rockaway Beach Improvement Association
- Sam Weaver, MD Waterways Foundation

In addition to relevant county agencies, representatives of other organizations participated in Workgroup meetings depending on area topics discussed:
- Phyllis Joris, NeighborSpace
- Mitchell Posner, Community Assistance Network
- Darlene Smith, Community Assistance Network
- Fred Lippert, MDOT, MTA
- Jordan Vogt, MDOT
- Kimberly Livezey, Maryland SHA
- Claudine Myers, Maryland SHA
- Al Eilbacher, Baltimore County Public School
- Yvette C. May, Essex Public Library

(2) What have been the strengths and challenges of the capacity of the Sustainable Communities Workgroup with respect to implementation of the SC Plan?

Most of the members of this Workgroup have been actively involved in the process of implementation of the previous plan. As a result, they have been relatively successful in completing goals of the 2018 Action Plan. These organizations have a strong ability to plan and execute various projects related to the revitalization and improvement of the Essex SC Area (as well as surrounding areas), and will remain helpful partners in the process to implement the updated 2023 Action Plan. Community organizations are weak in several of the neighborhoods within the Sustainable Communities area. One of our strongest implementation partner, Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce, has now a part time Executive Director to allocate some of her time to the SC area.

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

During this Renewal Application process, the Baltimore County Department of Planning (BC Planning) led an extensive public engagement process to ensure the community could provide as much input as possible. The County held a series of public meetings, and conducted several public surveys to collect input. There were six public, virtual meetings held. On October 11, 2022, BC Planning conducted a kickoff meeting to introduce the application and the process to the public. Two similar kickoff meetings were conducted with faith organizations and the Southeast Network Groups respectively, which were held on October 19. 2022 and November 1, 2022.

Following that, there were three focus group meetings, where the Workgroup, relevant Baltimore County Agency representatives, and interested community members, could attend and discuss each of the six action plan topics. These were primarily formatted as open discussions led by the Baltimore County Department of Planning, where attendees could discuss strengths, weaknesses, and potential outcomes or action steps for each of the six topics. The meetings occurred between October and November of 2022, and were held virtually. Additionally, there were a total of four surveys created and distributed virtually on the Essex Sustainable Community Hub and physically to gather further input on the six action plan topics between October and December of 2022. Physical surveys were located at Essex Senior Center and Essex Public Library. Once the draft of the Action Plan was completed, the workgroup had one week to review and provide comments. Afterwards, the draft Action Plan was posted online for public review for two weeks.

The Action Plan update is based on community needs heard during the public engagement process, the previous 2018 Action plan, existing County plans for projects to take place in the next five years, and existing initiatives being conducted, or soon to be conducted, by local organizations. Action Plan outcomes and strategies are consistent with County initiatives and goals such as 2021 Essex Design Guidelines and 2022 Essex Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) report. These outcomes and strategies also align with the existing adopted community plans that cover the Essex SC Area, including:
  • Essex CBD Revitalization Strategy (1991)
  • Eastern Baltimore County Revitalization Strategy (1996)
  • Community Conservation Plan for Essex Middle River (1996)
  • Riverdale Portion of the Middle River - Bird River Area Plan (2001)
  • Middle River Employment Center Area Plan, Part One (2002)
  • Eastern Baltimore County Pedestrian and Bicycle Access Plan (2006)

(4) Would you like any technical assistance from State agencies to help expand the capacity of your SC Workgroup or implement your SC plan? Please describe with which revitalization strategies you would like assistance.

The workgroup in the Essex SC area is highly organized and very active in the policies and initiatives. Because several main traffic arteries are maintained by State Highway Administration (e.g. Eastern Blvd), the workgroup may need additional assistance in getting relevant approvals. The area is also in need of a sufficiently capable Community Development Organization. The area struggles with a lack of organizations that have the capacity to support implementation projects.

SECTION B - SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACTION PLAN

[Essex]

Example Section

Strengths	Weaknesses
● Insert bulleted list of strengths (provide some detail as to why and how this is a strength in your community)	● Insert bulleted list of weaknesses (provide some detail as to why and how this is a weakness in your community)

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures Outcomes should be considered end results of actions and strategies. Based on the strengths and weaknesses, identify the strengths on which you would like to build and the challenges you would like to address. Progress Measure: What will you use to measure success toward outcome? Is it quantifiable or qualifiable?	Strategies and Action Items Identify strategies that will help your community to achieve each identified outcome to the left. If applicable, break down each strategy into specific action items that outline different steps of the strategy. Specify how you are planning to achieve the desired outcomes.	Implementation Partners Which community stakeholders need to be involved to realize each action step and strategy? Name specific public and/or private sector partners.
Example Outcome 1: Code violations and complaints are reduced in the Sustainable Community residential areas. Example Progress Measures: Code violations reduced by 25% in Sustainable Community residential areas	Example Strategy A: Review and revise, as needed, code compliance program to reduce frequency and number of residential code violations. Example Action 1: Complete analysis of code violations over the past five years to determine areas, both geographically and topically, for which code violations are most frequent. Example Action 2: Conduct outreach program to determine barriers to code compliance. Example Action 3: Analyze code compliance program for potential inefficiencies and opportunities for proactive engagement. Example Action 4: Pursue façade improvement funding to assist low-income homeowners overcome barriers to code compliance.	Maryland Department of Planning, Maryland Department of Housing, County Planning Department, local homeowners association

Environment

This section describes projects involving the natural environment, our use of natural resources, and our relationships or access to the natural environment.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): the quality of land, water, and air; tree canopies and green spaces; green infrastructure; habitat improvement, climate change mitigation and adaptation; nuisance flooding,; stormwater infrastructure and management; water and sewer capacity; energy conservation; recycling, pet waste, and organic waste programs; the mitigation of environmental hazards; and parks and recreation improvements.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- The SC area falls within two watersheds: Middle River to the northeast and Back River to the south and west. Within those are three watershed planning areas in which Small Watershed Action Plans (SWAPs) have been developed: Middle River/Tidal Gunpowder, Upper Back River, and Tidal Back River SWAPs have assessed water resources, quality influencers, and opportunities for restoration within the area of interest. - Several potential projects to improve water quality were identified in the County's SWAP, including stream restoration, stormwater conversion, stormwater retrofit, and tree planting. Additional opportunities are assessed for the possibility of citizen participation in restoration, such as rain barrel/rain garden installation potential. - The SC Area, being proximal to major water bodies, may result in a community that already feels a close connection with the water, allowing for greater citizen awareness and motivation for water quality improvement that may be realized from potential future action. - Multiple neighborhoods identified in the SWAPs have a high opportunity for environmental restoration actions. - Locally established Back River Restoration Committee – promotes stewardship, organizes volunteer cleanups, plants trees, marks storm drains, use of rain barrels and rain gardens; Manages the trash boom at the 695 bridge with a grant from Baltimore County (Have collected over 7.4 million pounds of trash and woody debris since 2011. Additionally Maryland Waterways Foundation (headquartered in Essex, operates regionally) has collected 418,410 lbs of trash and debris since they began partnering with Baltimore County in FY2021. - Overall access to parks and recreation sites - 11 parks, including The Fields at Renaissance Park (and its Stembridge Community Center) and Cox's Point Park (waterfront with water access – boat ramp). - Indoor and outdoor recreational facilities available at nine public school recreation centers.	- The area is vulnerable to coastal flood hazards from periodic weather events in additional to possible increases in flood hazards with projected sea level rise due to future climate change. - While monitoring points for tidal benthos do exist within the SCA, the water quality in the vicinity of the SCA will be largely influenced by inputs and activities in areas further upland in the Back River and Middle River watersheds and by tidal water flows from the Chesapeake Bay. - Out of the roughly 4,602 acres of land covered by the SCA there are only an estimated 438 acres (about 9.5%) draining to SWM facilities that provide water quality benefit. This is lower than the countywide average of 21.2% within urban sections of the URDL. There is a notable absence of water quality SWM in the downtown area of Essex along Eastern Blvd. - An analysis using 2020 impervious data shows that 37% of the SC area is covered by impervious surfaces, which is higher than the countywide average of 26.1% within the urban part of the URDL. Streams that have drainage areas with this amount of impervious are considered impacted and show signs of degradation such as erosion, channel widening, and a decline in stream habitat. - Multiple neighborhoods identified in the SWAPs have a high potential for contributing pollution to waterways. - Toxic contamination of fish tissues make it unsafe to eat several species of fish caught in tidal Middle River (PCBs) and tidal Back River (PCBs and chlordane). - Aquatic wildlife in tidal Back River is impaired by excessive nitrogen and phosphorous pollution. In many non-tidal streams in Back River, aquatic wildlife is impaired by excessive sediment, chloride, and sulfate pollution, and by channelization of streams and loss of riparian forest buffers. - Low tree canopy covering

- Community path has been established to connect several public sites within the Hawthorne peninsula, traversing parks, the Hawthorne Elementary School Recreation Center, and connecting sidewalks within this highly walkable neighborhood.
- Access to food – 4 major grocery stores, approximately 10 varying types of food marts within area.
- Farmers markets & local farms/farm stands within close distance to area.
- There are strong markets for recyclables.
- Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) produces high quality material.
- Strong base for recycling, including curbside collection, recycling various materials at the Residential Drop off Centers (RDOCs), and processors and businesses that participate in recycling.
- In February 2023, the Baltimore County establishes law to ban single-use plastic bags to reduce those littering roadways, fouling waterways and filling up landfills.

