



## **CHAPTER 5**

### *Goal 1: To Provide a Plan that Promotes Growth Management and Community Development*

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During the discussions, meetings, and workshops upon which the recommendations contained in this plan were based, it became apparent that the principal concern of citizens throughout Freedom was growth and the effect it is having on the community. Accordingly, the primary goal for the 2001 Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan is to manage growth and seek creative ways to facilitate a sense of place and community. Growth management includes the implementation of a comprehensive land use plan in conjunction with measures to control the quality, rate, timing, and phasing of growth.

The preparation of a land use plan for Freedom required an extensive review of existing development patterns and land use designations. The results of the analysis indicates that, for the most part, the development pattern in the community is set, leaving the focus for future development on the fringe areas and opportunities for a creative “in-fill” development approach.

The following chapter defines current development patterns in Freedom, provides the rationale for amending the 1977 land use plan, proposes new land use designations in response to the challenges facing Freedom today, and proposes other recommended strategies to achieve the intent of the growth management goal.

#### **A. Current Development Patterns and Land Use Designations**

The majority of the land within the Freedom Community Planning Area (CPA) is in residential use, predominantly single-family homes. Even though the following table indicates that over 60 percent of the land in Freedom is assigned Conservation (47%) or Agriculture (14%) land use designations, privately-held lands in these classifications are, in fact, developing as low-density residential areas. These areas, combined with the other residential uses in the community, account for over 85 percent of the land in Freedom.

While single-family residential land uses are found throughout the community, the majority of the non-residential uses are located in the commercial core of Freedom in the immediate vicinity of the MD 26 and MD 32 intersection. MD 26, in particular, has experienced a wave of commercial growth that rivals commercial growth anywhere else in the county. Traditional suburban commercial development, including Wal-Mart, Carrolltowne Mall, Eldersburg Plaza, restaurants, grocery stores, and a variety of small “walk-up” shopping centers, have located along MD 26. Although portions of MD 26 were anticipated to develop commercially in the original 1977 Freedom Comprehensive “Mini” Plan, the original concept along this corridor included “breaks” in the strip development to avoid the type of continuous commercial development prevalent along Liberty Road (MD 26) further to the east in Baltimore County. What has occurred, however, has been the commercial development of residentially- and industrially-zoned





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properties as conditional uses (approvals required by the County Board of Zoning Appeals). These uses, while permitted in the Zoning Ordinance, are contrary to the original concept envisioned in the 1977 Freedom Comprehensive “Mini” Plan.

**Land Use Designation Acreages  
1977 Freedom Area “Mini” Plan**

Existing Land Use	Land Area	
	Acres	%
Conservation	13,244	47.4
Agriculture	3,803	14.1
R-40,000	2,271	8.1
R-20,000	3,803	13.6
R-10,000	959	3.4
R-7,500	0	0
B-L	121	0.5
B-G	102	0.4
I-R	590	2.1
I-G	83	0.3
Other (roads and water bodies)	2,818	10.1
<b>TOTAL (Unincorporated)</b>	<b>27,932</b>	<b>100</b>
Sykesville Town Acreage	944	n/a
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>28,738</b>	<b>n/a</b>

Source: Carroll County Department of Planning, December

Industrial land uses are designated for several locations throughout the community. The primary industrial location, as adopted in the 1977 Freedom Comprehensive “Mini” Plan, was to be at the intersection of MD 26 and MD 32 in the heart of Eldersburg. Pressure for commercial sites, brought about at least partially by the fact that less than 1 percent of the total acreage in Freedom is designated for commercial uses, has led to the conditional use approval for retail businesses on the prime industrial acreage at this location. A Wal-Mart, Safeway Food Shopping Center, and a local bank were all approved as conditional uses on industrially-zoned land north of the intersection.

Additional locations of industrial zoning and land uses include the Central Maryland Service and Distribution Center located on the western fringe of Freedom in the vicinity of MD 26 and MD 97. Expansion of this site for industrial use has been recommended due to its location and ability





to extend public water and sewer. The Raincliffe Industrial Center, located at the intersection of MD 32 and Raincliffe Road, remains undeveloped at this time.

A major consideration when discussing land uses in Freedom is the concentration of public uses and land ownership throughout the community. The inclusion of Springfield State Hospital Complex, Liberty and Piney Run Reservoirs, Patapsco State Park, Piney Run Park, Freedom Park, and the Morgan Run Environmental Area in the community are the reasons why over 60 percent of the land was designated for conservation and agricultural uses. The combination of publicly-owned conservation land and the (agriculturally-zoned) institutional use on the Springfield Hospital site essentially forms a “green boundary” around the residentially-zoned land of Freedom (see 1977 Land Use Designation map at end of chapter).

