

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Approved

9/9/2020

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

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Baltimore, MD 21201

410-209-5800

<http://dhcd.maryland.gov/>

LARRY HOGAN, *Governor* KENNETH C. HOLT, *Secretary*

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD, *Lt. Governor*

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 OF 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 ASSISTANCE

If a local government has limited capacity, staff from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and Department of Planning (MDP) will be available to assist local government officials through the application process.

Please contact your Regional Project Manager at DHCD if you would like to request or learn more about this assistance (see page iv for contact information).

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES BENEFITS

The benefits of a Sustainable Community designation are substantial. The SC designation is a threshold requirement for application to several Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development revitalization programs (such as the Community Legacy Program and Strategic Demolition Fund listed below). Other programs from both the Department and other State agencies offer additional points or preference in the application process. The Sustainable Communities designation provides access to a suite of resources that can support housing and community development, local transportation enhancements, tax credit programs and programs to support a healthier environment. Taken together, these resources can promote safer, healthier and more attractive communities for families to live and put down roots.

While there are numerous benefits across multiple state agencies, below are two competitive capital revitalization grant programs are available to eligible applicants inside of Sustainable Communities.

Community Legacy Program is administered by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and provides local governments and community development organizations with financial assistance to strengthen communities through such activities as

business retention and attraction, encouraging homeownership and commercial revitalization. Community Legacy funds are restricted to Sustainable Community Areas.

Strategic Demolition Fund is administered by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and provides grants and loans to local governments and community development organizations for predevelopment activities including demolition and land assembly for housing and revitalization projects. The Strategic Demolition Fund catalyzes public and private investment in the reuse of vacant and underutilized sites. These funds are restricted to Sustainable Communities.

*Ask your regional project manager for additional information about Sustainable Communities benefits.

Application Eligibility and Threshold Requirements

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

Eligible applicants are to convene 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;
- 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 Evaluation

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

Priority Funding Areas

All Sustainable Communities must be located entirely within a Priority Funding Area. Applicants can verify Priority Funding Area boundaries by visiting the MDP website at: <http://www.mdp.state.md.us/OurProducts/pfamap.shtml>

Application Training

All applicants must attend an application training prior to submitting a renewal application. Trainings may be conducted over the phone or in person. Contact your Regional Project Manager (contact information page iv) to schedule an application training.

Application Submission

Applications will be submitted both electronically/digitally and via postal mail. Each applicant must submit **one** hard copy of their application with all required attachments. DHCD reserves the right to not consider incomplete applications.

The first printed page of the electronic application is a Table of Contents (see page vii). This should also serve as a checklist and be used to provide corresponding tabs. In addition to the digital copy of the application, all pictures and maps are to be submitted on a CD-ROM or flash drive. Pictures should be burned to the CD in a JPEG format and maps should be burned to the CD in a pdf format. Please ALSO include GIS shapefiles of Sustainable Community boundaries and other GIS related data if a boundary change is requested. Be sure to label your files on the CD-ROM appropriately, i.e., “Proposed Sustainable Community Boundary,” “Current Sustainable Community Boundary,” etc.

No incomplete applications will be accepted.

Deliver Sustainable Community Applications to:
Sustainable Community Application
ATTN: Mary Kendall
Division of Neighborhood Revitalization
Department of Housing and Community Development
2 N Charles Street, Suite 450
Baltimore, MD 21201

Site Visits, Follow-up Discussion

During the application review process, the review team may make site visits, hold meetings or have for follow-up discussions with applicants prior to designation approval.

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.

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. Qualitative and Comprehensive Report on accomplishments over past five 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 people in your community live or making 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 condition (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 a 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 be due to 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 of the different sections, 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: County Commissioners of Washington County

NAME OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY: Fort Ritchie - Cascade

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**
- Section B – Sustainable Community Renewal Report (Projects, Strategies and Partners)**
- Section C – Sustainable Community Renewal Action Plan Update (Matrix)**
- Section D – Sustainable Communities Workgroup Roster**
- Section E – Signature Letter (acknowledging Disclosure Authorization and Certification)**
- Section F – CD-ROM:** The CD-ROM should include the following contents:
 - If requesting a boundary modification, map in pdf format of the proposed Sustainable Community
 - **GIS shapefiles of the modified Sustainable Community boundary** (if requesting a modification) and other GIS related data
 - Pictures (jpeg format) of your accomplished projects of the last five years (as indicated in Section B)
 - Digital copy of completed Sustainable Communities Renewal Application

I. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY – General Information

A. Sustainable Community Boundary and Description

- (1) Are you requesting any changes to your Sustainable Community boundary? Describe why or why not? Washington County is not requesting any changes to the Sustainable Community boundary because the characteristics of the area have not changed significantly since the original application.
- (2) Include the following in as an attachment (if requesting a modification to your current boundary):
- a. PDF or JPEG of modified Sustainable Communities boundary map, ***Not Applicable***
 - b. GIS shapefiles of modified Sustainable Community boundary (mapped to the parcel boundary), ***Not Applicable***
- (3) Approximate number of acres of entire SC Area: 1210 acres
- (4) Existing federal, state or local designations:
- Main Street Maple Street National Register Historic District Local Historic District
 - Arts & Entertainment District State Enterprise Zone Special Taxing District **X** BRAC
 - State Designated TOD **X** Other(s): Camp Ritchie Historic District (Maryland Historical Trust Inventory of Historic Properties)
- (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?

In regard to the demographics of the SC over the past five years, most statistics have remained constant. Median age increased by a mere 1.7 years; Race changed by less than 1%; Household Size fell by .24 persons; Household Income dropped by \$1,923; and Ancestry is still primary German and Irish. Notable changes include a 13% increase in residents with a high school diploma, but there was a 4.3% drop in those with graduate or professional degrees. The number of families below the poverty level decreased by 2.8% and unemployment fell by 6%.

Age (median): 37.8

Race: 93.1% White; 2.7% Black/African American

Household Size (average): 2.40

Household Income (median): \$54,327

Educational Attainment: 51.7% High school graduate; 12.6% Bachelor’s degree;

2.0% Graduate or

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section A

Professional degree

Housing Units: 685 Total Units; 431 Occupied/254 Vacant

Families Below Poverty Line: 7.6%

Unemployment: 3.4%

Ancestry: 24.1% German; 19.3% Irish

NOTE: The above characteristics were reported for the zip code 21719, as this area better corresponds to the boundaries of the existing Sustainable Community

SOURCES: 2010 US Census; American Community Survey 2014-2018

B. 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?

Since the original application, which was approved in February 2014, the PenMar Development Corporation was dissolved in September 2016 and the Fort Ritchie property, along with its assets and liabilities, were transferred to Washington County Government. In November 2016, Washington County signed a development agreement with JG Business Link International for developing Cascade Town Centre on the property. By the end of 2017, approximately 63 acres of the former Fort Ritchie property had been transferred to Cascade Town Centre per this agreement. The remaining lands are still owned by Washington County Government who serves as the primary stakeholder. Within County government, the Department of Planning & Zoning, the Department of Business Development, the Division of Environmental Management, the Division of Public Works and the Office of Grant Management are represented in the membership of the SC Workgroup. Jill Baker, Director of Planning & Zoning for Washington County will be the lead contact moving forward with the renewal of the SC and will work closely with staff and other invested parties such as Cascade Town Center and the Cascade Community at large to manage the implementation of the SC Area Plan.

In 2019, the Board of County Commissioners of Washington County advertised the sale of the remaining lands of the former Fort Ritchie property. The projected purchaser of the property will be Mr. John Krumpotich. Mr. Krumpotich is a local developer with deep ties to the Cascade community. He has worked closely with County staff as part of the workgroup and will continue to have a primary role in the redevelopment of the area. Mr. Krumpotich hopes to bring business back to the area for the benefit of the community and is currently looking at a mix of residential and commercial uses on the property.

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

The strengths of the workgroup continue to be the experience that Washington County Government staff has in assessing local revitalization projects, crafting strategies and implementing initiatives in order to market the area for development. Washington County staff has substantial experience with:

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section A

- Acquiring Community Development Block Grant and Appalachian Regional Commission funding
- Marketing areas prime for business and industrial development
- Writing and adopting policy changes and developing incentives to promote growth and development in designated areas
- Operation, maintenance and inspection of County owned infrastructure

The workgroup continues to experience challenges in educating residents within the Sustainable Communities area. Education and promotion of Sustainable Communities initiatives and funding sources that are available to potential purchasers and developers within the area also continue to present challenges.

- (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?

The original SC Plan is available through various departments in Washington County government and on the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's website. The current update to the Action Plan has been distributed to the County Departments that have a vested interest in seeing that the Plan is written in order to promote future growth and development in the defined Sustainable Community. Washington County also intends to work with JGBLI, the proposed purchaser Mr. John Krumpotich, and the Fort Ritchie – Cascade community to the greatest extent possible in order to assist with the growth and redevelopment of the Sustainable Communities area.

The Sustainable Communities Plan for Fort Ritchie – Cascade is based off the goals and objectives in the 2002 Comprehensive Plan for Washington County, Maryland.