- Few upgrades/outdated park amenities at local recreation fields/parks
- Essex's main street needs to be updated
- Lack of infrastructure
- Development destruction of woodlands and habitat significantly reduces the coverage of green space and open space.
- Too many recyclables are still ending up in the trash.
- The public needs more education on recycling and zero waste.
- Need markets for items such as 3-7 plastics.

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
Outcome 1: Improve and protect water quality to enhance waterfront areas **Progress Measures:** • Progress on TMDLs - Reductions in pollutant loads and/or progress on TMDL Implementation Plan actions. • Reduced severity or elimination of water quality impairments. • Increase in drainage areas of Stormwater Management ponds that provide water quality improvements in addition to water quantity management. (GIS analysis of County SWM pond drainage layers. The coverage for the 2023 application is 438 acres approximately. This shows the increasing of 45 acres from the 2018 application, which was 393 acres approximately.	**Strategy A**: Encourage redevelopment of properties located along Eastern Blvd in the Back River watershed to allow for implementation of up to date SWM requirements **Strategy B**: Provide grant programs to local not-for-profit environmental organizations, which may be able to provide certain community-based support for best management practices, in order to implement principles laid out in the County's Small Watershed Action Plans (SWAPs) **Strategy C**: Implement critical restoration projects, operational projects such as street sweeping and reductions in the quantity of road salt applied **Strategy D**: Improve and/or create storm water management facilities through the County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to address drainage issues, especially along Old Eastern Avenue	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability • Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation • Baltimore County Public Schools **Private:** • Back River Restoration Committee Gunpowder Valley Conservancy (for Middle River portions of SCA) • Maryland Waterways Foundation (headquartered in Essex, operates regionally) • Local community/business associations/civic councils • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force

Outcome 2: Improve and maintain county park areas and enforce trash clearance to enhance visitor experience **Progress Measures:** • Additional benches, tables, grills, trash cans, • Park cleanups conducted	**Strategy A**: Assess existing conditions and future needs of park amenities and identify and prioritize park upgrades **Strategy B**: Research grant opportunities to help with costs of park upgrades or hold fundraisers to raise money and awareness of parks **Strategy C**: Get group of interns/local Boy Scouts to aid in maintenance/cleanup of parks **Strategy D:** Provide additional benches, tables, grills, trash cans, signage to enhance visitor experience Strategy E: Identify improvement needs for Cox Point Park and apply for revitalization funding to beautify the park	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks • Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation - Solid Waste Management • Baltimore County Department of Budget and Finance - Property Management **Private:** • Back River Restoration Committee • MD Waterways Foundation • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • NeighborSpace
Outcome 3: Resolve the long-standing odor issue created by the nearby wastewater treatment plant **Progress Measures:** • Decreased number of odor complaints	**Strategy A:** Establish partnerships with Baltimore City and the State for strategies to mitigate pungent smell **Strategy B:** Call on the state's government to pass legislation for an independent oversight agency to ensure that water treatment is in compliance with the existing codes and regulations	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability • Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation • Baltimore City Public Works • Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) **Private:** • Back River Restoration Committee • Sussex Community Association • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force
Outcome 4: Improve environmental conditions at public lands **Progress Measures:** • Number of shoreline restoration, forest and tree planting, and natural habitat enhancement projects completed	**Strategy A**: Identify additional shoreline restoration needs at waterfront parks and other public waterfront lands **Strategy B**: Identify locations where forest and tree plantings may be implemented, with partner agencies and groups working together to implement projects **Strategy C**: Investigate and implement opportunities for habitat enhancements and similar environment-friendly site improvements	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks • Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability

		Public: Baltimore County Department of Budget and Finance - Property Management • Baltimore County Public Schools **Private:** • Various civic and community groups
Outcome 5: Tree canopy – while some trees will be lost through development, increase tree plantings within the SC boundary and surrounding Census Designated Places (CDPs). **Progress Measures:** • Measure tree canopy of the SC boundary when new land use data is available. It may take several years after trees are planted for them to be detected in the land use maps. Current tree canopy is 17.6% (Chesapeake Conservancy High Resolution Land Cover, 2018). This is a 0.3% decrease from 2014. Since 2018, the County and its partners have planted 4.5 acres (450 trees) in the Sustainable Community boundary. (Note: Due to updates in the Tree Canopy data from 2018, there is a discrepancy in the tree canopy percent between the 2018 and 2023 submittal. Tree canopy should be 17.9% instead of 27.6% in the 2018 report.)	**Strategy A**: Tree planting – Redevelopment to add shade trees and other vegetation to areas that are lacking in the SC. **Strategy B**: Expand the Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) Expansion Program and outreach to property owners for participation. **Strategy C**: Survey street trees in the SC and replant trees that have been missing. **Strategy D**: Determine if there are locations for other tree plantings	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability **Private:** • Back River Restoration Committee; Gunpowder Valley Conservancy (for Middle River portions of SCA) BCPS • Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Neighborhood Organizations
Outcome 6: Increase the recycling rate of the area **Progress Measures:** • Achieve 40 percent recycling rate	**Strategy A**: Increase the provision of recycling information and education to residents via various platforms such as the county website, newsletter, and social media **Strategy B:** Improve and identity markets by providing technical and financial assistance to existing and potential recycling industries **Strategy C:** Match suppliers of recyclable commodities with businesses that can use the material **Strategy D:** Improve the quality of recyclables and purchase recycled products **Strategy E**: Consider adding additional materials to recycling	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation • Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability • Maryland Department of the Environment • Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority **Private:** • Residents

		• Neighborhood Organizations

Economy

This section is centered on economic growth and management.

Strengths and weaknesses might focus on the following: business attraction & retention; improving and maintaining the health of business districts, downtowns, and main streets; commercial vacancy reduction; workforce attraction and retention; employment/job training; marketing, branding, and tourism; improving or creating economic impact of cultural and historic assets; providing technical and financial assistance to businesses; commercial building acquisition, rehabilitation and/or adaptive re-use; and creating a sense of place and vibrancy through streetscaping and beautification.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Major institutions in the general area including the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) and Medstar Franklin Square Hospital, which provide a large number of high quality jobs and services to community. • Light industrial and distribution employment center (in close proximity to SC area) that draws thousands of workers daily from nearby neighborhoods and the region – including diverse brands of companies including distributors, wholesalers, beverage brewing, and building suppliers. • Proximity to the Eastpoint American Job Center supporting job seekers and incumbent workers with resume building, training, and job placement. • Tradepoint, Greenleigh and other development (e.g. Aviation Station) that bring higher paying jobs and investment back to east side of County. • Excellent multi-modal transportation access, with immediate connection to I-695 and I-95, a Class I freight railroad, Martin State Airport, MARC regional transit, and just a few miles from the Port of Baltimore. • The Chesapeake Enterprise Zone, which extends to the Lockheed Martin complex, offers incentives for major industrial investment and job creation in the area. • The Commercial Revitalization District designation promotes new commercial investment in and along the commercial corridors (Eastern Boulevard, Back River Neck Road). • Baltimore County Landmark Designation Program and Essex Design Review Panel Area	• ACS 2021 (5-Year Estimate Subject Tables) shows Essex CDP (Census Designated Place) has a higher unemployment rate (populations 20 to 64 years), which is 7.2%, than the County as a whole (5.1 %). • ACS 2021 (5-Year Estimate Subject Tables) shows relatively low educational attainment with only 14.3% of Essex CDP (Census Designated Place) residents (25 years and over) having a bachelor's degree or higher, versus 40.4% for County as a whole. • Need to maximize matching of local workforce with large employers in area. • Lack of comprehensive survey to evaluate opportunities for historic designations on the County and National level. • Commercial buildings lack architectural integrity to warrant landmarking on a County level. • High commercial turnover resulting in large number of vacant properties and storefronts along commercial corridor. • Poor appearance of commercial areas (run down businesses and infrastructure) that make this area become a thing of the past and feel depressed and blighted. • Lack of large anchor tenants to generate shopping traffic. • Absence of high quality businesses in commercial areas (Eastern Blvd./Back River Neck). • Negative perceptions of area (crime). • The operation of the Heritage Society of Essex and Middle River (Museum) is solely dependent on volunteers.

- Local tourist attractions included the Heritage Society of Essex and Middle River (Museum), Glenn L. Martin Maryland Aviation Museum, waterfront parks, including Rocky Point Park and Beach and Cox's Point Park, and Marshy Point Nature Center.
- Various types of restaurants and entertainment, local breweries and distilleries, and strong and well established marinas (with boat services), yacht clubs in area
- The average median household income increase from $55,654 in 2018 to $62,654 in 2021, showing $7,000 increased (based Census Tracts 4502, 4503, 4504, 4505.01, 4505.03, 4505.04, 4508, 4515, 4516, 4923).
- The Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce has done a lot with very limited staff capacity. New ARPA-funded 2023 hire Essex Development Initiative Director based at the Chamber brings new capacity to focus on Essex business district and neighborhoods.