Other important land uses within Freedom include more recent developments addressing retirement-age home buyers and the addition of major medical facilities. As the residents of Freedom continue to age, the demand for retirement villages and communities continues to increase. Two such developments are already in place in Freedom with at least one other retirement community in the review process. Regarding medical facilities, both Carroll County General Hospital and Sinai Hospital of Baltimore recently opened their doors to new community-based medical treatment facilities on industrially-zoned land in the vicinity of MD 26 and MD 32.

## **B. Concurrency Management Program**

Countywide, concurrency management is a program of timing growth and the provision of facilities by connecting future development to the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and the ability of the county to fund improvements. Through the comprehensive planning process used to prepare this plan, the location and intensity of various land uses were designated, and the public facilities needed to serve the planned land uses were identified. The Concurrency Management Ordinance addresses the present and future effects of the planned land uses on public infrastructure and services. By committing to the long-term needs of public facilities, the costs of planned improvements can be shared equitably over time between the public and private sectors. The county will be able to budget for the achievement or maintenance of an established level of service in the community, and it can identify that portion of the costs for improvements which are the direct result of new development.

## **C. Rationale for Amending the Prior Land Use Plan**

Since the adoption of the 1977 Freedom Comprehensive “Mini” Plan, a number of factors have evolved that warranted the review and revision of this plan. The fact that the original plan is now over 20 years old, the continuing development of residential land uses in the community, and the recently enacted state mandates created the need and opportunity to take a fresh approach to the updating and rewriting of the plan. Following are some of the more pressing reasons to update the plan:





- The population in Freedom has doubled from approximately 13,700 residents in 1977 to roughly 28,000 residents in 1998.
- The increase in population, coupled with the conditional use approvals allowing commercial and retail uses to be developed on residential and industrially-zoned land along MD 26 and MD 32, has led to traffic congestion and associated problems along the arterial state roadways in Freedom. Additionally, the lack of construction and completion of connections on the planned major street system has exacerbated the traffic situation on the arterial roadways of MD 26 and MD 32.
- Concerns about the quantity of water available to serve current and future citizens prompted the county to review previous plans to search for new water supply sources.
- Investments in expanding the water and wastewater treatment plants in Freedom need to be considered.
- As previously mentioned, the original plan for Freedom is now over twenty years old. Changing technology, environmental regulations, commuting patterns, and development pressures necessitated a comprehensive review of the 1977 Freedom Comprehensive “Mini” Plan. When the original plan was adopted, telecommuting was in its infancy; governments and citizens were not as concerned about the environment as we are today; more people were traveling downtown to work versus to decentralized suburban employment centers; and growth pressures outward from the central city were only just beginning to be felt in Carroll County.

Although the 1977 Freedom Comprehensive “Mini” Plan anticipated growth in the area, it could not anticipate all the changing conditions that have occurred, such as environmental regulations, increased commuter traveling distances, and a higher than anticipated demand for services such as schools, roads, water, and sewer. To address the changing needs of the Freedom area, the Planning Commission recommended in 1996 that the Freedom Comprehensive “Mini” Plan be updated.

## **D. Land Use Designations**

One of the primary purposes for updating a comprehensive plan is to ascertain whether the land use plan and zoning that have been previously established are suited to meet present and future requirements. The land use plan that follows is based not only on demographic projections and geographic and natural constraints of the land, but also on the specific intent of the citizens of the area who have been involved throughout the planning process. The intent of the citizens of Freedom was obtained through different means, including visioning sessions, a citizen survey, the Sacred Places Workshop, and the creation of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to oversee the drafting of a revised Freedom Plan. Documentation of the results of these efforts are contained in Chapter 4 and have been translated into the proposed land use recommendations.





### **Existing Land Use Designations**

The following are descriptions of the land use designations that can be found on the existing land use designation map from the 1977 Freedom Comprehensive “Mini” Plan and are carried over to the 2001 Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan.

*Agriculture* - The Agriculture designation delineates areas where the preferred uses are agriculture or agribusiness. Very limited residential development is permitted as are numerous business-related uses associated with agriculture. No water or sewer service is planned for extension to these areas. Residential subdivisions at the rate of one lot for every 20 acres are permitted in these areas.

*High-Density Residential* - High-Density Residential designation refers to those areas that permit single-family detached units, attached units, duplexes, and multi-family dwellings. This land use designation applies to those areas that are currently zoned R-7,500 and R-10,000. The maximum number of dwelling units allowed in these areas is six units and four units per acre, respectively. Most areas with this designation lie within the planned water and sewer service area boundaries.

*Medium-Density Residential* - Medium-Density Residential designation refers to those areas that are reserved for single-family homes with a density of no more than two units per acre. This area for single-family homes is designed to be a transition from the denser mix of High-Density Residential and the sparsely-populated Low-Density Residential and Conservation designated areas. This land use designation applies to those areas that are currently zoned R-20,000. Most areas with this designation lie within the planned water and sewer service area boundaries.