- (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.

Washington County Government may seek technical assistance from State agencies to help implement the Sustainable Communities Plan. Multiple financing programs from the revitalization toolbox such as the Community Legacy Program, Strategic Demolition Funding and the Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund are a few among the many programs that Washington County or future developers and property owners may be interested in taking advantage of in order to promote growth, development and revitalization in this area. Examples of programs that Washington County would be interested in receiving assistance with include:

- Community Legacy Program: to attract new businesses, encourage homeownership and promote new mixed-use developments.

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section A

- Strategic Demolition Fund: to focus on the reuse of vacant and underutilized sites.
- Maryland Mortgage Program: to promote home ownership among younger residents who also have a large amount of student loan debt.
- National Capital Strategic Economic Development Fund: to improve the economic viability of “grey field development” such as Fort Ritchie where the majority of the of the buildings are older and their functionality may be diminished.
- Maryland Bikeways Program: develop a Pen Mar/Fort Ritchie bicycle route to promote tourism and recreational opportunities.
- Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund: to provide upgrades to Water and Wastewater treatment facilities, lines and other infrastructure.
- Low Income Housing Tax Credit: to support potential development of multi-family affordable housing options in the area.
- Job Creation Tax Credit: to serve has an incentive for employers to establish new businesses in the area.

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) **Pictures:** 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: Upgrades to the Winebrenner Wastewater Treatment Facility

Outcome: Upgrades to the existing Winebrenner Wastewater Treatment Facility were completed in 2016

Projects: Funding for upgrades to the Washington County owned and operated Winebrenner Wastewater Treatment Facility in Cascade was awarded in 2014. The upgrades were designed to reduce water pollution in the State; locally in the Antietam Creek watershed and ultimately in the Chesapeake Bay. The upgrade incorporated the design and construction of biological nutrient removal (BNR) and enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) systems at the plant. These will reduce the nitrogen discharge by 83% and the phosphorus discharge by 90%. Both are critical components of Maryland's Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan. Additionally, the upgrades increased the capacity at the plant to 600,000 gallons per day which should adequately address any future development demands on the system

Partners: Washington County Government, the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development with funding from the Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund.

Impact: The impact of the completion of this project improves water quality, both locally and regionally, while providing infrastructure that is necessary in order to facilitate future growth and development in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area.

Accomplishment 2: Land Transfer to JG Business Link International

Outcome: In 2017, Washington County Government transferred approximately 63 acres of the former Fort Ritchie Army Base to JG Business Link International (JGBLI) to spur development of the Cascade Town Centre project.

Projects: Shortly after the land transfer to JGBLI in 2017, a preliminary concept plan was unveiled for the development and revitalization of the property. JGBLI was said to have had investors lined up to bring a mixed use of residential and business-related opportunities to the area, but to-date, none have made a formal commitment. Additionally, thirty-six townhouse lots are currently under consideration for redevelopment, but formal plans have not been submitted to the County for review as of the submittal of this application.

Partners: Washington County Government and JGBLI

Impact: Originally, the transfer of the 63 acres was thought to be the beginning of the economic recovery in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Community, but several factors such as infrastructure improvements, investor participation and the economic slow-down have stalled development activities.

Accomplishment 3: Fort Ritchie Community Center lot subdivision

Outcome: Washington County Government approved and recorded the subdivision of a 3.77 acre parcel where the Fort Ritchie Community Center is located.

Projects: The subdivision of this parcel, separate from the remaining lands of Fort Ritchie is a positive indication that both County government and the Fort Ritchie Community Center are interested in providing recreational and cultural opportunities to the residents within the Sustainable Communities area.

Partners: Washington County Government and the Fort Ritchie Community Center

Impact: Create and provide healthy lifestyle and leisure activities, foster community traditions, and promote cultural development through the arts, education, sports, technology, and natural resources to enhance the quality of life for the residents in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Community and surrounding area. This project has also provided a model for public-private partnerships that can be used to continue the redevelopment and revitalization of the area.

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: Stimulating economic development and reuse of existing buildings and infrastructure has proven to be challenging.

Narrative: Over the past 6 years, there has been a lot of interest in the Fort Ritchie property, but aside from the transfer of approximately 63 acres of land, with some improvements, to JGBLI in 2017, the property has sat idle waiting for interested parties and developers to come forward. JGBLI submitted a plan for 36 Townhouse lots to be built on a portion of the property that they own, but this project has not been finalized as of the submission of this application.