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
Outcome 1: Provide trade school programs to prepare for demands of the future labor market, particularly for auto, marine and aviation sectors. **Progress Measures:** • Number of programs created • Number of people who registered with these programs	**Strategy A:** Partner with area businesses to plan hiring events **Strategy B:** Partner with high schools and community colleges in the area to create programs **Strategy C:** Provide funding to support and sustain programs	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development • Community College of Baltimore County • Local schools • Maryland Department of Labor **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Essex Community and faith-based organizations • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce
Outcome 2: Decrease commercial vacancies within commercial districts **Progress Measures:** • Number of new businesses moving in • Decreased commercial vacancy • Number of networking opportunities created	**Strategy A:** Conduct market research to identify the appropriate business types that could be most viable in the area **Strategy B:** Create a straightforward marketing strategy to promote marinas to residents and visitors, cross marketing, sidewalk events **Strategy C:** Outreach to property owners and potential independent businesses and create opportunities for them to network	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development • Baltimore County Department of Planning

	Strategy D: Consider public-private partnerships for strategies to better utilize vacant commercial spaces **Strategy E:** Consider making the business district a safe and walkable area to help reduce overall vacancies	• Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development **Private:** • Private developers • Private investors • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce • Community organizations
Outcome 3: Attract businesses that meet the needs of community members **Progress Measures:** • Number of desired businesses moving in • Funds invested in renovating commercial buildings and facades • Number of networking opportunities created	**Strategy A:** Conduct surveys to explore the desired business types that locals would like to have in the area **Strategy B:** Outreach to property owners and potential independent businesses and create opportunities for them to network	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce • Community organizations
Outcome 4: Create a brand and marketing plan to make Essex a destination and promote a live-work-play community **Progress Measures:** • Number of in- and out-state visitors • Increased average money per person spending in the area	**Strategy A:** Form a tourism committee to better plan, organize and promote tourism events **Strategy B:** Provide funding to sustain and organize free and affordable events throughout the year for people of all ages **Strategy C:** Create branding package for area – gateway signage, streetscape signage/branding to create sense of place **Strategy D:** Establish partnerships with Trade Point Atlantic, Greenleigh, and Crossroads for technical assistance in marketing opportunities, patronizing	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Public Library • Baltimore County Office of Tourism • Historic Society of Baltimore County

	businesses, referrals of potential businesses, and subsidizing transportation links **Strategy D:** Consider making the business district a safe and walkable area to help make Essex a destination	**Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce • Community organizations • Lockheed Martin • Franklin Square • CCBC-Essex • Tradepoint Atlantic
Outcome 5: Increase awareness of available County, State and Federal programs and resources **Progress Measures:** • Number of workshops with business and property owners Increased number of programs being used	**Strategy A:** Expand marketing outreach of programs to business owners, real estate agents and investors **Strategy B:** Hold meeting within community for residents/business owners to spread awareness of programs **Strategy C:** Hire a business development representative or a coordinator who provide funding information and answer questions business owners might have	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce

Transportation

This section describes the way people in your community get from place to place.

Strengths, weaknesses and outcomes can focus on: 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; and road conditions.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Excellent multi-modal transportation access, with immediate connection to I-695 and I-95, a Class I freight railroad, Martin State Airport, MARC regional transit, and just a few miles from the Port of Baltimore. • There is a substantial bus transportation network in area.	• Eastern Boulevard and Back River Neck Road streetscape in disrepair (poor sidewalk conditions, poor bus stop conditions, missing & dead trees, tree pits in disrepair, brick planters falling apart, broken benches, light poles broken) • Sidewalks throughout the SC area are deteriorating.

• There is a Park & Ride Lot that Encourages carpooling & public transportation. • There are two existing plans: Eastern Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and updated Baltimore County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. • The State has designated, marked, and signed of bicycle lanes/routes on major State Routes, such as Eastern Blvd. • There is a trail system on the Hawthorne Peninsula in Middle River, which provides a bike trail loop around the community as well as connections with and through Midthorne/Hawthorne Park and Dark Head Creek Park where there is access to the waterfront. • Access to waterways, including boating boat ramps and fishing piers. • There is a good amount of parking in the area, including street parking and Baltimore County Revenue Authority Parking lot.	• Limited funding available for sidewalk and pedestrian improvements. • Narrow road right-of-way restricts the ability to have fully implemented "complete streets" along certain roadways. • There are inadequate parking and parking problems (e.g. tractor and trailers parking issues) • Roads in area need resurfaced/repaired/replaced • Traffic related issues, such as speed, congestion and noise, severely impact businesses and quality of life in the area. • As a State Highway, placemaking on Eastern Boulevard is severely constrained by the goals of SHA to move traffic at high speeds through the area • Lack of public transportation to Tradepoint Atlantic (TPA)

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
Outcome 1: Complete streetscaping of Eastern Boulevard, Back River Neck Road and Kingston Road with ADA standards **Progress Measures:** • Number of benches, flower beds, tree pits, and trash cans • Number of bus stops	**Strategy A:** Collaborate with MDOT SHA to develop and implement comprehensive streetscape plan **Strategy B:** Develop and maintain inventory of streetscape maintenance issues **Strategy C:** Improve existing bus stops with concrete pads and integrate them into the East-West corridor Study initialized by Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation • MDOT SHA • MDOT MTA **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force
Outcome 2: Conduct traffic studies to address traffic issues related to speed, congestion, noise and safety **Progress Measures:** • Number of traffic studies are completed.	**Strategy A:** Coordinate with MDOT SHA and BC DPW&T to formulate and conduct traffic studies to understand traffic related issues **Strategy B:** Work with the State of Maryland and Baltimore County to secure traffic study funding **Strategy C:** Fund and Install radar speed signs at multiple points along Eastern Boulevard where revitalization and placemaking are prioritized	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Police • Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation • MDOT SHA **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force

| Outcome 3: Implement the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan to enhance the regional bicycle and pedestrian connectivity

Progress Measures:
• Number of priority projects proposed for SC Area are completed
• Miles of trails/paths
• Miles of sidewalks/bicycle lanes/ side paths
• Number of key infrastructure improvements such as signalized crosswalks | Strategy A: Prioritize projects in plan that are located in SC area that are most important to community and provide connections to important regional destinations, such as the Martin State Airport MARC station

Strategy B: Work with Baltimore County to put priority projects into the capital improvement projects (CIP)

Strategy C: Plan and implement bicycle and pedestrian enhancement projects through the cooperation between bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups, Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T), and the Maryland Department of Transportation - State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) | Public:
• Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation
• MDOT SHA
• MDOT MTA
• Baltimore County Department of Planning
• Baltimore County Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee

Private:
• Eastern Baltimore County Task Force |
| Outcome 4: Develop transportation services for people in need to easily access Essex library and senior center or commute to regional employment centers (e.g. TPA)

Progress Measures:
• Number of users | Strategy A: Conduct surveys to explore the feasibility of this service and how this service should be implemented and operated

Strategy B: Request financial assistance through county, state and federal programs to secure funding for transportation services | Public:
• Baltimore County Department of Planning
• Baltimore County Public Library
• Baltimore County Department of Aging (Essex Senior Center)

Private:
• Eastern Baltimore County Task Force
• Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce |

Housing

This section focuses on the homes in which people in your community live and efforts which make it easier for them to find and stay in a place to call home.

Strengths, weaknesses and outcomes might focus on the following: affordability; increasing homeownership; increasing rental housing; diversifying the kinds of housing available; improving housing conditions (interior or exterior); housing programs; aging in place; preventing foreclosures; and reducing residential vacancies.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- The area has a diverse housing stock, including WWII era bungalows, 1950s brick row houses, 1970 apartments, and new single-family detached and large townhouses. - Waterfront & water view properties available with many having piers. - Housing opportunities for seniors to age in place in many single story houses and multi-family senior facilities. - Homeowners care about the area and want to make a change, and maintain their properties well. - The vacant housing rate decreased 0.6% from 10.4% in 2018 to 9.8% in 2020. - The homeownership rate increased 2% from 46.6% in 2018 to 48.6% in 2020. - Several newly constructed housing development were approved between 2018 and 2022, including - Water's Landing PUD (189 units), Hyde Park Overlook (129 units) and Morningstar Properties (2 units). - The Median Home Value in the Essex CDP increases from $190,800 in 2018 to $208,000 in 2021.	- Aging housing stock with many units constructed in 1930-1950s (e.g. WWII apartments), which might not be feasible for people age in place. - Neighborhoods are turning more transient due to less owner occupied housing and more rental housing. - There is a high vacancy rate of vacant homes and properties (9.8%) due to negligence and absentee of property owners. - Open space is being filled up with townhomes and other new development, making this area too congested and over crowded, especially in the Back River Neck Area - Negative perceptions of area (crime). - Lack of rodent control / rodent infestations - Issues with homelessness