*Low-Density Residential* - Low-Density Residential designation refers to those areas with a density of no more than one unit per acre. This land use designation applies to those areas that are currently zoned R-40,000. Most areas with this designation are outside the designated water and sewer service area boundaries.

*Conservation/Public Use* - The areas in the immediate vicinity of the reservoirs and environmentally-sensitive areas are designated Conservation/Public Use. Conservation/Public Use is specifically those publicly-owned lands that are adjacent to the reservoirs and other publicly-owned lands, including schools, parks, and the watershed areas. No residential construction will be allowed in these areas. Most areas designated Conservation are located in the No Planned Water and Sewer Service areas.

*Conservation/Private Use* - Similar to the Conservation/Public Use lands, the Conservation/Private Use refers to those lands that are in the immediate vicinity of the reservoirs and environmentally-sensitive areas but are privately owned. While residential development is allowed, the maximum permitted density is one dwelling unit on a 3-acre lot. Most areas designated Conservation are located in the No Planned Water and Sewer Service areas. Areas such as stream valleys, steep slopes, open space, and preserved lands are common in the Conservation areas.

*Restricted Industrial* - The Restricted Industrial designation provides for activities involved in





light manufacturing, research, processing, warehousing, assembly, and other similar industrial uses. These areas typically have direct access to a major road and should be within the planned water and sewer service area.

*Local Business* - The purpose of the Local Business designation is to provide for logical, easily-accessible locations where convenience-type retail establishments can be provided. Typically, these designations are near existing and projected population concentrations and tend to serve those neighborhoods.

*General Business* - The General Business designation provides for businesses of a more general type than would normally be found in a neighborhood. This type of business may be described as commercial, retail, wholesale, and some light processing operations. These uses are generally found along major transportation corridors and near population concentrations.

### **Proposed New Land Use Designations**

The following are descriptions of the proposed new land use designations that can be found on the land use designation map that accompanies this plan.

*Employment Campus* - The Employment Campus designation provides a setting for business and industrial parks which promote a common theme, such as corporate office and high-technology type uses. Landscape and open space requirements are designed to produce a college-type environment within a pleasant setting. Although rail access would be desirable, it is not necessary as long as the campus is accessible by a major road that provides convenient and efficient vehicle access. Commercial establishments which primarily are intended to support other users of the Employment Campus are also permitted in these areas.

*Boulevard District (Floating Zone)* - The Boulevard District (BD) designation applies specifically to identified segments of MD 26 and MD 32 within the Freedom CPA. The areas so designated shall have lighting, landscaping, design elements, land uses, and access control measures as detailed in the Boulevard District guidelines document.

## **E. Recommendations to Promote Growth Management and Community Development**

The following recommendations specific to the Freedom area are presented to facilitate appropriate measures that promote growth in a responsible fashion while concurrently expanding opportunities for community development and neighborhood interaction.

***Revise the existing land use map to reflect the appropriate changes proposed as a result of the plan update process***

- Roughly 75 acres, adjacent to the existing industrially-zoned land where the Central Maryland Distribution Center is located, is recommended to change from Agriculture to Restricted Industrial. This property is located adjacent to and accessible to public water



and sewer.

- The Springfield State Hospital Complex property, ideally located in close proximity to existing residential neighborhoods in the heart of Eldersburg, is recommended to change from Agriculture to Employment Campus. The State Complex is located in one of the county's designated Priority Funding Areas and is no longer feasible for agricultural uses. Approximately 139 acres of the state property known as the Warfield Complex was annexed into the Town of Sykesville, and the town plans to designate it as an opportunity for mixed-use development. All this, combined with the location of the State Complex within the county's economic development area, makes the Complex ideal for an Employment Campus designation.
- A regional park, combined with a public golf course, would also be appropriate in the vicinity of the Springfield State Hospital Complex due to the high level of public access and the need identified in the citizen visioning and survey results for recreational opportunities for people of all ages in the community. The area is currently designated as Agriculture; it would change to Employment Campus.
- The implementation of a Boulevard District in a designated area along the MD 26 corridor is recommended. The proposed area is a mix of Commercial and Residential designations currently. The proposed Boulevard District is further explained below.