Recently, the County has entered into a potential agreement for sale of the majority of the Fort Ritchie site. In addition, other developers have stated interest to the potential purchaser about developing portions of the property. Areas around the former parade grounds and Lakes Royer and Wastler are currently being explored for subdivision potential with the County retaining ownership of the aforementioned features along with the road network. Environmental, recreation and infrastructure related options are also being investigated.

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

Outcome: Addressing maintenance and repair issues associated with the water and wastewater treatment systems along with the possibility of transferring these systems to public ownership are still ongoing along with bringing storm water management practices up to current State standards.

Narrative: The County has addressed the upgrade of the Winebrenner Wastewater Treatment Facility and upgrades there are complete. However, the collection and distribution infrastructure in the ground on the Fort Ritchie property has yet to be turned over for County maintenance and upgrades. The Division of Water Quality is in the process of connecting the water supply lines that are within the Fort Ritchie property to the existing County owned and operated system in Cascade. Money has been allocated in the FY21 Washington County Capital Improvement Plan for the rehabilitation of two of the wells on the property. Storm water management practices have yet to be brought up to current standards because no development plans have been submitted to the County for review and approval.

Outcome: Transfer and dedication of open space and recreational assets to a public entity has not occurred.

Narrative: The former Fort Ritchie property has a myriad of recreational features including the former parade grounds, Lakes Royer and Wastler, and many miles of usable paved surfaces that would be suitable for walking/biking/running trails. The remnants of other facilities such as baseball and softball fields, soccer/football fields and other open space activities are abundant. The uncertainty of future development plans has put the transfer of any of these features on hold until such time that a developer wants to move forward.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY RENEWAL REPORT

PART II: COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

Purpose:

The purpose of the comprehensive assessment is to capture indicators of accomplishments in each Sustainable Community. Indicators should reflect the five year time period 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?)

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

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.

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

| 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? | X | | | In 2016, upgrades to the County owned and maintained Winebrenner Wastewater Treatment Facility were completed. These upgrades we designed to include biological nutrient removal and enhanced nutrient removal in the Antietam Creek watershed. Nitrogen and phosphorous levels should be reduced be 83% and 90% respectively. The Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund was used as a funding source for this project. |
| 2. Has the amount of impervious surface in your Community been reduced? (Amount in SF) | | X | | The amount of impervious service in the Sustainable Communities areas has remained unchanged since the original plan adoption in 2014. This is primarily due to the lack of development occurring in the area. The County has policies and procedures in place to help reduce the area of impervious surface moving forward once formal development plans are submitted and approved. |
| 3. Have there been improvements and/ or additions to your park and/ or recreational green space? | X | | | In 2019, a parcel of land was subdivided off from the Fort Ritchie property. This parcel of land is home to the Fort Ritchie Community Center which has been very active in creating and providing healthy lifestyle and leisure activities in the community. There is also potential for the County to retain the lake on the property and use them for recreational and environmental resources. |
| 4. Did the Sustainable Community implement any recycling or waste reduction programs? | | X | | The Sustainable Community has not formally adopted any method of recycling or waste reduction program since the area was initially identified in 2014. Specifically, as the Fort Ritchie property develops, the County will investigate these types of measures. |
| 5. Do all residents have access to healthy food options (i.e. fresh food grocery stores, farmers markets etc.) within the Sustainable Community? | X | | | The Fort Ritchie Community Center sponsors seasonal craft bazaars and yard sales which include locally grown produce that one would typically find at a farmers market. |
| OTHER: 6. Public Water system upgrades | X | | | Funding has been allocated in the FY21 Capital Improvement Plan for Washington County to rehabilitate two of the existing wells on the former Fort Ritchie property. Additionally, the County is working on connecting the existing water lines to the County owned and operated water system in the Cascade area. |

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

| 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 | | There has been no change in the number of new businesses within the Sustainable Communities area. Washington County is still hopeful that the former Fort Ritchie property will be developed by private investors in the near future. The uniqueness in location, geography, and infrastructure have created challenges in finding prospective developers willing to invest in what is essentially a small town. The economy in Washington County has been slow to recover and has also created challenges to the redevelopment of the property. |
| 2. Did the Municipality/ Sustainable Community area receive any designations that support local economic development? | X | | | A portion of the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area was included within the expansion of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area in 2017. A portion of the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area is also included within Foreign Trade Zone #255 in Washington County, Maryland. The entire Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area is within a designated Priority Funding Area in Washington County, Maryland. |
| 3. Has there been an increase in foot traffic in the Main Street/commercial district? | | X | | There has not been an increase in foot traffic in the Sustainable Communities area because there have been no new formal plans for development or redevelopment submitted in this area of the County. |
| 4. Have the number of commercial vacancies decreased? | | X | | There has been no change in the number of commercial vacancies within the Sustainable Communities area. |
| 5. Has there been an increase in local jobs within the Sustainable Community for its residents? | | X | | There has not been a significant increase in the number of jobs within the Sustainable Communities area, but Census data indicates that there was a 2% increase in the number of people who are now reporting that they work from home. |
| OTHER: | | | | |