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
Outcome 1: Develop plan to address absentee landlords, especially for vacant houses or rental houses operated by institutional investors (i.e. LLCs) or individuals **Progress Measures:** • Number of absentee landlords contacted regarding code enforcement issues or neglect of property	**Strategy A:** Create an inventory of vacant houses or rental houses owned/operated by institutional investors (i.e. LLCs) or individuals who do not reside in the area **Strategy B:** Increase homeownership by targeting outreach to renters in community for 1st time homebuyer program **Strategy C:** Develop plans to address household crowding	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections - Code Enforcement • Baltimore County Department of Housing and Community Development

• Number of participants in housing counseling workshops and he Settlement Expense Loan Program (SELP)		**Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Dundalk Renaissance (partnering with Eastern Baltimore County Task Force and providing housing counseling) • Community Assistance Network (CAN) • Community organizations
Outcome 2: Help residents make their homes more habitable and more suitable for aging in place, especially for low-income households **Progress Measures:** • Number of completed rehabs • Number of Elderly residents able to age in place	**Strategy A:** Increase awareness of County, State and Federal Housing Counseling Agencies (HCAs) and their services **Strategy B:** Apply for State Revitalization Programs funding to help address the aging housing stock **Strategy C:** Promote and expand the County's housing programs (e.g. Housing Opportunities and Finance Programs and Housing Accessibility Modification Program and County Aging BCAUSE program)	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Housing and Community Development • Baltimore County Department of Aging • Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development **Private:** • Dundalk Renaissance (partnering with Eastern Baltimore County Task Force and implementing BCAUSE senior home repairs in the Essex and Middle River areas) • Community organizations
Outcome 3: Develop plan to address negative perception of Essex as an area to reside **Progress Measures:** • Marketing materials and events • The homeownership rate • Number of events hosted in the area	**Strategy A:** Work with community leaders to promote homeownership and identify barriers **Strategy B:** Work with local real estate professionals to provide positive information, testimonials, welcome packages, etc. Highlight unique attributes of waterfront neighborhoods **Strategy C:** Promote neighborhood gatherings/events to foster sense of community	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development **Private:**

	Strategy D: Promote affordable quality housing to the 15,000 employees at Trade Point Atlantic	• Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce • Real estate agencies • Community organizations
Outcome 4: Combat vacant and blighted houses **Progress Measures:** Number of vacant houses to be rehabilitated Number of blighted residential properties to be reused	**Strategy A:** Identify vacant and blighted structures/houses to rehabilitate and turn them into livable homes **Strategy B:** Provide incentives and grants to help rehabilitate the vacant and blighted houses	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Housing and Community Development • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce • Real estate agencies • Community organizations
Outcome 5: Increase housing choices within and adjacent to commercial core to better support vibrant retail **Progress Measures:** Zoning allows more mixed use and increased density Number of mixed use developments/redevelopments Number of workforce housing developments	**Strategy A:** Revise zoning in commercial core and adjacent parcels to allow for increased density and housing and/or mixed use **Strategy B:** Develop partnerships to pursue workforce housing development on Park and Ride parcel identified in TAP report. This could include a limited number of units reserved for unhoused people. **Strategy C:** Encourage redevelopment of parcels in commercial corridor with financial incentives to support increased density, workforce housing, and/or mixed use with housing above retail. This could include a limited number of units reserved for unhoused people.	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Housing and Community Development • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Private Developers • Real estate agencies • Tradepoint Atlantic

Community Health and Quality of Life

This section is concerned with public health, community culture, and the day-to-day life of community residents.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): improvement of public health including improving community design to promote healthy behaviors such as walking and strengthening community support and connectedness through health and wellness programs and facilities that create inclusive communities. These projects may include built environment, indoor spaces, outdoor environments such as increasing community gardens and access to services including educational facilities and programs; health and wellness facilities and programs that serve multi-generations; senior facilities and programs; youth facilities and programs; facilities and programs for the disabled; civic amenities, access to quality food options; collaborations with faith-based organizations; arts and entertainment education; and homelessness prevention, services, and facilities. Projects should include community engagement that includes participation in the selection of strategies and outcomes, progress reports, and evaluation.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• The area has a rich history with strong community involvement. • There are many parks and recreation sites within the SC Area, including waterfront parks like Cox's Point Park and Hawthorne-Midthorne Park, a variety of other parks such as the Fields at Renaissance Park (site of the Stembridge Community Center), Fox Ridge Park, Martindale Parks, and Waterview Park. Numerous public school recreation centers supplement available recreational opportunities. • Eastern Baltimore County has long had strong ties to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Substantial lengths of shoreline within the Sustainable Community, along both Back River and Middle River, enable local residents to enjoy associated maritime and waterfront traditions and – in some cases - livelihoods. • Proximity to waterfront amenities such as public parks, public boat ramps and fishing piers (e.g. Cox's Point Park). • Marina/Boat Services readily available. • Various public facilities that provides services, various learning and fun activities such as Essex library, Essex Senior Center, the Heritage Society of Essex and Middle River Museum, and Glenn L. Martin Maryland Aviation Museum. • Essex Day celebration • Department of Social Services offers various services and funding to address the wellbeing of citizens, including staff and various types of programs. • Educational opportunities/options through public schools, both Essex & Dundalk Campuses of Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) and other organizations (e.g. Our Lady of Mount Carmel). • Close proximity to Medstar Franklin Square and Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Centers. • Large quantity of places of worship	• Lost sense of direction/sense of place in area. • The area does not have a cohesive architectural character. In some commercial and residential areas, the appearance of buildings is poor. • Lack of chain restaurants in area that result in limited pedestrian activity • Lack of comprehensive survey to evaluate opportunities for historic designations on the County and National level; • Lack of local and national historic designations. • A number of parks within the area are older and in need of revitalization, to update and expand upon their recreational facilities and ensure they remain valued community assets. • The area is lack of events and activities for people of different ages, especially for the seniors. • Challenges that affects the services provided by Department of Social Services, including staff turnover, gap services and lack of affordable housing in the area. • Police Force Staffing (Perception; Not enough visual representation of police in area/response time issues). • There are numerous unhoused people sleeping at bus stops, on benches. • Negative perceptions of area (crime). • Drugs (including on residential streets) and opioid problems is prevalent in the area. • Infestation Issues: rats and Midge bugs infestation that affects waterfront establishments and residences. • Area's median household income is far below the County's median • School issues: low ranked schools and overcrowded/Over-capacity schools.

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
Outcome 1: Foster and restore community associations to enhance the sense of community and increase community involvement **Progress Measures:** • Number of community associations restored	**Strategy A:** Identify inactive community groups and provide assistance and support for group reactivation **Strategy B:** Increase organizational capacity by improving and enhancing the skills, processes and resources of current organizations in the area	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Office of Community Engagement **Private:** • Local community associations • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force
Outcome 2: Continue and expand streetscaping and cleanup efforts on Eastern Boulevard and River Neck Back Road **Progress Measures:** • Number of implemented streetscaping projects • Number of Street cleaning	**Strategy A:** Provide incentives and grants to implement Essex Design Guidelines (adopted June 2021) to improve aesthetic appeal of Eastern Boulevard and Back River Neck Road **Strategy B:** Utilize County, State, and/or Federal funding to conduct/implement various streetscaping, wayfinding, and public art projects to connect the neighborhood to the CRD and distinguish Essex as its own community **Strategy C:** Establish partnerships with schools, community associations and faith-based organizations for street cleaning	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections - Code Enforcement • Baltimore County Public Schools **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce • Faith based and community organizations
Outcome 3: Increase the variety of recreational opportunities available **Progress Measures:** • Number of expanded recreational opportunities and programs • Number of youth enrichment-focused special events and activities	**Strategy A:** Evaluate and expand upon recreation program opportunities within the area, including indoor sites such as the Mars Estates Recreation Activity Center and Stembridge Community Center. **Strategy B:** Work with partner organizations such as the Car Ripken, Sr. Foundation to provide enrichment opportunities for area youth **Strategy C:** Create programs to attract seniors to downtown, not only engaging them to sponsor activities for other seniors and/or youth, but also connecting downtown to the Senior Center, which is only one block away	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development • Maryland Department of Natural Resources (via the Program Open Space and Local Parks and Playgrounds Infrastructure funding programs)