#### ***Develop a Boulevard District (Floating Zone)***

- Currently, haphazard development is strung all along MD 26 and MD 32. The Boulevard District's main objective is to address land use, design guidelines, and traffic control. Guidelines (found in Appendix A) for the Boulevard District include curbs, sidewalks, streetlights, signage, façade treatments, and architectural styles. With continuous sidewalk linking all the shops in the Boulevard District, the result would be an orderly streetscape and safe access for pedestrians and motorists alike. Appropriately-placed crosswalks, service roads, controlled curb cuts and medians, visually appealing buildings, and streets lined with trees would give the Boulevard District a true boulevard-like appearance. The Boulevard District would allow for a mixture of commercial, retail, professional office, and residential uses.
- The Boulevard District designation as identified on the proposed land use map would extend along MD 26 from Johnsville Road to Marriottsville Road #2, along MD 32 on the east side from Bennett Road to Macbeth Way, and from the west side from the southern tip of Liberty High School to Macbeth Way.
- The BD guidance document will be developed by an appointed committee selected by the Planning Commission in consultation with the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). The Committee will consist of local merchants, citizens, government representatives, and others having an interest in the implementation of such a program and working with an experienced design consulting firm (if needed). The Planning Commission will provide the mission and time line for completing the BD document.
- The Planning Commission and the BCC will approve a charter for the Committee that defines their responsibilities with regards to completing the document.
- Until the BD recommendations are adopted and in place, the zoning currently applicable in Freedom (including the area proposed for the Boulevard District at approximately 600

acres) would remain the same. Adherence to the new guidelines will be required of property owners as and when parcels are redeveloped within the confines of the new BD zone.

- The Freedom Boulevard District Committee will be an oversight committee (separate from the committee which will develop the guidance document) appointed to implement and monitor activities within the Boulevard District. This committee will be charged with the management and promotion of the corridor. The Committee members will be appointed by the BCC and would serve a specified term.

***Maintain a rate of development that is consistent with the county's ability to provide public facilities in a timely manner***

- The phasing of new developments in Freedom to allow the provision of public facilities in a timely manner was a principal concern of citizens during the drafting of this plan. Concerns about water pressure, overcrowded schools, and traffic congestion prompted the citizens to point out that growth should not occur until adequate facilities are in place to serve new development. The county's Concurrency Management Ordinance directs the phasing of growth and addresses both the timing and location of new development, thereby allowing for the most efficient extension of public services.

***Identify additional areas where Employment Districts would be appropriate in the Freedom area in keeping with the intent of the countywide Master Plan***

- The countywide Master Plan recommends the creation of a new business and office zoning classification that could be highly compatible with residential uses and could serve as a transition or buffer zone between residential areas and the more intensive business or industrial zoning. Additional employment opportunities are needed for residents in this area. Therefore, appropriate locations need to be identified.

***Protect and preserve Springfield State Hospital Complex as a lasting symbol of value to the community***

- The preservation of Springfield State Hospital Complex, an enduring institution that recalls the history of Freedom while continuing to serve as an employer for many citizens in the community, should be a priority. The hospital function, its buildings, and its grounds are signs of previous capital and fiscal investments in Freedom, and the preservation of this landmark would be a reaffirmation of the continuing value of the institution to the larger community.

***Identify sites for CIP projects, land acquisition, and land banking***

- This plan identifies lands and facilities needed for various public purposes in both the short and long term. Land acquisition projects will require funding within the capital improvement budgets of the county and state governments. Land is required in the future for planned roadway improvements, additional park and recreation areas, and other needs. These needs are capital projects and investments and involve land acquisition. If future land needs are not secured in advance, they may not be available or may be lost when the actual need arises. Such land can be secured by purchase, gift, easement, reservation, or



other means that will preclude untimely misappropriation to other uses. Therefore, this plan calls for the “land banking”, or securing of needed land resources in advance of actual need, to avoid preemption by other development.

***Review, revise, and amend the County Zoning Ordinance to eliminate conditional uses that are inconsistent with the intention of the Restricted Industrial Zoning District***

- A review of the existing Zoning Ordinance should be undertaken to remove all inappropriate conditional uses and certain principal permitted uses from specific districts. For example, commercial development currently allowed as a conditional use in the Restricted Industrial Zoning District should be removed. Other problems include the allowance of Planned Business Centers in the Business Local District, and all conditional uses allowed in the R-20 District.

## **F. Fiscal Impacts**

The majority of the recommendations contained in this chapter involves the review and amendment of the County Zoning Ordinance. For the most part, the actual cost required to amend the Ordinance involves existing staff. Therefore, no budget impacts are expected. But in order to draft the Boulevard District guidelines, certain consulting costs are likely to be incurred.

The actual acquisition of land is a capital cost to the county, and, therefore, this recommendation has a budget impact. While these costs are difficult to quantify due to different land values within different zoning districts, assumptions can be made to project right-of-way costs for the future roadway projects. Estimates indicate that the county will require \$1.745 million in a land bank budget to acquire the land needed to construct the proposed roadways in Freedom.

The estimate of funds required to construct a public park in Freedom equals roughly \$20,000 per acre in acquisition costs. A 20-acre park, therefore, would require approximately \$400,000 in land acquisition costs. However, the availability of publicly-owned state property in the vicinity would reduce the amount of local funds required for land acquisition.