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

| 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 amount of bike trails/paths has yet to increase due to lack of formal development plan on the Fort Ritchie property. This concept could be addressed during future development review. |
| 2. Have there been improvements to the public transit infrastructure? | | | X | |
| 3. Has there been an increase in sidewalks? (Amount in linear feet) | | X | | There has yet to be an increase in the linear feet of sidewalk available in the Sustainable Community area. Pedestrian movement will be addressed in future development review processes. |
| 4. Have there been any roadway improvements that support "Complete" or "Green" streets? | | X | | There have not been any roadway improvements to support "Complete" or "Green" streets to date. Roadway improvements will need to be a part of future development review because the road network within the Fort Ritchie property does not meet county design specifications. |
| 5. Has traffic congestion along major roads decreased? (Amount in percent) | | | X | |
| 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? |

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

| | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|---|
| 1. Have any residential facades been improved? | X | | | Twelve (12) residential properties have completed facade or exterior improvements in the Sustainable Communities area since 2014. |
| 2. Has the home ownership rate increased? | X | | | According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 (5-year estimate), the percentage of owner-occupied housing increased from 67.4% to 80.5% within the zip code 21719, the closest statistical boundary to the Sustainable Communities area. |
| 3. Has there been an increase in the number of housing units in the Sustainable Community area? What number and/or percent are affordable? | X | | | There were five (5) new housing units built in the Sustainable Communities area since the original application in 2014. None of these housing units would be considered affordable based on current definitions and criteria of the area. |
| 4. Has there been demolition of blighted properties? | X | | | Since 2014, there have been two (2) residential demolitions and two (2) non-residential demolitions within the Sustainable Communities area. There have also been demolition permit applications for approximately 38 housing units on the Fort Ritchie property. These older units are proposed to be replaced with 36 newer townhomes per the preliminary development plan. |
| 5. Has the residential vacancy rate decreased? | | X | | The residential vacancy rate within the Sustainable Communities area has increased from 11.2% as recorded in the 2010 Census to 37.1% per the American Community Survey 2014-2018. This increase in residential vacancy can be directly attributed to the non-renewal of leases for housing units on the Fort Ritchie property. |
| 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? |

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

| | | | | |
|--|----------|--|--|---|
| <p>1. Has there been a decrease in crime rate?</p> | <p>X</p> | | | <p>The crime rate within the Sustainable Communities area has dropped significantly since the original application. Statistics indicate that the area is safer than 98% of other cities in the nation; is safer than 97% of other cities in Maryland and the chance of being a victim of any type of crime is < 1 in 1,000. (Source: www.areavibes.com; April 24, 2020)</p> |
| <p>2. Have there been improvements and/ or additions to your public spaces (i.e. museums, community centers, public plazas)?</p> | <p>X</p> | | | <p>The Fort Ritchie Community Center has been operating since 2008. The Center focuses on creating and providing healthy lifestyle and leisure activities to enhance the quality of life for the residents in the surrounding communities. The Center works to promote cultural development through the arts, education, sports, technology and natural resource. The Center hosts summer camps for school-aged children, senior programs, a fitness center and exercise classes for its members. In 2019, Washington County approved the subdivision of land on which the Community Center sits.</p> |
| <p>3. Has there been an increase in public art/ arts & entertainment programs/venues (i.e. murals, movie theatre, music events)?</p> | <p>X</p> | | | <p>The Fort Ritchie Community Center has provided an increase in the number of arts, entertainment and other community events within the Sustainable Communities area.</p> |
| <p>4. How many historic properties were renovated/improved?</p> | <p>X</p> | | | <p>Since the original application in 2014, three (3) historic properties within the Sustainable Communities area have been renovated or had improvements made. Another 21 properties with the Sustainable Communities area have been renovated or improved outside of the historic district.</p> |
| <p>5. Are there any residential health and wellness opportunities in place (i.e. athletic facilities, recreational indoor/ outdoor courses or groups)?</p> | <p>X</p> | | | <p>The Fort Ritchie Community Center provides a multitude of health and wellness opportunities for the residents within the Sustainable Communities area. The area's proximity to natural resources and the Cascade Elementary School provide additional opportunities.</p> |
| <p>OTHER:</p> | | | | |