		• Baltimore County Department of Aging **Private:** • Bengies-Chase, Middle River, and Essex-Stembridge Recreation Councils • Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce • Community organizations
Outcome 4: Improve and maintain County park areas **Progress Measures:** • Number of completed maintenance and replacement projects for aging amenities such as playgrounds, sports courts, pavilions, trails, and playing fields • Quantity of new recreational amenities made available community • Number of large scale park enhancement and renovation projects	**Strategy A:** Prioritize the replacement of playgrounds, sports courts, and other recreational amenities based on condition and needs **Strategy B:** Develop the Woodward Park Site to provide additional recreational facilities and other potential public amenities/facilities **Strategy C:** Continue park revitalization programs and efforts, such as the project underway at Cox's Point Park **Strategy D:** Investigate and implement ways to provide greater and higher quality recreational access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks • Maryland Department of Natural Resources (via the Program Open Space and Local Parks and Playgrounds Infrastructure funding programs) • Various County agencies
Outcome 5: Improve access and integration of social and behavioral health services delivery to leverage multiple investments. **Progress Measures:** • Number of individuals participating in nutrition, addiction treatment, mentoring, workforce development, other programs • Number of individuals whose housing stability is monitored • Number of individuals whose housing stability is supported by rental assistance or other housing programs	**Strategy A:** Establish integrated data tracking to support targeted interventions to increase housing stability and improved service delivery **Strategy B:** Host Resource Fair connecting residents with Community Schools organizers and wide range of public and private resources **Strategy C:** Implement innovative programs such as ROCA to divert vulnerable populations into productive training and employment programs **Strategy D:** Explore opportunities for expanding access to rental assistance programs post-ARPA and post-COVID related funding **Strategy E:** Develop partnerships to pursue workforce housing development on Park and Ride parcel identified in TAP report. This could include a limited number of units reserved for unhoused people. **Strategy F:** Encourage redevelopment of parcels in commercial corridor with financial incentives to support increased density, workforce housing, and/or	**Public:** • County Executive's Office Essex Initiative • Baltimore County Department of Health • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development • Baltimore County Department of Housing and Community Development • Maryland Department of Health • Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development **Private:**

mixed use with housing above retail. This could include a limited number of units reserved for unhoused people.	• Various Non-Profit Service Providers • Various For-profit service providers • Private Developers and Real Estate Agents

Local Planning and Staffing Capacity

This section is concerned with a local government's ability to plan for the community's future and to meet the current needs of residents.

Strengths, weaknesses and outcomes might focus on the following: updating zoning ordinances or land use; updating municipal/local policies, taxes, fees, etc.; increasing local government staff capacity; and updating planning documents like sector plans or comprehensive plans.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• A lot of potential for businesses and community space • There is potential in promoting its proximity to the waterfront	• No community center, no park, and no affordable sports programming, especially in Harbor Point Estates/Sandalwood/Deep Creek Middle Area • Political support • Too many commercial vacancies along Eastern Ave. • Eyesores such as the old Peter's restaurant (corner of Back River Neck Road and Eastern Ave. • Too many pawn shops and clinics for additions, especially along Eastern Ave. • Being over built. • Buildings along Eastern Ave. need façade improvement.

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
Outcome 1: Address issues of the concentration of auto related uses, pawn shops and drug treatment clinics **Progress Measures:** • Decreased number of auto related uses, pawn shops and drug treatment clinics	**Strategy A:** Study zoning along Eastern Boulevard and Back River Neck Road to consider creating an overly district to encourage creative (re)development **Strategy B:** Conduct survey of uses wanted in area and encourage adaptive reuse, infill and redevelopment to attract these uses	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development

		• Baltimore County Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections **Private:** • Private developers • Private investors • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce • Community organizations
Outcome 2: Develop plan to address visual pollution and sidewalk merchandise displays along major commercial corridors. **Progress Measures:** • Number of properties used the façade improvement program • Decreased number of code enforcement	**Strategy A:** Create a business roundtable with specific short and midterm goals to improve appearance of storefronts **Strategy B:** Provide funding for building façade improvement programs **Strategy C:** Meet with Community Associations regularly to discuss code violations in their respective areas **Strategy D:** Work with owners and use Architect on Call to create a realistic façade and streetscape image designed to distinguish the area	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development • Baltimore County Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections **Private:** • Private developers • Private investors • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce
Outcome 3: Encourage reinvestment in older shopping centers such as Hawthorne Plaza Shopping Center. **Progress Measures:** • Country Ridge redevelopment, Middlesex Shopping Center & Hawthorne Plaza upgrades	**Strategy A:** Increase awareness of available County, State and Federal programs and resources **Strategy B:** Contact commercial real estate agents and expand outreach to property owner investors to promote incentives and attract uses to area	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Planning • Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development **Private:** • Private developers • Private investors

		• Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce
Outcome 4: Increase code enforcement in high-density neighborhoods like Hawthorne and Sussex **Progress Measures:** • Decreased number of code enforcement violations	**Strategy A:** Conduct code enforcement sweeps regularly to encourage properties to comply **Strategy B:** Partner with community associations to continuously check on problem properties in area to ensure compliance is being met	**Public:** • Baltimore County Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections - Code Enforcement • Baltimore County Office of Engagement **Private:** • Eastern Baltimore County Task Force • Local community associations

SECTION C - SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY RENEWAL REPORT
PART I: QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Purpose:
The purpose of this assessment is to capture significant projects/ improvements that have been completed since the approval of your local government's Sustainable Communities designation.

In relation to the goals stated in your local government's Sustainable Community Action Plan, **please highlight at least three major accomplishments from the last five years**, including how you achieved them. When writing your narrative, consider the questions below and refer to the six elements discussed in the General Information section of this document (page iv) – Environment, Economy, Transportation, Housing, Quality of Life, and Land Use/Local Planning.

1) **Outcome**: Which outcomes identified in your Sustainable Community plan were you able to achieve?
2) **Projects**: Which projects did you implement in order to achieve the outcome? Also indicate when you started and completed these projects.
3) **Partners**: With whom (i.e. state agencies, local stakeholders) did you partner to complete projects?
4) **Impact**: What kind of measurable impact did the achieved outcome have on your community? Are there other intangible benefits?
5) **Photos**: Please also include pictures that depict your accomplishments.

[EXAMPLE] Descriptive Narrative: Please list the most significant accomplishments that apply

Example – **Accomplishment 1**
Outcome: Improved stormwater management

Projects:
Project 1: Stormwater Retrofit Plan – In October 2014, the Town Council approved the Town's stormwater retrofit plan which outlines various strategies and capital budget expenditures over the next five years. Strategies include reducing the amount of impervious surface in the community and improving stormwater management. One of the plan recommendations is to pass an ordinance that assesses an environmental protection fee on municipal permits.

Project 2: Green Streets – The Town added green elements to approximately 600 linear feet of roadway that had been experiencing severe flooding. Specifically, bioswales were constructed and trees were planted.

Partners:
Chesapeake Bay Trust – provided technical assistance
MD DHCD – provided financial assistance in form of a Community Legacy grant (totaling $50,000).

Impact: The implementation of the projects had a significant impact on the community by improving stormwater runoff. The streets with the newly constructed bioswales no longer experience flooding.

Descriptive Narrative: Please list the most significant accomplishments that apply.

Accomplishment 1:

Outcome: Improve & maintain County park areas

*Projects: **Cox's Point Park Renovations and Enhancements**.*
This project involves a series of renovations and enhancements at Cox's Point Park, as part of Recreation and Park's Local Park Comprehensive Enhancements Program. Following up on the Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability's shoreline restoration project, which added a pier as part of the work, Recreation and Parks replaced a deteriorating pavilion in Spring of 2022. Additional needed renovations have been identified, and will proceed in the near future, utilizing available capital funding dedicated to this project. Funding assistance is being provided through Maryland's Local Parks and Playgrounds Infrastructure Program, administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Partners:
Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks
Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability
Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Impact:
The improvements to this older waterfront park will revitalize it, helping to keep it appealing to the diverse community that utilizes Cox's Point Park.

Accomplishment 2:

Outcome: Improve & maintain County park areas

*Projects: **Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation Youth Development Park**.*
This innovative partnership project, which is nearing its construction phase, will result in the construction of a synthetic turf field, LED field lighting system, permanent seating stands, a scoreboard, and sidewalk extensions at the Fields at Renaissance Park. Originating as an initiative of the Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce and Mount Carmel School, the location for the proposed facility was switched from the school to the park, which offered a better physical venue that would likewise provide a greater community benefit. Combined funding from the County, the American Rescue Plan Act, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation is making the construction of this facility possible.

Partners:
Department of Recreation and Parks
Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce
Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation
Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

Impact:
This field will extend recreational opportunities by providing a high quality playing surface that can be used in a greater variety of weather. The LED lighting system will significantly extend use hours, particularly in the Spring and Fall. Finally, the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation will host numerous youth events focused upon character-building and a life skills curriculum.

Accomplishment 3:

Outcome: Improve water quality in the tidal waters that bound this community and in non-tidal streams within community

*Projects: **Cox's Point Park Shoreline Enhancement***
This project includes the removal of Phragmites and slag debris. Structural and non-structural erosion control and shoreline enhancement techniques were used to stabilize 2,200 LF of shoreline. A revetment and four existing offshore stone breakwaters were enlarged as well as the construction of two additional breakwaters to help dissipate wave energy. 4,000 CY of sand was placed along the shoreline and planted with native wetland species creating 1.7 acres of marsh.

Partners:
Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability
Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transporation
Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks
Baltimore County Property Management
Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
Maryland Department of Environment
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Maryland Critical Area Commission
Maryland Conservation Corps
US Army Corps of Engineers
US Coast Guard
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
The National Aquarium in Baltimore
Local Volunteers
Moffatt & Nichol
Coastal Design and Construction

Impact:
Several improvements brought by this project include: improve water quality by stabilizing eroding banks and reducing erosion; reduce nutrient loading into the Chesapeake Bay; improve water clarity; provide ecological uplift by improving tidal habitat; protect and restore forested riparian buffer; assist with meeting Baltimore County's TMDL requirements

associated with the MS4 permit and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement; and provide shoreline access – constructed ADA compliant timber pier.

Accomplishment 4:

Outcome: Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce's Eastern Baltimore County Task Force formed a workgroup consisting of community and task force leaders to create a new gateway landmark sculpture by Back River bridge. The new sculpture was installed and unveiled in June 2022.

*Project: **Essex Gateway Landmark Sculpture***
For this project, we hired an art consultant to lead a work group consisting of community and task force leaders. This group evaluated and made recommendations to remove the red Essex cube as the gateway landmark sculpture as visitors come over the Back River bridge and re-erect it at the Heritage Society of Essex & Middle River. A call for Maryland artists was announced, the workgroup selected the winning design for a new sculpture and made all decisions on the images to be represented. This project also will include an art show at the Heritage Society for all artists who submitted work for consideration.

Partners:
Funded through grants from Baltimore County and the State of Maryland; Workgroup of community leaders; Baltimore County Department of Planning; sculptor Tim Scofield; artist Camilla Leao

Impact:
The sculpture is the shape of a lighthouse (obelisk), which is very symbolic for this waterfront community. The images on the four panels were selected by members of the community and the Task Force and our Baltimore County artist and are specific

to Essex and Maryland. Images include the red cube, Essex Day, Miller's Island Lighthouse, golfer (Rocky Point Golf Course), train/boat (sail, fishing, canoe, motor)/plane (A-10)/highway transportation (car going over Back River bridge), a rockfish, blue crab, waterfowl, black-eyed Susan flowers, and a diverse population with diverse professions (including a physician - MedStar), graduate (CCBC), park ranger (local and state parks), firefighter, police officer and construction worker and verbiage saying Strong Communities and Strong History. This lighted structure serves as a beacon welcoming Essex visitors and as a symbol to all that Essex has a lot to offer. To residents, this sculpture also sends a positive message that things are improving in their community. The selection of an obelisk for the sculpture was symbolic, as an obelisk represents creation and rebirth, unity and harmony, strength, effort/success/achievement.

Accomplishment 5:

Outcome: Provide key recommendations that guide the revitalization efforts on Eastern Blvd in Essex

*Project: **Essex 2022 Technical Assistance Panel (TAP)***
The three-day TAP was conducted in April 2022. The process included site visits of the study area which encompasses Eastern Blvd in Essex, interviews with over 30 stakeholders and residents, and online surveys with 40 residents. An open public meeting was held to gather broader community input. In the end of the workshop, a TAP report was created with findings and recommendations. (See the TAP Hub for more information).

Partners:
Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce's Eastern Baltimore County Task Force; Baltimore County Department of Planning; Urban Land Institute (ULI)

Impact:
The TAP report outlines important action items that should be implemented systematically and incrementally. More importantly, it advocates the importance of hiring a full-time champion and creating a steady funding stream for this position. Without this position, improvements in Essex would be far less likely to come to fruition and far more disjoined if and when they do.

Descriptive Narrative: Please use this section to describe any major outcomes or projects from your last Sustainable Communities Action Plan that have __NOT__ been accomplished and why.

Outcome: Address traffic speed issues

Narrative: Some major traffic arteries through the Essex SC area (Eastern Blvd), where most commercial areas are located, are owned and maintained by the State. Concerns about safety and noise issues resulting from cars speeding through the area have been raised. Coordinating with the State Highway Admiration (SHA) to address it has not been successful.

Outcome:

Narrative:

Outcome:

Narrative:

PART II: COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

Purpose:
The purpose of the comprehensive assessment is to capture indicators of accomplishments in each Sustainable Community. <u>Indicators should reflect the five year time period</u> since the adoption of the Sustainable Communities Action Plan. Thus, the following questions focus on the common outcomes that were identified in the various Sustainable Community Action Plans approved by the State. The assessment will be grouped in the sections of Environment, Economy, Transportation, Housing, Quality of Life, and Land Use.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.
Check "**YES**" if applicable to your community. If you answer "**YES**" please quantify the accomplishment (i.e. Q: Has there been an increase in the number of businesses in your Main Street/commercial district? A: YES 4 new businesses have opened in the past five years). If necessary, please also provide a short description of the accomplishment.

Please check "**NO**" if the question item did not have any impact on your community. If you answer **"NO"** please briefly summarize what kept you from achieving your plan's desired outcomes.

Check "**N/A**", if the question item does not apply to your Sustainable Community.

ENVIRONMENT	YES	NO	N/A	If YES, specify in quantifiable units and compare values from the last five years If NO, why not? What kept you from achieving your plan's desired outcomes?
1. Has there been an improvement in water quality? Have you completed any projects intended to improve water quality? Ex. impervious surface reduction, stormwater improvements etc.	X			Impervious surface area in this SC area increased by approximately 11.68 acres from 2017 to 2020. The County does not have aerial imagery past 2020 so that we are unable to report on any impervious added or removed after 2020 at this time. The County has completed one shallow marsh stormwater conversion project in the plan area since 2018. Watershed partners have installed two rain gardens and five micro-bio retentions since 2017 in the plan area.
2. Have you improved wildlife habitat in your community? Ex. native plantings, pollinator gardens, rain gardens	X			As part of the shoreline enhancements at Cox's point Park, there were plantings along the slope, creating more tidal/shallow water habitat. Two rain gardens have been installed in the plan area since 2017. The County and watershed partners have planted 450 native trees in the plan area since the last renewal.
3. Have you increased access to green space, parks or outdoor recreational opportunities?	X			The designed lighted artificial turf field currently being added to the Fields at Renaissance Park through a partnership with the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation will increase recreational opportunities by improving field conditions and access.
4. Have you implemented operational sustainability practices (example: town hall enhancements) and/or community-based practices? (ex. Rain barrels or rain	X			28 total rain barrels have been installed by watershed partners and through the County's rain barrel sale. For recycling, the County works with residents and businesses to increase recycling. This includes advertising, technical assistance, information on our website, articles on social media, and monthly newsletter. The County provides tours of our Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), which processes our recyclables, recycling presentations to elementary schools, and presentations to community organizations and at community events (fairs, shows, etc.)

gardens at residences, recycling, composting etc)				The County has switched from plastic bags to paper bags for yard materials to improve the quality of our compost. The County has initiated twice per year bulk collection for each single family and tow home. The collections have included recycling scrap metal. The County has completed a waste characterization study for the central part of the County to determine the percentage of various materials in the waste stream. This study is designed to consider additional programs to divert recyclables from the waste stream and consider new composting programs, especially composting for food waste.
OTHER:	X			In April 2021, the Baltimore County Solid Waste Work Group, established by County Executive John Olszewski, Jr. completed the "Five Year Tactical Plan: Baltimore County's Recycling & Solid Waste System." The study included a number of recommendations, including: • Eliminating plastic bags for yard materials • Including recycling carts • Pilot recycling projects • Bulk collection, including recycling • Zero waste education and outreach • Pilot organics processing • Upgrading the MRF at Cockeysville Baltimore County is working with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) on expanding markets for recyclables. This project includes technical and financial assistance to existing and potential recycling industries, identifying markets (including those markets that need additional assistance), matching suppliers of recyclable commodities with businesses that can use the material, improving the quality of recyclables, and buying recycled products. In November 2022, Baltimore County instituted a pilot residential trash cart for 4,300 homes in the Essex Area. The 65-gallon trash carts are designed to provide a safer, more efficient and environmentally friendly means of handling trash. The carts are designed to contain trash, reduce litter and help with vermin abatement efforts.

ECONOMY	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**	**If YES, specify in quantifiable units and compare values from the last five years. If NO, why not? What kept you from achieving your plan's desired outcomes?**
1. Has there been an increase in the number of new businesses in your Main Street/ Commercial District?			X	The county does not have the data to track whether or not there has been an increase in the number of new businesses. However, COVID-19, a global pandemic, negatively impacted small businesses along the commercial district. The State of Maryland enforced stringent safety protocols to decrease the spread of the virus. The protocols affected the restaurant, retail, and service industries enforcing a 6 feet distance, mask-wearing, and curfews. Many business owners pivoted while others were forced to shut down.
2. Did the Municipality/ Sustainable Community area receive any designations that support local economic development?	X			Essex has long had a Baltimore County Commercial Revitalization District (CRD) designation along Eastern Blvd, which provides opportunities for various County commercial incentive programs including: Commercial Revitalization Tax Credit, Building Improvement Loan Program, Commercial Revitalization Action Grant, and Architect on Call. A portion of the area is also under the Chesapeake Enterprise Zone. In 2021, the County expanded the Essex Design Review Panel (DRP) Area to align with the boundary of the Essex CRD area. Essex Design Guidelines for the area were created to help ensure high design standards and attract businesses.
3. Has there been an increase in foot traffic in the Main Street/commercial district?			X	There has been an estimated decrease in foot traffic due to COVID-19.
4. Have the number of commercial vacancies decreased?	X			From 2018 to current, the vacancy rates have decreased about 30%. In 2018, the vacancy rate was 33.5%. In 2022, about 3.5% of commercial properties in the Essex SC boundary are vacant. The redevelopment of Aviation Station (the previous Federal Depot site) might have contributed to the reduction of the vacancy rate.
5. Has there been an increase in local jobs within the Sustainable Community for its residents?			X	There has been no increase in local jobs. However, there has been a sense of urgency to fill existing jobs post-COVID. Regionally, there has been an increase in local jobs when considering Trade Point Atlantic (TPA) in nearby Sparrows Point.