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

| 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 | | | One (1) new residential dwelling was built within the Sustainable Communities area since 2014 along with two (2) replacement dwellings within the area. |
| 2. Has there been an increase in the amount of preserved/protected land? | | | X | |
| 3. Have there been any developments hindered by growth constraints? | | | X | |
| 4. Have there been any zoning or any policy changes that have fostered growth in your Sustainable Community? | | X | | There have been no zoning or policy changes within the Sustainable Communities area since 2014. |
| 5. Have there been any significant improvements to the municipal infrastructure within the Sustainable Community (i.e. street lighting, water/sewer lines)? | X | | | There have been upgrades to the County owned and operated Wastewater Treatment Facility in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area. There are also budgeted projects on the horizon to connect the water supply lines on the Fort Ritchie property to the County owned system in Cascade and to rehabilitate two of the existing wells on the Fort Ritchie property. |
| OTHER: | | | | |

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

| 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): N/A • • • | DHCD | | | |
| Strategic Demolition Fund (SDF): N/A • • | DHCD | | | |
| Community Safety & Enhancement Program: N/A | MDOT | | | |
| Maryland Bikeways Program: N/A | MDOT | | | |
| Sidewalk Retrofit Program: N/A | MDOT | | | |
| Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund: Washington County received a Water Quality Revolving Loan in the amount of \$2.5 million to make upgrades to the Winebrenner Wastewater Treatment Facility in the Fort Ritchie -Cascade Sustainable Community area. | MDE | \$2.5 Million | | |

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

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

| | | | | |
|--|---|---------------|--|--|
| <p>Bay Restoration Fund Grant: Washington County received a Grant in the amount of \$2.7M towards the improvements at the Winebrenner Wastewater Treatment Facility in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area.</p> | <p>Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)</p> | <p>\$2.7M</p> | | |
| <p>Chesapeake Bay Water Quality Project Biological Nutrient Removal Grant: Washington County received a grant in the amount of \$2.6M towards the improvements at the Winebrenner Wastewater Treatment Facility in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area.</p> | <p>Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)</p> | <p>\$2.6M</p> | | |
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Sustainable Community Action Plan

Fort Ritchie - Cascade

Submitted by Washington County, Maryland

Environment

This section focuses on the natural environment, our use of natural resources, and our relationships to the natural environment. Strengths and weaknesses might focus on the following: 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.

Strengths

- Plentiful forest cover in the area along with proximity to South Mountain State Park and the Appalachian Trail.
- Located within the Antietam Creek Watershed.
- Recently upgraded wastewater treatment facility to improve the health of local waterways.

Weaknesses

- Connections to the existing and aging infrastructure on the former Fort Ritchie army base may be problematic.
- Development conditions such as stormwater management, sidewalks and road conditions on the Fort Ritchie property will need to be brought up to meet current County specifications.
- Lake Wastler and Lake Royer are man-made water impoundments that require routine inspection and maintenance of dams and spillways.

Desired Outcomes and Progress

Measures

Based on the strengths and weaknesses identify the strengths on which you would like to build and the challenges you would like to address.

What outcomes are you trying to achieve? Where/ in what area do you want those changes to happen?

Progress Measure: Identify how you will know that you have achieved your outcome.



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.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Outcome 1: Increase forest, park and recreation land use acreages as development occurs.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Currently, 20.13 acres of land are in the category. Notable progress would be made if the acreage were doubled to 40+ acres.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Require forest easement retention and afforestation as the area is developed.</p> <p>Action Item: The Washington County Forest Conservation Ordinance requires that any development of land that is 20,000 square feet or greater in size submit Forest Stand Delineation and a Forest Conservation Plan to protect retained forest and trees on the site to be developed.</p> <p>Strategy B: Encourage the conservation and dedication of land for parks and recreational facilities to public entities for permanent protection.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, community leaders and property owners need to work together in order to achieve these goals of forest retention and the protection of lands for natural and recreational purposes.</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2: Improve water quality within the Antietam Creek Watershed.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Reduce the amount of non-point source pollution in the Antietam Creek Watershed.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Protect sensitive environmental areas, such as stream buffers and steep slopes, through stabilization, conservation and restoration activities.</p> <p>Action Item: The Washington County Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance requires that any development of land that is 5,000 square feet or greater in size submit an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan to the Soil Conservation District prior to disturbing any land in order to protect sensitive environmental areas.</p> <p>Strategy B: Conduct stormwater management upgrades and wastewater connections on the Fort Ritchie property to the County treatment facility.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, Maryland Department of the Environment and future development partners will all need to work together to achieve these goals.</p> |
| <p>Outcome 3: Analyze the potential benefits and hazards of the two lakes to determine future usage.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Lake Royer dam and spillway were recently upgraded to current standards for safety. Evaluation of Lake Wastler for similar upgrades should be completed.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Use the two water impoundments to mitigate stormwater management control and water quality requirements.</p> <p>Strategy B: Evaluate the usefulness of Lake Wastler to determine if impoundments should continue or if it would be more useful to return to a natural state for stream restoration and wetland restoration purposes.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, State Government, property owners, and community leaders will need to work together to determine the best scenario for future use of the lakes.</p> |