6. Has there been an increase in workforce development training or other opportunities for connecting potential employees to well-paying jobs?		X		The workforce development team collaborates with Eastpoint Mall in September targeting the Greater Essex area. The training requests have remained steady, but no significant increase since pre-COVID. There has been an increase in connecting job seekers to better paying job opportunities post-COVID. Many businesses increased wages to attract talent.
OTHER:				

TRANSPORTATION	YES	NO	N/A	If YES, specify in quantifiable units and compare values from the last five years If NO, why not? What kept you from achieving your plan's desired outcomes?
1. Has the amount of bike trails/paths increased? How many linear feet do the trails cover?	X			The State has designated, marked, and signed another 3 miles of a bicycle route along Eastern Avenue with declinational way finding.
2. Have there been improvements to the public transit infrastructure?			X	MDOT MTA is a state agency that provides the major transit services in Baltimore County.
3. Has there been an increase in sidewalks? (Amount in linear feet). Were accessibility elements added, such as more ADA-accessible ramps and signage/signals? Has there	X			ADA ramp upgrades were performed throughout the Essex community. Signage and signal upgrades have been installed and/or performed over the past 5 years as part of maintenance and/or citizen requests.

	YES	NO	N/A	
been a noticeable increased use of these walking places?				
4. Have there been any roadway improvements that support "Complete" or "Green" streets?		X		While there have not been a large amount of improvement with regard to green streets, DPWT has added a Green Infrastructure Division, which is actively hiring to increase the number of projects that involve installing small-scale stormwater practices within the county owned right-of-way to capture water from roadways.
5. Has traffic congestion along major roads decreased? (Amount in percent)			X	DPWT is evaluating ways to decrease congestion on the roadways by researching opportunities for more transit options in the County. No percentage is available at this time.
OTHER:				
HOUSING	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**	**If YES, specify in quantifiable units and compare values from the last five years** **If NO, why not? What kept you from achieving your plan's desired outcomes?**
1. Have any residential facades or interiors been improved? Has the energy efficiency of any housing units been increased?			X	The County does not track this properly. Therefore, no data is currently available.
2. Has the homeownership rate increased?		X		Based on aggregate data of owner-occupied households, according to the American Community Survey, Essex experienced about a nominal decrease in its homeownership rate from 2016 to 2020 – from 21,502 to 21,325. As it relates to Baltimore County-funded programming, the County's 2021-2022 Settlement Expense Loan Program (SELP) utilization data, it is inferred that homeownership among first-time homebuyers in Essex decreased largely due to COVID-19-related factors including but not limited to: supply chain shortages, the increased cost of building materials, record-high fuel costs, and the steep increase in real property costs overall. These factors significantly influence SELP users' ability to buy

				as they directly affect the inventory of homes available for sale for families, whose incomes are generally 80% AMI and below. An analysis from the National Association of Homebuilders found that between the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic and May 2022, the cost of building materials rose 35.6%. Real property costs are historically high with home prices having risen nearly 20% over 2021. This increase is exacerbated by the 10% increase from 2020 according to the S&P Core Logic Case-Shiller US National Home Price Index. Locally, these financial concerns are the chief reason homebuyers have been slower to purchase homes in Essex and similar neighborhoods in Baltimore County regardless of the support local government programs.
3. Has there been an increase in the number of housing units in the Sustainable Community area? What number and/or percent are affordable? How many are within .5 miles of a transit stop?		X		From 2016 to 2020, there was a nominal decrease in the overall number of housing units available in the Essex designated area from 16,317 to 16,171. As it relates to the Baltimore County-funded portfolio, there are 776 income-restricted units in Essex. All of these units are with 0.5 mile of a transit stop.
4. Has there been demolition of blighted properties?		X		No demolitions of blighted properties have occurred from 2016 and 2020. As the County has introduced legislation to update its vacant property definition, there is a high probability that demolitions and renovations of blighted properties will increase at least by 10% over the next three years in Essex.
5. Has the residential vacancy rate decreased?		X		The residential vacancy rate increased from about 55.54% 2016 to 55.95% in 2020.
6. Has the jurisdiction partnered with any community development corporations to improve its housing stock, increase the availability of affordable housing, or support	X			Baltimore County partners with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) for the provision of Housing Counseling Services for first-time homebuyers. Housing Counseling Services are provided by the following organizations: St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, Harbel Community Organization, Diversified Housing Corporation, Dundalk Renaissance, Eastside Community Development Corporation, and Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc. These groups lead the provision of first-time homebuyer training Countywide. Because of their close proximity to the community,

	YES	NO	N/A	
those experiencing homelessness or being threatened with eviction? Has the jurisdiction initiated any of its own programs to do the same?				Dundalk Renaissance and Eastside Community Development Corporation, provide these services for most families residing in Essex currently. In terms of eviction prevention services, over $100,000 in funds were distributed to families residing in Essex so that they could maintain their tenancy and not be displaced from their homes due to the temporary inability to pay rent as a result of COVID-19.
7. Has there been an increase in homeownership counseling services or individuals accessing such services?		X		There has not been a material increase in homeownership counseling services or the number of individuals accessing such services. Funding and operating levels have been average for the reporting period with $625k earmarked for homeownership counseling countywide to include first-time homebuyer training, financial literacy, and foreclosure prevention. However, Dundalk Renaissance and Eastside Community Development Corporation provide such services in the region, including the Essex SC area, through state and county support.
OTHER:				

COMMUNITY HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**	**If YES, specify in quantifiable units and compare values from the last five years If NO, why not? What kept you from achieving your plan's desired outcomes?**
1. How many historic properties were renovated/improved? To your knowledge, did the renovations mitigate certain environmental hazards such as lead and asbestos?	X			No locally designated historic properties or National Register properties within the Essex sustainable community have been rehabilitated or improved using tax credits or through our historic review process. In addition, none of the park sites within the Area have historic structures or features.
2. Have there been improvements and/or additions to your public or community available spaces? Examples include museums,	X			The replacement of the pavilion at Cox's Point Park has improved access to available spaces for community gatherings. This waterfront pavilion can be rented for gatherings and events.

community centers, public plazas, murals and public art.				
3. Are there opportunities for residents to gather, communicate and celebrate? Do they serve multi-generations and all populations in the community? Examples are wide-ranging and may include fairs, community history days, neighborhood meetings, etc.	X			Parks and facilities such as Cox's Point Park, the Fields at Renaissance Park (site of the Stembridge Community Center), and numerous neighborhood parks throughout the Sustainable Community Area provide quality venues where community members may gather, communicate, and celebrate. The Essex Senior Center, and the Essex Library, are available and hold various events and classes for multiple generations Baltimore County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have provided a series of community related outreach efforts through Child Welfare and Adult Services over the past five years that have included participation in community fairs, education sessions with citizens and professionals. FY 2019 (24 Adult Services Presentations, 4 Essex and 2 Catonsville). FY 2020 (8 Adult Services, 3 Essex and 1 Catonsville and 17 Child Welfare). FY 2021 14 Child Welfare and 15 Adult Services-3 Essex2 Catonsville). FY 2022 Child Welfare 8 and Adult Services 4-2 Catonsville). Many of our efforts to gather with folks from the communities were severely impacted by COVID-19.
4. Have there been any changes in access to health and wellness services? Examples include mobile clinics, hospitals, telehealth opportunities.	X			Since 2021, Baltimore County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) held 31 COVID-19 mobile clinics in Essex and 10 Monkeypox mobile clinics to allow access to free COVID-19 and monkeypox testing and vaccines for residents of Essex. While this question focuses primarily on Health from the perspective of the Department of Health, in Child Welfare the overall wellbeing of Children was impacted by the schools being closed because they were the major source of Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting.
5. Are there any residential health and wellness opportunities in place (i.e. athletic facilities, recreational indoor/outdoor courses or groups)?	X			The Stembridge Community Center (at the Fields at Renaissance Park) and the Mars Estates (Essex) Recreation Activity Center (formerly PAL Center) provide both indoor and outdoor health and wellness opportunities. Ten other neighborhood and community parks provide various types of recreational facilities and opportunities, ranging from playgrounds to waterfront facilities, to sports courts and fields. The Hawthorne community trail, which ties together Hawthorne/Midthorne Park, Darkhead Creek Park, and Hawthorne Elementary School Recreation Center, provides convenient access for pedestrian and cyclists. The nine school recreation centers with

				the Sustainable Community Area supplement recreational opportunities available at the parks. The Essex Senior Center, and the Essex Library, are available for wellness activities.
6. Do all residents have access to healthy food options such as fresh food grocery stores, farmers markets, community gardens, etc., within the Sustainable Community?	X			Essex residents have access to a variety of food resources ranging from but not limited to: • Baltimore County distribution sites • BCPL food resources • BCPS resources : Student Support and Maryland Food Bank food pantry sites • WIC centers/WIC farmers markets/WIC authorized stores • Maryland Food Bank Network and pantry-to-go partners • Summer Meals sites for children • Community and faith-based food pantry sites
7. Has there been a decrease in crime rate?	X			There has been a decrease in the reporting of Child and Adult Abuse and Neglect during these pass five years but it was largely due to the schools being closed for children and for older adults they were not leaving their homes. Overall crime in the Essex SC has decreased by nearly 17% from 2018 through 2021 (5,243 incidents in 2018 to 4,357 in 2021). The crimes against persons crime rate (reported instances per 100,000 residents) decreased from 4,153 in 2018 to 3,904 in 2021. Likewise, the crime rate for crimes against property decreased by more than 29%, from 6,199 cases in 2018 to 4,369 in 2021. Conversely, crimes against society, the lowest overall category, experienced a slight increase over the four-year period. In 2021, there were 608 reported incidents of crimes against society (or 1,341 per 100,000 residents) compared to 552 in 2018 (or 1,218 per 100,000 residents), an increase of 10%.
8. Do all residents have access to the Internet and other basic utilities and services?			X	There was definite increase in the number of people who had access to the Internet services because that was a major source of contact with service agencies both public and private throughout this last five years.
OTHER:				

LOCAL PLANNING & STAFFING CAPACITY	YES	NO	N/A	If YES, specify in quantifiable units and compare values from the last five years If NO, why not? What kept you from achieving your plan's desired outcomes?
1. Have there been any infill developments?			X	The county does not track the number of infill development projects. However, there is a tendency in supporting this development type. Currently there are five active development plans, including both residential and commercial development.
2. Has there been an increase in the amount of preserved/protected land?			X	There is no preserved land in the Essex SC boundary. The boundary does have approximately 290.80 acres of parks and public and private open space, but none of this is on permanent easement.
3. Have there been any developments hindered by growth constraints? If so, please describe. Example constraints could be inadequate infrastructure, insufficient zoning density/intensity, or lack of buildable land.	X			The high speed of cars travelling through the area, particularly on Eastern Blvd, not only creates an unsafe environment for pedestrians but also contributes to high noise levels. That makes it less desirable for business owners to relocate their businesses to the area or to inhibit existing restaurants along the Blvd from having outdoor sidewalk seating. Baltimore County classifies an overcrowded school as a school that has a State Rated Capacity that exceeds 115%. Any proposed residential development should be assessed its impact on schools. Based on Annual Report 2021-2022 (School Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance Report and Maps), in 2021, Deep Creek Elementary School is classified as an overcrowded school (116.76%). The analysis is based on its enrollment of September 30, 2021, which is 425, and the State Rated Capacity (SRC) for it, which is 364.
4. Have there been any zoning or policy changes that have fostered growth or redevelopment in your Sustainable Community?	X			Zoning changes occur through the County's CZMP process in which any person can request a zoning change on any property, to be approved by the County Council. This last took place in 2020, and there were 10 zoning issue requests. There will be another CZMP in 2024. BC Planning is currently in process of updating the Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies, Section III: Commercial Development within the Urban-Rural Demarcation Line. This updating of this section will support the redevelopment of commercial corridors or areas and is expected to be completed in 2023.

5. Have there been any significant improvements to the municipal infrastructure within the Sustainable Community (i.e. street lighting, water/sewer lines)?	X			BGE updated 121 of its maintained streetlights to LED. Back River Neck Road Water Main Replacement: 16" water main replacement from Middleborough Road to Mizells Road. This new 16" replaced an old 16" main. Eastern Avenue Water Main Replacement: New 24" water main replacement along Eastern Ave from Virginia Avenue to Mace Avenue. This new 24" replaced an old 12" main.
6. Have you hired any new staff members, reassigned duties, or procured the services of a contractor to increase or better align local capacity? Have you implemented any professional development programs?	X			There has been a number of new staff members and new roles, primarily within BC Department of Economic and Workforce Development, and within BC Planning. BC Planning staff has access to Planetizen courses (urban planning courses online) and APA materials. If desired, staff is able to attend APA conferences. In 2022, BC Planning partnered with the Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce and the Eastern Baltimore County Task Force engaged the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to host a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to develop creative actionable solutions to complex structural and economic development challenges in Essex. The Essex 2022 TAP report was created.
7. Has your community initiated or completed any planning efforts that will support the Sustainable Community area, including comprehensive planning, small area planning, or planning studies?	X			The County is currently finalizing Master Plan 2030 (BC Planning) and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (BC DPW&T). Other completed plans include: • 2017 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation (BC Rec&Parks) • Reinvesting in the Places We Call Home: Recommendations for Expanding and Enhancing Housing Opportunities in Baltimore County (BC HCD) • 23 Small Watershed Action Plan (SWAP) areas (BC EPS) These plans will support the growth of the Essex Sustainable Community area. In 2021, the County expanded the Essex Design Review Panel (DRP) Area to align with the boundary of the Essex CRD area. Essex Design Guidelines for the area were created to help ensure high design standards and attract businesses.
OTHER:				

Part III: Competitive Funding

Use the rows below to list competed funds sought for sustainability or revitalization projects since receiving Sustainable Communities designation.	Source (federal, state, foundation, etc.)	Amount Received	If no funding was received, what technical or other assistance from the state would help with future applications?	Other Notes
Community Legacy (CL):	DHCD	2019 - $100,000 (Essex streetscape I) 2019 - $125,000 (Joint effort with EBCTF & Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School for Community Center) 2019 - $125,000 (Joint effort with EBCTF & OLMC for Ball Field at Renaissance Park) 2020 - $25,000 (Essex Streetscape 2) 2020 - $250,000 (Joint effort with EBCTF & OLMC for Ball Field at Renaissance Park) 2021 - $50,000 (Essex Streetscape 3) 2021 - $250,000 (Joint effort with EBCTF & OLMC for Ball Field at Renaissance Park) 2022 - $75,000 (Essex Streetscape 4) 2023 - $500,000 (Joint effort with EBCTF & OLMC for Ball Field at Renaissance Park)		
Operating Assistance Grants:	DHCD	2018 - $20,000 (Awarded to Neighborhood Design Center to engage Essex Stakeholders in discussions about the Eastern Blvd. main street area and identify and prioritize potential streetscape improvement projects) 2019 - $20,000 (Part-time Essex streetscape project manager) 2020 - $20,000 (Part-time Essex streetscape project manager) 2022- $50,000 (Consultants: marketing & art; Project managers: streetscape, farmers' market)		

Strategic Demolition Fund (SDF):	DHCD			
Community Safety & Enhancement Program:	MDOT			
Maryland Bikeways Program:	MDOT			
Sidewalk Retrofit Program:	MDOT			
Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund:	MDE			
Other Funding Programs: *examples are U.S. HUD Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), or grants from USDA, EPA, Appalachian Regional Commission, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Maryland Heritage Areas Association, Preservation Maryland, Safe Routes to School, Maryland Rural Development Corporation, Maryland Energy Administration, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, etc.* *Please add more rows if necessary				
Commercial Revitalization Action Grant (CRAG)	Baltimore County	FY 2018 - $10,000 FY 2019 - $10,000 FY 2020 - $9,999.40 FY 2021 - $29.343.97 FY 2022 - $10,000		Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce receives about 10k per year through the County's CRAG program for various small

				revitalization projects, events, or installations.
Gayle Adams Community Service Grant	Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center	2019 - $300 (Flowers)		
Blue Ocean	Blue Ocean	2021 - $10,000 (Donation)		
Baltimore County Grant	Baltimore County	2022 - $30,000 (Technical Assistance Panel)		
State Capital Grant	State	2022 - $400,000 to Baltimore County Public Schools (Kenwood High School Recreation Center Synthetic Turf Field)		
American Rescue Plan Act funding (via Baltimore County)	Baltimore County (ARPA)	2023 - $250,0000 for Essex Revitalization Activities		Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce
Local Parks and Playgrounds Infrastructure Program	State	2023 - $1,200,000 (Cox's Point Park Renovations)		
American Rescue Plan Act	Federal	2023 - $750,000 (Fields at Renaissance Park Cal Ripken Field)		

COMPETITIVE FUNDING: Are there any types of projects/needs for which your Sustainable Community needs funding; however, there isn't a funding source?

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section C