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

- There is an abundant amount of vacant infrastructure available for renovation, rehabilitation and/or adaptive re-use
- Proximity to the Baltimore/Washington DC economic markets and workforce.

Weaknesses

- While the transportation network to the Sustainable Communities Area is good, it's lack of immediate highway access and remote location in northeastern Washington County is a limiting factor.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the underdeveloped land on the Fort Ritchie property could lend itself to creating a new sense of place through a master plan for development, including streetscaping and beautification. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The small local population and relative lack of business, commercial and industrial uses in the area provide little benefit to attracting new development. |
|--|--|

| Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures | Strategies and Action Items | Implementation Partners |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Outcome 1: County government needs to work with local residents and future development partners to create a master plan for development and revitalization.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Market the area to prospective developers and work towards approval of a master development plan.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Work with the Department of Business Development in Washington County in order to promote and market the area for development and revitalization.</p> <p>Strategy B: Work with the Department of Public Relations to develop an awareness Campaign featuring all of the benefits and incentives that are available in the area.</p> <p>Strategy C: Work with future development partners and consultants in order to maximize development opportunities in the area. Action Item: County Departments will work collectively to support Goal 2 of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan for Washington County in order to promote retention and expansion of existing businesses and industry while encouraging new businesses to broaden the employment base.</p> | <p>Washington County Department of Business Development, Department of Public Relations and Division of Plan Review and Permitting; future development partners and the residents of the community</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2: Promote the Cascade – Fort Ritchie Sustainable Communities Area as a prime location for development based on its Rural Village atmosphere, low crime rates and proximity to recreational opportunities.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Promote local passive and active recreational opportunities to increase tourism and awareness of the area.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Support the expansion of the Fort Ritchie Community Center and an option for passive and active recreational opportunities along with cultural and educational experiences.</p> <p>Strategy B: Promote the Pen Mar Park’s Summer Concert Series sponsored by the Washington County Department of Parks and Recreation.</p> | <p>Fort Ritchie Community Center, Washington County Department of Parks and Recreation, Washington County Tourism Office, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <p>Strategy C: Promote the area as part of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.</p> <p>Action Item: County Departments will work collectively to support and promote the Management Plan for the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area in Washington County. The Management Plan was incorporated into the 2002 Comprehensive Plan for Washington County and is designed to provide opportunities to promote conservation of historic sites while promoting and supporting heritage tourism throughout the area.</p> | |
|--|--|--|

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

- Proximity to the Maryland State Highway transportation network, including roadways with wide paved shoulder areas.
- Availability of limited railroad access on the Fort Ritchie property
- Proximity to Hagerstown Regional Airport.
- Potential for a pedestrian and bicycle friendly community as the area expands and develops.

Weaknesses

- Limited CSX railroad access.
- Lack of immediate access to Interstate network.
- Longer drive-times to and from regional destinations.
- Lack of a developed and integrated sidewalk system for pedestrian travel.

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures



Strategies and Action Items



Implementation Partners

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Outcome 1: Work with future development partners to create a master plan that is pedestrian and bicycle friendly.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Market the area to prospective developers and work towards approval of a master development plan.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Create and administer a recreation survey to the residents within the Fort Ritchie - Cascade community to identify needs and expectations in the community.</p> <p>Strategy B: Work with other County departments, the Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization and future development partners to identify needs and implement strategies for improved options in modes of transportation.</p> <p>Action Item: Coordinate with the Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization to determine the feasibility of or need for a traffic study in the Fort Ritchie - Cascade Sustainable Communities area in or to identify transportation needs that would benefit future development.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization and future development partners</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2: Work with CSX to explore the options for railroad access in the area in order to support future development needs.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Document all possible railroad access options for use in marketing the area for future development.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Meet with CSX to determine feasibility of railroad access in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade area.</p> <p>Strategy B: Create a marketing plan that incorporates all available transportation resources in the area.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, CSX and future development partners</p> |

Housing

This section focuses on the homes in which people in your community live or making 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 condition (interior or exterior); housing programs; aging in place; preventing foreclosures; and reducing residential vacancies.

Strengths

- Increasing home ownership has been realized over the past 5 years.
- Several structures have either had improvements made to exterior and interior conditions and three homes have been replaced with new structures.

Weaknesses

- The housing stock in the area is aging.
- Lack of current employment opportunities makes this area more of a bedroom or commuter community than a traditional town or suburban area.

| Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures | Strategies and Action Items | Implementation Partners |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Outcome 1: Improve the quality of the housing stock and address blighting influences in the area.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Increase confidence of homeowners, renters and future developers to promote and improve housing appeal and community character.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Assist home buyers and investors in identifying acquisition opportunities and financial assistance programs. Action Item: Work with various State and local agencies to promote and conduct homeownership workshops to specifically target overcoming the challenges that exist in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area.</p> <p>Strategy B: Promote rehabilitation of existing housing through the marketing of financial assistance programs and education on local building code requirements.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, homeowners, future development partners and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2: Continue to encourage home ownership in the area.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Increased home ownership rates and decrease vacancy rates of both owner-occupied and rental dwellings in the area.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Explore opportunities for acquisition and rehabilitation of existing housing stock, promote home ownership through new home buyer incentives and market the area to a wider audience.</p> <p>Strategy B: Encourage renovation and adaptive reuse of vacant property into a variety of housing types such as studio/lofts and artist live-work spaces along with traditional single family and multi-family dwelling units.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, homeowners, future development partners and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development</p> |

Community Health and Quality of Life

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

Strengths, weaknesses and outcomes might focus on the following: 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.

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fort Ritchie Community Center is available as an athletic, educational and cultural center that also offers dedicated youth and senior activities within the community. The rate of crime in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade area is almost non-existent. The area is within close proximity to the Appalachian Trail and Pen Mar Park for local recreational opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a relatively small amount of dedicated open space for recreational purposes within the dedicated Sustainable Communities Area. There are no dedicated senior centers or libraries within the area. There is only one physical faith-based organization in the Fort Ritchie – Cascade community. |

| Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures | Strategies and Action Items | Implementation Partners |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Outcome 1: Recruitment of more diverse retail and community services presence in the community.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Increase in businesses setting up temporary or permanent locations in the area.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Work with Public Relations and Business Development to promote the Fort Ritchie – Cascade community as a desirable business location. Action Item: Utilize and promote Washington County’s existing Business Resource Network as a tool for marketing the Fort Ritchie – Cascade Sustainable Communities area.</p> <p>Strategy B: Work with the Fort Ritchie Community Center to sponsor and host events that promote the health and diversity of the community through Farmers Markets, pop-up shops and other civic opportunities.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, Fort Ritchie Community Center, homeowners, future development partners</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2: Market the area to prospective developers as a unique community looking to expand its employment opportunities in a variety of industries.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Evidence of development or redevelopment on the Fort Ritchie property.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Work with Business Development and Public Relations to promote the area as being prime for economic development; with land available to new construction and buildings ready for renovation.</p> <p>Strategy B: Promote financial assistance opportunities to future development partners as an incentive to locate their business in the area while highlighting the low crime rates, availability of housing and recreational offerings.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, homeowners, future development partners, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development</p> |

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 |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional County staff are skilled with working with property and business owners to promote and encourage development in a logical and efficient manner. Washington County has a strong history of being developer friendly. Local zoning and building codes are updated regularly and the County Comprehensive Plan has established parameters for managing growth. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fort Ritchie property has sat largely dormant since 2016. Large, older buildings are expensive to modernize. There seems to be a lack of confidence among future development partners |



| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Outcome 1: Develop a strategic marketing campaign to advertise the availability of land and buildings for use by new and expanding businesses.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Reduction in the amount of vacant structures and the approval of a master development plan for the Fort Ritchie property.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Work with Business Development, Public Relations and other County Departments to develop a plan to attract investors and seek funding sources to assist with the financing of future development.</p> <p>Strategy B: Develop and strengthen public–public and public–private partnerships to promote future development within the Sustainable Communities Area.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, future development partners</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2: Compile a comprehensive list of funding sources that could be leveraged in order to promote the area for new development.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Approve and implement a master development plan for the area.</p> | <p>Strategy A: Work with Business Development and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to identify all possible funding sources for development purposes.</p> <p>Strategy B: Promote the Fort Ritchie – Cascade area for economic development in the 2020 update of Washington County’s Comprehensive Plan.</p> | <p>Washington County Government, future development partners, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development</p> |

